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**UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHAMPTON**  
**FACULTY OF LAW, ARTS & SOCIAL SCIENCES**  
School of Social Sciences

**Poor Law Reform and Policy Innovation in  
Rural Southern England, c.1780-1850**

by

**Samantha Anne Shave**

**Thesis for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy**

**June 2010**

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHAMPTON

ABSTRACT

FACULTY OF LAW, ARTS & SOCIAL SCIENCES

SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES

Doctor of Philosophy

POOR LAW REFORM AND POLICY INNOVATION IN  
RURAL SOUTHERN ENGLAND, c.1780-1850

by Samantha Anne Shave

Recent analysis in poor law history has uncovered the experiences of individual relief claimants and recipients, emphasising their role in the welfare process. The literature has, however, tended to draw a false dichotomy between understanding the experiences of the individual poor and understanding the administration of the poor laws. This thesis deploys a 'policy process' understanding of social policies, a concept developed in the social sciences, to understand the processes driving social policies under the poor laws.

The thesis deploys a more holistic approach to understanding the poor laws, taking into account how those in positions of power, as well as welfare recipients, impacted upon social policies under the poor law. By applying this understanding to the literature, significant aspects of poor law history have been left under-researched. The adoption and implementation of enabling legislation in the final years of the old poor law, specifically Gilbert's Act of 1782 and Sturges Bourne's Act of 1819, have hitherto received little attention. Policy transfer under the old and New poor laws, an aspect that informed all stages of the policy process, has also been neglected. In addition, the ways in which welfare scandals during the early years of the New Poor Law influenced the development of social policies have not been treated to systematic analysis.

This thesis tackles each of these lacunas in turn, using administrative records produced by the central welfare authorities and Parliament, and local administrative records from the rural south of England. It offers a more nuanced picture of poor law reform and policy innovation under the poor laws. Enabling legislation was adopted and dropped at different times, and it was implemented in different ways. Policy transfer was important in the administration of poor law policy throughout the period. Early welfare scandals arose in areas of policy strain and had influenced the development of national legislation.

Cumulatively, the different foci demonstrate the multifarious ways in which policy was adopted, implemented and changed under the poor laws. They also highlight the importance of two groups in this process, key actors and stakeholders. Rather than viewing the experiences of relief claimants as separate to the administrative aspects of the poor laws, the 'policy process' approach allows us to view them as part of the same process. In turn, this offers new insights into how both relief claimants and relief administration impacted upon each other.

You know perfectly well that the infinite heaps of *things* they recorded, the notes and traces that these people left behind, constitute practically nothing at all...Your craft is to conjure a social system from a nutmeg grater...

(Carolyn Steedman, *Dust* (Manchester, 2001), p. 18)

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## Declaration of Authorship

I, Samantha Anne Shave, declare that the thesis entitled 'Poor Law Reform and Policy Innovation in Rural Southern England, c.1780-1850' and the work presented in the thesis are both my own, and have been generated by me as the result of my own research.

I confirm that:

- this work was done wholly or mainly while in the candidature for a research degree at this University;
- where I have consulted the published work of others, the source is always given. With the exception of such quotations, this thesis is entirely my own work;
- I have acknowledged all main sources of help;
- where the thesis is based on work done by myself jointly with others, I have made clear exactly what was done by others and what I have contributed myself;
- parts of this thesis have previously been submitted for a degree of another qualification at this University:

Chapter seven incorporates material from: S.A. Shave, "Rascally handled": New Poor Law Scandals and the working out of social policy', (unpublished MSc dissertation, University of Southampton, 2006). Submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for MSc (Social Sciences) in Social Policy by instructional course.

- parts of this work have been published:

Chapter four incorporates material from: S.A. Shave, 'The welfare of the vulnerable in the late 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> centuries: Gilbert's Act of 1782' *History in Focus*, 'Welfare' edition (2008). Online. Available: <http://www.history.ac.uk/ihr/Focus/welfare/articles/shaves.html> [last accessed 28 April 2010].

Signed:.....

Date:.....

## Acknowledgements

Firstly, I thank the ESRC for giving me the opportunity to continue studying (award number: PTA-030-2005-00267). Without this financial support I would not have been able to undertake a Masters in Social Policy and this doctoral research.

I am very grateful to Bernard Harris, whose time and help has been invaluable to my postgraduate research from the very start. He has been an encouraging supervisor throughout my studies and without his critical insight, detailed comments and advice at every step this thesis would not exist.

Throughout the research I used and studied in a number of different record offices and libraries, including the Main Library at Queen's University during my visits to Belfast. I thank the assistance of the staff in all of these services, but especially Wendy White, a subject librarian at the Hartley Library at the University of Southampton, who always went out of her way to ensure I had access to the appropriate materials. Assistance with the mapping was gratefully received from Julian Leyland in the School of Geography. I am obliged to thank Lord Egremont for granting his permission for me to use documents in this thesis from the Petworth House Archives.

In the spring of 2009 I undertook an ESRC internship at The National Archives. I would like to thank my supervisors here and for the other interns for making the experience a pleasurable one.

I have had conversations with Carl Griffin about my research from the infancy of this thesis. His knowledge and advice has undoubtedly benefited my research and writing. John Mohan and Andrew Hinde commented on my earlier work. I would like to thank these people and those who provided me with comments and guidance at conferences and workshops including David Green, Steve Hindle, Tim Hitchcock, Jane Humphries, Peter Jones, Steve King, Leonard Schwarz, Brian Short, Richard Smith, Keith Snell, Nicola Verdon and Adam Whitworth.

Words to the effect of 'keep going' came from numerous directions.

I have enjoyed undertaking this thesis in a School of mutual support and lively discussion. I would especially like to thank Heather Buckingham and Michelle Heward whose friendships I am very grateful for. Many other students also offered words of comfort and good humour, both within and beyond our office, room 2059. I have also valued the support of other friends who have helped me in many different ways over the past few years.

I am especially indebted to my family. My grandparents, Mary and Kenneth Francis and Ruby and Robert Shave, were keen to hear of my progress and welcomed discussion on local history. My sister, Sarah-Jayne, and her partner, Darren, helped me in Southampton and provided me with much needed distraction from work. My Mum, Dad and my brothers, Scott and Stephen, have always been interested in my research, my seminar teaching and travelling. Mum and Dad have continually encouraged me along this journey and were always, without fail, there for me when I needed them. I have appreciated Honey's companionship and for the excuse to go for walks in the Vale, so she should be thanked as well.

*This thesis is dedicated to my parents Trevor and Julie-Anne Shave for all their love and care*

## **Abbreviations**

### ***Record Offices***

Bristol City Record Office	BCRO
Dorset History Centre	DHC
East Sussex Record Office	ESRO
Hampshire Record Office	HRO
Petworth House Archives	PHA
Portsmouth City Record Office	PCRO
Somerset Record Office	SRO
Southampton City Record Office	SCRO
Surrey History Centre	SHC
The National Archives	TNA
West Sussex Record Office	WSRO
Wiltshire and Swindon Archives	WSA

### ***Government Papers***

British Parliamentary Papers	BPP
Home Office	HO
Ministry of Health	MH
Poor Law Commission	PLC

All quotations in this thesis are taken directly from the documents.  
Any alterations to the originals have been placed in square brackets.

## Chapter 1: Introduction

I am sorry to receive such a meassage from  
you that I am to have four Shillans of  
my Pay taken of I hope you will not  
be so hard harted as to take it from me  
as I stand in more need of having some

Ann Dunster<sup>1</sup>

Ann Dunster was unemployed and living on Exmoor. In 1821 she wrote to the parish officers outlining her circumstances, arguing that she needed poor relief to keep her children, and herself, from going hungry. Ann argued that she had little control over her situation: '[i]t is not by Idleness' or misbehaviour 'that I am forst to come to you but it is by Death'. Ann knew where her status as a widow placed her entitlement according to the Law. As 'aloud by the Justice of Peace' it was the duty of the parish to send money to maintain the fatherless children until 'they are abel to do for them selves'.<sup>2</sup> The main purpose of her letter was not to obtain poor relief for the first time, or ask for an increase in the value of a payment, however. Ann had written to her parish officers to remonstrate against a reduction in her outdoor relief. Her letter was one of thousands which were sent from relief claimants to the overseers during the poor laws. Whilst, as I have asserted elsewhere, there was no such thing as the 'typical' pauper, Ann's case typifies the complex interactions between policy, practitioners and paupers after the mid-eighteenth century.<sup>3</sup> This thesis examines the social policies developed during this period of poor relief transition, the sorts of policies which had affected individuals, such as Ann, and their families.

---

<sup>1</sup> Ann Dunster to Mr. Allen (Cannington), [no day or month] 1821, Cannington, Overseers' Correspondence, SRO D\P\Can13/13/6. Subsequent correspondence shows that she was living in Withypoole.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> S.A. Shave, 'The Dependent Poor? (Re)constructing the Lives of Individuals "on the parish" in rural Dorset, 1800-1832', *Rural History*, 20 (2009), 67-97.

## 1.1 The old and New poor laws

The poor laws have a long, enduring, history which forms an important context to this period. Pieces of legislation were passed infrequently in the late fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, such as the acts of 1495 and 1531 which gave local magistrates the power to issue begging licences to individuals and to punish vagrants.<sup>4</sup> The first statutes 'which defined the Old Poor Law', however, were the acts of 1598 and 1601 at the end of Queen Elizabeth's reign.<sup>5</sup> The first, the Act for the Relief of the Poor, and its revised edition in 1601, stipulated that the parish was the unit from which poor relief would be both funded and distributed. To raise funds for relief, the parish had to organise the charging and collection of a new parish-based tax, the poor rate, which was levied in correlation to property ownership. In addition, the legislation demanded that the impotent should be given relief, the able-bodied should be set to work and children should be apprenticed. In charge of administering these laws were churchwardens and overseers. Magistrates maintained a 'supervisory' role over the endeavours of individual parishes, ensuring that parish officials had been elected fairly, and relief provision was operating within the confines of the new legislature.<sup>6</sup> Magistrates also listened to individuals' appeals against parish relief decisions and overruled them whenever they believed it was appropriate. As a consequence, when the poor were at odds with their treatment they could successfully mobilise the magistracy to 'defend their interests.'<sup>7</sup>

Slack has posited that '[i]n all essentials...the poor law was complete in 1601' but, as others have already highlighted, a variety of acts were passed in the seventeenth century.<sup>8</sup> These Acts enabled parishes to identify who their poor were and to whom relief should be provided. The Settlement Act of 1662, although not considered to be a poor law per se, allowed parish officials to quiz individuals who they thought were 'likely to be chargeable' to the parish and

---

<sup>4</sup> P. Slack, *The English Poor Law, 1531-1782* (1990, Cambridge, 1995), p. 9; B. Harris, *The Origins of the British Welfare State: Social Welfare in England and Wales, 1800-1945* (Basingstoke, 2004), p. 40.

<sup>5</sup> Slack, *The English Poor Law*, p. 11.

<sup>6</sup> Slack, *The English Poor Law*, p. 11.

<sup>7</sup> S. Hindle, *On the Parish? The Micro-Politics of Poor Relief in Rural England c.1550-1750* (Oxford, 2004), p. 406.

<sup>8</sup> Slack, *The English Poor Law*, p. 11; Harris, *Origins of the British Welfare State*, p. 41.

(with the approval of two justices) return the paupers to their place of settlement. Whilst this Act had reinforced parish boundaries' social and cultural importance within in communities, another piece of legislation (passed in 1697) allowed parish officers to literally label their poor with the parish name.<sup>9</sup> Whilst there were various interpretations of this Act, such as how and when the badge should be worn and what types of relief should be given to its wearers, it is a matter of debate whether badging was a stigmatising practice or whether it had reinforced individuals' entitlement to relief. Whatever the intentions of the parish officers using this policy, however, the practice persisted into the 1790s.<sup>10</sup>

In the meantime, providing relief by way of admittance into parish funded accommodation became increasingly popular. Although numerous parishes had decided to pay individuals' house rents, or had hired or bought a house for the reception of their poor as allowed under Elizabeth's Act of 1601, many parish officers decided to establish institutions.<sup>11</sup> There were two main types. Firstly, Local Act workhouses, which allowed a set of parish officials, with the consent of the wider community, to provide a workhouse with rules agreed in a piece of legislation. And secondly, the parochial workhouse, the adoption of which concentrated in the 1720-30s, not least due to the passage of Knatchbull's Act (1723), an 'enabling' or 'non-compulsory' piece of legislation which allowed parishes to build alone or in collaboration with other parishes a workhouse for the receipt of the poor. The workhouse movement lost momentum by the 1740s, but in the 1777 parliamentary enquiry into institutions, a total of 1,916 workhouses were identified in England, housing over 90,000 paupers.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> K.D.M. Snell, 'The culture of local xenophobia', *Social History*, 28 (2003), p. 8. Those in receipt of regular parish relief were to 'openly wear upon the shoulder of the right sleeve a badge or mark with a large Roman P, and the first letter of the name of the parish', cited in S. Webb and B. Webb, *English Poor Law History, Part 1: The Old Poor Law* (1927, London, 1963), p. 151. The Act itself was, however, thought to have been inspired by 'the military institution, when the nobility distinguished their followers with peculiar ensigns', T. Ruggles, 'On the Police and Situation of the Poor' in A. Young (ed.), *Annals of Agriculture and other Useful Arts*, Volume 18 (London, 1792), p. 338.

<sup>10</sup> For an exploration of the negotiations surrounding the wearing and removal of these symbols and how these implied both a sense of belonging to and exclusion from localities see S. Hindle, 'Dependency, Shame and Belonging: Badging the Deserving Poor, c. 1550-1750', *Cultural and Social History*, 1 (2004), 6-35; *idem.*, *On the Parish?*, pp. 433-449.

<sup>11</sup> 43 Eliz. c.2, V.

<sup>12</sup> T. Hitchcock, 'Paupers and Preachers: The SPCK and the Parochial Workhouse Movement' in I. Davison, T. Hitchcock, T. Keirn and R.B. Shoemaker (eds.), *Stilling the Grumbling Hive: The Response to Social and Economic Problems in England, 1689-1750* (Stroud, 1992), pp. 145-146.

England witnessed both industrial and agricultural revolutions during the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries, provoking profound social and economic change.<sup>13</sup> Employment in agriculture, forestry and fishing fell from 35.9% of the workforce in 1700 to 21.7% by 1851, while those employed in manufacturing, mining and industry increased from 29.7% to 42.9%.<sup>14</sup> Due to mechanisation and cheaper costs of production in large scale factories, cottage industries declined, something which had a dramatic impact upon many rural communities.<sup>15</sup> In the countryside, the quickening of the capitalist imperative essentially divided rural societies into three main groups: landlords, tenant farmers and agricultural labourers.<sup>16</sup> The widespread enclosure of commons and open fields allowed landlords to make efficiency savings as well as to capitalise on a long-term rise in rents. The labouring poor, conversely, almost invariably lost out, as the increased employment which proponents of enclosure claimed rarely made up for the loss of any common and wasteland access.<sup>17</sup> The economic effects of the Napoleonic Wars further exacerbated these problems, causing a further decline in real wages and acting to intensify structural unemployment. Although labour shortages between 1793 and 1815 reduced unemployment rates, unemployment increased dramatically after 1815.<sup>18</sup> This, combined with a decline of live-in service which tended to reduce marriage ages, created an ever increasing but underemployed population.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Harris, *Origins of the British Welfare State*, chapter three, pp. 28-39.

<sup>14</sup> N. Tranter, 'The Labour Supply 1780-1860' in R. Floud and D. McCloskey (eds.), *The Economic History of Britain Since 1700*, Volume 1 (Oxford, 1994), pp. 204-226, cited in Harris, *Origins of the British Welfare State*, p. 29.

<sup>15</sup> P. Sharpe, *Adapting to Capitalism: Working Women in the English Economy, 1700-1850* (London, 1996); B. Reay, *Microhistories: Demography, Society and Culture in Rural England, 1800-1930* (Cambridge, 1996); B. Reay, *Rural England: Labouring Lives in the Nineteenth Century* (Basingstoke, 2004).

<sup>16</sup> E. Hobsbawm and G. Rudé, *Captain Swing* (London, 1969).

<sup>17</sup> J.L. Hammond and B. Hammond, *The Village Labourer* (1911, London, 1978); J.M. Neeson, *Commoners: Common Right, Enclosure and Social Change in England, 1700-1820* (Cambridge, 1993); J. Humphries, 'Enclosure, Common Rights, and Women: The Proletarianization of Families in the Late Eighteenth and Early Nineteenth Centuries', *Journal of Economic History*, 50 (1990), 85-149.

<sup>18</sup> K.D.M. Snell, *Annals of the Labouring Poor: Social Change and Agrarian England 1660-1900* (Cambridge, 1985), pp. 65-66.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 67-103; For further debate surrounding this issue see D.A. Baugh, 'The Cost of Poor Relief in South-East England, 1790-1834', *Economic History Review*, 28 (1975), 50-68; M. Blaug, 'The Myth of the Old Poor Law and the Making of the New', *Journal of Economic History*, 23 (1963), 151-184; *idem.*, 'The Poor Law Report Re-examined', *Journal of Economic History*, 24 (1964), 229-245; J.P. Huzel, 'Malthus, the Poor Law, and Population in Early-Nineteenth Century England', *Economic History Review*, 22



By the nineteenth century, as Roger Wells has stated, ‘the vast bulk of the inhabitants of the English countryside...were landless agricultural labourers’, their families unable to subsist on male wages alone.<sup>20</sup> According to Dunbabin, this combination of factors created ‘the only real Marxian proletariat that England ever had’.<sup>21</sup> It is little wonder therefore that we have tended, as Huzel has asserted, to assume that the ‘Poor Law loomed large in the daily life of the agricultural labourer’.<sup>22</sup> It was the labouring class of the rural south, according to Snell, who had suffered a particular deterioration of both their standard of living and quality of life after circa 1780 due to their vulnerability to structural changes and continued population growth.<sup>23</sup> Snell’s comparison of male agricultural weekly rates wages in the early-nineteenth century also suggests the south experienced the lowest wages. Wages had remained high and stable in north of England compared to wages in the south.<sup>24</sup>

The labouring classes were hit particularly hard, suffering from a deterioration of both their standard of living and quality of life due to their vulnerability to not only cyclical unemployment but also structural change. As such, many labouring individuals and labouring class families were forced to seek relief from the parish, yet rate-payers, dominated by farmers, wanted to reduce relief expenditure. Parish welfare officials, not least in the south of England, faced a seemingly insurmountable challenge: to provide poor relief whilst endeavouring to keep the poor rates stable. England had entered, as Brundage summarised it, an age of ‘debates, experiments and reforms’.<sup>25</sup>

By the mid-eighteenth century, the poor relief landscape was very complex. Parishes could engineer their own legislation, adhere to enabling acts

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(1969), 430–452; *idem.*, ‘The Demographic Impact of the Old Poor Law: More Reflexions on Malthus’, *Economic History Review*, 33 (1980), 367–381; S. Williams, ‘Malthus, Marriage and Poor Law Allowances Revisited: A Bedfordshire Case Study, 1770–1834’, *Agricultural History Review*, 52 (2004), 56–82.

<sup>20</sup> R. Wells, ‘The Development of the English Rural Proletariat and Social Protest, 1700–1850’ in M. Reed and R. Wells (eds.), *Class, Conflict and Protest in the English Countryside, 1700–1880* (London, 1990), p. 29.

<sup>21</sup> J. Dunbabin, *Rural Discontent in Nineteenth Century Britain* (London, 1974), p. 248.

<sup>22</sup> J.P. Huzel, ‘The Labourer and the Poor Law, 1750–1850’, in G. Mingay (ed.), *The Agrarian History of England and Wales*, Volume 6: 1750–1850 (Cambridge, 1989), p. 755.

<sup>23</sup> Snell, *Annals of the Labouring Poor*. Also Wells, ‘The Development of the English Rural Proletariat’.

<sup>24</sup> Snell, *Annals of the Labouring Poor*, pp. 130–131.

<sup>25</sup> A. Brundage, *The English Poor Laws, 1700–1930* (Basingstoke, 2002), title of chapter 3, pp. 37–60.

and develop their own policies, as long as they conformed to the basic rules laid down in 1601. As a consequence, the old poor laws created a remarkably flexible system. In the first instance, parishes could adopt acts and develop practices which best suited their local contexts and, secondly, relief provision could be tailored to suit the needs of the individual claimants' situation. This optimistic perspective led Blaug to call the last few decades of relief under the old poor laws 'a welfare state in miniature' as it had managed 'elements of wage escalation, family allowances, unemployment compensation, and public works.'<sup>26</sup> Indeed, the south of England saw the growth of Speenhamland-style practices, whereby relief was allocated according to family size, as well as parish employment-linked relief, and allotment provision. In addition, parish-funded medical attendance was common, and those in need of specialist treatments were sent to hospitals, to reside with medical men and to take a change of air. The parish would also pay for, or subsidise, food, clothing and tools to enable people to work.<sup>27</sup> But just as the relief system was flexible, however, it was also open to corruption. It was to the widespread adoption of allowances as well as employment linked relief provision that historians have attributed some of the causes of agricultural unrest in the 1830s.<sup>28</sup>

Opinion subsequently moved in favour of long-term, government-led policy change, culminating in the Poor Law Amendment Act of 1834. It was within this context that the New Poor Law came into existence. The Royal Commission, after researching the practices of the old poor laws, and with the influence of political economists, believed that the deterrent workhouse system would be the best option for the relief of the poor. Whilst the Amendment Act of 1834 did not make the creation of workhouse-centred unions compulsory, in practice the zealous activities of the Poor Law Commission - the London-based welfare authority responsible for the central administration of the New Poor Law - meant that few places fell outside of their control by the late 1830s. Although there were pockets of resistance to the Act throughout England, the pro-reform sympathies of many local elites and the middle classes had helped its

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<sup>26</sup> M. Blaug, 'The Poor Law Report Reexamined', p. 229.

<sup>27</sup> R. Wells, *Wretched Faces: Famine in Wartime England 1763-1803* (Gloucester, 1988).

<sup>28</sup> Snell, *Annals of the Labouring Poor*, p. 27; Hobsbawm and Rudé, *Captain Swing*, p. 47.

implementation.<sup>29</sup> The Commission instructed that parishes formed into unions, ideally around a market town or city, to provide a central workhouse. These policies meant that the Act has been viewed by historians as detrimental to relief recipients and yet significant in the history of welfare provision. Studies which have examined the implementation of the New Poor Laws have, however, more often than not sympathised with the labouring classes. John and Barbara Hammond, usually keen to avoid generalisations, argued that their situation had turned from bad to worse: the labouring classes were 'stripped of their ancient rights and their ancient possessions' and were given 'instead a universal system of pauperism'.<sup>30</sup> Those taking a longue durée perspective of the development of the modern welfare state have argued that the Amendment Act was 'one of the most important pieces of social legislation in the nineteenth century'.<sup>31</sup>

## 1.2 The past policy process

This thesis is not about the state of things - the poor, the nation or the government – at a particular moment in time. Behind the account provided in the section above was a complex web of negotiation between and within central and local welfare authorities, and between welfare providers and recipients. This thesis unpicks this in order to expose how policies emerged, and were taken up, implemented and developed in the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries. It aims to expose the complicated nature of social policies under the poor laws. It will, therefore, (re)construct the processes driving the relief system, and processes linking the poor, the nation and the government.

The research does not follow the tide of recent research about individuals' experiences of welfare receipt. Rather, it makes a case for the continued study of

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<sup>29</sup> W. Apfel and P. Dunkley, 'English Rural Society and the New Poor Law: Bedfordshire, 1834-47', *Social History*, 10 (1985), 37-68; B. Harris, 'Charity and Poor Relief in England and Wales, Circa 1750-1914', in B. Harris and P. Bridgen (eds.), *Charity and Mutual Aid in Europe and North America Since 1800* (London, 2007), pp. 20-23.

<sup>30</sup> Hammond and Hammond, *The Village Labourer*.

<sup>31</sup> A. Digby, *British Welfare Policy: Workhouse to Welfare* (London, 1989), p. 31; D. Englander, *Poverty and Poor Law Reform in Nineteenth Century Britain, 1834-1914* (Harlow, 1998), p. 1; A. Kidd, *State, Society and the Poor in Nineteenth Century England* (Basingstoke, 1999), p. 4; Harris, *Origins of the British Welfare State*, p. 49.

relief administration. Using a 'policy process' approach, developed by social scientists, this thesis examines aspects of past relief policies which have hitherto received little attention. As the next chapter explains, when the existing literature is examined from this perspective, it appears that significant chunks of the administrative history of the poor laws have been left unexamined. This is largely a consequence of the welfare historians' desire to assess whether the architects of the Amendment Act were correct in their judgements of past welfare provision (i.e. the allowance system) and assess whether the centralised authorities were subsequently 'successful' in their implementation of the Amendment Act.

In order to examine the policy process at national and local levels, this research involved the analysis and linkage of a large array of administrative documents, as will be outlined in chapter three. Documents which reveal the processes at the governmental level include Parliamentary Papers, such as Select Committee Reports and the Returns, the Parliamentary Debates and documents which reveal the process at the local level include vestry and union minute books and several types of unofficial records. The context within which these local level records were created is, of course, important. This research focuses on the agrarian counties of the south of England, namely the region known as Wessex. This includes the counties of Dorset, Hampshire, Somerset and Wiltshire. This was the centre of the rural agrarian south, an area which not only experienced high levels of poverty in comparison to the rest of the south, but was also an area which the creators of the Amendment Act were most concerned to reform. Some additional local records have been used from West Sussex, though, not least because the landowning gentry here kept immaculate records on the administration of certain relief schemes which are still accessible today. Although the thesis is, therefore, embedded within the south of England, this does not prevent the findings from having broader implications for our understandings of social policies under the poor laws in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

Before 1834 policy was based on the development and implementation of a series of permissive acts. Chapters four and five will show how this process worked through an examination of the adoption and implementation of two sets of enabling Acts which have hitherto received little attention. The first is Thomas Gilbert's Act of 1782 and the second Sturges Bourne's Act of 1819. In both

instances, it is shown that the adoption of both so-called 'enabling' Acts was far more common than has previously been considered. In addition, their application may have diverted from the initial intentions of their makers. Gilbert's Act was passed with the intention that those parishes adopting it would place the 'vulnerable' sections of the poor within a workhouse and allocate employment and distribute outdoor relief to the able-bodied. The Act also had intended to promote industry and good morals amongst the poor, allowing parish officers to work the poor within the workhouse and embark on teaching programmes for children. Yet, as the eighteenth century drew to a close, and the pursuit of more economical modes of relieving the poor became ever more important, the Act was adapted in ways which could have actually contradicted Gilbert's intentions. Sturges Bourne's Acts permitted parishes to employ an assistant overseer whose sole task was to inspect the poor and distribute relief, and the appointment of a Select Vestry to take charge of policy decisions and relief claimants. Whilst the retrenchment of relief provision was an inevitable consequence of the Act, the sheer innumerable variety of ways in which it was implemented is interesting. Sturges Bourne allowed parish officials to return to the clear-cut decision-making which had originated with the Elizabethan Poor Law – individuals were identified as either 'deserving' of poor relief, or not.

Chapter six takes a very different angle. It sets out to develop an understanding of how social policies were disseminated between welfare officials. The first half demonstrates that, before the creation of the Poor Law Commission, there was no central welfare authority to suggest ways in which parishes could cope with the increasing demand on poor relief, resulting in parish officials seeking solutions from one another. The information they passed originated at a specific location, but it was presented and promoted as 'best practice'. Knowledge was transferred between officials through a number of modes, including correspondence, visits and pamphlet production. Locally derived knowledge was not insignificant after the passage of the Amendment Act. The Commission was proactive in seeking local precedents and encouraging Boards of Guardians to adopt particularly beneficial practices. In addition, regardless of the presence of a central welfare authority, evidence can be found of officials continuing the tradition of conferring with one another, without the interference of the

Commission. In short, the policy process was not constrained by parish boundaries before 1834, nor controlled by the Commission thereafter.

The last thematic chapter explores the role of welfare scandals in policy-making after the passage of the Amendment Act. It contends that the creation of a centralised welfare authority brought with it centralised accountability for local relief administration. More than this, though, the post-1834 relief system opened the policy-making process to a number of other stakeholders to express their own requirements from the relief system, such as the medical profession. These ‘stakeholders’, and notable ‘key actors’ from the anti-New Poor Law movement shaped the direction of social policies during the early years of the New Poor Law, not the Commission alone. The existence of a central authority, to hold the local authorities to account, ensured that policies developed in ways which would resolve the problems happening within the unions. This meant that relief recipients themselves played a role in the policy-making process, as their experiences had reached the ears of authority. There was, essentially, a feedback mechanism between policy implementation and policy evaluation and change stages of the policy process under the New Poor Law.

This thesis demonstrates that social policies under the poor laws were not stable, stationary entities, simply appearing within the policy landscape. Rather, social policies were a myriad of laws and practices which were conceived and exchanged between those in positions of power. Social policies were also applied on the ground sporadically and multifariously, both converging and diverting from the initial intentions of their makers. And even those who appeared to lack any power, that is, individuals not in formal positions of authority, were still able to influence both the policy process and its outcomes. As such, the administration of poor relief should not be viewed as a system apart from welfare recipients’ experiences.

## Chapter 2: The Implications of a ‘Policy Process’ Approach to Understanding the Poor Laws

The curtailment of Ann Dunster’s outdoor relief provision mirrors the experiences of many other relief claimants after the late-eighteenth century when relief provision was subject to different rules and expectations. Foregrounding the experiences of relief recipients has, however, only been a recent trend in poor law studies. As such, the first section of this chapter outlines the ‘history from below’ approach, the subsequent section investigates the impact this has had on poor law research. In particular, it follows its impact on a recently emerging strand of research about the relief claimants’ agency and strategy. The chapter then goes on to argue that the analysis of the administrative aspects of the poor laws has become neglected in the ‘experiential turn’. The next section of this chapter describes the ‘policy process’, a concept developed in the social sciences. It concludes by applying a policy process model to the current literature, an approach which highlights several aspects of poor law administration which are currently ill-understood.

### **2.1 Recent poor law research**

#### **2.1.1 A ‘history from below’ approach**

No individual has made more impact on the approach of social historians’ research over the last 40 years than E.P. Thompson. In 1963 Thompson published *The Making of the English Working Class*, a seminal work where he argued the need to ‘rescue’ the lives of the stockinger, the cropper and hand-loom weaver ‘from the enormous condescension of posterity.’ The *lives* of the working-class should, he posited, not be neglected.<sup>1</sup> Indeed, the effort to uncover the lives of ‘common people’ had been an insignificant strand of research up until then, and such efforts were always obscured by those whose lives were, apparently, of

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<sup>1</sup> E.P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (London, 1963), p. 7.

more importance. Three years later he published an article in the *Times Literary Supplement* entitled 'History from Below'. This bold piece of writing placed 'the concept of history from below' to enter into 'the common parlance of historians.'<sup>2</sup> Thompson's approach, which challenged a meta-narrative of the 'making' of the working class, influenced the structural approach of the British Marxist historians whose work had been more 'firmly centred in class struggle and human agency' rather than a 'history from below'. The structure-focused and grand-narrative seeking nature of traditional history became neglected in favour of the need to uncover the social world(s) of the masses.<sup>3</sup>

The way in which this approach has influenced social history has been profound. Historians of social policy have followed this trend by examining welfare provision from the standpoint of those using welfare services, rather than detailing social policy reform and innovation. Welfare historians such as Pat Thane and Stephanie Blackburn sought to build on the earlier insights of historians, including Henry Pelling, in order to understand the reactions and attitudes of 'ordinary' working-class people towards the growth of state welfare 'intervention' predominantly between 1890 and the First World War.<sup>4</sup> Their efforts have been reinforced by the work of oral historians. Stephen Humphries, Elizabeth Roberts, Joanna Bornat and Dorothy Atkinson have all used individual testimonies to explore people's direct experience of educational provision, the introduction of national health insurance and the provision of services for people with disabilities.<sup>5</sup> More recently, analysts of contemporary social policies, such as Ruth Lister, have also emphasised the importance of 'participatory methods' in

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<sup>2</sup> J. Sharpe, 'History from Below' in P. Burke (ed.), *New Perspectives on Historical Writing* (Cambridge, 1991), pp. 24-41.

<sup>3</sup> E.A. Clark, *History, Theory, Text: Historians and the Linguistic Turn* (London, 2004), p. 79.

<sup>4</sup> H. Pelling, 'The Working Class and the Origins of the Welfare State' in H. Pelling (ed.), *Popular politics and society in late-Victorian Britain* (London, 1968) pp. 1-18; H. Pelling and A. Reid, *A Short History of the Labour Party* (Basingstoke, 1996); P. Thane, *The Foundations of the Welfare State* (London, 1982); *idem.*, 'The Working Class and State "Welfare" in Britain, 1880-1914', *Historical Journal*, 27 (1984), 877-900; S. Blackburn, 'Working-class attitudes to social reform: Black Country chainmakers and anti-sweating legislation 1880-1930', *International Review of Social History*, 33 (1988), 42-69.

<sup>5</sup> S. Humphries, *Hooligans or rebels? An Oral History of Working-Class Childhood and Youth 1889-1939* (Oxford, 1981); E. Roberts, *A Woman's Place: An Oral History of Working-Class Women 1890-1940* (Oxford, 1984); *idem.*, 'The recipients' view of welfare' in J. Bornat, R. Perks, P. Thompson and J. Walmsley (eds.) *Oral History, Health and Welfare* (London, 2000), pp. 203-226; J. Bornat, and D. Atkinson, 'Oral history and the history of learning disability' in J. Bornat *et al.*, *Oral History*, pp. 180-202.



understanding the relationship between individual people and welfare services.<sup>6</sup> The challenge has been, however, to (re)create the attitudes and reaction of welfare 'clients' in an earlier period, a period now beyond anyone's living memory.

Another approach of increasing importance in history has been microhistory, developing from a similar aim to those following the 'history from below' perspective. The origins of the term 'microhistory' are contested, but the approach developed from the writings of historians of northern Italy in the 1970s and 80s.<sup>7</sup> Carlo Ginzburg's *The Cheese and the Worms* is arguably the most influential microhistory. Uncovering the trials and tribulations of life of a sixteenth-century miller, it demonstrated a concern with revealing the actions and behaviours of 'lost people', the otherwise obscure and marginal groups in society.<sup>8</sup> The intellectual rationale for this perspective not only lies in the belief that uncovering lives is a worthwhile exercise in its own right, but also in the understanding that by uncovering lives we can 'clarify the nature of authority'.<sup>9</sup> Although initial studies focused on the interactions between individuals and their richer neighbours, the practice of microhistory has been adopted outside of Italy and has steadily permeated many areas of British history, most notably rural history, historical geography and women's history.<sup>10</sup> Consequently, the concept of microhistory has become more broadly defined as an approach which reduces the scale of observation towards a microscopic level of analysis, whether an individual person or a specific place. In the latter case, as Reay argues, '[t]he local

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<sup>6</sup> R. Lister, *Poverty* (Cambridge, 2004).

<sup>7</sup> For the contested nature of the beginnings of the term see C. Ginzburg, 'Microhistory: Two or Three Things That I know about It' (translated by J. Tedeschi and A. C. Tedeschi) *Critical Inquiry*, 20 (1993), 10-35, especially pp. 10-14. It is thought to have origins in the work of several American scholars in the 1950s.

<sup>8</sup> *Idem.*, *The Cheese and the Worms: the Cosmos of a Sixteenth-Century Miller*, (1976, London, translated edition 1980).

<sup>9</sup> E. Muir, 'Introduction: Observing trifles' in E. Muir and G. Guggiero (eds.), *Microhistories & the Lost Peoples of Europe* (Baltimore, 1991), p. viii.

<sup>10</sup> Examples include B. Reay, *Microhistories: Demography, Society and Culture in Rural England, 1800-1930* (Cambridge, 1996); P. Sharpe, *Population and Society in an East Devon Parish, Reproducing Colyton 1540-1840* (Exeter, 2002); R. Thompson, 'Economic and social change in a Somerset village, 1700-1851: a microhistory' (unpublished PhD thesis, University of Cambridge, 2004); *idem.*, 'A Breed Apart? Class and Community in a Somerset Coal-Mining Parish, c.1750-1850', *Rural History*, 16 (2005), 137-159; C.J. Griffin, 'Policy on the Hoof: Sir Robert Peel, Sir Edward Knatchbull and the Trial of the Elham Machine Breakers, 1830', *Rural History*, 15 (2004), 1-22; B. Short and J. Godfrey, 'The Outhwaite controversy': a micro-history of the Edwardian land campaign', *Journal of Historical Geography*, 33 (2007), 45-71.

is the site for exploring significant social change and for teasing out important historiographical issues.’<sup>11</sup>

There are also similarities between microhistory and other schools of European thought, specifically the *Annales School*, founded in 1929, which developed predominately in France and *Alltagsgeschichte* (‘the history of everyday life’) which developed in mid-1970s Germany.<sup>12</sup> As Clark suggests, these have all tended to reject ‘a mechanistic or deterministic form of history-writing that emphasised statistics, generalization, quantitative formulation, [and] the *longue durée*’.<sup>13</sup> Instead, the focus of these schools has been on detailing the everyday lives of ordinary people, although the *Annales School* distinctively analyses the history of people’s mindsets. Whilst the focus of these schools has shifted over the decades, at points there were some stark differences between these schools and their European counterparts. For instance, the original Annalists rejected what they termed ‘event history’, or the use of documents from a constrained time-span, because it was thought not to be a true representation of reality (for instance, the study of protests and strikes). The third generation of the School, from the late 1960s, however, began to consider structuralist issues once again, not least due to the rising influence of Marxist thought in history, especially Thompson and other Marxist historians. As a consequence, the study of short-lived events returned to the agenda.<sup>14</sup>

All these approaches have influenced the paths taken by historians in their research of the poor laws of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, especially in the shift from analyses of the administration of the poor laws to analyses of the experience of relief claimants. The next section details this trend, discussing both the ‘welfare process’ and the attempts to further our knowledge about relief claimants’ agency and strategies.

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<sup>11</sup> Microhistory is comparable to ethnographic approaches in anthropology. Levi argues similarly that the microhistorian provides ‘thick description’ which provides a context for past shifting human actions and discourses.

<sup>12</sup> G. Eley, ‘Labour History, Social History, “*Alltagsgeschichte*”: Experience, Culture, and the Politics of the Everyday -- a New Direction for German Social History?’, *Journal of Modern History*, 61 (1989), p. 297. For an introduction to *Alltagsgeschichte* also see A. Lüdtke (eds.), *The History of Everyday Life: Reconstructing Historical Experiences and Ways of Life* (Princeton, 1995).

<sup>13</sup> Clark, *History, Theory, Text*, p. 75.

<sup>14</sup> Clark, *History, Theory, Text*, p. 74. Similar issues are discussed in M. Middell, ‘The Annales’ in S. Berger, H. Feldner and K. Passmore (eds.), *Writing History Theory & Practice* (London, 2003), pp. 104-117.

### 2.1.2 The 'welfare process' and agency

Lees argued that '[t]he heart of the welfare process lay in the contacts between the pauper and administrator'.<sup>15</sup> Both had predetermined aims and desired outcomes and engaged in a negotiation before any poor relief would be offered. The term, 'welfare process', is also used by Hindle. In his research into relief in early modern England Hindle argues that the 'welfare process' was embedded in a complex web of interactions 'between the various participants – the labouring poor, the parish officers, the county magistrates, the itinerant judiciary', and is therefore entangled in the 'micro-politics' of poor relief provision. As such, we have now come to the understanding that the 'welfare process' involved many 'protracted and often antagonistic negotiations'.<sup>16</sup> With this in mind, poor law historians have begun to examine the negotiations between the relief recipient and relieving officers. To 'get at' these negotiations, research has turned away from records detailing administration to those containing 'pauper narratives'. Tomkins first demonstrated how a series of 'pauper letters' from an individual could reveal both the changing circumstances of individuals and how they varied their negotiations accordingly.<sup>17</sup> Pauper letters are pieces of correspondence written by, or for, individuals and families asking for relief from their parish of settlement when they were unable to make a claim in person. As such, pauper letters are a valuable resource. As Snell contends, pauper letters are simply '*the* most authentic source for "history from below"'.<sup>18</sup>

The largest collection of transcribed correspondence contains 758 letters from individuals to overseers in Essex.<sup>19</sup> Sokoll's *Essex Pauper Letters* has been hailed as a welcome addition to the literature, providing us with the opportunity to use 'some of the words of the individual poor'.<sup>20</sup> Although this volume has not been used as extensively as it might have been, many researchers have turned to

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<sup>15</sup> L.H. Lees, *Solidarities of Strangers: The English Poor Laws and the People, 1700-1948* (Cambridge, 1998), p. 33.

<sup>16</sup> S. Hindle, *On the Parish? The Micro-Politics of Poor Relief in Rural England c.1550-1750* (Oxford, 2004), p. 363.

<sup>17</sup> A. Tomkins, 'Self Presentation in Pauper Letters and the Case of Ellen Parker, 1818-1827', *Women's History Notebooks*, 6 (1999), 2-7.

<sup>18</sup> K.D.M. Snell, 'Voices of the Poor: 'home' and 'belonging', 'friends' and 'community' (unpublished paper), p. 1.

<sup>19</sup> T. Sokoll (ed.), *Essex Pauper Letters, 1731-1837* (Oxford, 2001).

<sup>20</sup> A. Tomkins and S. King, 'Introduction' in A. Tomkins and S. King (eds.), *The Poor in England 1700-1850, An Economy of Makeshifts* (Manchester, 2003), p. 6.

finding and transcribing letters from other parts of the country for their analysis.<sup>21</sup> One emergent theme has been the ways in which the poor were able to use language to demonstrate their eligibility for relief payments. Taylor, in one of the first papers to analyse pauper letters, recognised four different ‘voices’ from the authors, each category with varying formality and insistency that their relief was urgent.<sup>22</sup> Subsequently, King has produced several articles which explore the language individuals used to secure payments when ill.<sup>23</sup> In the past year both King and Jones each examined how the poor were able secure entitlement to clothing. Jones details how the poor used stereotypical language (such as ‘barefooted’ and ‘naked’) to express their need, King noting that the poor and welfare officials shared an understanding of minimal clothing needs.<sup>24</sup> They both suggest, therefore, that there is a shared ‘linguistic register’, as King puts it, for ‘linking clothing and deservingness’.<sup>25</sup> There is still work to be done to analyse the language used to obtain other sorts of relief, including food, child maintenance and accommodation payments, as the language used in clothing requests cannot stand as a proxy for all requests.

There has, however, been a dearth of research on those pauper letters written after the passage of the Amendment Act. This is largely due to the fact the majority of surviving letters are held in unwieldy volumes of correspondence at The National Archives, rather than, as per the older letters, in small parish

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<sup>21</sup> Exceptions are obviously those articles written by Sokoll himself, including T. Sokoll, ‘Old Age in Poverty: The Record of Essex Pauper Letters, 1780-1834’ in T. Hitchcock, P. King and P. Sharpe (eds.), *Chronicling Poverty: The Voices and Strategies of the English Poor, 1640-1840* (Basingstoke, 1997), pp. 127-154; T. Sokoll, ‘Writing for relief: Rhetoric in English pauper letters, 1800-1834’ in A. Gestrich, S. King and L. Raphael (eds.), *Being Poor in Modern Europe Historical Perspectives 1800-1940* (Oxford, 2006), pp. 91-111. Also Snell, ‘Voices of the Poor’. Lancashire’s pauper letters have been used by King, for instance S. King, “‘Stop this Overwhelming Torment of Destiny’: Negotiating Financial Aid at Times of Sickness under the English Old Poor Law, 1800-1840’, *Bulletin of the History of Medicine*, 79 (2005), 228-260.

<sup>22</sup> J. S. Taylor, ‘Voices in the Crowd: The Kirkby Lonsdale Township Letters, 1809-36’ in Hitchcock *et al.*, *Chronicling Poverty*, pp. 109-126.

<sup>23</sup> S. King, “‘Stop This Overwhelming Torment of Destiny’”; *idem.*, “‘It is impossible for our vestry to judge his case into perfection from here’: managing the distance dimensions of poor relief under the old poor Law”, *Rural History*, 16 (2005), 161-189; *idem.*, ‘Regional patterns in the experiences and treatment of the sick poor, 1800-40: Rights, obligations and duties in the rhetoric of paupers’, *Family and Community History*, 10 (2007), 61-75.

<sup>24</sup> P. Jones, “‘I cannot keep my place without being deascent’: Pauper Letters, Parish Clothing and Pragmatism in the South of England, 1750-1830’, *Rural History*, 20 (2009), 31-49; S. King, “‘I Fear You Will Think Me Too Presumptuous in My Demands but Necessity Has No Law’: Clothing in English Pauper Letters, 1800-1834’, *International Review of Social History*, 54 (2009), pp. 207-202

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 207

correspondence bundles in county and city record offices.<sup>26</sup> Regardless of this significant lacuna, research has examined individuals' agency in the context of the workhouse. Through an examination of workhouse offences and prison committals, Green has demonstrated that the early nineteenth-century workhouse was a 'deeply contested site of resistance in which paupers and poor law officials negotiated' relief provision.<sup>27</sup> On a similar note, Clark has examined a riot in the South Dublin workhouse in 1860 which was started by sixteen year-old girls whilst Crossman has examined the 1887 workhouse riot of New Cross (Wexford) which was also started by females and led to the assault of the workhouse master.<sup>28</sup> Both of these cases are concerned with how these one-off riots reflected the broader political issues of the day. There is still work to be done to uncover the extent of resistance in eighteenth and nineteenth century workhouses, not least the smaller, everyday, covert acts of resistance.

The desire amongst poor law historians to get at the ways in which the poor asserted their agency with the relief provision authorities has gained in popularity with another route of investigation: how the poor got by on an everyday basis. Although the phrase 'economies of makeshift' was first coined to describe poor people's strategies in eighteenth-century France, it has been adopted throughout Europe to capture the 'disparate nature of income for poor households' in the past.<sup>29</sup> Over a decade ago, a volume to bring together research on the wider options available to the poor was published.<sup>30</sup> The aim of *Chronicling Poverty*, according to its editors, was to 'explore an important and little-regarded aspect of social history, contributing to a fuller and more nuanced 'history from below'.'<sup>31</sup> In particular, these analyses have demonstrated that that poor should not be defined solely by their association with statutory forms of

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<sup>26</sup> Predominantly in the union correspondence volumes in series MH12.

<sup>27</sup> D. Green, 'Pauper protests: power and resistance in early nineteenth-century London workhouses', *Social History*, 31 (2006), p. 159; Also see *idem.*, *Pauper Capital: London and the Poor Law, 1790-1870* (Farnham, 2010), pp. 157-187.

<sup>28</sup> A. Clark, 'Wild Workhouse Girls and the Liberal Imperial State in Mid-Nineteenth Century Ireland', *Journal of Social History*, 39 (2005), 389-409; V. Crossman, 'The New Ross Workhouse Riot of 1887: Nationalism, Class and the Irish Poor Laws', *Past and Present*, 179 (2003), 135-158.

<sup>29</sup> O.H. Hufton, *The Poor of Eighteenth-Century France 1750-1789* (Oxford, 1974); Tomkins and King, 'Introduction' in Tomkins and King, *The Poor in England*, p. 1.

<sup>30</sup> Hitchcock *et al.*, *Chronicling Poverty*.

<sup>31</sup> T. Hitchcock, P. King and P. Sharpe, 'Introduction: Chronicling Poverty – The Voices and Strategies of the English Poor, 1640-1840' in Hitchcock *et al.*, *Chronicling Poverty*, p. 1.

relief provision. Indeed, *Chronicling Poverty* pushed forward our understanding that individuals did claim relief, but that they utilised a variety of other options. The poor mobilised the resources of voluntary organisations, whether large, such as the London Foundling Hospital, or small, such as a parish-based Penny Clothing Club.<sup>32</sup> Private organisations offered important sources of support of the poor, especially the role of credit and the availability of a pawnshop.<sup>33</sup> These varied ways in which individuals got by were subsequently captured in another collection of essays - *The Poor in England 1700-1850, An Economy of Makeshifts* - and Hitchcock's monograph about life on the streets in eighteenth-century London.<sup>34</sup>

Recently Tomkins has sought to examine such alternative sources of support with a holistic study of getting by in eighteenth century urban England.<sup>35</sup> As Schwarz, in his recent review of Tomkins' book suggests, though, very small proportions of the population could be matched to the types of resource they were using.<sup>36</sup> Firstly, this reminds us of the methodological constraints when linking different types of records (as shall be discussed in chapter three). Secondly, it illustrates that, context depending, not all individuals were able to combine different resources. Even in cities where such alternative resources may have been readily available, individuals may not have been using them to the extent we had assumed.

Perhaps a more fruitful path of enquiry would be to look at resources within kinship networks. Over recent decades research has demonstrated that

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<sup>32</sup> A. Levene, 'The origins of the children of the London Foundling Hospital, 1741-1760: a reconsideration', *Continuity and Change*, 18 (2003), 201-235; *idem.*, 'The Mortality Penalty of Illegitimate Children: Foundlings and Poor Children in Eighteenth-Century England' in A. Levene, T. Nutt and S. Williams (eds.), *Illegitimacy in Britain, 1700-1920* (2005, Basingstoke), pp. 34-49; T. Evans, 'A Good Character of Virtue, Sobriety, and Honesty': Unmarried Mothers' Petitions to the London Foundling Hospital and the Rhetoric of Need in the Early Nineteenth Century' in Levene *et al.*, *Illegitimacy in Britain*, pp. 86-101; T. Evans, *Lone Mothers in Eighteenth-Century London* (Basingstoke, 2005); P. Jones 'Clothing the Poor in Early-Nineteenth-Century England', *Textile History*, 37 (2006), 17-37; A. Levene (ed.), *Narratives of the Poor in Eighteenth-Century Britain*, 5 volumes (London, 2006).

<sup>33</sup> For example, A. Tomkins, 'Pawnbroking and the survival strategies of the urban poor in 1770s York' in King and Tomkins, *The Poor in England*, pp. 166-198.

<sup>34</sup> King and Tomkins, *The poor in England*; T. Hitchcock, *Down and Out in Eighteenth Century London* (London, 2004).

<sup>35</sup> A. Tomkins, *The Experience of Urban Poverty: Parish, Charity and Credit, 1723-82* (Manchester, 2006).

<sup>36</sup> L. Schwarz, Review of A. Tomkins, *The Experience of Urban Poverty: Parish, Charity and Credit, 1723-82* (Manchester, 2006), *Economic History Review*, 61 (2008), 505-506.

women's wages were an elemental part of the 'household economy' of the labouring classes. This understanding, teamed with the 'mixed economies' approach, has led to some important findings. Recently, Williams examined household budgets in Bedfordshire to illustrate how proportions of income, parish relief and 'charity cash' varied over time during the early years of the New Poor Law.<sup>37</sup> She also acknowledges more informal inputs into the household economy, such as acting as a costermonger and taking in lodgers.<sup>38</sup> Work undertaken by historians such as Tomkins and Williams has, therefore, provided us with a detailed picture of the overlapping practices of statutory relief alongside charity, mutual-aid and the private sector.

Although the focus on 'strategy' has opened up the alternative forms of welfare the poor used to get by, it has also made poor law historians question the ways in which statutory relief could be used and even manipulated. For instance, it has now come to our attention that individuals may not have entered the workhouse exclusively because of their poverty. Hitchcock draws our attention towards the functions of London workhouses in the mid-eighteenth century, examining how women entered the Chelsea workhouse to receive medical treatment and to give birth. Mothers and fathers had also left their children in this workhouse upon accepting an offer of employment.<sup>39</sup> Also, outdoor relief was more necessary for certain periods of the life-course than others, as the works of Wales, Stapleton and King have all demonstrated.<sup>40</sup> Snell's research revealed the average number of children within a family at the point of a settlement examination in the eighteenth century. This is an indication of poverty, as being 'chargeable' by a parish officials is often, though not always, linked to a claim for

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<sup>37</sup> S. Williams, 'Earnings, Poor Relief and the Economy of Makeshifts: Bedfordshire in the Early Years of the New Poor Law', *Rural History*, 16 (2005), 21-52.

<sup>38</sup> Williams, 'Earnings, Poor Relief', p. 39.

<sup>39</sup> T. Hitchcock, 'Unlawfully begotten on her body': Illegitimacy and the Parish Poor in St Luke's Chelsea' in Hitchcock *et al.*, *Chronicling Poverty*, pp. 70-86.

<sup>40</sup> B. Stapleton, 'Inherited Poverty and Life-Cycle Poverty: Odiham, Hampshire, 1650-1850', *Social History*, 18 (1993), 339-355; S. King, 'Reconstructing Lives: The Poor, the Poor Law and Welfare in Calverley, 1650-1820', *Social History*, 22 (1997), 318-338; *idem.*, *Poverty and Welfare in England 1700-1850: A Regional Perspective* (Manchester, 2000), pp. 127-134. The latter source contains a comparison of the relief provided to those at different stages in the life-course within four communities between 1680 and 1799, namely Calverley and Idle (both within the parish of Calverley) and the parishes of Aynho and Farthinghoe (Northamptonshire).

and the receipt of relief.<sup>41</sup> Demographic factors, therefore, impacted upon the use of outdoor relief. But periods of relief receipt and non-relief came at different times for different individuals, as my own research demonstrated. Elsewhere, combining a microhistorical and biographical approach, I traced eight individuals' life-courses, detailing their relief receipt and demographic events. Most individuals received outdoor relief to get by during moments of hardship, and may have preferred the security of parish-organised employment compared to that off the parish.<sup>42</sup>

These studies demonstrate that the poor were able to assert their own agency in the 'welfare process'. They could present their cases to the parish officers in particular ways, and once in receipt of relief they could use it akin to a strategy and alter the conditions of their indoor relief. Yet, the agency of the poor is only one side of the 'welfare process', the negotiation between relief claimants and relief providers. And it was relief providers who had overwhelmingly more power within this negotiation. As Green has been careful to acknowledge, 'paupers and poor law officials negotiated, albeit from very different power bases'.<sup>43</sup> The next section details why a more dynamic approach is needed to fully understand the welfare process.

### **2.1.3 A 'preoccupation' with administration?**

Researchers adopting an 'agency of the poor' approach have been forthright in setting out their aims in relation to the tradition of understanding the poor laws from an administrative perspective. Hitchcock *et al.* wrote, in the introduction to *Chronicling Poverty*, that previous work which had examined more administrative aspects of poor relief was 'clearly important', especially the ways in which social historians have unearthed the "social control" strategies and ideological edifices of the propertied', and the abuse of positions of power 'to

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<sup>41</sup>K.D.M. Snell, *Annals of the Labouring Poor: Social Change and Agrarian England 1660-1900* (Cambridge, 1985), pp. 358-359.

<sup>42</sup> S.A. Shave, 'The Dependent Poor? (Re)constructing the Lives of Individuals "on the parish" in rural Dorset, 1800-1832', *Rural History*, 20 (2009), 67-97.

<sup>43</sup> Green, 'Pauper protests', p. 159.



make and justify policies that furthered their diverse interests.’<sup>44</sup> Yet, regardless of its importance, they realised that despite the calls to write histories ‘from below’, academics had not been doing so. There had been a growing literature about collective action during the eighteenth and nineteenth-centuries on a par with Thompson’s own work, but little about the *everyday* actions of the poor. ‘Historians’, they contended, had not looked beyond ‘the abundance of readily available sources detailing the attitudes of the rich towards the poor’, sources which led to histories being written which ‘tended to portray the poor mainly as passive objects, victims of actions of the rich.’<sup>45</sup>

Hitchcock has continued to be the most forthright proponent of the approach, insisting that a more ‘democratic’ history from below should be created, where the labouring class should no longer be allowed ‘the smallest walk-on parts’ in our accounts of poverty and its relief.<sup>46</sup> The disapproval of work which continues to analyse the perspectives of the middling sort and upper classes of the poor, rather than the worlds, lives and opinions of the poor themselves has, however, resulted in the opinion that we should cease to research it. A very recent example of this position is displayed by Jones who claims that there is ‘an ongoing historical preoccupation with all aspects of its administration’, a ‘preoccupation’ which has occurred at the expense of ‘how paupers actually interacted with’ and ‘were able to influence’ poor relief provision.<sup>47</sup> The repercussions of this perspective are threefold. First, the position ignores the extent to which information about paupers’ own experiences is still often derived from administrative records, or from records directly associated with administrative processes. For instance, pauper letters are, as historians have acknowledged, the result of the Settlement Act as well as outdoor relief policies. But they have to be used *interpretatively*, i.e. with an understanding of ‘their context, production and consumption’.<sup>48</sup> As Steedman suggests, these are not simply the words of the poor but ‘enforced narratives’ constructed through an

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<sup>44</sup> T. Hitchcock, P. King and P. Sharpe, ‘Introduction: Chronicling Poverty – The Voices and Strategies of the English Poor, 1640-1840’ in Hitchcock *et al.*, *Chronicling Poverty*, p. 2.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>46</sup> T. Hitchcock, ‘A New History From Below’, *History Workshop Journal*, 57 (2004), p. 296; *idem.*, *Down and Out in Eighteenth-Century London* (London, 2004), p. 239.

<sup>47</sup> Jones, ‘I cannot keep my place without being deascent’, p. 31.

<sup>48</sup> J. Mason, *Qualitative Researching*, second edition (London, 2002), p. 115.

administrative process.<sup>49</sup> It is therefore essential to know about the administrative context in which these records and processes occurred.

Second, it is impossible to isolate agency and strategy from the context in which individuals employed them. In *Down and Out*, Hitchcock uses a range of vignettes to demonstrate the use - and deliberate manipulation - of the workhouse by the poor in eighteenth-century London. Yet what contextualises these stories is administrative information. For instance, he states that '[t]he system of poor relief' in this context 'was extensive, expensive and remarkably comprehensive'.<sup>50</sup> Thereafter he refers to several pieces of research about London's relief provision, including the types of institutions which served the city's poor. These stories could be interpreted rather differently had the poor of London had to search far and wide for a parish institution within which they could take shelter, or receive emergency medical treatment within. This highlights a broader point: it is impossible to detach people's lives from the social, cultural and economic contexts in which they live. Whether we like it or not, the middling sort and upper classes did have the majority of the power in this context, even in the 'welfare process': they were the very individuals who were able to decide on policies, and how and when to allocate particular relief to particular people. By not acknowledging the location and nature of power in this way, we fail to appreciate just how uneven the playing field on which negotiations took place really was.

This leads to a third issue. By focusing on individual claimants themselves, and ignoring the administrative context, historians could underplay the role that welfare claimants themselves played in the administration of the poor laws. The challenge is therefore to trace the impact of paupers' experiences on how policies were made and implemented.

Knowledge of the administrative aspects of relief provision is therefore vital to understand the history of the poor laws. But what do we mean by 'administration'? According to dictionary definitions, this word denotes the

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<sup>49</sup> C. Steedman, 'Enforced Narratives: Stories of another self' in T. Cosslett, C. Lury and P. Summerfield (eds.), *Feminism and Autobiography: Texts, Theories, Methods* (London, 2000), pp. 25-39.

<sup>50</sup> Hitchcock, *Down and Out*, p. 132.

‘performance’, ‘execution’ or ‘management’ of a duty or of business.<sup>51</sup> Stating that historians have been ‘preoccupied’ with the administrative aspects of the poor laws suggests, therefore, that we now know enough about the ways in which the poor laws were put into practice. The administrative nature of policy has been conceptualised within the social sciences, and is now known as the ‘policy process’. The application of the ‘policy process’ concept to the literature reveals significant gaps in our understandings of how the poor laws operated administratively.

## 2.2 The policy process

Before addressing the ‘policy process’ itself, it is important to define ‘policy’. Parsons contends that policy is broadly ‘a course of action...an attempt to define and structure a rational basis for action or inaction’.<sup>52</sup> There have, however, been many different definitions of the term, and social scientists have tended to disagree over its exact usage. Spicker has put forward the clearest working-definition of policy. He states it is ‘a decision about a course of action, but it is also supposed to represent a set of decisions, interrelated and consistent with others.’<sup>53</sup> *Social* policy also has contested meanings, and has been the subject of considerable definitional debate.<sup>54</sup> In its broadest sense it can be clarified by Baldock *et al.* as ‘the principles and practice of state activity – including state policy for private or voluntary action – relating to redistribution in pursuit of... welfare outcomes.’<sup>55</sup> Spicker’s and Baldock *et al.*’s definitions allude to the idea that policy is not simply an individual decision, but a decision embedded within a framework of other decisions and within a context of particular principles. In

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<sup>51</sup> *Oxford English Dictionary*.

<sup>52</sup> W. Parsons, *Public Policy: An Introduction to the Theory and Practice of Policy Analysis* (Cheltenham, 1995), p. 14.

<sup>53</sup> P. Spicker, *Policy Analysis for Practice: Applying Social Policy* (Bristol, 2006), p. 15.

<sup>54</sup> For example, see C. Bochel and H. Bochel, *The UK Social Policy Process*, (Basingstoke, 2004), pp. 10-11; C. Alcock, G. Daly and E. Griggs (eds.), *Introducing Social Policy*, second edition (London, 2008); H. Bochel, C. Bochel, R. Page and R. Sykes (eds.), *Social Policy: Issues and Developments*, second edition (London, 2008).

<sup>55</sup> J. Baldock, N. Manning and S. Vickerstaff, ‘Social Policy, Social Welfare, and the Welfare State’ in J. Baldock, N. Manning and S. Vickerstaff (eds.), *Social Policy*, second edition (Oxford, 2003), p. 27

order to understand the origin of policy decisions we need to identify who had the power to make decisions. In the context of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, poor relief social policies were pursued by individuals, or groups of individuals, with powers to make decisions within the poor relief system, such as a vestry, magistrate(s), landowner(s), a Board of Guardians and, after 1834, the Poor Law Commission.

As the multiple definitions of the term policy testify, policies are in reality very complicated. As Spicker outlines:

[p]olicy is difficult to read, in more than one sense of that term.

It is often difficult to find out what a policy is, who has made decisions, and where policy has come from. By the same token, it can be difficult to reform policy, or to manage change.<sup>56</sup>

A 'policy process' approach tries to simplify this confusion by viewing 'policy making and implementation as a continuous process'.<sup>57</sup> There are two fundamental stages to the policy process: policy-making and policy implementation. Others have preferred to view these two stages as interlinked, rather than linear, because policy implementation can impact on further policy-making. Parsons has illustrated the concept of the 'policy life-cycle' (see Figure 2.1). The cycle demonstrates a connection from the identification of a problem, to the evaluation of options available to rectify the problem and the selection of a policy, then the implementation and evaluation of the policy. This policy may undergo further development, or have unforeseen repercussions. In these cases, it could either create a new 'problem' or exacerbate the 'problem' which provoked the policy in the first instance. Others have broken the policy process into even more stages, including Bridgman and Davis who have identified eight stages for those working in the Australian policy-making system, namely: identify issues, policy analysis, policy instruments, consultation, coordination, decision, implementation and evaluation.<sup>58</sup>

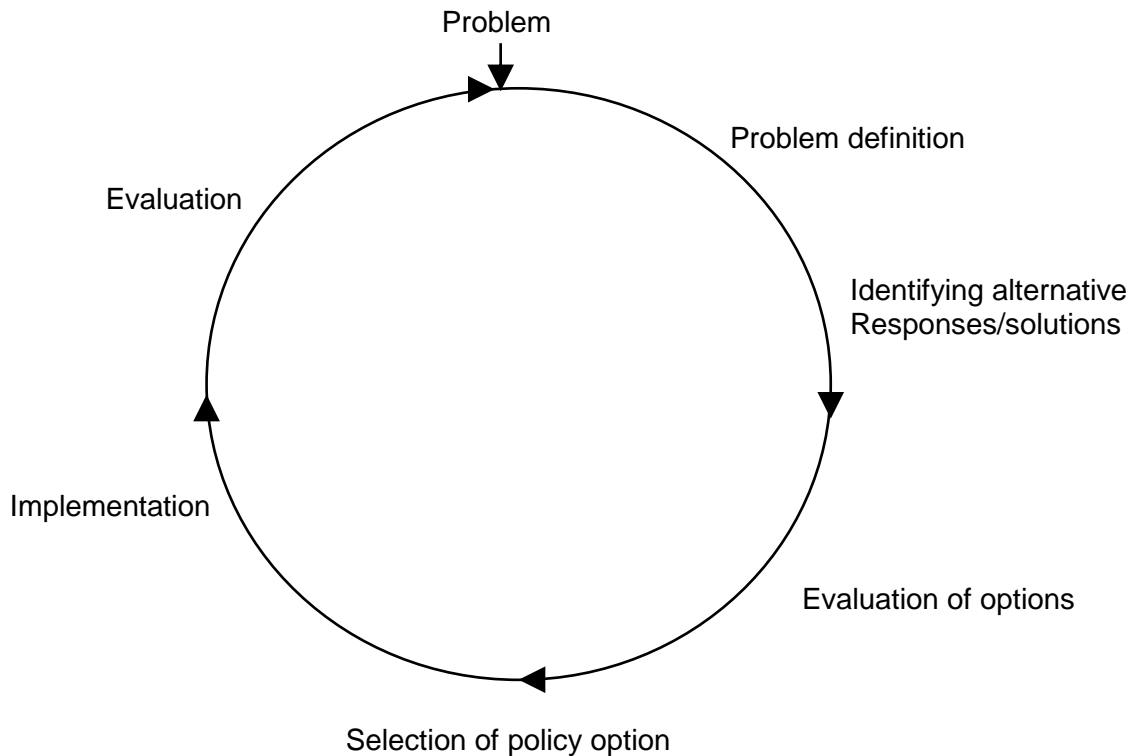
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<sup>56</sup> Spicker, *Policy Analysis for Practice*, p. 29.

<sup>57</sup> Bochel and Bochel, *The UK Social Policy Process*, p. 10. This is their interpretation of Hogwood and Gunn's tenth identification of the use of the term policy.

<sup>58</sup> P. Bridgman and G. Davis, *Australian Policy Handbook* (Sydney, 1998), cited in Spicker, *Policy Analysis for Practice*, p. 30.

Figure 2.1: The policy life-cycle



Source: Figure 1.9 from Parsons, *Public Policy*, p. 77.

Although it is useful to outline the stages of the policy process as ‘a sequence of ordered stages’, which serves as a guide to those currently working with policies, the reality is far more complex. Spicker lists several examples:

[p]olicy instruments are likely to be refined and developed as time goes on; consultation may not go to schedule; coordination and partnership work is likely to be continuous; policy analysis can be undertaken at any stage of the process.<sup>59</sup>

In addition, ‘governments inevitably must consider the means of implementation before establishing policies.’<sup>60</sup> The complications of this process are numerous.

<sup>59</sup> Spiker, *Policy Analysis for Practice*, p. 30.

<sup>60</sup> Bochel and Bochel, *The UK Social Policy Process*, p. 16.

As Parsons puts it, ‘phases and stages tend to blur, overlap and intermingle.’<sup>61</sup> Nevertheless, as Hill argues, ‘there are clearly advantages in separating different aspects of the process.’<sup>62</sup> One advantage is to use these stages to address the ways in which policies should be made and implemented, for instance, as Bridgman and Davis suggest, by placing a model in a handbook. As Spicker contends, the model and its stages, can act as a ‘checklist’ for those working in the field of policy.<sup>63</sup> Another is that it provides us with some categories within which we can encapsulate, and therefore evaluate, the knowledge of the ‘policy process’ in any area of social policy. The rest of this chapter draws upon the model of the policy process at three main stages: policy-making, policy implementation and policy development and change.

### **2.2.1 Policy-making**

Policy-making can occur in two main ways: ‘bottom-up’ and ‘top-down’. ‘Bottom-up’ policy-making occurs when officials develop ‘practical ways of responding to issues’, which are then ‘imitated by others’, and acknowledged and ‘taken up by decision makers at the local or national level. Hence, it becomes a general policy’.<sup>64</sup> ‘Top-down’ policy-making originates with central, governmental decisions. Although the history of the poor laws demonstrates the difficulty of drawing a clear distinction between the two approaches, as shall be demonstrated below, by applying these understandings to the literature we can illustrate what aspects of policy-making have been researched thus far.

Spicker suggests that there is one obvious example of ‘bottom-up’ policy-making during the nineteenth century, the influence of the Nottinghamshire reformers’ deterrent workhouse system upon the genesis of the New Poor Law workhouse.<sup>65</sup> Reverends J.T. Becher and Robert Lowe, from the parishes of Southwell and Bingham respectively, had initially forged the ‘anti-pauper system’ covering 49 parishes containing two workhouses (Southwell and Upton) in the

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<sup>61</sup> Parsons, *Public Policy*, p. xvii.

<sup>62</sup> M. Hill, *The Policy Process in the Modern State*, third edition (Hemel Hempstead, 1997), p. 1.

<sup>63</sup> Spicker, *Policy Analysis for Practice*, p. 35.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 26.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 27.

face of what were escalating poor rates. The parishes were united under Gilbert's Act, but rather than offering a sanctuary for the poor the workhouse was used as a deterrent to relief claimants. It was only after the arrival of George Nicholls to the Southwell workhouse, that the Nottinghamshire plans reached a wider audience.<sup>66</sup> Nicholls, author of numerous poor law pamphlets, discussed his ideas with the creators of the Poor Law Report, and was also friends with Robert Peel who subsequently influenced Nassau Senior to employ Nicholls in the Poor Law Commission. Overall, local practices gained wider attention and, therefore, provided the context within which Chadwick, and other key figures in the Royal Commission, framed their ideas.<sup>67</sup>

This 'bottom-up' perspective is clearly a useful way to understand some aspects of the policy process during the last decades under the old poor laws. Many policies devised at a local-level during this period attempted to contain escalating poor relief expenditures experienced from the 1790s onwards. All of these policies, however, fell short of becoming 'general' or legally binding policies. Yet, the makings of some of these policies have garnered attention by historians, not least those policies which the architects of Amendment Act found to be 'resented' the most.<sup>68</sup> This includes Speenhamland-style allowance systems which was apparently the 'master evil' of the old poor laws.<sup>69</sup> The policy was thought to cause 'indolence' and 'parish dependency', and even the cause of an increase in the population.<sup>70</sup> As Poynter stresses, this represents a 'preoccupation with a phenomenon which was never more than one among the many expedients practised under the old Poor Law.'<sup>71</sup> Although historians have revealed that the actual adoption of Speenhamland-style scales was not as prolific as has been first been thought - explored in section 2.2.2 - the origins of this type of allowance

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<sup>66</sup> A. Brundage, *The English Poor Laws, 1700-1930* (Basingstoke, 2002), p. 52.

<sup>67</sup> D. Marshall, 'The Nottinghamshire Reformers and their Contribution to the New Poor Law', *Economic History Review*, 13 (1961), p. 396.

<sup>68</sup> S. Webb and B. Webb, *English Poor Law History, Part 1: The Old Poor Law* (1927, London, 1963), p. 182.

<sup>69</sup> BPP 1834 (44) Report from His Majesty's Commissioners for Inquiring into the Administration and Practical Operation of the Poor Laws, p. 279, cited in M. Rose, 'The Allowance System under the New Poor Law', *Economic History Review*, 19 (1966), p. 607.

<sup>70</sup> Snell, *Annals of the Labouring Poor*, p.120.

<sup>71</sup> J.R. Poynter, *Society and Pauperism: English Ideas on Poor Relief 1795-1834* (London, 1969), p. xxiv.

system have received ample attention.<sup>72</sup> Like the ‘original’ Speenhamland system, most ‘allowance’ or ‘bread’ ‘scales’ or ‘systems’ were devised and sanctioned by the Bench. Poynter, therefore, believed such policies were developed out of sheer frustration by the magistracy. Their responsibilities, to both landowning and labouring classes, meant that they developed a policy of compromise, one which would support the poor but would not increase the cost of wages. It is little surprise then that Hobsbawm and Rudé, in their study of the Swing Riots of 1830, viewed the policy as an ‘emergency measure, introduced at a time of famine, designed to hold off mass unrest’.<sup>73</sup> Griffin, however, provides a more cautionary perspective by stating that pre-existing schemes, such as those in Dorset in 1792, were not formulated during years of particular adversity.<sup>74</sup> Nevertheless, the allowance system had symbolised the continued interest and innovation of the magistracy in poor law policy during the late nineteenth century.<sup>75</sup>

Besides allowance systems, other policies were devised at the local level. From the allowance system came the ‘Roundsman’, ‘billet’, ‘yardland’ or ‘stem’ systems, whereby parish officers offered ‘unemployed labourers to the parish farmers at subsidized rates’.<sup>76</sup> There were a great number of variations of the scheme including pauper auctions, whereby parishioners would bid for the labour of unemployed labourers, and the fixing of labour rates, whereby a rate was levied against each rate-payer who either paid the rate to employ pauper labour or paid the rate to the parish without acquiring any labour.<sup>77</sup> Labour rates became commonly used in south of England in the 1820s, especially after the purported successes of the parish of Oundle (Northamptonshire) who had devised the

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<sup>72</sup> Hammond and Hammond, *The Village Labourer*, especially pp. 107-111; Webb and Webb, *English Poor Law History, Part 1*, p. 178; M. Neuman, *The Speenhamland County: Poverty and the Poor Laws in Berkshire, 1782-1834* (New York, 1982); *idem.*, ‘A Suggestion Regarding the Origin of the Speenhamland Plan’, *English Historical Review*, 84 (1969), 317-392.

<sup>73</sup> E. Hobsbawm and G. Rudé, *Captain Swing* (London, 1969), p. 48.

<sup>74</sup> C.J. Griffin, “Employing the poor”: the experience of unemployment in post-Napoleonic rural England’ (unpublished paper), p. 4.

<sup>75</sup> Poynter, *Society and Pauperism*, pp. 79-80.

<sup>76</sup> C.J. Griffin, “Employing the poor”, p. 20.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 22.



‘Oundle plan’.<sup>78</sup> On-going research by Griffin shows that these employment-linked relief schemes originated with parish officers, rather than the magistrates.

The top-down policy-making process associated with the Poor Law Amendment Act has been thoroughly researched.<sup>79</sup> Early interpretations of the derivation and purpose of the legislation focused on the importance of Benthamite ideas, and then contributions began to emphasise the importance of ‘incrementalism’ and ‘empiricism’ as guiding principles.<sup>80</sup> Brundage contended that scholars had overemphasised the role of the Benthamites in the origin of the New Poor Law and ignored the fact that large landowners supported the Law for their own ends.<sup>81</sup> Other examinations have focused on the role that political economists had on making the New Law.<sup>82</sup> Political economic doctrines proved persuasive to many politicians, both Whig and Tory, and led to something of a shift towards the framing of reforms in terms of the free market rather than the older languages of morals and paternalism.<sup>83</sup> Since the 1970s, historians have demonstrated that the passage of the Act was an evolutionary, rather than revolutionary, step. Dunkley argued that the Amendment Act, when placed in the context of political debates rather than abstract ideas, reveals that there was a ‘spur to and reflection of a general transformation in social attitudes during the early nineteenth century’.<sup>84</sup>

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<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 29.

<sup>79</sup> In Scottish and Irish contexts as well see R. Mitchison, ‘The making of the old Scottish poor law’, *Past & Present*, 63 (1974), 58-93; R.A. Cage, *The Scottish Poor Law 1745-1845* (Edinburgh, 1981); P. Gray, *The Making of the Irish Poor Law, 1815-1843* (Manchester, 2009).

<sup>80</sup> W. Lubenow, *The Politics of Government Growth: Early Victorian Attitudes Toward State Intervention 1835-1838* (Newton Abbot, 1971), cited in P. Dunkley, ‘Whigs and Paupers: The Reform of the English Poor Laws, 1830-1834’, *Journal of British Studies*, 20 (1981), p. 125.

<sup>81</sup> A. Brundage, ‘The Landed Interest and the New Poor Law: A Reappraisal of the Revolution in Government’, *English Historical Review*, 87 (1972), 27-48; *idem.*, *The Making of the New Poor Law: The Politics of Inquiry, Enactment, and Implementation, 1832-1839* (London, 1978).

<sup>82</sup> R. Cowherd, *Political Economists and the English Poor Laws: A Historical Study of the Influence of Classical Economics and the Formation of Social Welfare Policy* (Ohio, 1977).

<sup>83</sup> Brundage, *The English Poor Laws*, pp. 59-62. This is explored in more detail in P. Mandler, ‘Tories and Paupers: Christian Political Economy and the Making of the New Poor Law’, *Historical Journal*, 33 (1990), 81-103.

<sup>84</sup> Dunkley, ‘Whigs and Paupers’, p. 125. Also see Eastwood’s work which contends that although it was a ‘contest between different strategies for reform’, Benthamite thought was integral to the creation of the Amendment Act, D. Eastwood, ‘Rethinking the Debates on the Poor Law in Early Nineteenth-Century England’, *Utilitas*, 6 (1994), p. 115.

Brundage states that it is difficult to know what exactly caused the increased governmental intervention more generally at this time.<sup>85</sup> Indeed, whilst political economic and Benthamite thought impacted on the creation of the Amendment Act, there was a 'rapidly growing religious movement' which was also influential. From the mid-eighteenth century Evangelicalism was being embraced by the upper and middle classes.<sup>86</sup> Those following this religious movement tended to support charity and individual moral reform over and above poor relief. Some even advocated the abolition of the poor laws altogether. The movement wanted to find a way of using the power of the state to create a solution which limited the extent of the state's responsibilities.<sup>87</sup>

Important steps have also been made in clarifying the origins of pre-Amendment Act statutory policy. Thomas Gilbert's Act of 1782 was a private – as opposed to a government-pursued – piece of legislation passed in what historians claim was a supportive moral and parliamentary context. The Act empowered parishes to group together or act alone to provide a workhouse for vulnerable members of the parish. According to Marshall, Gilbert's aim was to provide the vulnerable separate or renewed accommodation different to the 'dens of horror', i.e. regular parish workhouse, marking 'a new wave of humanitarian feeling' in England.<sup>88</sup> The origins of other significant pieces of enabling legislation have also received attention, notably Sturges Bourne Acts of 1818 and 1819 which allowed the formation of a Select Vestry and appointment of an assistant overseer to take control of parochial relief provision. According to Brundage, it was the 'economic and social crises of the immediate post-war period' which 'put poor law reform back on the list of urgent matters for the country's political leaders.'<sup>89</sup> The Select Committees, convened in 1817 and 1818 to address the issue of poor relief,

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<sup>85</sup> Brundage, *The Making of the New Poor Law*, p. 181.

<sup>86</sup> Brundage, *The English Poor Laws*, p. 37.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.* For more about the views and actions of the nineteenth-century Evangelicals in social policy see chapter three, entitled 'Poverty and Passionate Flesh', in B. Hilton, *The Age of Atonement: The Influence of Evangelicalism on Social and Economic Thought, 1795-1865* (Oxford, 1988), pp. 75-114; B. Harris, 'Charity and Poor Relief in England and Wales, Circa 1750-1914' in B. Harris and P. Bridgen (eds.), *Charity and Mutual Aid in Europe and North America Since 1800* (London, 2007), pp. 20-23.

<sup>88</sup> D. Marshall, *The English Poor in the Eighteenth Century: a study in social administrative history* (London, 1926), pp. 159-160; A. W. Coats, 'Economic thought and poor law policy in the eighteenth century', *Economic History Review*, 13 (1960), 39-51; Marshall, *The English Poor*, p. 159.

<sup>89</sup> Brundage, *The English Poor Laws*, p. 48.

favoured, as Wells suggests, the reinforcement of local elites' control over the traditional vestries rather than a radical reform of the relief system.<sup>90</sup>

A clearer understanding of the genesis of legislation could be obtained by mobilising the understandings of the two groups identified in social science literature as having a role in the policy-making process; 'stakeholders' and 'key actors'. Stakeholders can be defined as 'decision makers, officers, service users and agencies engaged in related work', those who act in groups and often have politically informed viewpoints. Key actors, on the other hand, are a much more limited group of individuals of stakeholders who, according to Spicker, have an important role in the policy-making process on their own terms.<sup>91</sup> The identification of these groups highlights the more participatory nature of social policy-making in Britain today. Indeed, the presence of stakeholders at board meetings denotes a move away from top-down policy-making to policy-making through networks of 'reciprocity and interdependence...negotiation and diplomacy'.<sup>92</sup> Nevertheless, it is possible to identify the role of both of these groups in the past without being anachronistic. There is a wealth of literature detailing the influence of local landowners, ratepayers and magistracy in policy-making at the local-level.<sup>93</sup> Yet there were other individuals and groups who negotiated and set the contents of the post-1834 Orders. There were also other mechanisms through which this was achieved. Innes has outlined several direct ways in which civil society interacted with the parliamentary system, other than voting, including petitioning the government and obtaining an interview on a

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<sup>90</sup> R. Wells, 'Poor-Law Reform in the Rural South-east; the Impact of the 'Sturges Bourne Acts' during the Agricultural Depression, 1815-1835', *Southern History*, 23 (2001), p. 56.

<sup>91</sup> Spicker, *Policy Analysis for Practice*, pp. 70-72.

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 22. Spicker cites the work of Rhodes on this matter, a foreword about the complexities and general trends noticed in the formation of contemporary policy through these routes, R. Rhodes, 'Foreword: Governance and networks' in G. Stoker (ed.), *The New Management of British Local Governance* (Basingstoke, 1999), pp. xii-xxvi. Policy-making in this way has been termed as policy-making in 'policy networks' or 'policy communities'.

<sup>93</sup> As Dunkley has found, however, the intervention of magistrates varied from place to place, but was particularly marked 'in those districts where the pressure of poverty and the burden of the rates were greatest', p. 381; and ratepayers and the parish officers, individuals which can be conceptualised as a single stakeholder group in rural parishes because they largely had the same aims: 'to minimize all demands on their limited capital assets', p. 392; P. Dunkley, 'Paternalism, the Magistracy and Poor Relief in England, 1795-1834', *International Review of Social History*, 24 (1979), 371-397.

Select Committee.<sup>94</sup> How these mechanisms were used by stakeholders and key actors outside the parliamentary system to influence legally-binding social policy in the early years of the New Poor Law still requires attention though.

Although we have developed a comprehensive knowledge of how policies were made, we have little knowledge about how policy ideas were diffused. A strand of research has evolved in the social sciences, especially in political and international studies, which ‘uses, discusses and analyzes the processes involved in lesson-drawing, policy convergence, policy diffusion and policy transfer’ between political systems, organisations or different countries.<sup>95</sup> Much of the research about the development of the UK’s social policies over the last thirty years has focused on the influence of US policies, notably the welfare-to-work schemes.<sup>96</sup> Policy transfer, which affects *all* stages of the policy process, has not received the attention of poor law historians. At a time when the centralised welfare authorities had little power over welfare provision, the parish vestry, overseen by magistrates, was the governing body for welfare. How would these individuals engage in ‘policy transfer’? From the late-eighteenth century onwards, ‘a huge crop of pamphlets...mostly written by farmers, ratepayers, and clergymen closely concerned with administration, and eager to have their proposals adopted nationally’ proliferated.<sup>97</sup> This is illustrative of the desire of many local officials to exchange their knowledge on how ‘best’ to provide poor relief. Moreover, we do not understand if, when the Poor Law Commission was established, the exchange of knowledge lapsed. As Bochel and Bochel suggest, policy transfer relies on the ‘dissatisfaction with existing programmes or policies and a consequent demand to do something new.’<sup>98</sup> We need to ask, therefore, what sorts of information were being sought and for what reasons?

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<sup>94</sup> These are all direct ways in which civil society interacted with the parliamentary system by the early nineteenth-century in addition to obtaining and reading the Parliament’s proceedings, J. Innes, ‘Legislation and public participation 1760-1830’ in D. Lemmings (ed.), *The British and their Laws in the Eighteenth Century* (Woodbridge, 2005), pp. 102-132.

<sup>95</sup> D.P. Dolowitz and D. Marsh, ‘Learning from Abroad: The Role of Policy Transfer in Contemporary Policy-Making’, *Governance: An International Journal of Policy and Administration*, 13 (2000), p. 5.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 15. Also in other areas, such as crime policy, as demonstrated in T. Jones and T. Newburn, *Policy Transfer and Criminal Justice: Exploring US Influence over British Crime Control Policy* (Maidenhead, 2007).

<sup>97</sup> Snell, *Annals of the Labouring Poor*, p. 110.

<sup>98</sup> Bochel and Bochel, *The UK Social Policy Process*, p. 195.

### 2.2.2 Policy implementation

According to Hill, policy studies of the 1970s viewed policy implementation as the ‘missing link’ between policy-making and its outcomes. Especially after the publication of Pressman and Wildavsky’s seminal work, *Implementation*, there was a plethora of studies examining this stage in the policy process.<sup>99</sup> As Hill argues, these studies sought to outline the distinctiveness of policy implementation, compared to policy-making, in order to justify their stance. In consequence, ‘[t]here has been a tendency to treat policies as clear-cut, uncontroversial entities, whose implementation can be quite separately studied.’<sup>100</sup> Indeed, there is a tension between viewing the policy process as a series of discrete stages, and viewing the policy process as a series of interlinked stages which influence one another. In many respects policy implementation can be viewed as an extension of policy-making, nevertheless, attempts have been made to position policy implementation as a distinct stage. Van Meter and Van Horn view implementation as ‘actions by public or private individuals (or groups) that are directed at the achievement of objectives set forth in prior policy decisions’.<sup>101</sup> Akin to the policy-making stage, implementation can also be viewed from ‘top-down’ and ‘bottom-up’ perspectives. The rationale for the study of policy implementation is, therefore, based on the understanding that ‘the process of putting policy into action is deserving of study, and that it is wrong to take it for granted that this process will be smooth and straightforward’.<sup>102</sup>

Both ‘top-down’ and ‘bottom-up’ terms have been used to describe the ways in which policies are implemented. According to Sabatier, as with policy-making, policy implementation starts ‘with a policy decision by governmental (often central government) officials’.<sup>103</sup> Hogwood and Gunn, amongst others, have set out to define what they believe were ‘ten preconditions necessary to

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<sup>99</sup> J. Pressman and A. Wildavsky, *Implementation* (Berkeley, 1973).

<sup>100</sup> Hill, *The Policy Process*, p. 128

<sup>101</sup> D. Van Meter and C.E. Van Horn, ‘The Policy Implementation Process: A Conceptual Framework’, *Administration and Society*, 6 (1975) p. 445, cited in Hill, *The Policy Process*, p. 129.

<sup>102</sup> Hill, *The Policy Process*, p. 129.

<sup>103</sup> P.A. Sabatier, ‘Top-down and bottom-up approaches to implementation research’ in M. Hill (ed.), *The Policy Process: A Reader* (Hemel Hempstead, 1993), p. 267.

achieve the perfect implementation', according to Hill.<sup>104</sup> These preconditions emphasise the need of various factors to ensure optimum policy implementation, such as a single and independent implementing agency with unlimited resources, the necessary resources, and complete understanding of agreed objectives. This assumes, as do further similar studies, that policies are the property of policy-makers at the top and their desires are to 'minimise implementation deficit.'<sup>105</sup> In order to see policy implementation in this way, policies are viewed as rigid, and successful policy outcome can be 'measured' against a series of 'outcomes' or 'goals'.<sup>106</sup> For some social scientists this view of policy implementation is flawed. The decisions and actions of those who implemented policies, rather than the boards which dictated implementation, should also receive attention. This perspective gained momentum in the 1980s, especially after Elmore's work which, in a US context, perceived that 'implementation actors [are]...forced to make choices between programmes which conflict or interact with each other'.<sup>107</sup> As Hill suggests, this perspective understands Gunn and Hogwood's preconditions but allows for the fact that these rarely exist in reality. As a consequence, the everyday decisions and actions involved in implementation should be researched.

Out of all the social policies implemented during the last years of the old poor laws, it is the implementation of allowances which we know most about. By the early 1800s, 11 per cent of the population of England and Wales was in receipt of some form of relief. Particular regions exceeded this average, such as in the south-east and south-west where 14.2 per cent and 13.7 per cent of the population was in receipt of relief respectively.<sup>108</sup> As the Webbs argued, 'relief in aid of wages' became 'devastatingly common throughout the countryside of southern England

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<sup>104</sup> Hill, *The Policy Process*, p. 130. Hill refers to two of their works, L. Gunn, 'Why is implementation so difficult?', *Management Services in Government*, 33 (1978), 169-176 and B.W. Hogwood and L. Gunn, *Policy Analysis for the Real World* (London, 1984).

<sup>105</sup> Hill, *The Policy Process*, p. 131. Hill refers to P. Sabatier and D. Mazmanian, 'The conditions of effective implementation: a guide to accomplishing policy objectives', *Policy Analysis*, 5 (1979), 481-501.

<sup>106</sup> Hill, *The Policy Process*, pp. 138 and 140.

<sup>107</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 138. This is Hill's reading of Elmore, see R. Elmore 'Backward mapping: implementation research and policy decisions', *Political Science Quarterly*, 94 (1980), 185-228.

<sup>108</sup> P. Jones, 'Swing, Speenhamland and rural social relations: the 'moral economy' of the English crowd in the nineteenth century', *Social History*, 32 (2007), p. 278 and J.P. Huzel, 'The Labourer and the Poor Law, 1750-1850' in G. Mingay (ed.), *The Agrarian History of England and Wales*, Volume 6: 1750-1850 (Cambridge, 1989), p. 770.

and some parts of the north and midlands, though not in the populous urban centres.’<sup>109</sup> Using the answers of those parishes that had completed and returned the 1832 Queries, Hobsbawm and Rudé also argued that large proportions of counties, especially in the lower midlands and the south, had adopted allowance systems (Table 2.1). This picture was in reality much more complicated. Langton, upon examining the policy from Parliamentary as well as parish records in Oxfordshire, illustrates that although the mechanism of the scale was adopted the exact remittances would sometimes be set by the parish rather than the magistrates. This means that ‘although bread scales were common, the actual scales used varied widely from place to place.’<sup>110</sup> The value of allowances changed temporally as well as spatially. Snell argues that ‘the scale was heavily curtailed over time, to become only two-thirds to a half of its 1795 value by the 1820s.’<sup>111</sup>

Regardless of how prolific the allowance system was both the Webbs and Blaug have argued that ‘hardly any of the dire effects ascribed to the Old Poor Law stand up in the light of available empirical knowledge.’<sup>112</sup> Since the 1980s we have come to the understanding that ‘historians, economists, and demographers ...emphasize that relief under the old poor law was essentially a *response* to population growth, under-employment, and low wages, rather than their *cause*.’<sup>113</sup> Williams, after an analysis of two communities in Bedfordshire, also argued that allowances had not induced early marriages and larger families but was rather a policy brought in to deal with the deteriorating condition of the labouring class.<sup>114</sup> This brings into focus another aspect of policy adoption and implementation during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Parishes adopted and rejected allowances, as well as other locally-derived

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<sup>109</sup> Webb and Webb, *English Poor Law History, Part 1*, p. 151. It is thought that this was encouraged not only by the original acts of the Elizabethan era, but also by Sir William Young’s Act of 1796 (36 Geo. III c.23).

<sup>110</sup> J. Langton, ‘The Geography of Poor Relief in Rural Oxfordshire 1775-1834’, *School of Geography Research Papers, University of Oxford*, 56 (2000), p. 44.

<sup>111</sup> Snell, *Annals of the Labouring Poor*, p. 109.

<sup>112</sup> M. Blaug, ‘The Myth of the Old Poor Law and the Making of the New’, *Journal of Economic History*, 23 (1963), p. 176; see also Webb and Webb, *English Poor Law History Part 1*, p. 127.

<sup>113</sup> A. Digby, *The Poor Law in Nineteenth-century England and Wales* (London, 1982), p. 13. Boyer has since gone against this consensus, see G. Boyer, ‘Malthus was right after all: poor relief and the birth rate in south-eastern England’, *Journal of Political Economy*, 97 (1989), 93-114.

<sup>114</sup> S. Williams, ‘Malthus, Marriage and Poor Law Allowances Revisited: A Bedfordshire Case Study, 1770-1834’, *Agricultural History Review*, 52 (2004), p. 82. As Table 2.1 suggests, however, the scale was not common in Bedfordshire.

Table 2.1: Percentage of parishes using allowance scales in the ‘Swing counties’, 1832

County	Percentage
Sussex	82
Hampshire	74
Suffolk	74
Berkshire	73
Wiltshire	72
Oxford	72
Buckinghamshire	71
Devon	67
Northamptonshire	67
Essex	66
Huntingdonshire	54
Cambridge	50
Kent	50
Norfolk	50
Gloucestershire	46
Dorset	44
Bedfordshire	19

Source: Hobsbawm and Rudé, *Captain Swing*, p. 47

policies, at different times. The myriad of options available to the parish meant that parish relief was customised for each individual claimant.<sup>115</sup>

Historians have also examined the adoption and implementation of Local Acts under the old poor laws. ‘Local Acts’ were pieces of legislation passed at the governmental level but which only applied to the relief provision of a specific parish or group of parishes. The Acts consisted of rules as to different types of relief to be given to different types of people, and in what institutional setting relief was to occur. The first ‘Corporation of the Poor’ was formed in Bristol in 1696, and from this point onwards the idea spread. By 1711, incorporations were established in 15 different cities.<sup>116</sup> Incorporations in rural locales were also

<sup>115</sup> Shave, ‘The Dependent Poor?’.

<sup>116</sup> T. Hitchcock, ‘Paupers and Preachers: The SPCK and the Parochial Workhouse Movement’ in I. Davison, T. Hitchcock, T. Keirn and R.B. Shoemaker (eds.), *Stilling the Grumbling Hive: The Response to Social and Economic Problems in England, 1689-1750* (Stroud, 1992), p. 145.



permitted, but were much less common. The Webbs' assessment of the incorporations came to the conclusion that the 'long-drawn-out experiments in the establishment of incorporated bodies for Poor Law administration...make up a confused medley which it is difficult to analyse or to classify'.<sup>117</sup> Nevertheless, the workhouse was central to the relief policies issued by Incorporations. Several studies of incorporations have been undertaken, including Hitchcock's case studies of the Bristol, Exeter, London and Norwich Incorporations and Tomkins' examinations of several urban workhouses in the midlands and north of England.<sup>118</sup> Some studies have even examined the negotiations which took place between the Commission and the Guardians in control of relief under Local Acts, such as Clark's study of the Southampton Incorporation.<sup>119</sup> Digby found that four out of the seven incorporations of Norfolk persisted into the New Poor Law, confirming her overall belief that the desires of local landowners continued to be met after centralisation.<sup>120</sup> In addition, Driver has created a national picture of 'non-conformity' by mapping the 45 Local Act Unions and Parishes which remained in place in 1856. In the south of England, these Local Acts remained in place mainly in large market towns and cities.<sup>121</sup>

As noted, much ink has been devoted to the implementation of the Amendment Act. A significant body of research has accumulated about the conditions experienced within New Poor Law Union workhouses.<sup>122</sup>

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<sup>117</sup> Webb and Webb, *English Poor Law History, Part 1*, p. 144.

<sup>118</sup> T. Hitchcock, 'The English Workhouse: A Study in Institutional Poor Relief in Selected Counties, 1696-1750' (unpublished PhD thesis, University of Oxford, 1985). In chapter three, pp. 46-91, Hitchcock provides an overview of the different Incorporations which were all established in different years, Bristol was under a Local Act from 1696, Exeter from 1698, Norwich from 1711, and London's Incorporation was established on the authority of the 1662 Settlement Act and therefore, according to Hitchcock, could not assert as much power over poor relief matters as those established under Local Acts. Tomkins examined the Oxford workhouse (which obtained a Local Act in 1771), the Shewsbury workhouse (which did not have a Local Act until 1784) and York (which did not have a Local Act); Tomkins, *The Experience of Urban Poverty*.

<sup>119</sup> A. Clark, 'The Administration of Poor Relief in Southampton 1830-1850' (unpublished BA dissertation, University of Southampton, 1960).

<sup>120</sup> A. Digby, *Pauper Palaces* (London, 1978), map on p. 33 shows Local Act Incorporations of Mitford and Launditch, Norwich, Forehoe, Tunstead and Happing, Loddon and Clavering, Buxton and the East and West Flegg. After the implementation of the Amendment Act, Norwich, Forehoe, Tunstead and Happing and the East and Incorporations remained in place, p. 58.

<sup>121</sup> F. Driver, *Power and Pauperism: The Workhouse System 1834-1884* (Cambridge, 1993), p. 45. One notable exception was the rural parish of Stoke Damerell (Devon).

<sup>122</sup> Monographs include M.A. Crowther, *The Workhouse System 1834-1929* (Georgia, 1981); N. Longmate, *The Workhouse: A Social History* (1974, London, 2003); S. Fowler,

Notwithstanding the ‘newness’ of the legislation, though, most academics have sought to show how both relief practices, and welfare officials’ relief administration practices, had remained the same after 1834. The bulk of this research has formed into what has been called the ‘continuity thesis’. For instance, Rose illustrated that the allowance system for the able-bodied continued well beyond 1834 because the Commission was unable to prohibit outdoor relief to the able-bodied.<sup>123</sup> Rose highlighted the Commissioners’ lack of power to actually overcome middle- and working class resistance, especially within the north of England.<sup>124</sup> Digby found local relief officials would remain ‘stubbornly independent’ of central authority. Even when formed into Boards of Guardians, landowners and farmers continued to assert their influence in the administration of poor relief.<sup>125</sup> According to this research, the Commission had reinforced rather than undermined the powers of local elites.<sup>126</sup> This consensus position has been challenged, most notably by Williams. The Commission wanted, according to Williams, to reduce the numbers of able-bodied men in receipt of outdoor relief, not the able-bodied generally.<sup>127</sup> When drawing this distinction it is possible to demonstrate the Commission reduced the overall number of able-bodied men receiving outdoor relief.<sup>128</sup> In view of this evidence, the Commission had been successful in bringing about change to relief provision and administration.

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*Workhouse: The People, The Places, The Life Behind Doors* (Kew, 2007); Driver, *Power and Pauperism*.

<sup>123</sup> Rose, ‘The Allowance System under the New Poor Law’.

<sup>124</sup> *Ibid.*; N. Edsall, *The Anti-Poor Law Movement, 1834-44* (Manchester, 1971); J. Knott, *Popular Opposition to the 1834 Poor Law* (New York, 1986); Driver, *Power and pauperism*, pp. 112-130; D. Ashforth ‘The Urban Poor Law’ in D. Fraser (ed.), *The New Poor Law in the Nineteenth-Century* (London, 1976), pp. 128-146.

<sup>125</sup> Digby, *Pauper Palaces*, p.229. Digby’s point that the social policies dealing with the unemployment adopted at the parish level continued during the New Poor Law is also expressed in *idem.*, ‘The Labour Market and the Continuity of Social Policy after 1834: the Case of the Eastern Counties’, *Economic History Review*, 28 (1975), 69-83.

<sup>126</sup> Brundage, *The Making of the New Poor Law*. See also B.K. Song, ‘Continuity and Change in English Rural Society: the Formation of Poor Law Unions in Oxfordshire’, *English Historical Review*, 114 (1999), 314-389; K.D.M. Snell, *Parish and Belonging: Community, Identity and Welfare in England and Wales 1750-1950* (Cambridge, 2006), especially chapter five ‘A cruel kindness’: parish out-door relief and the new poor law’, pp. 207-338 where Snell demonstrates that the continuation of outdoor relief was linked to ‘common sense, morality, financial prudence and the enduring sense of parochial feeling’, p. 329.

<sup>127</sup> K. Williams, *From Pauperism to Poverty* (London, 1981), p. 57.

<sup>128</sup> *Ibid.*, Statistical Appendix, Section D ‘Relief to men without work’, pp. 179-195.

Further literature has offered a more complex picture of how the Amendment Act was implemented, most notably though focusing on the roles of other key actors in the 'welfare process' after 1834. Harling demonstrates that many of the employees appointed by Boards of Guardians, including masters, matrons, porters and nurses, had experience of working in workhouses. In consequence, there was a gradual transition in providing relief according to the new stipulations.<sup>129</sup> Even parish officers continued to provide relief well beyond the passage of the Amendment Act. As Snell demonstrates, overseers had to provide relief in kind and accommodation in urgent situations and could also admit individuals into union workhouses. They also continued to chase relatives for maintenance payments and take settlement cases to the magistrates.<sup>130</sup> Nevertheless, Harling argues that the new roles of Assistant Commissioners meant that local relief practices 'would never again go entirely unquestioned'.<sup>131</sup> Dunkley made the same point after an examination of the Commission's intervention in poor relief provision during the hungry forties.<sup>132</sup>

The overwhelming focus on the Amendment Act of 1834 has obscured significant features of earlier legislation, especially enabling or 'non-compulsory' policies which have not been systematically researched. Enabling legislation, Digby explained, was 'grafted on to the Elizabethan bases of the Old Poor Law', modifications to take or leave.<sup>133</sup> One of these pieces of legislation was, as noted, Gilbert's Act of 1782. Gilbert's Act is often mentioned in passing, but such references are only tacit acknowledgements of its impact on the lives of the poor.<sup>134</sup> Digby's study of Norfolk is the only work which has thus far actually examined the adoption of Gilbert's Act. The focus of Digby's research though was the assessment of the impact of the 1834 Act on the operation of the poor laws in

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<sup>129</sup> P. Harling, 'The Power of Persuasion: Central Authority, Local Bureaucracy and the New Poor Law', *English Historical Review*, 107 (1992), 30-53.

<sup>130</sup> Snell, *Parish and Belonging*, pp. 345-350.

<sup>131</sup> Harling, 'The Power of Persuasion', p. 53.

<sup>132</sup> P. Dunkley, 'The 'Hungry Forties' and the New Poor Law: A Case Study', *Historical Journal*, 17 (1974), 329-346.

<sup>133</sup> Digby, *Pauper Palaces*, p. 32.

<sup>134</sup> Webb and Webb, *English Poor Law History, Part 1*, pp. 149-313; Marshall, *The English Poor Law*, especially chapter three, pp. 87-160; P. Slack, *The English poor law, 1531-1782* (1990, Cambridge, 1995); M. Rose, *The English Poor Law 1780-1930* (Newton Abbott, 1971), pp. 25-26; S. King, *Poverty and Welfare*, pp. 24-26; Brundage, *The English Poor Laws*, pp. 10-15, 21-22, 50-51; D. Fraser, *The Evolution of the British Welfare State*, third edition (Basingstoke, 2003), pp. 37-38; Longmate, *The Workhouse*, pp. 24-33.

the county rather than an analysis of the implementation of Gilbert's Act per se.<sup>135</sup> Consequently, our understandings of the Act are not effectively grounded in observed histories. As mentioned, Marshall claimed that Gilbert's Act marked the start of 'a new wave of humanitarian feeling' in England.<sup>136</sup> Others have argued that this period is characterised by the opposite feeling, supposedly due to the hostile attitudes of the landed elite towards the poor and the 'greediness' of farmers.<sup>137</sup> Such contradictory statements graphically demonstrate the need for an analysis of why and how Gilbert's Act was adopted and implemented.

Sturges Bourne's Acts (1818 and 1819) have also been neglected. Passed in the context of the unprecedented increase in poor rates, the intention was to give more powers to local vestrymen to clamp down on too generous relief provisions to the poor through the employment of a salaried overseer (an 'assistant overseer') and the formation of a Select Vestry. The impacts of this legislation remain ill-understood. The Poor Law Report of 1834 acknowledged that 'the Acts under which the ratepayers are empowered to elect a committee for the management of their parochial concerns have proved highly beneficial'. Yet, they also argued that Select Vestries were not popular, that meetings were sparsely attended, and, when the vestry did sit, they had 'no power', made 'injurious' relief decisions and were infrequently recorded.<sup>138</sup> This perspective on Sturges Bourne's reforms has been left largely unquestioned, although the examination of two Select Vestries in Sussex by Wells and the insights made by Neuman (Berkshire) and Digby (Lancashire and Yorkshire) show that the legislation may have achieved its purpose in reducing relief costs.<sup>139</sup> A more detailed assessment of the implementation of enabling legislation is needed, of both Gilbert's Act and Sturges Bourne's Acts, in order to understand the impact these had upon the welfare process prior to 1834.

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<sup>135</sup> Digby, *Pauper Palaces*.

<sup>136</sup> Marshall, *The English Poor*, p. 159.

<sup>137</sup> P. Mandler, 'The making of the New Poor Law redivivus', *Past and Present*, 117 (1987), p. 134.

<sup>138</sup> S.G. Checkland and E.O.A. Checkland (eds.), *The Poor Law Report of 1834*, (1834, Harmondsworth, 1974), p. 199.

<sup>139</sup> Wells, 'Poor-Law Reform in the Rural South-east', pp. 52-115; Neuman, *The Speenhamland County*, pp. 176-183; Digby, *The New Poor Law in Nineteenth-century*, p. 7.

The examination of the implementation of these laws has in part been hindered by their ‘enabling’ status. This ‘opt in’ nature makes this legislation seemingly of low importance. It is important to stress, therefore, that the *uptake* of Gilbert’s Act and the Sturges Bourne’s Acts have been just as under-researched as their implementation. As Wells suggests, ‘the adoption of Sturges Bourne has not been systematically studied, merely commented upon’.<sup>140</sup> Two-thirds of ratepayers during an ordinary, or ‘open’, vestry had to agree to adopt the provisions of Gilbert’s Act, although it also had to secure the approval of a magistrate.<sup>141</sup> Select Vestries under Sturges Bourne’s legislation were also established by a majority vote from the ratepayers, and such an agreement stood in place until fourteen days after the next Annual Appointment of Overseers (usually on Lady Day). Thereafter, it would be renewed at another open vestry. Similarly to Gilbert’s Act, the formation of a Select Vestry also required the seal of a magistrate.<sup>142</sup> Assistant overseers were elected and confirmed in a similar way, requiring the support of two magistrates.<sup>143</sup> It must not be forgotten that the Poor Law Amendment Act was also ‘adopted’ by parishes in a similar fashion, although under immense pressure from the Commission. The Commission had no powers to change or re-model Gilbert’s Parishes, Unions and Local Incorporations without the consent of the Guardians. Indeed, many parishes resisted adopting the legislation for years and, in some cases, even decades.<sup>144</sup>

There was, therefore, an intermediate stage between policy-making and implementation in the policy process, namely their policy *adoption*. Social scientists should be forgiven for their oversight of this, not least because the British state was a much weaker legislative body prior to the late twentieth century. Policy adoption and implementation cannot necessarily be viewed as independent stages because the second stage relies on the first. In consequence, the simultaneous examination of adoption and implementation of enabling legislation under the poor laws is required.

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<sup>140</sup> Wells, ‘Poor-Law Reform in the Rural South-east’, p. 59.

<sup>141</sup> 22 Geo. III c.83, I and III.

<sup>142</sup> 59 Geo. III c.12, I.

<sup>143</sup> 59 Geo. III c.12, VII.

<sup>144</sup> As stipulated in the Amendment Act, 4 & 5 Wm. IV c.76, XXXII, cited in M. Rose, ‘The Anti-Poor Law Movement in the North of England’, *Northern History*, 1 (1966), p. 89.

### 2.2.3 Policy development and change

The stages of the policy process may have blurred edges, but there are also a 'succession of feedback loops between them'.<sup>145</sup> For instance, when a policy is proving difficult to implement, the governing body sometimes receives this information and is able to change the policy through amendment or the passage of a new policy. As Bochel and Bochel contend:

[i]f policies are seen as originating from particular decisions that are aimed at achieving particular goals, it would seem natural and appropriate that those who make those decisions, at central or local government level, would wish to determine the effects of their decisions or actions.<sup>146</sup>

This is what they term a 'rational' model of decision making which, unlike other more fragmented models, views the process of making policies as a 'means-end' process.<sup>147</sup> Two aspects of policy can be evaluated: the outcomes of policy and the individuals implementing policies.<sup>148</sup> Although evaluation comes after the implementation stage, it also comes after a degree of monitoring and, therefore, the gathering of information.<sup>149</sup> The collection and evaluation of information produced through monitoring is not devoid of bias, though. As Parsons explains, 'the evaluation of the actual impact of policy on problems is something which is essentially a matter of *values* rather than *facts*: numbers mean whatever policy-makers want them to mean.' And he goes further, to argue that the analysis of policies moulds the 'context and agenda within which problems are being defined and constructed...[which] takes us back to the start of the policy cycle – problem definition and agenda setting.'<sup>150</sup> Clearly, the political contexts within which policies are reviewed and then (re)made cannot be ignored.

In terms of recent UK social policies, Bochel and Bochel notice that 'much of the assessment of policy success or failure in social policy has been impressionistic and anecdotal', with much research being undertaken by

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<sup>145</sup> Hill, *The Policy Process*, p. 24.

<sup>146</sup> Bochel and Bochel, *The UK Social Policy Process*, p. 178.

<sup>147</sup> Bochel and Bochel, *The UK Social Policy Process*, p. 31.

<sup>148</sup> Parsons, *Public Policy*, p. 543.

<sup>149</sup> Hogwood and Gunn, *Policy Analysis for the Real World*.

<sup>150</sup> Parsons, *Public Policy*, p. 602. My emphasis.

academics and pressure groups rather than by policy-makers themselves.<sup>151</sup> The question is, therefore, how much attention have historians paid to the attempts made *at the time* to evaluate and change policies. At this stage of the policy process poor law literature is strong in one area alone: the Royal Commission's evaluation of the old poor laws. Brundage, for instance, outlines how Nassau Senior in writing the first half of the Poor Law Report (1834) relied upon 'a good deal of anecdotes of corruption and abuse', details which were represented 'in such a way that readers could only conclude that the existing system was grievously flawed and in need of drastic reform.'<sup>152</sup> As King notes, the Royal Commission had used the responses of the Rural and Town Queries, to present:

a ramshackle system of local welfare initiatives that bore only a limited resemblance to what the state thought was happening. Generous allowances encouraged idleness and immorality, undermining the desirable self-help ethic which should have lain at the heart of welfare. The result was spiralling relief bills and a vicious circle of poverty.<sup>153</sup>

The bias of the Poor Law Report and how it constructed a 'problem' and promoted change is widely acknowledged. But how was the Amendment Act itself scrutinised? The Amendment Act was a controversial piece of legislation. The anti-New Poor Law movement quickly sought to expose flaws in the operation of the new relief system. Their zealous activities and the new central accountability for poor relief meant that local problems in the administration of relief became of national concern. The print media played an important role, reporting claims of neglect and abuse towards relief claimants. Roberts has discovered that between 1837 and 1842 *The Times* reported 16 wife and husband separations, 32 accounts of punishments, 14 cases of overcrowding, 24 cases of inadequate diets, 10 cases of diseased conditions and 7 workhouse-based murders. Outside of the workhouse, there were 42 reported cases of inadequate outdoor relief to the aged and infirm, and 33 instances where emergency relief was refused.<sup>154</sup>

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<sup>151</sup> Bochel and Bochel, *The UK Social Policy Process*, p. 178.

<sup>152</sup> Brundage, *The English Poor Laws*, p. 65.

<sup>153</sup> King, *Poverty and Welfare in England*, p. 227.

<sup>154</sup> D. Roberts, 'How Cruel was the Victorian Poor Law?', *Historical Journal*, 6 (1963), pp. 98-99.

Whilst all of these cases garnered public attention, few escalated into welfare scandals. As Butler and Drakeford contend, scandals are produced through ‘the process whereby everyday tragedies are transformed into something extraordinary; the process whereby events that are local and personal become national and public; the process whereby the specific comes to stand for the general’.<sup>155</sup> Thus, whilst all scandals had initially developed from ‘everyday tragedies’, not all everyday tragedies escalated into scandals. Still, everyday tragedies and scandals during the early years of the New Poor Laws *have* caught the attention of poor law historians, but no distinction has been made between the two categories.

Neglect and abuse cases under the New Poor Law have been viewed as a representation of people’s feelings about the new system. Roberts argues that *The Times* reports demonstrate the lengths to which the anti-New Poor Law movement went to secure publicity over cases of maladministration. On the other hand, Henriques believed that such cases reflected ‘a climate of opinion in which abuses were more likely to occur’, a climate which was of the Commission’s own making.<sup>156</sup> More recent research has moved beyond these interpretations. Using the correspondence between the Commission and a Board of Guardians regarding the death of Henry Williams in Llantrisant, Stewart and King demonstrated the complexities faced at both local and national levels when implementing the Amendment Act.<sup>157</sup> Others, including McCord and Wells, have also examined local-centre relations through the correspondence created during similar crises.<sup>158</sup>

Regardless of the number of welfare *scandals* which occurred under the first period of centralised welfare provision, the only scandal universally acknowledged in studies of the New Poor Law is the Andover Union Scandal of

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<sup>155</sup> I. Butler and M. Drakeford, *Scandal, Social Policy and Social Welfare*, second edition (Bristol, 2005), p. 1.

<sup>156</sup> Reading of Henriques by Bernard Harris, *Origins of the British Welfare State*, p. 50; U. Henriques, ‘How Cruel was the Victorian Poor Law?’ *Historical Journal*, 11 (1968), 365-371.

<sup>157</sup> J. Stewart and S. King, ‘Death in Llantrisant: Henry Williams and the New Poor Law in Wales’, *Rural History*, 15 (2004), 69-87.

<sup>158</sup> N. McCord, ‘The implementation of the 1834 Poor Law Amendment Act on Tyneside’, *International Review of Social History*, 14 (1969), pp. 104-107; R. Wells, ‘Andover Antecedents? Hampshire New Poor-Law Scandals, 1834-1842’, *Southern History*, 24 (2002), 91-217.



the 1840s.<sup>159</sup> Here, malnourished paupers gnawed on the bones they were supposed to crush for the Guardians to sell as fertiliser.<sup>160</sup> Its powerful, and prolific, legacy has endured for two key reasons. First, the Andover scandal has been utilised as a graphic example of maladministration, evoking a clear ‘grim symbolic feature’ of life behind the workhouse doors.<sup>161</sup> Second, the Andover scandal is also believed to have put the final nail in the coffin of the Commission, the Commission being left to expire without renewal by Parliament in 1847.<sup>162</sup>

Rather than examine the scandal alone, historians need to trace how such scandals infiltrated into policy-making, development and change during the early years of the New Poor Law. Indeed, within policies there are what Spicker calls ‘meta-rules’, rules which ‘determine how decisions are made, how they are changed, how they are decided on and enforced’.<sup>163</sup> The use of these rules facilitate the implementation of policies and result in the development of further policies. The meta-rules of the Amendment Act have been heralded as one of the ‘the most important clauses’ of that legislation because they defined the powers of the Commission. Indeed, their use resulted in the production of legally binding stipulations, each agreed upon by the Secretary of State.<sup>164</sup> The implementation of these policies had to be checked by the Poor Law Commission. Section 16 of the Amendment Act provided the Commissioners with the power to release General Orders which could contain instructions applying to all, or a large proportion, of unions under their charge.<sup>165</sup>

Significant numbers of Orders were released by the Commission and some of these have been studied, although the interpretations are somewhat incomplete.<sup>166</sup> For instance, Rose has focused on the Outdoor Relief Prohibitory

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<sup>159</sup> For instance, Brundage, *The English Poor Laws*, pp. 87-88; P. Wood, *Poverty and the Workhouse in Victorian Britain* (Stroud, 1991), p. 100; D. Roberts, *The Victorian Origins of the Welfare State* (Yale, 1960), pp. 120 and 128.

<sup>160</sup> I. Anstruther, *The Scandal of the Andover Workhouse*, second edition (Stroud, 1984).

<sup>161</sup> R. Wells, ‘Andover Antecedents?’, p. 91.

<sup>162</sup> Brundage, *The English Poor Laws*, p. 88.

<sup>163</sup> Spicker, *Policy Analysis for Practice*, p. 24.

<sup>164</sup> Rose, *The English Poor Law*, p. 95.

<sup>165</sup> 5 & 6 Vict. c.57, XVI.

<sup>166</sup> W.C. Glen, *The Consolidated and other Orders of the Poor Law Commissioners and of the Poor Law Board* (London, 1855).

Order (1844) and Hodgkinson examined the General Medical Order (1842).<sup>167</sup> Rose contends that it had always been the mission of the Commission to stop all outdoor relief to the able-bodied poor, so when the General Order was sent to the localities it had come as no surprise to many Boards of Guardians. In addition, the Commission had sent union-specific Orders to the Guardians to stop outdoor relief payments after the establishment of union workhouses.<sup>168</sup> Hodgkinson attributes the Medical Order to the pressures of the British Medical Association.<sup>169</sup> As such, the genesis of the General Orders has always been attributed to external pressures or the determination of the Commission. How local events, such as scandals, infiltrated into the development of the Commission's policies has therefore been somewhat neglected.

This chapter has argued for a 'policy process' perspective of understanding the administration of the poor laws. There are, according to this approach, a series of gaps in our current knowledge of the poor laws. The rest of this thesis addresses each of these areas in four different chapters. Chapters four and five analyse the adoption and implementation of two sets of enabling acts, namely Gilbert's and Sturges Bourne's Acts. Chapter six is concerned with policy transfer under both the old and New Poor Laws, whilst chapter seven traces the impact of welfare scandals upon the development of policies by the Commission.

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<sup>167</sup> R. Hodgkinson, *The Origins of the National Health Service: The Medical Services of the New Poor Law, 1834-1871* (London, 1967); Rose, 'The Allowance System under the New Poor Law'.

<sup>168</sup> Rose, 'The Allowance System under the New Poor Law', p. 609.

<sup>169</sup> Also see A. Digby, *Making a Medical Living: Doctors and patients in the English market for medicine, 1720-1911* (Cambridge, 1994), p. 244.

## Chapter 3: Documents and Approach: (Re)constructing the Policy Process

Chapter two concluded that significant aspects of the ‘policy process’ have been neglected, and therefore need to be systematically addressed in order to understand social policies under the poor laws. Four areas of research have emerged from this perspective and form the four subsequent chapters in this thesis. Each of the chapters is concerned with the policy process in action, and therefore it draws upon both the events at, and between, local and central levels. As such, it draws upon the documents created at both levels. It would be impossible to examine all of the local records of potential relevance, and therefore, cover the policy processes at work throughout the whole of England. The geographical focus is the counties of Wessex and West Sussex, though some material is drawn from elsewhere. The first section of this chapter outlines the reasons for choosing this area before detailing the broad socio-economic characteristics of the area. Having considered the geographical context, the chapter goes on to describe the different stages of the archival research undertaken, including details about the sampling strategies deployed. As other historians using a wide range of documents within one study have found, whilst general discussion of the sources is useful, the attributes of the documents are best expressed in the context of their use.<sup>1</sup> This considered, the third section outlines in brief the specific content and ‘quality’ of the documents used.

### 3.1 The local context

The rural south was the region which the Poor Law Commissioners most wanted to change. As King, in his national study of poor law provision notes, the southern and eastern regions of England provided generous poor relief in comparison to

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<sup>1</sup> As Snell expressed in *Annals of the Labouring Poor*, many of the sources were ‘partly discussed in the context of later chapters’, K.D.M. Snell, *Annals of the Labouring Poor: Social Change and Agrarian England 1660-1900* (Cambridge, 1985), p. 9.

the north and west. '[T]he rural counties of the south and east', he contends, 'had put in place a wide definition of entitlement and the communal welfare system granted more substantial nominal allowances to more people than did communities in the north and west.' By the end of the eighteenth century allowances of 2-3 shillings per week were common, supplemented by an average of a further 30% through payments in cash and kind. Elsewhere in England, an average of 2 shillings per week was granted with other payments supplementing incomes by 10 to 20%.<sup>2</sup> Green argues that poor relief expenditure comparisons should be used with caution, not least as expenditure figures often included the costs of establishing and running workhouses.<sup>3</sup> Nevertheless, the low wages and widespread unemployment experienced in the south of England necessarily meant that parish vestries here had to provide more substantial amounts of relief to their parishioners.

There have, however, been a disproportionate number of examinations about the operation of the poor laws within the south-east, especially of Kent, East Sussex and Essex.<sup>4</sup> Snell's comparison of male agricultural weekly rates of wages in the early nineteenth century demonstrates that wages had remained high and stable in the north of England compared to wages in the south. The southern experience was not, however, a universal one. Of the counties which experienced the most dramatic decline in wages, the majority were located within the south-east where labourers often ready to protest against their impoverishment.<sup>5</sup> That the 'Swing Riots' started, and were most intense, in Kent is no coincidence.<sup>6</sup> A study which takes into account the operation of poor relief within the counties of Dorset, Hampshire, Somerset and Wiltshire, commonly

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<sup>2</sup> S. King, *Poverty and Welfare in England 1700-1850: A Regional Perspective* (Manchester, 2000), p. 257.

<sup>3</sup> D. Green, *Pauper Capital: London and the Poor Law, 1790-1870* (Farnham, 2010), p. 5.

<sup>4</sup> Steve King makes the point that there is a 'need for greater spatial balance and new perspectives on the character and role of poor relief outside the south-east' to stress that more detailed studies of northern parishes are needed. It could be argued, however, that this bias towards the south-east suggests that south-western counties also need to be examined, S. King, 'Reconstructing Lives: The Poor, the Poor Law and Welfare in Calverley, 1650-1820', *Social History*, 22 (1997), p. 319. Also *idem.*, *Poverty and Welfare*, p. 8.

<sup>5</sup> Snell, *Annals of the Labouring Poor*, pp. 130-131.

<sup>6</sup> C.J. Griffin, 'There was no law to punish that offence' Reassessing 'Captain Swing' : Rural Luddism and Rebellion in East Kent, 1830-31', *Southern History*, 22 (2000), 131-163.

known as Wessex (see Figure 3.1) therefore, is long overdue.<sup>7</sup> Wessex is located in the centre of the south of England. This area of the south has been ill-understood in comparison to the south-east, which has typically become the main source of information for north-south comparisons. Wessex straddles both the 'south' and 'far west' regions which King has identified, by the nineteenth century, as having 'generous' and 'narrow and inflexible' relief provision respectively.<sup>8</sup> The area therefore encapsulates diverse range of levels of poverty and poor relief provision within the south.

Wessex is an interesting and diverse area of the south of England to research the poor laws. This area was the starting point for many poor law innovations. The first Local Act for the relief of the poor in England was obtained in Bristol in 1696, forming the first 'Corporation of the Poor'. The legislation became a precedent from which other parishes united under Local Acts to provide a workhouse for indoor relief and rules for providing outdoor relief. The politician William Sturges Bourne served as the chairman of the Hampshire Quarter Sessions between 1817 and 1822, during which he also held the position of chairman on a Select Committee to investigate the reform of the poor laws. This led to the passage of his two Acts of 1818 and 1819.

Wessex had a varied agricultural economy, containing a range of industries other than agricultural production, unlike the south-east. Many rural communities were close to growing towns and cities, including Bath, Bristol, Portsmouth, Southampton and Weymouth. Some of these were thriving ports on the coast. In consequence, labouring class wages varied throughout the region. In the early 1830s, male agricultural weekly wages ranged from an average of 10s 4d in Hampshire and 9s 10d in Somerset to 9s 5d in Wiltshire and 8s 8d in Dorset.<sup>9</sup> Women's wages also varied, but were generally restricted to between 6 and 8d per day in the early-nineteenth century.<sup>10</sup> Throughout the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries, Wessex contained whole counties 'notorious for its low agricultural wages and extensive unemployment and rural poverty', such as

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<sup>7</sup> One exception is G.A. Body, 'The Administration of the Poor Laws in Dorset, 1760-1834' (unpublished PhD thesis, University of Southampton, 1965).

<sup>8</sup> King, *Poverty and Welfare*, pp. 262 and 264.

<sup>9</sup> Wages in 1833, Snell, *Annals of the Labouring Poor*, p. 130.

<sup>10</sup> N. Verdon, *Rural Women Workers in Nineteenth-Century England: Gender, Work and Wages* (Woodbridge, 2002), p. 48.

Wiltshire, and complex pockets of impoverishment within counties, such as Purbeck in Dorset.<sup>11</sup> Wessex has the potential therefore to reflect the diversity of policy responses in the south of England overall. The varied agricultural economy of this area is worth exploring in further detail.

As one of the Assistant Poor Law Commissioners noted in 1834, 'pauperism...[is] influenced by uncertainty in employment, and the degree in which the population depend on their daily labour'.<sup>12</sup> Wessex had a varied rural economy, a result of the varied landscape, featuring the Quantocks and Mendips in Somerset to the West – cooler, more economically marginal landscapes upon which to make a living – to the Blackmore Vale in Wessex's centre – predominantly pasture and woodland – to the chalk arable lands of Wiltshire and Hampshire in the east. Wessex was therefore an area of mixed farming, including the production of corn and barley and the rearing of livestock, mainly cattle, sheep and pigs. Although pigs were predominantly kept for their meat, cattle were needed for milk from which high quality butters and cheeses were produced, whilst wool was worked and turned into cloth within many of the small market towns of the region. Such produce not only supplied the inhabitants of Wessex and the more populous urban centres of Bristol and Salisbury, but they were also sent to London. There were other rural industries as well. Wessex was rich in natural resources. Billingsly, in his late-eighteenth century observations of Somerset, states '[f]rom its bowels are dug Lead, Copper, Iron, Lapis Calaminaris, Coal, Fullers Earth, Marl, Lime Stones, Paving, Freestone Tiling Stone, &c. &c. in great abundance'.<sup>13</sup> Coal-mining, in particular, was an important occupation in Somerset.<sup>14</sup> Quarrying also can be found throughout the region during the period, especially in Portland (Dorset) where the distinctive white stone was in demand

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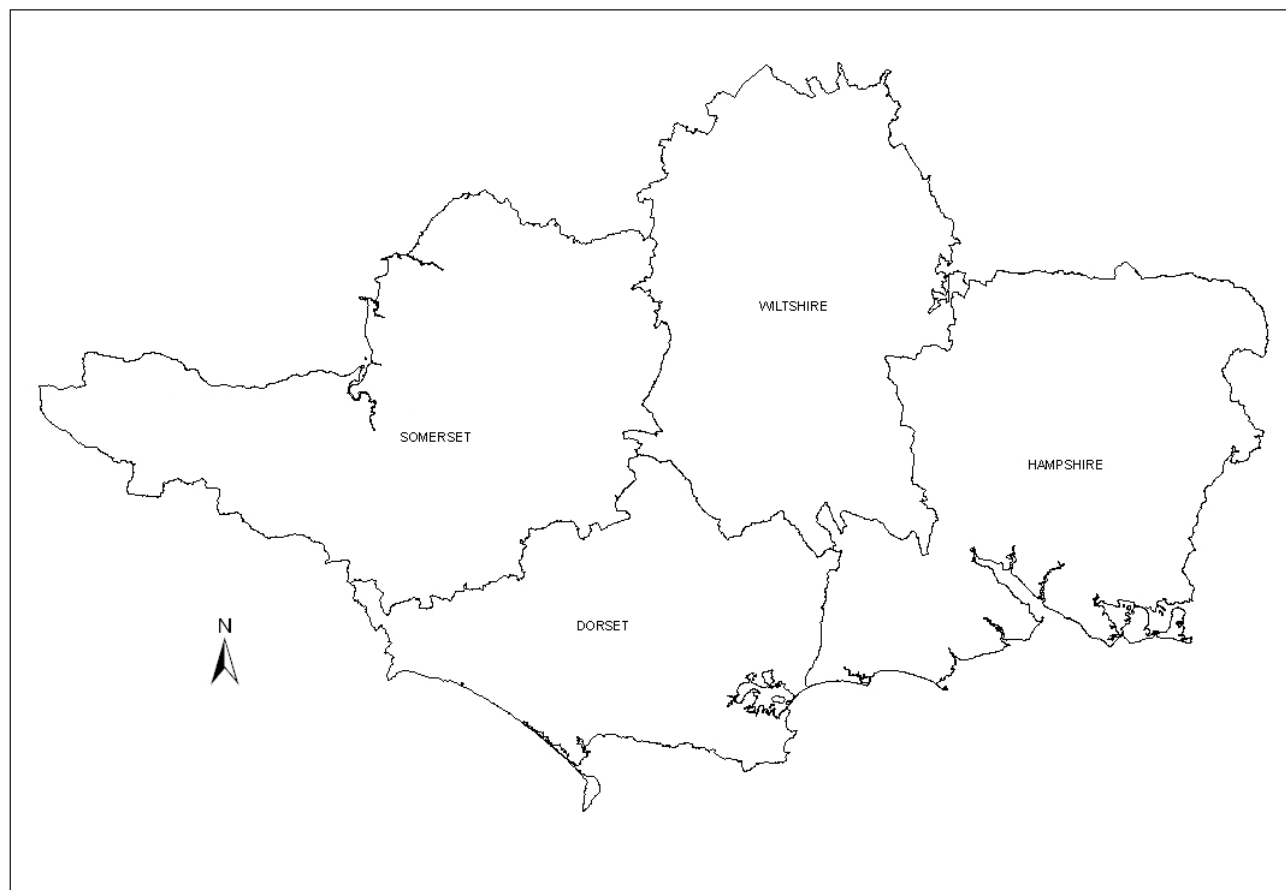
<sup>11</sup> A. Randall and E. Newman, 'Protest, Proletarians and Paternalists: Social Conflict in Rural Wiltshire, 1830-1850', *Rural History*, 6 (1995), p. 206.

<sup>12</sup> BPP 1834 (44) XXVIII, Report from His Majesty's Commissioners for Inquiring into the Administration and Practical Operation of the Poor Laws. Appendix A. Reports from Assistant Commissioners. Part 1. Report 15. Captain Chapman, p. 424.

<sup>13</sup> J. Billingsly, *General view of the agriculture of the county of Somerset: with observations on the means of its improvement*, Board of Agriculture (London, 1794), p. 7.

<sup>14</sup> Betty describes the industry as concentrated in 'the northern fringe of Mendip and in north Somerset, in the Radstock – Midsomer Norton area and around Bishops Sutton, Pensford, Clutton, Queen Charlton, Brislington, Kilmersdon and Camerton, and at Nailsea', J. Betty, *Rural Life in Wessex 1500-1900* (Bradford-on-Avon, 1977), p. 48.

Figure 3.1: The counties of Wessex



Source: Made using 'English Ancient Counties, 1851' data from UKBORDERS at EDINA. Online. Available: <http://edina.ac.uk> [last accessed 4 June 2010].

throughout England.<sup>15</sup>

Employment opportunities were greater within the market towns of Wessex than the countryside, especially for women and children. As noted, the region was known for the production of cloth and clothing. Chippenham, Melksham and Warminster made an expensive cloth called broadcloth. Trowbridge and Frome also weaved broadcloth, but soon diversified into 'cassimere' production, a lighter twilled cloth.<sup>16</sup> Wilton (near Salisbury) was famed for its high quality carpets and other 'fancy woollens'.<sup>17</sup> Shaftesbury, north Dorset, produced linsey, a blend of linen and wool. The rest of Wessex produced clothing from other materials. Glove-making and silk production were undertaken in the neighbouring towns of Gillingham (Dorset) and Mere (Wiltshire).<sup>18</sup> These industries were also adopted throughout other Wessex towns. Glove and coarse linen manufacture centred on Yeovil (Somerset), whilst gloving was also undertaken at Milborne Port (Somerset) and gloving alongside silk throwing at Andover (Hampshire), Whitchurch (Hampshire) and Sherborne (Dorset).<sup>19</sup> In the latter town, two silk manufactories had 600 employees by the late-eighteenth century.<sup>20</sup> Bed ticking was produced in Fordingbridge (Hampshire).<sup>21</sup> Several Somersetshire towns had also produced cotton goods, such as flannel, including Chard, Milverton, Wincanton and Wiveliscombe, but

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<sup>15</sup> W. Stevenson, *General view of the agriculture of the county of Dorset: with observations on the means of its improvement*, Board of Agriculture (London, 1812), p. 2.

<sup>16</sup> J. Bettey, *Wessex from AD 1000* (London, 1986), pp. 251-252. Details about the production of woollen goods and the woollen industry within Wiltshire and north-east Somerset in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century can be found in A. Randall, *Before the Luddities: Custom, Community and Machinery in the England Woollen Industry, 1776-1809* (Cambridge, 1991).

<sup>17</sup> T. Davis, *General view of the agriculture of Wiltshire: drawn up and published by order of the Board of Agriculture and Internal Improvement*, Board of Agriculture (London, 1811), p. 217.

<sup>18</sup> J. Rutter, 'A Brief Sketch of the State of the Poor, and of the Management of the Houses of Industry; Recommended to the Consideration of the Inhabitants of the Town of Shaftesbury, and Other Places', second edition (Shaftesbury, 1819), p. 36.

<sup>19</sup> N. Raven, 'A 'humbler, industrious class of female' Women's employment and industry in the small towns of southern England, c.1790-1840' in P. Lane, N. Raven and K.D.M. Snell (eds.), *Women, Work and Wages in England, 1600-1850* (Woodbridge, 2004), pp. 170-172. Assistant Poor Law Commissioner Robert Weale initially superintended the Yeovil Union (with a population of 25581 in 1831) and reported that many individuals relied on both glove and linen manufacture, Weale to PLC, 19 July 1838, TNA MH32/85, p. 2.

<sup>20</sup> Stevenson, *General view of the agriculture of the county of Dorset*, p. 27.

<sup>21</sup> Raven, 'A 'humbler, industrious class of female'', p. 170.



production of this soon declined alongside 'the expiry of the East India Company's monopoly'.<sup>22</sup>

Women and children were employed in field work, especially on dairy farms and during the harvests. Farm service was an important form of employment, although both female day labourers and farm servants 'earned one-third to a half of the wage of their male counterparts' in the 1790s.<sup>23</sup> Young women would also be employed as domestic servants in large rural estates, such as Longleat (Wiltshire), and the growing towns and cities of Wessex, some of which had become popular leisure resorts by the nineteenth century.<sup>24</sup> In villages and smaller towns women and children were also engaged in the production of clothing and haberdashery. In the north of Dorset, lace and 'Dorset buttons' were produced.<sup>25</sup> In nearby villages, such as Stourton and Maiden Bradley (Wiltshire), silk, as well as flax, was worked on a small scale. Here women taught each other, and children, how to spin at a 'school' which was likely to have been subsidised through the poor rates.<sup>26</sup> In the large parish of Wimborne Minster, women and children made woollen goods and knitted hosiery.<sup>27</sup> In addition, in all Wessex towns there were always small errands to be completed. In Shaftesbury, a hill-top town with limited water supply before the mid-nineteenth century, the poor had apparently gained money carrying water on their heads or on their horses.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Bettey, *Wessex from AD 1000*, p. 252.

<sup>23</sup> Verdon, *Rural Women Workers*, p. 49. For an examination of dairy farming employment in Dorset see P. Horn, 'The Dorset Dairy System', *Agricultural History Review*, 26 (1978), 100-107.

<sup>24</sup> The 1851 Census shows that 'about one third of the women were employed in domestic service' in Bath, R.S. Neale, 'The Industries of the City of Bath in the First Half of the Nineteenth Century', *The Proceedings of the Somerset Archaeological and Natural History Society*, 108 (1963-4), p. 133. Bath, Bristol, Bridgwater, Weymouth, Lyme Regis, Poole, Portsmouth and Southsea had significant populations by the nineteenth century and leisure resorts grew in number and popularity in the region, not least when railway links had been established with London. For instance, Southsea had a direct rail link with London in 1847, Bettey, *Wessex from AD 1000*, p. 245. For a recent account of domestic service during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries see C. Steedman, *Labours Lost: Domestic Service and the Making of Modern England* (Cambridge, 2009).

<sup>25</sup> B. Reay, *Rural England: Labouring Lives in the Nineteenth Century* (Basingstoke, 2004), p. 63; Verdon, *Rural Women Workers*, especially pp. 53, 65 and 133; M. Bright,

*Buttonty: The Dorset Heritage* (Lyttchett Minster, 1971); M.A. Jackson, *The History of the Dorset Button* (Romsey, 1970); Stevenson, *General view of the agriculture of the county of Dorset*, p. 26.

<sup>26</sup> Davis, *General view of the agriculture of Wiltshire*, p. 220.

<sup>27</sup> Stevenson, *General view of the agriculture of the county of Dorset*, p. 24.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 25.

Regardless of the dominance of cloth-making in Wessex, a number of other industries flourished in eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, not least due to the proximity of waterways and the sea. Bridgwater thrived on the production of building materials such as glass, bricks, tiles and clay pipes, some of which were used to drain the Somerset Levels. These materials were exported through the town's port which was situated along the Bristol Channel.<sup>29</sup> Coastal towns and villages contained large segments of the population engaged in fishing, but people were also employed in the manufacture of fishing boats and fishing equipment. The south coast of Dorset was known to export vast quantities of seines, nets, lines, twines, cord and sailcloth. In fact, it was estimated that 1,500 tons of hemp and flax were worked annually, and exported to Newfoundland and other parts of America as well as to British fisheries in the West Indies.<sup>30</sup> In particular, Beaminster manufactured linen and sailcloth, whilst rope, nets and cord were made in Bridport.<sup>31</sup> Goods were also made and exported from Poole, including oil-cloth, nets, cord and clothing.<sup>32</sup> Hampshire contained similar coastal industries driven by the naval dockyard at Portsmouth, the inhabitants of nearby towns producing goods for the dockyards.<sup>33</sup> For instance, Gosport, a small town west of Portsmouth, had an ironworks and built naval vessels.<sup>34</sup>

Life for rural workers was difficult – and becoming more so – throughout Wessex. Wages did not rise commensurately with the cost of grain which, although fluctuating, had remained high during the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries. Wilson notes that from the late-eighteenth century onwards, labouring families in Wiltshire faced ‘50 years of subsistence living and often actual hunger’.<sup>35</sup> The story was similar in other Wessex counties, where poor harvests and cold winters, such as that of 1816, worsened the already declining demand for, and cost of, labour. By 1833 the average weekly

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<sup>29</sup> Bettey, *Wessex from AD 1000*, pp. 205, 208 and 251.

<sup>30</sup> Stevenson, *General view of the agriculture of the county of Dorset*, p. 27.

<sup>31</sup> Bettey, *Wessex from AD 1000*, pp. 250 and 253.

<sup>32</sup> Stevenson, *General view of the agriculture of the county of Dorset*, p. 24.

<sup>33</sup> Portsmouth produced woollen, leather and silk goods, bed tickings and earthen ware, C. Vancouver, *General view of the agriculture of Hampshire, including the Isle of Wight*, Board of Agriculture (London, 1810), p. 6.

<sup>34</sup> Iron was also worked, according to Bettey, at Wick and Frenchay near Bristol, Seend in Wiltshire and Fontley on the river Meon west of Fareham, Bettey, *Wessex from AD 1000*, pp.193, 208.

<sup>35</sup> A.R. Wilson, *Forgotten Labour: The Wiltshire Agricultural Labourer and His Environment, 4500 BC – AD 1950* (East Knoyle, 2007), p. 189.

agricultural wage in the south of England was 11s 2d, although Wessex had below this average weekly salary. From the pitiful wage of 8s 8d in Dorset to the Hampshire's modest 10s 4d, it is clear that the labouring families of Wessex had fared worse than their south-eastern counterparts.<sup>36</sup> The Dorset magistrate, Okeden, reported to the Royal Commission, that '[t]he better class of poor' in the county 'feel deeply the degradation of their state.'<sup>37</sup> It is of little surprise that the Swing Riots occurred within the county.<sup>38</sup> There were pockets of rioting throughout the Wessex region not only involving the destruction of threshing machines and incendiarism, but also the demolition of workhouses, as at Headley and Selborne (Hampshire).<sup>39</sup> The labouring classes here were clearly aggrieved by the condition of their poverty.

A variety of policies had been adopted throughout Wessex to maintain a growing body of under- and unemployed labouring families. Speenhamland-style scales were widespread in the region, as well as a plethora of employment schemes.<sup>40</sup> Yet, these policies, which magistrates had helped to foster from the late-eighteenth century onwards, were a source of concern by the early-nineteenth century. Dorset magistrate D.O.P. Okeden wrote a letter to Parliament in 1830, bemoaning the fact that the 'Labourer' had been reduced to a 'Parish slave'.<sup>41</sup>

Indoor relief was less prevalent than outdoor relief, although in addition to providing the labouring poor with accommodation in workhouses overseers had subsidised parishioners' living costs either by providing rent-free cottages or through subsidising the poor's rent.<sup>42</sup> This is reflected in the comments of the Assistant Commissioners in the 1830s. Robert Weale found 'relieving able-bodied

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<sup>36</sup> Surrey 12s 9d, Sussex 12s 6d and Kent 13s 7d, Snell, *Annals of the Labouring Poor*, p. 130.

<sup>37</sup> BPP 1834 (44) XXVIII, Report from His Majesty's Commissioners for Inquiring into the Administration and Practical Operation of the Poor Laws. Appendix A. Reports from Assistant Commissioners. Part 1. Report 3. D.O.P. Okeden, Esq. (Third Report), p. 24.

<sup>38</sup> B. Kerr, *Bound to the Soil: A Social History of Dorset 1750-1918* (1968, East Ardsley, 1975), pp. 90-122.

<sup>39</sup> J.O. Smith, *One Monday in November: The Story of the Selborne and Headley Workhouse Riots of 1830* (Bordon, 1993).

<sup>40</sup> C.J. Griffin, 'Employing the poor': the experience of unemployment in post-Napoleonic rural England', (unpublished paper). Griffin analyses the employment schemes in Wiltshire and Hampshire.

<sup>41</sup> D.O.P. Okeden, 'A Letter to The Members in Parliament, for Dorsetshire, on the subject of Poor-Relief and Labourers' Wages,' second edition (Blandford, 1830), p. 10.

<sup>42</sup> J. Broad, 'Housing the rural poor in southern England, 1650-1850', *Agricultural History Review*, 48 (2000), p. 164.

labourers, either by paying rents, providing habitations, or making weekly allowances, [was] prevailing to a greater or less extent' in Somerset, Gloucestershire and Worcestershire.<sup>43</sup> In Dorset, Sir John James Garbett Walsham noted that the payment of rents had reached 'a very mischievous extent'.<sup>44</sup>

Demand for labour in some of the manufacturing districts in Wessex had also declined by the 1830s. Captain Chapman reported to the Royal Commission that more economical modes of producing textiles had especially deprived parts of Wessex. In North Bradley (Wiltshire), 'an agricultural parish', Chapman found 'a colony of weavers totally deprived of their ordinary work by improvements in machinery'. Farmers were 'driven to the necessity of employing them on their farms' at nominal wages.<sup>45</sup> However, it was the inhabitants of Frome and Shepton Mallet in Somerset and Trowbridge, Westbury, Bradford-on-Avon and Broughton Gifford in Wiltshire whom Chapman believed had experienced the most distress in consequence of the decline in textile manufacturing. Warminster's industry had deteriorated from the start of the nineteenth century, whilst Shepton Mallet witnessed the closure of several factories from the 1810s.<sup>46</sup> Communities which produced accessories for clothing were also affected. In Dorset, beyond Bridport and Poole and 'one or two other smaller places connected with the coast', Okeden noted in 1832 that 'there is no employment for women and children but in the field'.<sup>47</sup> In the north of the county, wages which had supplemented the household economy in the production of the Dorset Button had declined due to the manufacture of the cheaper pearl button.<sup>48</sup>

Some other parts of Wessex had coped better within the changing economic climate. It was reported that 'Bridgwater appears to have suffered less

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<sup>43</sup> R. Weale, 'Report on the Counties of *Gloucester*, *Worcester*, and *Somerset*, by Robert Weale, Esq., Assistant Poor Law Commissioner', Appendix B, Report 10 in Second Annual Report of the Poor Law Commissioners (London, 1836), p. 356.

<sup>44</sup> J.J. Garbett Walsham, 'Report on the Unions in the County of *Dorset*, by Sir John James Garbett Walsham, Bart., Assistant Poor Law Commissioner', Appendix B, Report 11 in Second Annual Report of the Poor Law Commissioners (London, 1836), p. 369.

<sup>45</sup> BPP 1834 (44) XXVIII, Report from His Majesty's Commissioners for Inquiring into the Administration and Practical Operation of the Poor Laws. Appendix A. Reports from Assistant Commissioners. Part 1. Report 15. Captain Chapman, p. 424.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 438 and 504.

<sup>47</sup> BPP 1834 (44) XXVIII, Report from His Majesty's Commissioners for Inquiring into the Administration and Practical Operation of the Poor Laws. Appendix A. Reports from Assistant Commissioners. Part 1. Report 3. D.O.P. Okeden, p. 11.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 11. Also see literature in footnote 23.

than most other places from the difficulties of the time'. Nevertheless, the fluctuating wages received by the workers in some industries meant that poor relief was still needed. Boatmen's wages were 'irregular' and brickmaker's wages were high one minute and non-existent the next according to the season.<sup>49</sup> Miners experienced a more stable demand for their labour, although, especially in 1818, the low value of metal led to some under- and unemployment. Whilst, by 1830, 'times had mended' in mining industries, it was also reported that the 'demand for labour falls short of the supply'.<sup>50</sup> In addition, a miner would be employed on account of his 'good speed' and, therefore, his health. Those who therefore suffered from 'illness or a succession of bad speed', Chapman reported, 'are becoming more dependent on the parish'.<sup>51</sup> Even though the parish officers did not have to frequently intervene to set or 'make up' the pay of the employees of these industries, as they did in agricultural parishes, poor relief was still an important safety net during periods of under- and unemployment, accident and illness.

Overall, Wessex offers a diverse focus to explore the policy process. Four counties, however, is a large area within which to locate a thesis. The region contained a huge number of parishes - 1,531 - all of which produced some local administrative documentation. These were organised, after 1834, into 72 New Poor Law Unions (see Figure 3.2), resulting in the production of union administrative documentation, although some parishes continued to provide relief under earlier legislation. In consequence, a sample of records from the region had to be obtained and analysed. The next section details my archival strategy.

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<sup>49</sup> BPP 1834 (44) XXVIII, Report from His Majesty's Commissioners for Inquiring into the Administration and Practical Operation of the Poor Laws. Appendix A. Reports from Assistant Commissioners. Part 1. Report 15. Captain Chapman, p. 486.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 506.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 505-506.

### 3.2 Archival strategy

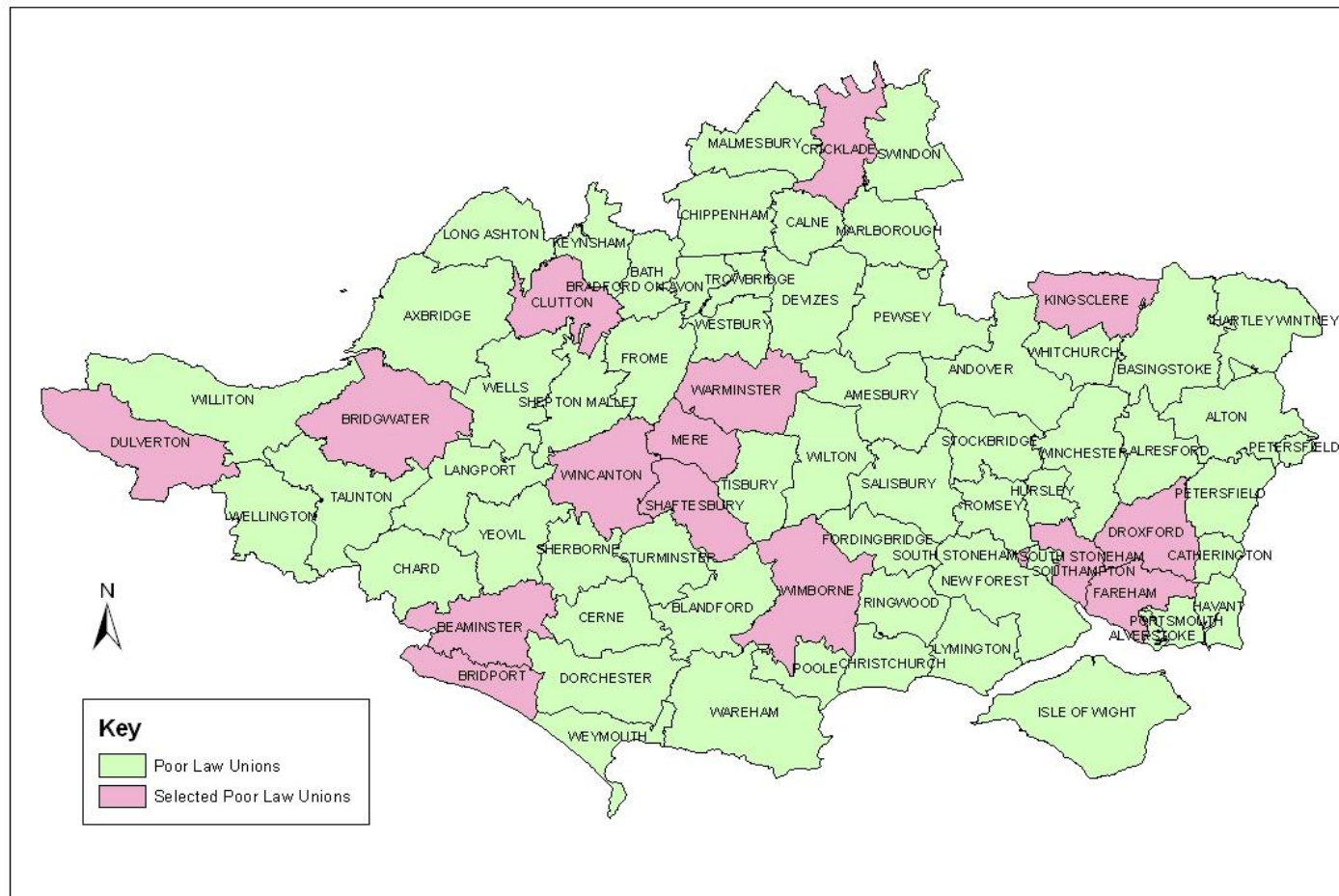
This thesis asks a range of questions, to which the analysis of just one series of documents alone would not suffice. It was important therefore to adopt an approach that acknowledged the importance of many facets of the policy process. The backbone of the research consists of administrative documents created in the local and, after 1834, the national administration of the Poor Laws. As such, it was logical to undertake the archival research in a series of distinct stages.

The first stage was to use the locally-produced administrative documents, held at various county and city record offices across Wessex. This research centred on reading vestry minutes (1750-1847), including Select Vestry minutes, and the minutes kept by committees under Gilbert's Act and Boards of Guardians under the 1834 Amendment Act. Yet, due to the sheer number of records to potentially peruse within the archives, a sampling strategy was devised which covered a wide range of rural contexts whilst matching parishes to the most complete sets of New Poor Law records; minute books and the related correspondence of the unions held at The National Archives (TNA). A total of 15 New Poor Law Unions were selected from across Wessex (see Figure 3.2 and Table 3.1). These unions contained different numbers of parishes, ranging from nine in the Hampshire unions of Fareham and South Stoneham to four times as many parishes in the Somerset unions of Bridgwater and Wincanton. The acreage also varied, from the smaller unions of South Stoneham, Bridport and Mere to the much larger Wimborne and Cranborne Union. This union contained Cranborne, the biggest parish in Dorset, and many other sparsely populated parishes. These parishes were situated within and around Cranborne Chase, a large expanse of land which, within the 'ancient metes and bounds', contained 250,000 acres, a part of which stretches into the south of Wiltshire.<sup>52</sup> William Horace Pitt-Rivers (2<sup>nd</sup> Baron Rivers) owned the Chase before it was disenfranchised in 1830, although the family continued to be major landowners within the bounds of the former legally-constituted Chase alongside several other

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<sup>52</sup> Stevenson, *General view of the agriculture of the county of Dorset*, p. 24.

Figure 3.2: New Poor Law Unions selected in Wessex



Source: Made using 'English Poor Law Unions, 1840' data from UKBORDERS at EDINA. Online. Available: <http://edina.ac.uk> [last accessed 4 June 2010].

Table 3.1: New Poor Law Unions selected with populations 1801-1841 and areas in 1831

County	New Poor Law Union	Number of parishes (on formation)	Population (according to registration district)					Pop. increase (%)	Area (acres)
			1801	1811	1821	1831	1841		
Dorset	Beaminster	27	10378	11257	12959	13869	15112	45.61	56730
	Bridport	17	10160	11482	13194	14644	16674	64.11	32090
	Shaftesbury	19	9093	9862	11196	12189	13106	44.13	38310
	Wimborne and Cranborne	24	10978	11572	12966	14229	15949	45.28	79560
Hampshire	Droxford	11	7092	7824	9056	9549	10281	44.96	48600
	Fareham	9	9447	10488	11319	12137	14599	54.54	36680
	Kingclere	15	5707	6039	7231	7875	8462	48.27	43860
	South Stoneham	9	6074	7015	8677	9416	12693	100.09	27850
Somerset	Bridgwater	40	18066	20724	24712	28566	31793	75.98	87300
	Clutton	29	14871	16326	19636	22368	25190	69.39	46490
	Dulverton*	11	~	~	~	4951	~	~	~
	Wincanton	39	16323	17313	19546	21108	21286	30.40	68110
Wiltshire	Cricklade and Wootton Bassett	14	7914	8587	9619	10275	13195	66.73	41610
	Mere	12	6544	6845	7385	7888	8498	29.86	32100
	Warminster	22	13908	13794	15959	17150	17109	23.02	55510
Total	15 unions	298							

\* Statistics are not readily available for Dulverton because it had only existed as a registration district for less than a year (1 July 1837 to 1 January 1838), thereafter being dissolved and the parishes being placed in the Tiverton District (Devon). 1831 population figure from the first Dulverton Union Minute Book, front matter, SRO D/G/D/8a/1.

Source: Populations and acreage '1831 Census database in EXCEL (Version 2.1) format' downloaded from The Victorian Census Project, Staffordshire University. Online.

Available:

[http://www.staffs.ac.uk/schools/humanities\\_and\\_soc\\_sciences/census/cen1831.htm](http://www.staffs.ac.uk/schools/humanities_and_soc_sciences/census/cen1831.htm)  
[last accessed 8 December 2009].



families.<sup>53</sup> Such a vast expanse of land, and tight land ownership, presents some interesting implications for the workings of the social policies under the poor laws. These understandings have informed this thesis.

One way to understand the diversity of the rural places selected is to calculate the population densities of the parishes these cover. As Figure 3.3 demonstrates, in 1831 both Clutton and Bridport had the highest population densities with between 0.4 and 0.5 people per acre. Six of the unions selected had 0.3-0.4 people per acre, three at 0.2-0.3 and a further three with 0.1-0.2 per acre. Not surprisingly, Wimborne and Cranborne Union had the lowest population density, followed by the Kingsclere Union, located on the Hampshire-Berkshire border and containing the substantial parish of Kingsclere itself, and Droxford Union which covered many large parishes in the south of Hampshire. Interestingly, the large union at Bridgwater which contained 40 parishes had a population density of just 0.244, the Quantock Hills containing small and sparsely populated settlements, whilst the port-based market town of Bridgwater was more populous.<sup>54</sup> This reminds us that these figures can mask variations in population density within the unions.

The unions selected encapsulate the different characteristics of Wessex, containing different rural economies in their environs and differing industrial employments at their centre. Indeed, as desired by the Poor Law Commission, at the centre of most of the New Poor Law Unions were market towns. Land-locked and coastal unions were selected for the sample, as well as those on landscapes which suited pastoral and arable agriculture. It was also imperative that one of the areas researched included parishes which were engaged in the excavation of natural resources. The union selected, centred on Clutton, contained many coal-mining communities on the edge of the Mendips.

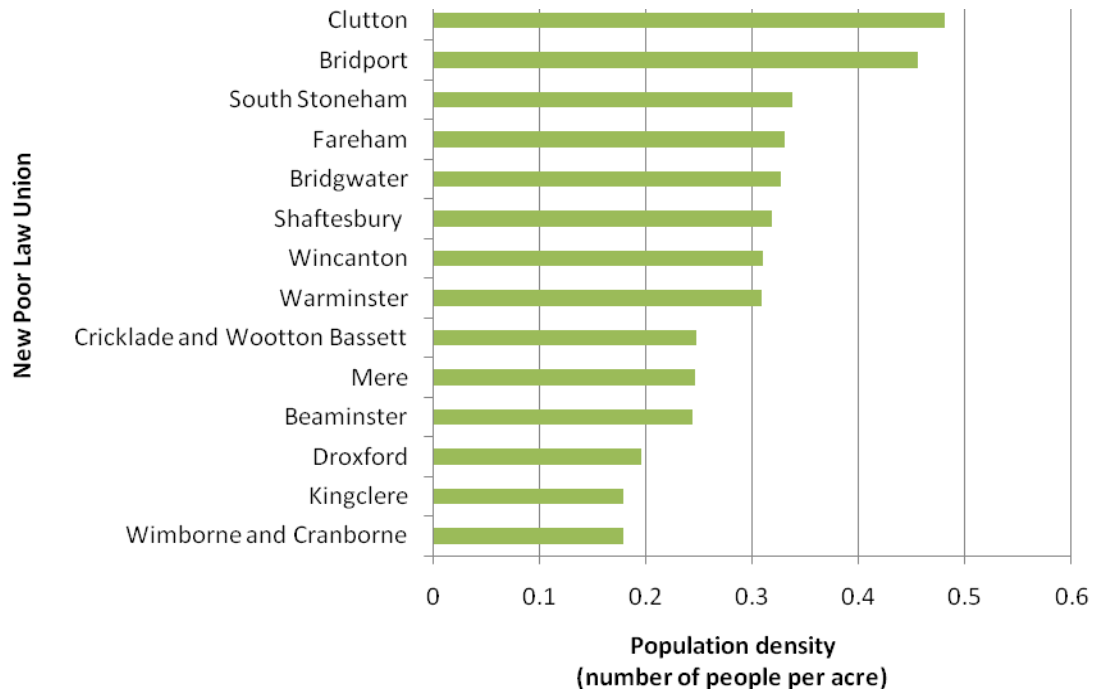
As Table 3.1 illustrates, the area experienced a large increase in population during the first half of the nineteenth century. The area selected which experienced the most dramatic increase in population was that of South Stoneham. This union was chosen because it was in such close proximity to a thriving urban centre of regional importance. Indeed, the union, whilst

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<sup>53</sup> Mainly the Paget, Arundell and Bankes families, see D. Hawkins, *Cranborne Chase* (Wimborne Minster, 1993), p. 35.

<sup>54</sup> Billingsly, *General view of the agriculture of the county of Somerset*, p. 7.

Figure 3.3: Population density of selected unions, 1831



Source: Based on data used for Table 3.1.

containing a large number of agricultural parishes, was carved out from the edge of Southampton, a town which experienced rapid population increase throughout the nineteenth century.<sup>55</sup> Brundage contends that ‘there were wholesale departures from the market town principle’.<sup>56</sup> One of these was the Dulverton Union, mainly formed of large parishes along the county boarder on the edge of Exmoor, south of the Brendon Hills and west of the Vale of Taunton Deane. The remote location and sparse population meant it possessed some interesting characteristics which other unions, with a market town within their centre, did not have.

The Dulverton Union was also selected because it did not build a central union workhouse until the mid-nineteenth century, a feature which may have impacted on dynamics of the policy process under the New Poor Law.

<sup>55</sup> In Southampton in 1801 there were only 8,000 inhabitants, but by 1851 there were 35,000, Bettey, *Wessex from AD 1000*, p. 231.

<sup>56</sup> A. Brundage, *The English Poor Laws, 1700-1930* (Basingstoke, 2002), p. 71.

Nevertheless, it was also important that this sampling strategy considered a range of administrative histories after the passage of the Amendment Act. Four unions were re-modelled during the early years of the New Poor Law to create two larger unions, namely Wimborne and Cranborne (Dorset) and Cricklade and Wootton Bassett (Wiltshire).

Due to the desire to uncover the extent to which officials communicated with one another - the theme of chapter six - unions with shared borders were also selected. The Beaminster and Bridport Unions are one such duo, as are the Droxford and Fareham Unions. Three neighbouring unions largely consisting of parishes from three different counties were also selected, namely Shaftesbury (Dorset), Wincanton (Somerset) and Mere (Wiltshire), the latter of which also bordered onto the Warminster Union (Wiltshire). The Mere Union was also selected because it contained Stourhead, an estate comprising a large house, cottages, chapel and a vast landscaped garden. This was the home of the Hoare family who gained their money in the mid-eighteenth century from banking. It was, therefore, also important to include areas which included landowning gentry in the region, who may (or may not) have paid particular attention to the provision of poor relief on their doorstep.

Three unions, rather than four, were examined in Wiltshire, two in the south of the county, and one in the middle of the county. This was, firstly, due to the poor survival of the New Poor Law Union minute books within the county. Secondly, there are a number of distinctive characteristics in parts of this county not shared by others in Wessex. Unions within the north of the county contained industrialised towns, well-served by a sophisticated canal system. Towns such as Chippenham thrived on the engineering industry and Calne had a well-developed food-processing industry, so this part of Wiltshire experienced a remarkable rise in population by the mid-nineteenth century. Their growth could only be matched in the most urbanised parts of the other counties of Wessex, such as Wellington, Yeovil and Taunton (Somerset).<sup>57</sup> Conversely, several unions, especially in the west of Wiltshire, contained a large number of extra-parochial parishes. These include parishes on Salisbury Plain, on the edges of the New Forest and around Chute Forest, Groveley Wood, Savernake and the parklands of Clarendon and

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<sup>57</sup> Bettey, *Wessex from AD 1000*, p. 232.

Melchet.<sup>58</sup> Such extra-parochial areas did not usually have a place of worship and, prior to 1858, 'made no provision for the poor, and...did not normally appoint overseers.'<sup>59</sup> Poor relief administration both within fast-growing Wessex towns and scarcely populated landscapes requires special attention in a separate study.

Union minute books, as well as letter and punishment books where they exist, were examined for each of these unions, from their creation to 1847. Based on the coverage of these unions, parish-level documentation, predominantly consisting of vestry minutes recorded between 1750 until 1847, was examined. A total of 298 parishes' holdings were examined (see Table 3.1), comprising 19.5% of all parishes within the Wessex region. This appears to be an immense number of parishes, but the survival rate of local administrative records created during this period is poor. In addition, the process revealed very few minutes kept about the adoption and implementation of Gilbert's and Sturges Bourne's Acts, the topics of chapters four and five. As such, a more general survey was undertaken of Wessex parish records using parish catalogues, although a particular focus was placed on identifying documents which would contain details relating to the administration of the Acts (see below), for instance those records which were detailed as 'Select Vestry' minute books or 'Incorporation' committee minutes.

The search for records detailing the adoption and implementation of Gilbert's Act was particularly fruitless. Although, as demonstrated in the next chapter, a great many places had adopted and operated under the Act in rural Wessex, far fewer have left any significant trace of this. The only significant collection of minutes was found in Hampshire in the management of the Gilbert's Parish of Alverstoke, which contained the small coastal town of Gosport. In consequence, I decided to peruse the records of a neighbouring county, West Sussex.<sup>60</sup> This is reflected in the high proportion of parishes which had provided

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<sup>58</sup> Other areas of forest include Braydon in the north of the county and Vernditch Chase in the south, and prior to 1750 forests were also situated in Aldbourne Chase, Chippenham, Melksham and Selwood, J. Langton and G. Jones (eds.), *Forests and Chases England and Wales c.1500-c.1850: Towards a survey & analysis* (Oxford, 2005), see p. viii for a detailed map of forests and chases.

<sup>59</sup> K.D.M. Snell, *Parish and Belonging: Community, Identity and Welfare in England and Wales 1750-1950* (Cambridge, 2006), p. 374.

<sup>60</sup> Wells had already demonstrated in a brief article that a significant proportion of West Sussex had adopted Gilbert's Act; R. Wells, 'The Poor Law 1700-1900' in K.C. Leslie and B. Short (eds.), *A Historical Atlas of Sussex* (Chichester, 1999), pp. 70-71.

relief in a workhouse overall, as documented in answers to the Rural Queries.<sup>61</sup> This led to systematic trawls through paper catalogues, which revealed the survival of both official records, such as minute books, as well as some unusual unofficial records, as shall be discussed in the next section of this chapter.

The introduction of West Sussex to this thesis is not free from complication. On first appearance, West Sussex had much in common with Wessex. The Downs were suitable for mixed farming and sheep walks, and at their foot arable and livestock farming. The High and Low Weald also contained mixed farming, and cattle and dairy farming, although the High also featured hop fields and orchards. Like Wessex, arable farming created a seasonal labour force, with demand highest during the harvest, with smaller numbers given steady employment engaged in stock rearing.<sup>62</sup> Whilst the agricultural and poor relief landscapes are comparable between West Sussex and Wessex, West Sussex witnessed a higher concentration of large landowners. They exerted, according to Verdon, a 'huge influence' over the parishes of the county.<sup>63</sup> These were typical 'closed' parishes under the tight control of one family compared to the 'open' parishes of mid-Sussex which contained numerous landowners with small portions of land.

A large cluster of Gilbert's Act adoptees surrounded Lord Egremont's home in West Sussex, Petworth House. Egremont had particular control over the Gilbert's Parish of Petworth and the unions of Easebourne and Sutton, engaging in philanthropic activities towards the poor throughout his life.<sup>64</sup> On one hand, the careful creation and safe preservation of a large collection of documents has proved helpful for this research, but on the other hand, these records may document an unusual welfare system. Indeed, Lord Egremont's interest and

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<sup>61</sup> 16 of the 32 parishes returning the questionnaire stated that they had provided relief within a workhouse; BPP 1834 (44) XXXI, Report from His Majesty's Commissioners for Inquiring into the Administration and Practical Operation of the Poor Laws. Appendix B.1. Answers to the Rural Queries in Five Parts. Part 2. Question 22.

<sup>62</sup> N. Philbeam and I. Nelson, *Mid Sussex Poor Law Records 1601-1835* (Lewes, 2000), pp. 7-9.

<sup>63</sup> N. Verdon, 'Hay, hops and harvest: women's work in agriculture in nineteenth-century Sussex' in N. Goose (ed.), *Women and Work in Industrial England: Regional and Local Perspectives* (Hatfield, 2007), p. 79.

<sup>64</sup> This was the third Earl of Egremont, George O'Brien Wyndham (1751-1837) and he owned over 110,000 acres and had an annual income of £100,000, C. Rowell, 'Wyndham, George O'Brien, third earl of Egremont (1751-1837)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford, 2004). Online. Available: <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/30141> [last accessed 10 October 2007].

influence over poor relief matters may have had a considerable impact on the ways in which Gilbert's Act had been adopted and implemented. These contextual factors have been acknowledged in the analysis of this material and, where possible, information gathered about these Gilbert's Act Parishes and Unions have been compared with Gilbert's Parishes and Unions elsewhere.

Some of the records created in Lord Egremont's parishes are held in the Petworth House Archives, but ordered through and examined at the West Sussex Record Office. Vestry minute books were examined alongside overseers' account books, not least as these sometimes contained details of the initial decision to adopt Gilbert's Act. Notes were also taken from these records regarding assistant overseers and Select Vestries, adding further data to a critical mass needed for chapter five concerning Sturges Bourne's Acts.

The next stage of the research involved the analysis of New Poor Law correspondence. These records were important to all chapters within the thesis because much of the correspondence during the early years of the New Poor Law details the administration of poor relief in parishes prior to the implementation of the 1834 Act. The bound volumes of correspondence are found at The National Archives, Kew, in two main record series: MH12 and MH32. MH12 contains letters between the Poor Law Commission, based in Somerset House in London, and Boards of Guardians and letters between the Boards of Guardians and the Assistant Poor Law Commissioners. All of the unions selected in the first stage of the research had bound volumes of correspondence, apart from Wincanton and several years of Fareham Union.<sup>65</sup> The only human interface between the policy stipulations of the Commission and the policy implementation on the ground were the Assistant Poor Law Commissioners. Labelled as 'the eyes and ears of Somerset House in the regions which they superintend[ed]', these men were in constant correspondence with the Commission and Boards of Guardians regarding the process of implementing the New Poor Law. This correspondence

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<sup>65</sup> The entire correspondence related to the Wincanton Union has not survived, the Fareham correspondence for the years 1837-1839 has been lost and the previous volume (1834-6) has been damaged by damp. The Droxford Union correspondence for the years 1838-40 have been very badly damaged by damp and has to be used under supervision. Approximately one-third of correspondence in the year 1838 is unreadable.

has been compiled into volumes known as series MH32.<sup>66</sup> It was important to first identify which Assistant Commissioners supervised unions within throughout the period from 1834 to 1847 before note taking from these. The Assistants' districts changed frequently so although I had initially relied on the appendixes of the Annual Poor Law Reports for this information, I was able to follow the details in the correspondence to track the changes myself. A total of twelve different Assistant Commissioners oversaw the region before the creation of the Poor Law Board.

The other Poor Law Commission documents used at TNA included the Commissioners' minute books. Due to the immense amount of information these contained I only examined these for particular periods of time, such as when the cases of abuse and neglect examined in chapter seven had escalated into scandals. TNA also holds the records of the Home Office in whose files remarkably survives a bundle of correspondence relating to one of the General Orders (examined in chapter seven). Both chapters six and seven, which examine the policy process under the New Poor Law, involved the close reading of two other types of documents published by the Commission. Firstly, their Annual Reports, produced from 1835, and their Official Circulars which were formally published from 1840. Whilst the former publications were obtained on loan from the Hartley Library, the latter were accessed at TNA and The British Library.

Other published sources have been examined, forming the final stage of the research. The main published sources analysed were the British Parliamentary Papers (BPPs). These have been indispensable, both as sources of local information about the adoption and implementation of pieces of enabling legislation (from Parliamentary Returns) and detailed information about peoples' roles in neglect and abuse cases under the New Poor Law (from the Minutes of Evidence of Select Committee Reports). This does not mean they are devoid of bias. The documents have been read and used with an understanding of how they were created and the purposes for which they were created. Other miscellaneous documents, such as letters and reports, which were published at the request of one of the Houses of Parliament have also been used. Pamphlets also feature throughout the thesis. These have been searched for using the catalogues of

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<sup>66</sup> Brundage, *The English Poor Laws*, p. 71.

county and city archives and other collections, such as Nineteenth Century (on microfiche), and web-based resources including Eighteenth Century Collections Online and Google Books. Pamphlets which I know to exist from other sources, for instance, being mentioned in a letter, have been found at local reference libraries and The British Library. National and local newspaper searches have also been undertaken, but as with some of the pamphlets, many of these were followed-up after gaining prior knowledge of their content from other documents.<sup>67</sup>

Although chapters four to six are largely thematic, chapter seven, which traces the impact of scandals on the genesis of policies, relies on the close scrutiny of a series of events. Tracing the impact of scandals on the creation of policy-making, the focus of chapter seven, involved the close reading of *Hansard's Parliamentary Debates*. Due to the aim to examine the context within which the first medical policy was created in that chapter, two medical specialist publications were consulted: *Provincial Medical and Surgical Journal* and *The Lancet*. Both publications have been digitalised.

### **3.3 Production and consumption**

Any account of the policy process under the poor laws has to be (re)constituted from records created by those in a position of authority; the vestrymen, Guardians, magistrates, Poor Law Commissioners, their secretaries and assistants.<sup>68</sup> According to Scott, such administrative records contain 'facts' because 'the author may have little choice or discretion' over the creation and contents of the document.<sup>69</sup> Yet all administrative documents were necessarily created with underlying motives and within uneven power structures, and hence are inherently biased. Historians have, therefore, stressed the need for

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<sup>67</sup> *The Times* was searched using the online index and *Palmer's Index to The Times* which was available in the Hartley Library, University of Southampton.

<sup>68</sup> J. Scott, *A Matter of Record: Documentary Sources in Social Research* (Cambridge, 1990).

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 22.



documents to be read through the eyes of their creators.<sup>70</sup> The production of a document, therefore, should always affect the way in which the researcher consumes (uses) the document.<sup>71</sup> According to Prior, this means that records should be read *interpretatively* rather than just literally. All documents produced in social settings 'are always...collective (social) products'.<sup>72</sup> Information may be taken from the documents, such as dates, places and decisions, but such 'facts' should be used with an understanding of both how they were created and why they were recorded. An interpretative approach, therefore, requires the document consumer to interpret the contents of a document, and not to take its contents at face-value.

Interpretative readings of documents can also remind us that content alone 'is not the most important feature of a document'.<sup>73</sup> We can elucidate, rather than just be aware of, the predetermined views of the author by revealing how the author 'performs' their identity, and authority, within the record.<sup>74</sup> The policy process approach is somewhat similar to the aims of the interpretative readings of documents, as it promotes the understanding of 'the exercise of power and influence as well as the development of policies'.<sup>75</sup> As such, this thesis is not only interested in the contents of records produced in the administration of the poor laws, but also the processes which generated these records and the data within them. Those who ordered the document to be produced and authored them were in positions of power. Without such an approach, important aspects of the documentation could be missed. For instance, the Annual Poor Law Reports, created by the Poor Law Commissioners, were produced by law for the Secretary of State. The reports were generally upbeat in tone and relied upon stories of successful implementations of the Amendment Act. Copies of the Report were not only sent to the Secretary, but also to Boards of Guardians, parish officials and those whom the Assistant Commissioners identified as individuals who paid an interest in, or were resistant towards, the Amendment Act. An interpretative

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<sup>70</sup> A. Baker, J. Hamshere and J. Langton, *Geographical Interpretations of Historical Sources* (Newton Abbot, 1970).

<sup>71</sup> L. Prior, *Using Documents in Social Research* (London, 2003).

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 26

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 26.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 104.

<sup>75</sup> C. Bochel and H. Bochel, *The UK Social Policy Process* (Basingstoke, 2004), p. 6.

approach would, therefore, take into account that the information within the Reports was selected and displayed with the intention of influencing the readers to support the continued operation of the New Poor Law. With this understanding in mind, it has been possible to trace how particular policies and practices were disseminated using the Reports from and between those in positions of power (see chapter six).

This thesis also uses experiences of individual relief claimants and recipients from documents containing 'pauper narratives'. As noted in the previous chapter, poor law historians have paid attention to the complications of using pauper narratives, especially those in pauper letters and examinations. I have used documents in which individuals were interviewed about their experiences, the results of which featured in pamphlets and Parliamentary Papers. Unlike administrative documents, these interviews were not simply created by those in positions of authority, but were written as part of a process in which their interviewees were relatively powerless. Whilst individuals' answers may have reflected their true experiences, the questions were framed and the answers were then presented in ways which would make them more acceptable to those in positions of authority. As Steedman suggests, these are not simply the words of the poor but 'enforced narratives' constructed through an administrative process.<sup>76</sup> It is therefore essential to adopt an interpretative approach when using these types of records as well.

The rest of this chapter explores the creation and contents of the documents used in this thesis. It first considers local administrative records, both official records (created according to legal stipulations) and unofficial records, before assessing Commission, Parliamentary and governmental records.

### **3.3.1 Local administrative records**

Records which derive from the administrative unit of the parish are of fundamental importance in understanding policy process under the pre-1834 poor laws. These documents have been deposited, according to law, in county and

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<sup>76</sup> C. Steedman, 'Enforced Narratives: Stories of another self' in T. Cosslett, C. Lury and P. Summerfield (eds.), *Feminism and Autobiography: Texts, Theories, Methods* (London, 2000), pp. 25-39.

city record offices, and fall into the following categories. Firstly, vestry minutes detail the decisions made by those rate-payers who formed the *de facto* parish management committee. Vestry meetings 'deal[t] with every aspect of parish life and communal affairs', setting church, highway and poor rates: taxes levied against property owners and occupied at the level of the parish towards the maintenance of the church, the roads and the poor respectively.<sup>77</sup> As such, these notes (can) reveal the policies, including adoption and implementation of enabling acts by individual parishes. Vestry minutes are usually found within their own vestry books, although they can also be found within other parish records such as overseers' accounts and churchwardens' minutes.<sup>78</sup> Unfortunately, many vestry minute books have not survived, and scores of those which have survived have badly deteriorated. As with all documents, this may have been due to loss or mishandling. Many local administrative records were kept in parish chests which protected documents over long periods of time. All the same, many parish chests were kept in parish churches which made the documents vulnerable to damage. The parish records of Yatley (Hampshire), for instance, were damaged when an arson attack led to the total devastation of the church in 1979.

Select Vestry minutes contain details of the adoption and implementation of Select Vestries. As Tate notes, however, Select Vestry minutes were not always noted within their own separate minute book. They can be found scattered amongst the ordinary or 'open' vestry minutes, placed at the back of open vestry books and even amongst other types of parish records akin to ordinary vestry minutes. As such, identifying whether a parish has a Select Vestry from the perusal of a catalogue alone is a flawed approach. In addition, even if minutes cannot be found it does not necessarily mean that a Select Vestry was not in operation. Some vestry minute books contain evidence of the adoption of a Select Vestry but no evidence of its management. This is because, according to the law,

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<sup>77</sup> W.E. Tate, *The Parish Chest: A Study of the Records of Parochial Administration in England*, third edition (Chichester, 1969), p. 13.

<sup>78</sup> Before 1834 overseers of the poor were the principal agents administering the poor laws. Overseers were bound by the law to keep records of their accounts, in relation to both income (mainly from the poor rates) and expenditure (mainly on poor relief). Within these accounts individuals' relief would be recorded by name, usually noting the male head of the family, and would also sometimes give a reason for the expenditure, for instance, illness, working for the parish, or relief in kind such as clothing and shoes.

each year a Select Vestry had to be voted in by an open vestry meeting and this had to be supported by a magistrate. The arrangement was renewed annually.<sup>79</sup> Such agreements can be found in parish records or on separate pieces of paper. Where regular minutes *have* been kept, they contain varying levels of detail about the proceedings of the vestry, or no detail whatsoever. As Wells has noticed, Select Vestries were supposed to convene once every fortnight, but suffered from absenteeism for a number of reasons. For instance, the Ticehurst Select Vestry experienced low attendance in 1826 ‘probably attributable to complacency’ and in 1830 ‘owing to difficult harvesting and hopping during the third consecutive wet season’.<sup>80</sup> The cancellation of meetings obviously resulted in less decision-making which provides fewer minutes for analysis.

A variety of records are required to examine the adoption and implementation of Gilbert’s Act. Parishes which adopted Gilbert’s Act had two additional administrative structures above the open parish vestry. From this we have been left both agreements and a few detailed administrative documents. Legislation stipulated that the consent of two magistrates was required upon the adoption of the Act. These agreements can be found in Quarter Sessions records.<sup>81</sup> Since parishes could adopt Gilbert’s Act alone or in union with other parishes, copies of these agreements are often found in parish vestry books as well as Gilbert’s Union minute books.<sup>82</sup> Some agreements have survived allowing us to piece together the initial compositions of the parishes united under the Act. Occasionally, though, such agreements were never actually sought. A Sussex magistrate found out from attendees of a Petworth Quarter Sessions in 1796 that ‘some Houses of Industry in the Western Division of the County of Sussex have not registered their Deeds of Union’. He then placed an advert, presumably in a newspaper, stating that several unions had been formed without seeking his attention and warned that ‘Prosecutions will be commenced against the Parties

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<sup>79</sup> 59 Geo. III c.12, I. The Select Vestry could operate from any time, but it would expire fourteen days after the annual appointment of overseers.

<sup>80</sup> R. Wells, ‘Poor-Law Reform in the Rural South-east; the Impact of the ‘Sturges Bourne Acts’ during the Agricultural Depression, 1815-1835’, *Southern History*, 23 (2001), pp. 61 and 73.

<sup>81</sup> 22. Geo. III c.83, IV.

<sup>82</sup> 22. Geo. III c.83, I.

who shall neglect so to do'.<sup>83</sup> In addition, two magistrates had to approve the location of each workhouse, but it is unclear whether such an agreement was needed when a Gilbert's Act Parish or Union used a pre-existing building.<sup>84</sup> Magistrates' roles were further extended as they had to approve the yearly appointment of the workhouse governor (or contractor) and had to appoint a Visitor (from a shortlist of three persons) and treasurer (from the group of elected Guardians).<sup>85</sup>

The administration of Gilbert's Parishes and Unions required the upkeep of account and minute books. The existence of separate workhouse account books records appears to be more prevalent in Gilbert's Unions, rather than Gilbert's Parishes, because expenses had to be apportioned amongst the united members. Those who adopted the Act alone often merged these accounts with the overseers' accounts. Several institutions kept very detailed records. The Gilbert's Parish of Alverstoke made particularly detailed minutes, and a multitude of documents (including receipts, contracts and treasurers' books) survived from the Sutton and Easebourne Unions which are kept in the Petworth House Archives. Minutes created from statutory meetings of the Visitor and Guardians were crucial in developing an understanding of what Boards' concerns were and how decisions were implemented.<sup>86</sup> Some people have already commented on how useful this particular source is. Wells, for instance, states that the existence of these documents 'permits a rare insight into the opaque world of vestry politics'.<sup>87</sup>

It was also imperative that each treasurer wrote a 'just and fair Account of the Expences' of administering relief under Gilbert's Act, the population of the workhouse 'distinguishing their Age and Sex...and how they have been employed,

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<sup>83</sup> Note written by W. Ellis (at the Petworth Quarter Sessions), 4 October 1796 and correspondence J. Sargent (Woolavington) to Mr. William Ellis, Attorney of Law (Horsham, Sussex), 26 October 1796, both in Clerk of the Peace, Precedents, Notices concerning workhouses and millers, 1796, ESRO QCP/2/2.

<sup>84</sup> 22. Geo. III c.83, VII, X. Section XVII states that 'proper Buildings and Accommodations' should be provided 'either by erecting new ones on Land to be purchased or rented by them for that Purpose, altering old ones, or hiring Buildings for the Purpose'.

<sup>85</sup> 22. Geo. III c.83, VIII, X and XI.

<sup>86</sup> 22. Geo. III c.83, VII.

<sup>87</sup> This point was made whilst analysing parish contracting-out processes in Framfield (East Sussex), which was permitted under an earlier 'enabling' law, R. Wells, 'Social Protest, Class, Conflict and Consciousness in the English Countryside 1700-1880' in M. Reed and R. Wells (eds.), *Class, Conflict and Protest in the English Countryside, 1700-1880* (London, 1990), p. 144.

and how such Money hath been earned by the Labour of the Poor in the Year preceding'.<sup>88</sup> These annual reports are extremely rare because, after being written, they were sent to the local Quarter Sessions. Nevertheless, William Bridger diligently made copies of the annual reports submitted from the Easebourne Gilbert's Union.<sup>89</sup> These were kept within the Petworth House repositories. The information these reports contain is largely qualitative, and clearly reflects a rather optimistic view of the achievements made within the union throughout the past year. The accounts of the workhouse populations, however, lend themselves to quantitative analysis, providing an illustration of the characteristics of individuals within the institution.

Regardless of the fact the law required the production of a multitude of official records, the majority of enabling Act adoptions left little trace. Hints of their existence can only be deciphered from the occasional vestry minute scattered amongst the parish record. Such hints could also come from other records. The answers of the Rural and Town Queries have been used to generate a tentative picture of the adoption of enabling legislation for chapters four and five. Colonel Charles Ashe A'Court, previously a magistrate and deputy lieutenant of Wiltshire, was appointed as an Assistant Commissioner for the counties of Hampshire, Wiltshire and Berkshire in 1834.<sup>90</sup> Immediately after his appointment he travelled to Hampshire, making detailed reports about the administration of relief in each parish, which are now held by The National Archives in the record series MH32. These have been useful in piecing together an understanding of the adoption and implementation of non-compulsory Acts.

Upon the passage of the Amendment Act and the creation of New Poor Law Unions in Wessex in 1835 and 1836, the administration of poor relief shifted away from the parish. Each union was controlled by a governing body of elected Guardians who met once a week to discuss the administration of the union, under the directions of the central Poor Law Commission. These discussions were noted within large union minute books. Similar to vestry, Select Vestry and Gilbert's Act

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<sup>88</sup> 22. Geo. III c.83, XII.

<sup>89</sup> All data extracted from Easebourne Union, Copies of the yearly accounts of William Bridger, Treasurer of the Easebourne United Parishes, 1797-1827, PHA/7869.

<sup>90</sup> A. Brundage, *The Making of the New Poor Law: The Politics of Inquiry, Enactment, and Implementation, 1832-1839* (London, 1978), p. 83.

Guardians' minutes, they vary in detail, and meetings were sometimes cancelled. At the Kingsclere Union, an average of 4.6 planned meetings per year between 1836 and 1847 did not go ahead due to low attendance.<sup>91</sup> This may not have always been due to uninterested Guardians. In more remote rural locations, travelling to a meeting, usually by horse, could be hindered by cold weather. Uniquely, the Dulverton Union even called fewer meetings. From April 1842 the Guardians had decided to meet only once a fortnight, which was probably satisfactory in light of the fact they were not managing a union workhouse.<sup>92</sup>

A variety of locally produced - and unofficial - records were also created detailing the adoption and implementation of social policies under the poor laws. Some of these records served an administrative purpose. The Sutton Gilbert's Union (West Sussex) records are of particular interest to the themes in this thesis. Rare bundles of miscellaneous bills and receipts were kept, and when a contractor was appointed to undertake the management of the workhouse, their original correspondence with the Guardians has survived. These can contain the views of contractors, as well as the Guardians', about the contracting-out process. The Sutton Union collection also includes what have been catalogued as 'case papers'. What appear to be odd pieces of paper contain approximately 150 relief decisions of the Board made between 1837 and 1844. These cases detail the names of the poor applying for relief, their situation (sometimes their age, marital status and dependants), what they applied for and often the decision of the board. Whilst they appear to have had a patchy survival, their contents allow us a rare insight into how relief was obtained by paupers.<sup>93</sup>

Such unofficial yet administratively important records were also kept during the implementation of the New Poor Law. Volumes within the series MH12 and MH32 are the core documents used by historians to understand the implementation of the New Poor Law. The latter series contains information about the Assistant Commissioners' progress in establishing and managing New Poor Law Unions. Some of these letters were not for the general consumption of the Commission itself but intended for individual members of the Commission.

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<sup>91</sup> Kingsclere Union, Minute Books, 1835-1847, HRO PL3/11/1-4.

<sup>92</sup> Dulverton Union, Minute Book, 1842-1847, SRO D\G\D/8a/2 compared to Dulverton Union, Minute Book, 1836-1842, SRO D\G\D/8a/1.

<sup>93</sup> Sutton Union, Sutton Case Papers, WSRO WG3/4.

This can make the details of some of the letters difficult to contextualise. For instance, the papers in MH12 reveal much about how Boards of Guardians came to a decision about administering relief according to the New Poor Law and why they remonstrated against a particular stipulation. These letters can also reveal whether, in making their decision, they had consulted the opinions of other Boards of Guardians. According to Wells, the correspondence is invaluable about the local implementation of the New Poor Law, but also incomplete.<sup>94</sup> Within MH12 and MH32 both the enclosures belonging to letters and whole letters are missing, presumably because they were taken away to serve another administrative purpose and not replaced.

Other locally produced records were also replete with information detailing the reform and implementation of social policies but did not fulfil an administrative purpose. Rather, they served as reading material for particular audiences. Pamphlets, for instance, contain useful accounts of local relief schemes but are likely to take one of two positions. Either they contain details of reforms recently made, and therefore are predisposed to providing evidence of positive changes to poor relief provision, or details of local poor relief provision which needs reform. In this case, they are more likely to present a negative picture of poor relief provision and are hopeful of change in the near future (discussed in chapters six and seven). Subscription lists for eighteenth and nineteenth century pamphlets are relatively rare, but where they have been included within the pamphlet themselves their contents are illuminating. The audience of Herbert Smith's pro-New Poor Law pamphlet, written about the implementation of the New Poor Law in the New Forest, included local and neighbouring parish and union officials, local Members of Parliament and those in government who had been interested in the pamphleteers' ideas, including the Earl of Radnor, Lord Ashburton, Sir Matthew Blakiston and, a local Hampshire resident, William Sturges-Bourne.<sup>95</sup> Newspapers and journals were also written for a particular audience. *The Times* was a notoriously anti-New Poor Law

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<sup>94</sup> This point has been stressed by Wells, who recognises that the MH12 series is an underused resource by poor law historians, R. Wells, Review of P. Carter (ed.), *Bradford Poor Law Union: Papers and Correspondence with the Poor Law Commission 1834 to January 1839* (Woodbridge, 2004), *English Historical Review*, 490 (2006), 233-237.

<sup>95</sup> H. Smith, 'The poor man's advocate; or, A few words for and to the poor : In six letters : With an addenda' (London, 1839), list of subscribers at the back of the pamphlet.



national newspaper, as were many local newspapers. It is important to consider this dynamic because articles and letters will inevitably present a particular viewpoint.

### **3.3.2 Commission, parliamentary and governmental records**

The Commission created several other types of documents, other than the letters mentioned above, containing their decisions and stipulations about how to administer relief under the New Poor Law. The Official Circulars contained the most important decisions and stipulations made by the Commission and served as a handbook for Guardians and workhouse staff alike.<sup>96</sup> The Annual Reports, as described above, existed to convince the Secretary of State and its other readers that implementation of the New Poor Law was proceeding smoothly and with just cause.<sup>97</sup>

A variety of documents have been used from the governmental level. By far the most useful type of record, which features within all of the chapters of this thesis, are Parliamentary Returns. These contain information sent to Parliament from the localities, which is then collated and published. This data is sometimes discussed in the Houses, especially those members who called for the Returns, or was sent to an appointed Select Committee for examination. In the latter case, the Select Committee usually produced a report which discussed the returned information. Returns, whilst providing a wealth of information about particularly controversial areas of social policy, are flawed in two main ways. First, not all places which were asked for information replied. Only after 1834 was there a central welfare authority, the Poor Law Commission, which was able to press for the return of completed questionnaires. Not only can Returns be partial and incomplete they are also only merely snapshots of reality. Upon asking questions such as ‘do you do x?’ they produce answers which capture a process at a specific moment in time. This flaw has caused a particular problem in our current understanding of the adoption of Gilbert’s Act, as shall be discussed in the next chapter. More generally, the information which we can glean from Returns is

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<sup>96</sup> Official Circulars of Public Documents and Information (London). I would like to thank David Green for bringing these to my attention.

<sup>97</sup> Annual Reports of the Poor Law Commissioners (London).

constrained by both the heavily structured nature of the surveys and the specific topics of the questions which were asked, which often provoked simple 'yes' or 'no' answers.

Sometimes the contents of a speech in Parliament, or the contents of a Return, raised enough concern to warrant a more thorough investigation. Indeed, after the scandals were mentioned in the Houses of Parliament and were deemed too important to ignore, Select Committees were immediately formed to investigate and report as to the relief practices within the problem union. Consisting of different members of Parliament, the Committees collected Returns, copies of correspondence between those individuals who both administered and received poor relief and held called some of these individuals to an interview. These interviews were transcribed and, upon reading, contain an immense amount of detail about how responsibilities were negotiated between different layers of authority. Such interviews were intimidating though and we need to carefully consider these pressures on the interviewees.<sup>98</sup> In addition, some Select Committees, formed around a 'problem' with the existing policy rather than scandal, took evidence from stakeholder groups. These individuals had an explicit interest in the reform of policies, perhaps to benefit themselves and the individuals they represented.

Both Returns and Select Committee reports need to be contextualised within the debates of the House from which their Order arose. Hansard's Parliamentary Debates contain transcriptions of the speeches and debates which occurred within both Houses of Parliament. Although these are not verbatim records, they are nonetheless detailed accounts. In addition, although they have useful contents pages and clear layouts, they are written generally in the third person, so on occasion it is difficult to follow exactly who said what, and who the speaker was referring to. Occasionally, where the exact timing of an Order (such

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<sup>98</sup> There are numerous issues and challenges associated with interviewing which could cause bias in the answers provided. These issues are covered well in contemporary methodology books, but also apply to the interviews documented in the past, e.g. J. Mason, *Qualitative Researching*, second edition (London, 2002), pp. 62-83. Wells has identified some places where the Commissioners actually asked a number of leading questions during the interviews about welfare scandals, and instances where the answers of the interviewees contain the terminology of the interviewers, R. Wells, 'Andover Antecedents? Hampshire New Poor-Law Scandals, 1834-1842', *Southern History*, 24 (2002), p. 156.

as a Return for documents, the publishing of documents or the commencement of a Select Committee) could not be deciphered, the Journals of the House of Commons and House of Lords, and their Indexes, were consulted. These provide succinct summaries of the Order moved for within the House and the date upon which it occurred. This technique provides just enough information to find the relevant entry within *Hansard* and obtain more information about the background of the Order.

Before 1847, the central welfare authority was an ‘independent body, uncontrolled by any Minister, and therefore unrepresented in the House of Commons’.<sup>99</sup> Nevertheless, as the Amendment Act of 1834 details, the Commission was accountable to the Secretary of State. Correspondence between the Secretary of State and the Poor Law Commission, held at TNA, has survived only in a partial state. Civil servants, as today, were instructed to identify which paperwork would be worth keeping. Luckily, some of the correspondence relating to both of the scandals examined in chapter seven survived this process and can be found within the series HO. Although all of the HO series are yet to be catalogued at piece level, those relating to the scandals were accessible. There are several issues to consider when using these documents, however. As with any correspondence, it is difficult to ascertain whether any other correspondence surrounding the issue had been written. If these are copies of correspondence – which is likely at the governmental level – we must ask whether the writers have written all of the details word for word. In addition, have they made omissions, or failed to copy the notes on the edges of letters (which provide us with useful clues as to the readers’ reactions)? In addition, in relation to correspondence between people working within close proximity, what verbal negotiations, if any, surrounded these letters? These are questions which I am unable to answer with any certainty, but must be considered when using the documents.

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<sup>99</sup> S. Webb and B. Webb, *English Poor Law History, Part 2: The Last Hundred Years* (1929, London, 1963), p. 183.

## Chapter 4: Enabling Acts (I) Gilbert's Act

This chapter is one of two which examines the adoption and implementation of enabling legislation passed during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. As chapter two outlined, although the existence of this legislation has been used by historians to illustrate a general desire for poor law reform prior to 1834, the impact of the legislation within parishes has been perceived as insignificant. This chapter examines the impact of Gilbert's Act of 1782 within Wessex and West Sussex. The genesis of the Act is briefly outlined, after which the main stipulations of the Act are reviewed. The chapter then focuses on two areas. Firstly, it examines the adoption of Gilbert's Act in the south of England and considers why parishes adopted the Act. Secondly, it analyses the relief provided to individuals living within parishes which adopted the Act, including the different forms of work undertaken in the Gilbert's Act workhouses. Through an examination of the adoption and implementation of Gilbert's Act, this chapter demonstrates how enabling legislation manifested itself in different ways across the south of England.

### 4.1 Gilbert and the Act of 1782

Born in Staffordshire, Thomas Gilbert was a chief land agent to Lord Gower and, by 1782, an eager poor law reformer. Through his work, he developed an immense political, legal, commercial and industrial knowledge which enabled the Gower estate to become one of the most prosperous in England. Gilbert's concern for the poor may have stemmed from his role as agent, which had allowed him to take onboard the role of paymaster for a charity of naval officers' widows. In November 1763 he was elected to Parliament for Newcastle-under-Lyme and subsequently represented Lichfield until his retirement in 1794.<sup>1</sup> According to Coats, Gilbert's enthusiasm for poor law reform and especially his desire to

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<sup>1</sup> R.S. Tompson, 'Gilbert, Thomas (*bap.* 1720, *d.* 1798)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford, 2004). Online. Available: <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/10703> [last accessed 10 June 2008].

improve the welfare of the poor was immediately apparent on his arrival at Westminster and within a month he threw his energies into better understanding the workings of the poor laws. Between January and March 1764 he sat on a committee which sought to 'resolve' the debt of the Gloucester workhouse. This seemingly self-contained examination soon unfurled into a 'lengthy dispute in which the merits of indoor and outdoor relief were vigorously debated.'<sup>2</sup> It is thought that in these formative parliamentary years Gilbert had developed his preliminary ideas for the later Act. His first bill, for the 'Employment and better relief of the poor', was debated in Parliament in 1765.<sup>3</sup> This early bill proposed that commissioners be appointed to draw up relief districts for which local-level committees would be elected and charged with establishing workhouses for the reception of their poor. The policies failed to gain enough support in the House of Lords, with 66 votes against and 59 for the bill.<sup>4</sup> Gilbert revised these plans in 1775, but although several of his resolutions were accepted by the Commons, a bill was not prepared.<sup>5</sup>

There was then an evolution in Gilbert's ideas about the purpose of the workhouse.<sup>6</sup> In his 1775 pamphlet Gilbert wrote that workhouses 'should contain as many poor, as can conveniently be managed under the care of one set of officers', making no distinction between the types of poor who should be accommodated.<sup>7</sup> In his next pamphlet, published in 1781, he wrote that the 'vulnerable' poor – the aged, infirm and young – should be accommodated in the workhouse. The able-bodied would not be permitted to reside in the house. This policy idea was based on the information he gleaned from the 1771 Parliamentary Returns on Houses of Industry. Gilbert noted that whilst some workhouses had

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<sup>2</sup> A.W. Coats, 'Economic thought and poor law policy in the eighteenth century', *Economic History Review*, 13 (1960), p. 46.

<sup>3</sup> T. Gilbert, 'A Scheme for the Better Relief and Employment of the Poor' (London, 1764).

<sup>4</sup> S. Webb and B. Webb, *English Poor Law History, Part 1: The Old Poor Law* (1927, London, 1963), p. 170.

<sup>5</sup> Coats states it was likely that 'the attention of members was diverted to the task of collecting information' on workhouses, Coats, 'Economic thought and poor law policy', p. 47; original information from T. Gilbert, 'Observations upon the Orders and Resolutions of the House of Commons, with respect to the poor, vagrants, and houses of correction' (London, 1775).

<sup>6</sup> As Coats has noted, it is difficult to fully understand the influences which made Gilbert change his opinions of social policies because the House of Commons Committee records relating to the period were destroyed; Coats, 'Economic thought and poor law policy', footnote 7, p. 47.

<sup>7</sup> Gilbert, 'Observations upon the Orders and Resolutions of the House of Commons', p. 28.

‘succeeded very well, in Places where they have been duly attended by Gentlemen respectable in their Neighbourhood’, others were much ‘less beneficial.’ Their overall success was ‘precarious’.<sup>8</sup> Gilbert thought that such old parish workhouses:

were generally inhabited by all Sorts of Persons...Hence arise Confusion, Disorder, and Distresses, not easily to be described...I have long thought it a great Defect in the Management of the common Workhouses, that all Descriptions of poor Persons should be sent thither; where...they are very ill accommodated.<sup>9</sup>

As Marshall has noted, to Gilbert old parish workhouses were ‘dens of horror’.<sup>10</sup> They were too uncomfortable for those who were in poverty due to no fault of their own and places where the young were susceptible to ‘Habits of Virtue and Vice’ learnt from ‘bad characters’. For the sake of both the poor and the rates, Gilbert thought that workhouses should be reformed to promote industrious behaviour.<sup>11</sup>

These ideas culminated in a new bill and then subsequently Gilbert’s Act of 1782.<sup>12</sup> The literature is remarkably silent about the development of Gilbert’s ideas before 1782 and the passage of the bill, not least because of the fire of 1834 which burnt down both Houses of Parliament and destroyed most of the records produced by the Commons prior to this year. Nevertheless, from Gilbert’s plan and the legislature itself, it is possible to decipher the aims of Gilbert’s reforms. Firstly, the Act enabled parishes to provide a workhouse solely for the accommodation of the vulnerable.<sup>13</sup> Although such residents were, as Gilbert put it, ‘not able to maintain themselves by their Labour’ outside of the workhouse they were still to ‘be employed in doing as much Work as they can’ within the

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<sup>8</sup> T. Gilbert, ‘Plan for the better relief and employment of the poor; for enforcing and amending the laws respecting houses of correction, and vagrants; and for improving the police of this country. Together with bills intended to be offered to Parliament for those purposes’ (London, 1781), p. 3.

<sup>9</sup> Gilbert, ‘Plan for the better relief and employment of the poor’, pp. 6-7.

<sup>10</sup> D. Marshall, *The English Poor in the Eighteenth Century: a study in social administrative history* (London, 1926), p. 160.

<sup>11</sup> Gilbert, ‘Plan for the better relief and employment of the poor’, p. 11.

<sup>12</sup> Repealed in 1871 in the Statute Law Revision Act, Webb and Webb, *English Poor Law History, Part 1*, p. 171.

<sup>13</sup> 22 Geo. III c.83, XXIX.

workhouse.<sup>14</sup> Work was therefore a part of everyday life within a Gilbert's Act workhouse. The able-bodied were to be found employment and outdoor relief, with indoor relief only provided on a temporary basis.<sup>15</sup> Those who refused work (the 'idle') were to endure 'hard Labour in the Houses of Correction'.<sup>16</sup>

Gilbert's Act also allowed parishes to unite together to provide a workhouse. According to King, Gilbert's Act was the first real breach of the old poor laws principle 'local problem - local treatment', not least because Gilbert's Act permitted poor relief administration to transcend parish boundaries.<sup>17</sup> Yet, any 'Parish, Town, or Township' was also permitted to implement the law alone, and therefore concerns over poverty did not always go beyond individual parish boundaries under Gilbert's Act.<sup>18</sup> Indeed, Driver was the first welfare historian to explicitly acknowledge that there were both Gilbert's Act Parishes and Gilbert's Act Unions, a distinction which has informed the analysis in this chapter.<sup>19</sup> The workhouses were to be managed in a different way compared to the older parish workhouses, such as those established under Knatchbull's Act of 1723. Gilbert believed that the poor laws had been 'unhappily' executed 'through the misconduct of overseers'.<sup>20</sup> Such officers, tended to 'gratify themselves and their Favourites, and neglect the more deserving Objects'.<sup>21</sup> This dim view of overseers was shared by many others at the time.<sup>22</sup> In correction, Gilbert's Act proposed two new roles which essentially bypassed the overseers' role in issuing relief: the Visitor and Guardians. Each Gilbert's Parish or Union was to appoint one Visitor

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<sup>14</sup> Gilbert, 'Plan for the better relief and employment of the poor', p. 7.

<sup>15</sup> '...any poor Person or Persons who shall be able and willing to work, but who cannot get Employment, it shall and may be lawful for the Guardian...to agree for the Labour of such poor Person or Persons, at any Work or Employment suited to his or her Strength and Capacity...and to maintain, or cause such Person or Persons to be properly maintained, lodged, and provided for, until such Employment shall be procured, and during the Time of such Work, and to receive the Money to be earned by such Work or Labour, and apply it in such Maintenance, as far as the same will go, and make up the Deficiency...', 22 Geo. III c.83, XXXII.

<sup>16</sup> Gilbert, 'Plan for the better relief and employment of the poor', p. 7, also see 22 Geo. III c.83, XXXII.

<sup>17</sup> S. King, *Poverty and Welfare in England 1700-1850: A Regional Perspective* (Manchester, 2000), p. 25.

<sup>18</sup> 22 Geo. III c.83, I.

<sup>19</sup> F. Driver, *Power and Pauperism: The Workhouse System 1834-1884* (Cambridge, 1993), p. 45.

<sup>20</sup> Gilbert, 'Observations upon the orders and resolutions of the House of Commons', p. 3.

<sup>21</sup> Gilbert, 'Plan for the better relief and employment of the poor', p. 9.

<sup>22</sup> For instance, Richard Burn's *The History of the Poor Laws* condemned parish officers for being too harsh towards the poor and fraudulent with the poor rates, R. Burn, *The History of the Poor Laws: With Observations* (London, 1764).

whose role, similar to that of a chairman under the New Poor Law, was to bring strategies to the board table, make policy decisions and to give direction to the Guardians, parish vestries and workhouse staff.<sup>23</sup> One Guardian was to be elected for every parish in a union. The Visitor and Guardians met once a month to organise and administer relief. Within these meetings they could establish year-long contracts with third parties ‘for the Diet or Cloathing of such poor Persons...and for the Work and Labour of such poor Persons’.<sup>24</sup>

Magistrates were also given further powers concerning the establishment and management of workhouses under Gilbert’s Act. They had to authorise the adoption of Gilbert’s Act, the building of new workhouses and annually review their progress in the form of returns made to the local Quarter Sessions.<sup>25</sup> Thus, where the Act was adopted, the responsibilities of the overseer included little more than collecting the poor rates.<sup>26</sup> And, as shall be examined in chapter five, even these remaining tasks could be given to a vestry clerk or assistant overseer if the parish appointed one.

## **4.2 The adoption of the enabling Act of 1782**

As discussed in chapter two there was an intermediate stage between policy-making and policy implementation under the old poor laws, namely policy adoption. This section outlines the adoption of Gilbert’s Act, first through a review of the information readily available in the form of Parliamentary Returns, and secondly through the analysis of local administrative records in the south of England.

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<sup>23</sup> 22 Geo. III c.83, II, VIII and X.

<sup>24</sup> 22 Geo. III c.83, II and VII.

<sup>25</sup> 22 Geo. III c.83, XII states that the returns should include ‘...where such Poor House shall be situate, make out, or cause to be made out, a just and fair Account of the Expences attending the same, distinguishing them under the several Heads herein specified; and also an Account of the Number of poor Persons, distinguishing their Age and Sex, with shall be contained in every such House at the Time of making such Account, and how they have been employed, and how such Money hath been earned by the Labour of the Poor in the Year preceding...’. As such, these returns are an invaluable source of information, but alas these or draft returns rarely survive. The magistrates’ impact in the welfare process in Gilbert’s Unions/Parishes has been little explored. See also 22 Geo. III c.83, XXXV.

<sup>26</sup> 22 Geo. III c.83, VIII.



#### 4.2.1 Gilbert's Act in the south of England

There are several estimates as to the number of parishes which adopted Gilbert's Act in England and Wales. According to the Select Committee on Poor Relief of 1844, there were apparently 68 Gilbert's Unions and 3 Gilbert's Parishes (a total of 1000 parishes), although a separate return of Gilbert's Unions (1844) lists 76 adoptions (1075 parishes).<sup>27</sup> The Webbs, though, acknowledged 67 unions, totalling 924 parishes, whilst ignoring the fact single parishes could, and did, adopt the Act unilaterally.<sup>28</sup> The overall impact of the Act was, according to the Webbs, 'relatively trifling'.<sup>29</sup> This statement goes a long way in helping us to understand our lack of knowledge about Gilbert's Act. As the Webbs created the sub-discipline of poor law studies, and subsequently influenced many later social histories of social welfare, their interpretations of Gilbert's importance went unchallenged for many years. For instance, Felix Driver states that only 'one thousand parishes containing half a million people' had welfare administered according to the Act,<sup>30</sup> whilst Longmate suggests that only about '1 in 16' parishes implemented the Act.<sup>31</sup> Further interpretative problems have arisen from these estimates, most notably concerning the geography of adoption. The Webbs argued that unions were 'practically all rural in character; the great majority in south-eastern England, East Anglia and the Midlands, with a few in Westmoreland and Yorkshire; none at all in Wales, in the west or south-west of England, or north of the Tees'.<sup>32</sup> Conversely, Mandler's account was different from the Webbs. He stated that the Act 'was taken up almost exclusively in urban

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<sup>27</sup> Driver, *Power and Pauperism*, p. 44 and footnote 45; 1844 (543) Report from the Select Committee on Poor Relief (Gilbert Unions); together with the minutes of evidence, appendix and index [herein BPP 1844 (543) Report from the Select Committee on Gilbert's Act].

<sup>28</sup> Webb and Webb, *English Poor Law History, Part 1*, pp. 173 and 275. They did not cite the source for these figures.

<sup>29</sup> Webb and Webb, *English Poor Law History, Part 1*, p. 276.

<sup>30</sup> Driver, *Power and Pauperism*, p. 44. Driver utilises the returns in BPP 1844 (543) Report from the Select Committee on Gilbert's Act.

<sup>31</sup> N. Longmate, *The Workhouse: A Social History* (1974, London, 2003), p. 30.

<sup>32</sup> Webb and Webb, *English Poor Law History, Part 1*, p. 275. The Webbs also suggest that the list of Unions formed under the Act provided in the Ninth Annual Report of the Poor Law Commissioners (London, 1843) is 'incomplete', and '[n]o general description of the working of these is known to us' apart from in some incidental descriptions in the Annual Poor Law Reports by the requisite commissioners, see footnote 1, p. 273.

and industrial areas, apart from a unique cluster in East Anglia'.<sup>33</sup> Whilst the geography of the adoption has been interpreted in diverse ways, vast patches of England were, according to these interpretations, untouched by the Act.

The Returns completed for the Rural and Town Queries reveal a little more information about Gilbert's Act adoptions within the local contexts prior to the passage of the Amendment Act, but (as examined in chapter three) the sources suffer from the same shortcomings. To start with, the Rural Queries asked the parishes whether they had a workhouse. This reveals a distinctive pattern of institutional relief provision within the region of focus (see Table 4.1). Approximately half of all parishes in West Sussex and Hampshire provided relief within a workhouse. The proportion of parishes which provided relief in a workhouse declines the further west we travel with 36 percent and 30 percent of the parishes in Wiltshire and Somerset respectively providing a workhouse for their parishioners. Dorset, however, was the lowest with just 13.3 percent of parishes providing relief in a workhouse. The majority of towns and cities which answered the Town Queries had a workhouse in operation on the eve of the New Poor Law (19 out of 22).<sup>34</sup> This, of course, may be a reflection of the types of parishes which answered the survey (i.e. those which had run an institution) rather than a reflection of indoor relief provision in urban localities *per se*. The three places which returned a questionnaire and had not managed a workhouse included the very small market towns of Cerne Abbas (Dorset) and Dulverton (Somerset) and the larger cloth-producing town of Trowbridge (Wiltshire).

The Town Queries included the question 'Have you a Local Act for the Management for the Poor?' This provoked positive responses about the uptake of Gilbert's Act as well as the creation of Local Acts. Respondents for Newport (Hampshire) explained it was under a Local Act created for the Isle of Wight, and those for Southampton explained that 6 parishes had been united in a Local Act (13 Geo. III).<sup>35</sup> Bristol's respondent proudly announced that their status as an

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<sup>33</sup> P. Mandler, 'The making of the New Poor Law redivivus', *Past and Present*, 117 (1987), p. 133.

<sup>34</sup> BPP 1834 (44) XXXV, Report from His Majesty's Commissioners for Inquiring into the Administration and Practical Operation of the Poor Laws. Appendix B.2. Answers to the Town Queries in Five Parts. Part 2. Question 15.

<sup>35</sup> As examined in A. Clark, 'The Administration of Poor Relief in Southampton 1830-1850' (unpublished BA dissertation, University of Southampton, 1960).

Table 4.1: Parishes providing relief within a workhouse in 1832, according to the Rural Queries (question 22)<sup>36</sup>

County	Number of parishes answering in county	Number of parishes			% of parishes		
		Providing relief in a workhouse or poorhouse (not including rent-free cottages)	Without a workhouse or poorhouse	No answer	Providing relief in a workhouse or poorhouse (not including rent-free cottages)	Without a workhouse or poorhouse	No answer
Dorset	15	2	4	9	13.3	26.7	60
Hampshire	57	27	20	10	47.4	35.1	17.5
Somerset	20	6	11	3	30.0	55.0	15.0
West Sussex	32	16	5	11	50.0	15.6	34.4
Wiltshire	25	9	12	4	36.0	48.0	16.0
Total	149	44	47	26	36.7	40.2	22.2

Source: BPP 1834 (44) XXXI, Report from His Majesty's Commissioners for Inquiring into the Administration and Practical Operation of the Poor Laws. Appendix B.1. Answers to the Rural Queries in Five Parts. Part 2. Question 22.

<sup>36</sup> The following Rural Queries were not included because either the answers covered an area larger than a parish (e.g. magistrate's divisions) and/or they represented duplicate answers, or had they had answered the 'Town Queries'; **Dorset**: 'Blandford (Division)'; 'Cerne Abbas'; **Hampshire**: 'Bishopstoke and other Parishes around', 'Isle of Wight'; **Somerset**: 'Hundreds of Bruton, Catash, Horethorne, and Norton-Ferris'; 'Chilton Canteloe Parish and Yeovil District'; '(Vale of Taunton), Bagborough, Bishop's Lydeard, Combe-Florey, Cothelstone, Kingston'; 'Dulverton'; 'Yeovil'; **West Sussex**: 'The Lower Division of Chichester Rape (consisting of the parishes of Harting, Rogate, Terwick, Trotton, Chithurst, Iping, Stedham, Lynch, Woolbeding, Easebourne, Farnhurst, Linchmere, Lodsworth, Selham, Graffham, Heyshott, Cocking, Bepton, Didling, Trey)'; **Wiltshire**: 'District of Hungerford & Ramsbury'; 'Pitton and Farley United Parishes'; 'Warminster'; 'West Grimstead, Pitton, & Farley'.

'Incorporation' had been established since the reign of William and Mary, but explained another Act was granted on 22 May 1822 to strengthen the powers of the union, and a further Act in 1831 altered and amended their original Act. Three urban parishes of Salisbury were united under a Local Act in 1770.<sup>37</sup> Other places, such as Bradford-on-Avon (Wiltshire), stated that the officers were indeed acting under a Local Act (24 Geo. III) which permitted them to appoint an assistant overseer.<sup>38</sup> The question did not specifically address whether the parishes adopted enabling legislation, however. Yet three parishes, namely Poole (St. James), Alverstoke and Lymington, voluntarily disclosed this information, explicitly stating that they were operating under Gilbert's stipulations. The Rural Queries, unfortunately, did not ask a similar question. When detailing whether they had provided relief within a workhouse (question 22) six parishes responded that they shared a workhouse with one or more parishes. The respondent for Chale explained they were consolidated under a Local Act on the Isle of Wight. The rest were united under Gilbert's Act although only one explicitly mentioned the Act itself.<sup>39</sup>

The information contained in the Queries presents only a partial account of the adoption of Gilbert's Act. Indeed, they include some information about which parishes had adopted which acts to establish workhouses, yet not all of the parishes explicitly noted the legislation they had adopted and not all parishes which may have adopted Gilbert's Act completed a return. However, we can obtain a much fuller picture of the scale of Gilbert's Act adoptions by combining this data with that information obtained from the local administrative records described in chapter three. As Wells has noticed, the early correspondence of the Assistant Poor Law Commissioners also contains information about the adoption

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<sup>37</sup> Although another Act was passed in 1830 stipulating that the poor rates for cottages under £10 in value were to be paid by the landlords.

<sup>38</sup> This is also mentioned in a pamphlet, T. Bush, J. Jones, Junr., T. Tugwell and W. Barker, 'Parochial Regulations Relative to the Management of the Poor of Bradford, Wilts; with Notes, Tendering to Promote Economy and Comfort in the Work-House' (Bristol, 1801), p. 14. In addition, the parish of Ellingham (next to Ringwood and the New Forest) was under a Local Act, A'Court's correspondence, 'Notes on the several Parishes in the division of Ringwood', 'Ellingham', 27 November 1834, TNA MH32/1.

<sup>39</sup> Bentley and Long Sutton (Hampshire) and Clapham, Singleton and Tillington (West Sussex). Just Long Sutton mentioned being united under Gilbert's Act.

of Gilbert's Act.<sup>40</sup> Indeed, four parishes which claimed to be sharing a workhouse with other parishes in response to question 22 of the Rural Queries could be confirmed as parishes within Gilbert's Unions using these other sources. Whilst this chapter does not attempt to provide a definitive list of Gilbert's Act adoptions in Wessex and West Sussex, using the archival strategy outlined in chapter three, a significant number of adoptions have come to light. This illustrates that many parishes of the south of England adopted Gilbert's Act.

Table 4.2 shows the number of identified 'adoptions' of Gilbert's Act in Wessex and West Sussex, 'adoptions' being either Gilbert's Parishes or Gilbert's Unions. 9 adoptions have been found for West Sussex, 17 in Hampshire, 2 on the Hampshire-Surrey borders, 2 in Wiltshire and 2 in Dorset. No adoptions were found in Somerset. The fact that more adoptions have been identified in some counties compared to others is not surprising considering that, as discussed above, the management of a workhouse was a more popular parish strategy to provide relief to the poor in the east of the region compared to the west. The adoptions of Gilbert's Act in Surrey (8) and Gloucestershire (2) have also been included due to the availability of this information.

There were significant clusters of Gilbert's Unions and Parishes, as illustrated on Figure 4.1. The largest cluster was in West Sussex, where at least 80 parishes were providing relief under Gilbert's Act at different times over the course of the period as a whole. Most of these can mainly be attributed to the substantial landowner Lord Egremont, who resided at Petworth House. Egremont had particular control over the Gilbert's Parish of Petworth and the Unions of Easebourne and Sutton and engaged in philanthropic activity towards the poor throughout his life.<sup>41</sup> Another notable cluster can be found on the Hampshire and Surrey borders.<sup>42</sup> In addition, a long line of coastal parishes from

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<sup>40</sup> Wells states '[t]here is probably more data on the evidentially-obscure post-1782 Gilbert Unions among these papers than anywhere else'; R. Wells, Review of P. Carter (ed.), *Bradford Poor Law Union: Papers and Correspondence with the Poor Law Commission 1834 to January 1839* (Woodbridge, 2004), *English Historical Review*, 490 (2006), p. 233.

<sup>41</sup> C. Rowell, 'Wyndham, George O'Brien, third earl of Egremont (1751–1837)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford, 2004). Online. Available: <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/30141> [last accessed 10 October 2007].

<sup>42</sup> This cluster was of particular concern to the Commission under the New Poor Law, Poor Law Commission, Fourth Annual Report of the Poor Law Commissioners (London, 1838), p. 5.

Table 4.2: Identified Gilbert's Act Parishes and Unions

County	Name of Gilbert's Parish or Union	Parish or Union	Initial number of parishes (on first formation)	Eventual number of parishes	Date established
Dorset	Cranborne	P	1	1	?
	Poole	P	1	1	1813
Gloucestershire	Cheltenham	P	1	1	Approx. 1811
	Westbury-on-Trym	P	1	1	1802
Hampshire	Alverstoke	P	1	1	1799
	Bishopstoke	P	1	1	?
	Boldre	P	1	1	?
	Farnborough	U	2	4	1794
	Froyle	P	1	1	?
	Headley	U	3	3	1795
	Hordle	P	1	1	?
	Hursley	P	1	1	1829
	Lymington	P	1	1	1809
	Medstead	P	1	1	?
	Micheldever & East Stratton	U	2	2	1826
	Milford [on Sea]	P	1	1	1816
	[New] Milton	P	1	1	?
	Otterbourne	P	1	1	?
	Selbourne	P	1	1	?
	South Stoneham	P	1	1	Approx. 1792
	Winchester	U	2	2	?
Hampshire and Surrey borders	Aldershot & Bentley	P to U	1	2	Approx. 1818, Aldershot joined in 1824
	Ash	U	4	5	1806
Surrey <sup>43</sup>	Cranleigh	P	1	1	1793
	Ewhurst	P	1	1	1799
	Farnham	P	1	1	Approx. 1790
	Frensham	P	1	1	1795
	Frimley	P	1	1	?

<sup>43</sup> Judith Hill only identified five Gilbert's adoptions in Surrey, namely Ash, Hambledon, Reigate, Cranleigh and Farnham; J. Hill, 'Poverty, Unrest and the Response in Surrey, 1815-1834' (unpublished PhD thesis, University of Roehampton, 2006), p. 178.

	Godalming	P	1	1	1786
	Hambledon	U	4	9	1786
	Reigate	U	5	5	1795
West Sussex	Arundel	P	1	1	?
	Easebourne	U	16 in 1799	16	1792
	East Preston	U	5	19	1791
	Petworth	P	1	1	?
	Sidelsham	U	?	5	?
	Sutton	U	8	17	1791
	Thakeham	U	?	6	1789
	Westhampnett	U	?	11	?
	Yapton	U	?	3	?
Wiltshire	Devizes	U	2	2	1796
	Mere	P	1	1	1814

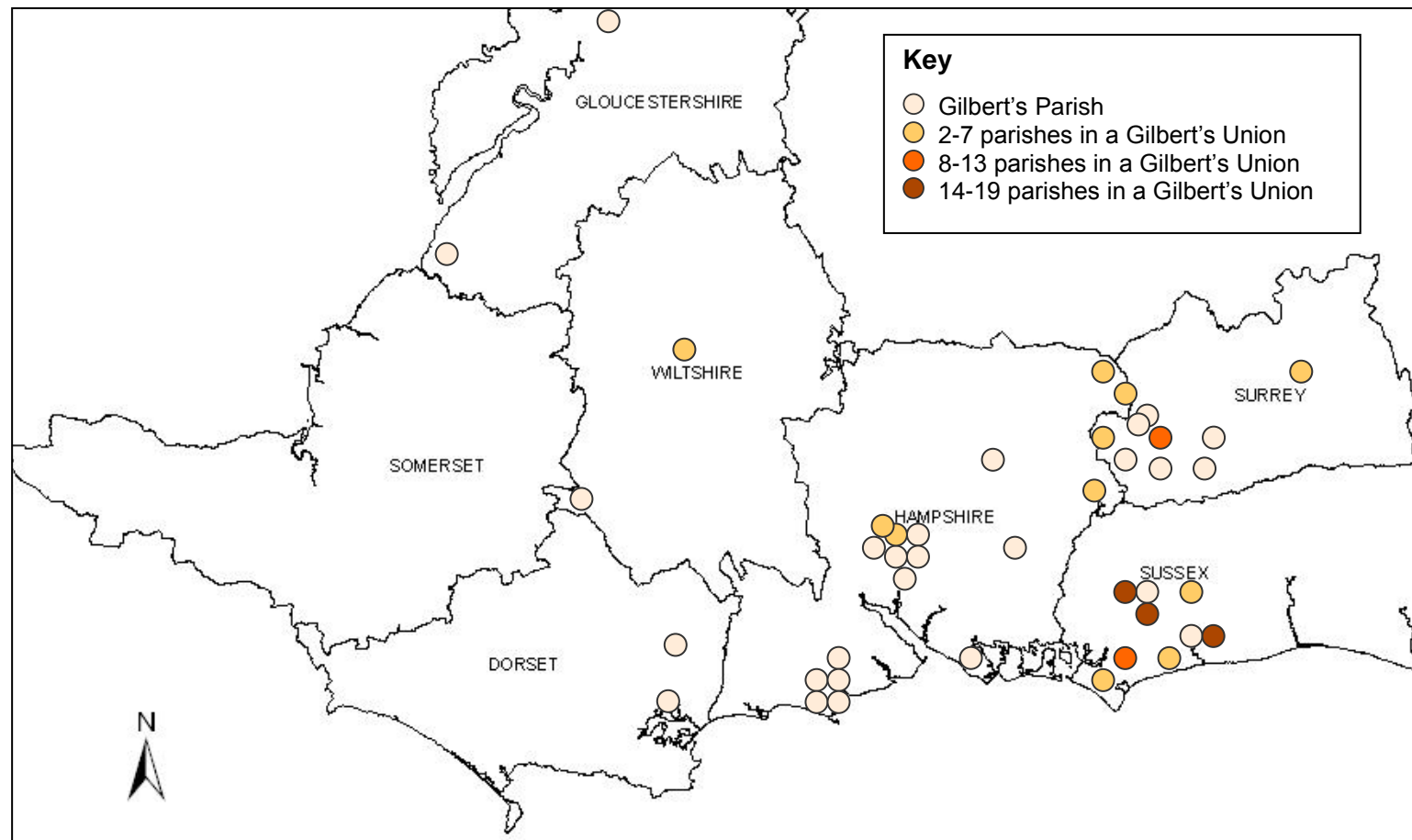
Source: See Appendix 1a for the earliest archival evidence for identified adoptions. Appendix 1b contains a list of parishes which formed the Gilbert's Act Unions.

Milford on Sea to Gosport implemented the Act, as well as a sporadic scattering of inland parishes. Some of these were growing urban parishes, such as South Stoneham, Lymington and Gosport.

The adoption of Gilbert's Act varied temporally as well as spatially. As illustrated in Figure 4.2, the exact dates of the adoption of Gilbert's Act by 22 Gilbert's Parishes and Unions have been retrieved as well as the approximate dates for 4 Gilbert's Parishes and Unions. Although this is a small number, it can confirm some of the observations made about the adoption of the Act. Of these, only three had adopted the legislation before the end of the 1780s. This confirms the views of Sir William Young who, writing fourteen years after the passage of the Act, claimed that 'very few' unions had formed.<sup>44</sup> Yet by the end of the 1790s, we find 13 more adoptions of the Act. Thus, the decade in which Young made his observations was the most popular decade for new adoptions of Gilbert's Act in the south of England. As Driver notes, 'there was [also] a slow and steady increase

<sup>44</sup> W. Young, *Considerations on the Subject of Poorhouses* (London, 1796), p. 29, cited in Webb and Webb, *English Poor Law History, Part 1*, p. 275.

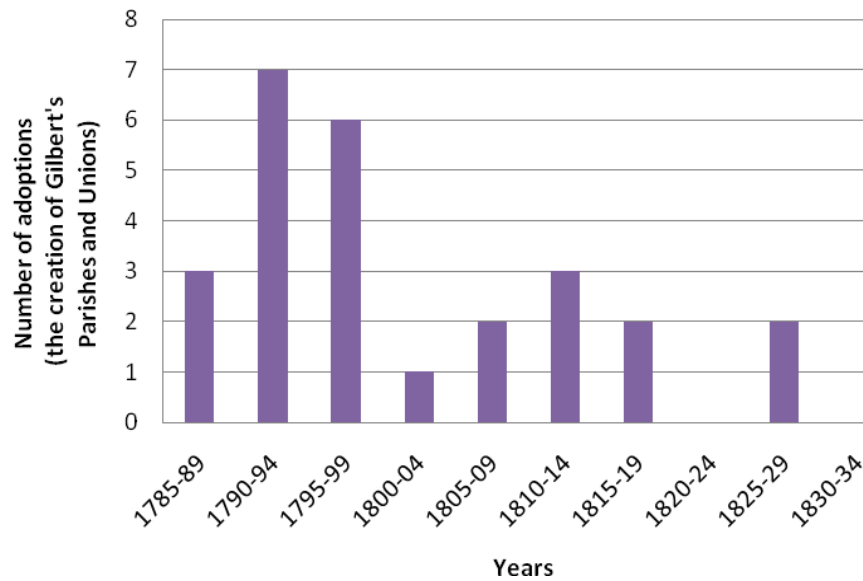
Figure 4.1: Identified Gilbert's Act Parishes and Unions



Source: Made using data from the column 'Eventual number of parishes' in Table 4.2 and 'English Ancient Counties, 1851' data from UKBORDERS at EDINA. Online. Available: <http://edina.ac.uk> [last accessed 4 June 2010].



Figure 4.2: Adoption of Gilbert's Act according to year



Source: Dates from Table 4.2.

in the number of Gilbert's Unions formed during the early nineteenth century'.<sup>45</sup> This is true within the study region. Between 1800 and 1820 there were eight more adoptions of Gilbert's Act. Wells stated that many areas adopted the Act in the late 1820s.<sup>46</sup> The union formed from the parishes of Micheldever and East Stratton (1826) and the adoption of the Act in Hursley (1829) provides evidence for his claim.

#### 4.2.2 Why was Gilbert's Act adopted?

Finding an answer to why Gilbert's Act was adopted is hindered by a lack of explicit documentary evidence. Indeed, vestry minute books were used to place memos of the topics of future meetings and the policy adoptions which resulted from these meetings, rather than the stage in between: the 'decision-making' process. Enough evidence exists to make some tentative suggestions, however.

<sup>45</sup> Driver, *Power and Pauperism*, p. 44.

<sup>46</sup> Wells, Review of P. Carter (ed.), *Bradford Poor Law Union*, p. 237. For instance: Micheldever & East Stratton (Gilbert's Union, Hampshire 1826) and Hursley (Gilbert's Parish, Hampshire 1829).

Gilbert's Act itself provided two potential advantages for parishes, the establishment of well-maintained accommodation for vulnerable groups of the poor and, through uniting with other parishes, the provision of a joint workhouse and, therefore, the opportunity to economise relief provision. Both of these aspects of Gilbert's Act were attractive. Just outside of the region in focus, a Gilbert Union which never came into fruition in East Sussex has left a proposal for the formation of a union of more than ten parishes (Appendix 2).<sup>47</sup> The reasons discussed for uniting were very clearly related to these benefits, as well as Gilbert's ideals. The first point mentioned was that by combining small sums of money from multiple parishes (between £100 and £150 each) a large and good quality institution could be built. All the parishes could also jointly employ a 'respectable' governor, a man who would be capable of superintending a manufactory. Obviously a manufactory was intended to work the inmates as much as possible, as suggested by mention that it would 'employ aged Persons & young Children'. The document also suggests when it appears to be the intention to house and employ the able-bodied poor as well. For instance, it states that the house should be the location to 'employ the Poor and the Idle'.<sup>48</sup>

There were strong economic reasons for adopting Gilbert's Act, as the above proposal indicates. We can assume that Lord Egremont made his decision to adopt the Act based on a similar rationale. By uniting the parishes he had influential powers over, it was possible for him to offer a well maintained workhouse and, over time, hopefully incur savings in poor relief expenditure in the process. He would have also avoided creating Local Acts which, as Digby explains, was more expensive compared to adopting enabling legislation.<sup>49</sup> Sir Thomas Baring, who owned East Stratton (Hampshire) had always paid 'great

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<sup>47</sup> Proposal for the formation of [a Gilbert Union] based on the parish of Fletching to build a Workhouse at Piltdown or Chelwood Common, n.d., ESRO AMS4899/1, see Appendix 2. Parishes in the proposed union were: Newick, Isfield, Little Horsted, Ringmer, Uckfield, Framfield, Bruxted, Maresfield, Fletching, Chailey, Lindfield and Horsted Keynes, but the document does suggest that if Chemwood Common was used for the location of the workhouse then East Grinstead, West Hoadly, Worth and Ardingly could be added.

<sup>48</sup> An antiquarian, writing in 1929, believed the proposal was 'in keeping with the spirit of Gilbert's Act'; H.D. Gilbert (Uckfield, Sussex) to Mr. Bridges, 26 July 1929, found in ESRO AMS4899/1.

<sup>49</sup> Digby suggests that Gilbert's Act had 'slowed the incorporating movement in Norfolk' because Gilbert's Act was 'much cheaper to set up' compared to 'incorporation under an expensive local act of Parliament', A. Digby, *Pauper Palaces* (London, 1978), p. 46.

interest in the management of its poor', and consented to a union with Micheldever.<sup>50</sup> This may not explain why the gentry engineered the adoption of Gilbert's Act in singular parishes, such as Egremont's Gilbert's Parish of Petworth. This may have been due to the desire to keep the local governance of his home parish private and solely under his oligarchic control. Nevertheless, Gilbert's Parishes were also established on the assumption that they would also reduce the cost of maintaining the poor. The clergy and parish officers of Boldre (Hampshire), which had adopted Gilbert's Act as a solitary parish in the 1790s, were keen to promote both the beneficial effects to the poor of their new workhouse and the considerable savings made. In a pamphlet, describing their adoption of the Act, they claimed that the establishment had saved £157 1s 6d in the poor rates in 1796 compared to the previous year.<sup>51</sup>

The economic benefits of adopting the Act could overshadow the benefits of the Act for the vulnerable poor, especially after the end of the Napoleonic Wars. As shall be explored in detail below, committees established under the Act soon after it had passed changed the ways in which they implemented the Act over time. The most important change was to make an agreement with a contractor for the management of the workhouse. The contractor would be paid a fixed price per head per week or a lump sum to maintain the poor. The poor would then work in the workhouse or a separate manufactory, and any profit could be kept by the contractor. Contracts often lasted 6-12 months.<sup>52</sup> There were many potential complications though, for instance, the contractors could stipulate that they must be paid to maintain a minimum number of people per week which guaranteed the contractor a minimum income. In addition, the

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<sup>50</sup> A'Court's correspondence, 'Notes on every Parish in the Winchester Division', 'East Stratton', November 1834, TNA MH32/1. Baring was resistant to the Poor Law Amendment Act interfering with this arrangement, A'Court (Bishopstoke) to PLC, 1 June 1835, TNA MH32/1.

<sup>51</sup> J. Walter, T. Robbins and W. Gilpin, 'An account of a new poor-house erected in the parish of Boldre: in New Forest near Lymington' (London, 1796), p. 11.

<sup>52</sup> For instance, in 1820, the vestry of Donhead St. Mary (Wiltshire) decided that a new workhouse was built in the parish and Francis and Elizabeth Drew should undertake the management of the poor for six months at £7 10 shillings and to receive the earnings of the poor people in the house. In the following year the parish moved into an agreement with contractors (Joseph and Jane Trowbridge) at 3s per head per week for six months. In 1822 Thomas Green entered into an agreement with the parish, at 3s per head per week for one year, Donhead St. Mary with Charlton St. John, Vestry Minute Book, 22 September and 5 October 1820, 11 June 1821, 16 May 1822, WSA PR/Donhead St. Mary Vestry with Charlton St. John/980/22.

parish(es) would have subsidised the contractor for the cost of supplying the house with wheat when it went above a certain price per bushel at the local markets. Obtaining a profit from this business would have also depended on other rules stipulated within the contracts, such as the percentage of profit which should be expended on the poor as a reward for their labour.<sup>53</sup> The contracting system provided two main economic advantages.<sup>54</sup> Not only did it add an element of competition in the cost of managing the workhouse, but by setting minimum numbers of inmates to be accommodated in the workhouse the Board could offer more of their parishioners indoor relief without incurring an extra fee. Of course, it could also tie the Board into an expensive contract if the cost of provisions lowered during the course of the agreement.

The timing of the adoption of Gilbert's Act also gives us an indication of the rationales behind its adoption. Those which adopted the Act in periods of economic depression in the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries may have placed poor rate savings at the forefront of their reasoning to embrace the legislation. As Figure 4.2 illustrates, the most popular decade for adopting Gilbert's Act in the south of England was the 1790s. The economic motives for adopting Gilbert's Act can also be found in minute books. In 1814, the year after the Act's adoption, the vestrymen of Poole St. James praised the work of the Visitor and Guardians which made a 'considerable saving' for the parish.<sup>55</sup> In 1821 the vestrymen of Botley arranged a meeting to consider adopting Gilbert's Act for the first time.<sup>56</sup> It was only after they received a letter from magistrates and gentlemen, who had attended a vestry meeting held in the South Stoneham poorhouse in the December of 1826, that they considered adopting Gilbert's Act

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<sup>53</sup> Between 40 and 60 people per week was stipulated in the contracts at Sutton Union, Contracts of Mary Bryan and Daniel Bryan of Petworth [to 1803] or Daniel Bryan [1804 on], and the Visitor and Guardians of Sutton United Parishes for the Governorship of the Workhouse, and the care, feeding, clothing etc. of the poor; with bonds, 1802-1836, PHA/6514-6548; Thomas Green entered into a contract with Donhead St. Mary for one year in April 1825, which stipulated that he was to receive 4s per head per week, and to have at least 25 individuals within the workhouse. If less than 25 individuals were in the house he would be paid for at least that number. Later in the year, however, the vestry decided not to fix a minimum number in the future. Donhead St. Mary Vestry with Charlton St. John Minute Book, 14 April and 31 August 1825, WSA PR/Donhead St. Mary Vestry with Charlton St. John/980/22.

<sup>54</sup> There were many types of contracting. This has been examined in Webb and Webb, *English Poor Law History, Part 1*, pp. 280-313.

<sup>55</sup> Poole, Churchwardens' Account Book (with Vestry Minutes), 12 April 1814, DHC PE/PL CW1/1/4.

<sup>56</sup> Botley, Vestry Minute Book, 14 March 1821, HRO 40M75/PV1.

again.<sup>57</sup> The letter asked the Botley gentlemen to consider joining with other parishes, including South Stoneham, under Gilbert's Act, a plan 'likely to prove beneficial to all who are assessed to the Rates'. Although Botley then made further enquiries about the proposed plan, they did not follow it through. The parishes which adopted the Act after the Napoleonic Wars may have been keen for similar savings. Gilbert's Act, therefore, could have been adopted in the early nineteenth century due to the rising cost of poor relief. Yet, only through the perusal of more detailed administrative records in other regions of England can this statement be made with more certainty.

Economic reasons may have also accounted for the expansion of Gilbert's Unions and the unofficial agreements to accommodate the poor of neighbouring parishes within Gilbert's workhouses. Table 4.2 shows that at least five Gilbert's Unions had permitted more parishes to join their regime over the course of their lifetime. When examining maps of Gilbert's Unions in the early 1830s throughout the country, the Poor Law Commissioner George Lewis sarcastically noted that the East Preston Union was 'more compact than most of the others.'<sup>58</sup> This observation was not incorrect because some of the other West Sussex Gilbert's Unions contained parishes which were not contiguous with the bulk of the united parishes.<sup>59</sup> Lewis thought it was the 'voluntary' nature of policy adoption which caused 'the extremely irregular combination of the parishes' had, he claimed, 'very doubtful legality'.<sup>60</sup> The Sutton Union had also expanded. After the original union of the eight parishes, by 1804 several clusters of parishes were added as well a single parish. In 1807 another five parishes wanted to join the union, which would have made it twenty parishes large. The Sutton Board understood, however, that their long-standing and reliable contractor, Daniel Bryan, would

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<sup>57</sup> Botley, Select Vestry Minute Book, 21 December 1826, HRO 40M75/PV2.

<sup>58</sup> BPP 1844 (543) Report from the Select Committee on Gilbert's Act, interview of G. Cornwall Lewis, p. 16.

<sup>59</sup> R. Wells, 'The Poor Law 1700-1900' in K.C. Leslie and B. Short (eds.), *A Historical Atlas of Sussex: An Atlas of the History of the Counties of East and West Sussex* (Chichester, 1999), a detailed map of parishes within the unions is on p. 71.

<sup>60</sup> BPP 1844 (543) Report from the Select Committee on Gilbert's Act, interview of G. Cornwall Lewis, p. 16. Lewis claimed that those parishes which joined after the initial establishment of the Union were now under the rules of the Poor Law Commission. Whether this practice was in fact legal or not is not of direct concern here, but this indicates the nature of how some Unions had expanded.

only continue on the terms of the contract if the union remained as it was.<sup>61</sup> As this example demonstrates, such supposedly haphazard formations were the result of strategic decision making.<sup>62</sup>

The unofficial arrangements between Boards of Gilbert's Act Parishes and Unions and the parish officers of other parishes also had economic reasons. In West Sussex, a parish officer of North Stoke placed one family, his only paupers, into the nearby Sutton Union workhouse for a small fee.<sup>63</sup> Similar agreements were made in Surrey and Hampshire. The Gilbert's Parish of Cranleigh built a workhouse which was far too large for their poor parishioners' needs.<sup>64</sup> Subsequently, the parish decided to receive the paupers of neighbouring Wonersh into the workhouse for a negotiated sum.<sup>65</sup> The contractor of the Alverstoke workhouse was permitted to receive paupers from 'other parishes' and in 1834 had six parishioners from nearby Hayling Island, for whom the contractor received three shillings per head per week.<sup>66</sup> There may well have been further instances of this, but when such agreements were made on the hoof, for instance, when a parish urgently needed accommodation for their parishioners, it is likely such negotiations were not recorded within minute books.

The reasons why parishes did *not* adopt Gilbert's Act are few and far between within the archive. It is clear, however, that some vestrymen simply did not want a change in the relief regime. The first time the Botley vestrymen considered adopting Gilbert's Act was in March 1821. The vestry decided to adjourn the meeting until half past six o'clock in the evening at the Dolphin Inn. At that very time, only one overseer attended the public house. The lack of interest in the proposal to adopt Gilbert's Act meant that nothing would be agreed

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<sup>61</sup> Daniel Bryan and Mary Bryan managed the workhouse from October 1802-1804 and then Daniel Bryan managed the workhouse without his wife due to her death from 1804 to at least October 1836, Sutton Union Contracts, contract of 4 October 1802, WSRO PHA/6514; contract of 2 November 1835, PHA/6547;

<sup>62</sup> What became of rejected parishes is important. Post-1834 two of the parishes who did not join the Sutton Union, namely East Dean and Singleton, joined the neighbouring Westhampnett New Poor Law Union. This was much to the dislike of Lord Egremont who was a major landowner of both parishes.

<sup>63</sup> BPP 1844 (543) Report from the Select Committee on Gilbert's Act, interview of T. Sockett, pp. 196-197.

<sup>64</sup> It accommodated for 150 paupers.

<sup>65</sup> Cranleigh, Vestry Minute Book, 12 December 1821 and 1 January 1822, SHC P58/1/1; Original agreement under which Cranleigh adopted Gilbert's Act, Copy agreement, 8 June 1793, SHC QS2/6/1793/Mid/31.

<sup>66</sup> A'Court's correspondence, 'Notes on the parishes in the division of Fareham including Portsmouth', 'Alverstoke and Gosport', 21 December 1834, TNAMH32/1.

upon.<sup>67</sup> A similar instance occurred at Titchfield in 1806. A committee was appointed on the 8 April to examine poor relief, both the rates and expenditure, and on the 15 May it was decided they should meet to consider whether Gilbert's Act should be adopted for the parish.<sup>68</sup> The committee made a strong case for the adoption of the legislation, including their need for individuals with 'duties clear and distinct', a Visitor who 'would be able to relieve the distress more judiciously and prevent imposition' and accounts settled every month rather than every year.<sup>69</sup> The supposed benefits of Gilbert's Act did not provoke an immediate uptake of the Act. The decision was deferred, although an examination of the subsequent vestry minutes suggests that topic was not reconsidered.<sup>70</sup> The lack of interest in adopting Gilbert's Act could have stemmed from the belief that many believed implementing the Act would be difficult. The Millbrook vestrymen, in 1817, made enquiries into a union with at least four nearby parishes under Gilbert's Act, only to decide that the 'association would not [at] present be practicable [sic]'.<sup>71</sup>

### **4.3 Relief provision under Gilbert's Act**

The pursuit of economy not only influenced the expansion of unions and informal boarding-out agreements, but it also meant that Gilbert's Act had impacted on the welfare of many more of the poor than we have previously thought. As a consequence, it is important to understand relief provision under Gilbert's Act. This section examines the relief provided in the parishes which had adopted Gilbert's Act in Wessex and West Sussex. Firstly, it provides an overview of the populations of Gilbert's Act workhouses. Secondly, it examines the relief provision to easily identifiable 'vulnerable' groups, children and the aged, infirm

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<sup>67</sup> Botley, Vestry Minute Book, 14 March 1821, HRO 40M75/PV1.

<sup>68</sup> Titchfield, Vestry Minute Book, 8 April and 15 May 1806, HRO 37M73/PV1.

<sup>69</sup> Titchfield, Vestry Minute Book, Report of the Committee, 3 June 1816, HRO 37M73/PV1.

<sup>70</sup> Titchfield, Vestry Minute Book, committee meeting, 27 May 1806, HRO 37M73/PV1.

<sup>71</sup> Parishes included Eling, Nursling, Minstead and Dibden, Millbrook, Vestry Minute Book, 17 and 30 January 1817, SCRO PR10/8/1. In the following year it was decided to raise the topic again, although this time it considered whether they should place the parish under the Act alone. It was succinctly noted that the legislation was 'not desirable for in this Parish to adopt', Millbrook, Vestry Minute Book, 27 July 1818, SCRO PR10/8/1.

and ill. Thirdly, it details the work undertaken within the workhouse and, lastly, examines whether the able-bodied were placed in the workhouse. These thematic paths of analysis illustrate the variety of ways in which Gilbert's Act was implemented.

#### **4.3.1 The workhouse population**

As noted, indoor relief provision was of central importance to operation of Gilbert's Act. It is worth examining the populations of Gilbert's Act workhouses, which will hopefully provide clues as to how the institution was used over time.<sup>72</sup>

Although the composition of a workhouse population was the result of policy-decisions, the overall numbers within a workhouse depended upon socio-economic conditions, which created demand for relief provision, but more fundamentally, workhouse infrastructure. Starting with the latter point, bricks and mortar dictated the maximum capacities of institutions. There were a wide range of workhouses in operation under Gilbert's Act. In Wessex and West Sussex there appear to have been two main types. Firstly, those workhouses which were adapted from parish owned cottages or other buildings purchased by the parish. The extent of these adaptations varied greatly from place to place. The Hursley workhouse (Appendix 3) was originally a cluster of 'Parish lodging-houses' but alterations, funded by the local large landowner Sir William Heathcote, enabled the establishment of two courtyards and the classification of two groups, males and females, accommodating 49 people.<sup>73</sup> The Hordle workhouse was also formed of cottages. As the plan suggests (Appendix 4), by 1834 the building still

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<sup>72</sup> There have been various studies of workhouse populations, but this mostly focused on the population in New Poor Law Union workhouses. These are based on the readily available sources, including census and the Poor Law Commission's statistics. Examples of this work include A. Hinde and F. Turnbull, 'The Populations of two Hampshire workhouses 1851-1861', *Local Population Studies*, 61 (1998), 38-52; D.G. Jackson, 'Kent Workhouse Populations in 1881: a study based on the census enumerators' books', *Local Population Studies*, 69 (2002), 51-66; *idem.*, 'The Medway Union Workhouse, 1876-1881: a study based on the admission and discharge registers and the census enumerators' books', *Local Population Studies*, 75 (2005), 11-32; N. Goose, 'Workhouse populations in the mid-nineteenth century: the case of Hertfordshire', *Local Population Studies*, 62 (1999), 52-69.

<sup>73</sup> A Court's correspondence, 'Notes on every Parish in the Winchester Division', 'Hursley', 1 March 1834, TNA MH32/1.



largely resembled cottages and could only accommodate 20 people.<sup>74</sup> The Boldre workhouse was adapted from an old farm house (Appendix 5), the parish also renting the 50 acre farm. Whilst the land was worked upon by the able-bodied men, according to a parish employment scheme, the farm house and garden accommodated 70 inmates.<sup>75</sup> Secondly, there were purpose-built workhouses constructed after the adoption of the Act, many of which can be found amongst the larger unions. Presumably the combined resources of multiple parishes enabled the building of large workhouses which were intended to serve multiple parishes from the outset. The single Gilbert's Parish of Alverstoke built a workhouse to accommodate 300 individuals. It consisted of an early panopticon design and cost £12,000 to erect (Appendix 6).<sup>76</sup>

The capacities of workhouses varied from place to place. Yet, their 'maximum' capacities could be stretched at times of need. The Hordle workhouse had once housed 23 people.<sup>77</sup> This did not necessarily cause any disruption to the management of the workhouse. The Alverstoke Guardians, however, once allowed the population of their workhouse to reach 537 and the 'factory' building was converted into a dormitory.<sup>78</sup> Contractual agreements, such as those mentioned above, could influence the number of people accommodated within a workhouse, as could agreements between parishes. The Aldershot and Bentley parishes united under Gilbert's Act used the workhouse located in, and owned by, the parish of Aldershot. It could accommodate 40 individuals, and the Bentley parish gave the Aldershot parish £20 per year for its use. This flat rate may have incentivised the parish officers of Bentley to send as many of their relief claimants

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<sup>74</sup> A'Court's correspondence, 'Notes on the Parishes in the Lymington Division', 'Hordle', 3 December 1834, TNA MH32/1.

<sup>75</sup> A'Court's correspondence, 'Notes on the Parishes in the Lymington Division', 'Boldre', 3 December 1834, TNA MH32/1.

<sup>76</sup> A'Court's correspondence, 'Notes on the parishes in the division of Fareham including Portsmouth', 'Alverstoke and Gosport', 21 December 1834, TNA MH32/1.

<sup>77</sup> A'Court's correspondence, 'Notes on the Parishes in the Lymington Division', 'Hordle', 3 December 1834, TNA MH32/1.

<sup>78</sup> A'Court's correspondence, 'Notes on the parishes in the division of Fareham including Portsmouth', 'Alverstoke and Gosport', 21 December 1834, TNA MH32/1. This appears to have been in 1821, Alverstoke, Guardians' Minute Book, Annual report 1821, HRO PL2/1/1.

as possible into the house to reduce their own parish's expenditure on outdoor relief. Yet, the workhouse only had the capacity for 40 inmates in total.<sup>79</sup>

Although there are many one-off counts of Gilbert's Act workhouse populations, for instance within A'Court's correspondence, there are few workhouses which left population information over time. One exception was the Headley workhouse, which served the parishes of Headley, Kingsley and Bramshot in Hampshire. The main workhouse accommodation was situated opposite sheds and pigsties between which was a courtyard. Outside of this complex was a workhouse garden of approximately 2 acres. The capacity of the workhouse was 75-80 people and by 1835 was managed by a contractor at 2s 10d per head per week. The contractor paid for a minimum of 36 inmates in the house, and the parishes agreed that at least 14 should come from Headley, 6 from Kingsley and 16 from Bramshot.<sup>80</sup> Inmate population figures are available for this union from 1795 to 1820, but relate only to those sent from the parish of Headley. There was a fairly steady number of poor in the workhouse from Headley throughout this period, as Figure 4.3 illustrates, although there was a notable increase in 1800 and 1801 and another, though smaller, peak in 1805. Evidently, more people were accommodated in the workhouse during years of particular hardship. There is evidence that a contractor was always in residence during this period, so it is possible there was also a 'minimum' number agreement in place before 1834.<sup>81</sup>

The population of another, albeit larger, Gilbert's Act workhouse also varied year on year. The management of the Easebourne Union left a very comprehensive record of the workhouse population from 1796 to 1827, thanks to the diligence of the treasurer William Bridger who made copies of reports on the workhouse which were returned to the Michaelmas Quarter Sessions annually.<sup>82</sup> The Michaelmas Quarter Sessions were usually held at the end of September (Michaelmas Day was 29 September) but were often held throughout October. As

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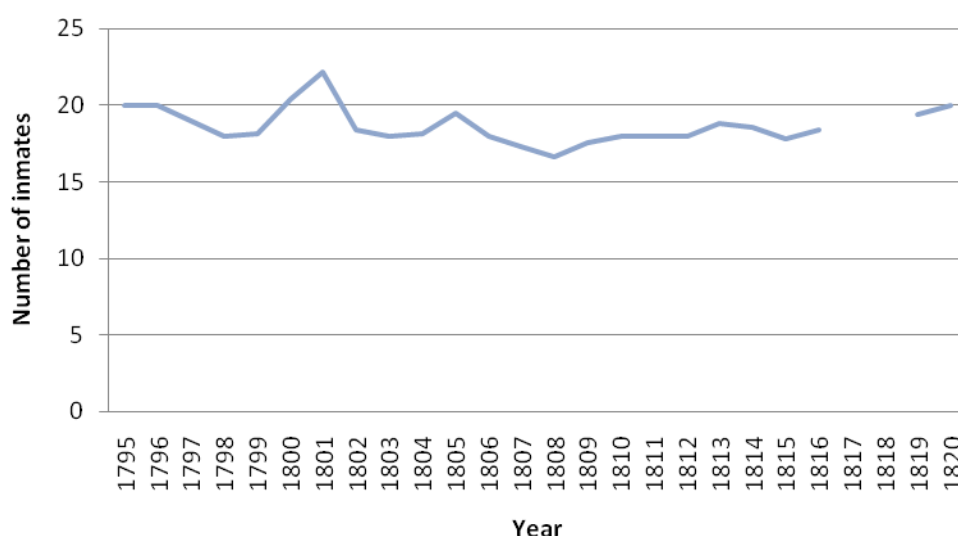
<sup>79</sup> A'Court's correspondence, 'Notes on the magisterial division of Alton', 'Bentley', 23 February 1835, TNA MH32/1.

<sup>80</sup> A'Court's correspondence, 'Notes on the magisterial division of Alton', 'Headley', 2 February 1835, TNA MH32/1.

<sup>81</sup> Payments per head per week varying from 2s 6d to 3s 10d throughout the period, Headley, Workhouse Account Book, 1795-1829, HRO 57M75/PO16.

<sup>82</sup> Easebourne Union, Copies of the yearly accounts of William Bridger, Treasurer of the Easebourne United Parishes, 1797-1827, PHA/7869.

Figure 4.3: Average annual number of inmates from Headley parish in the Headley Union workhouse, 1795-1820<sup>83</sup>



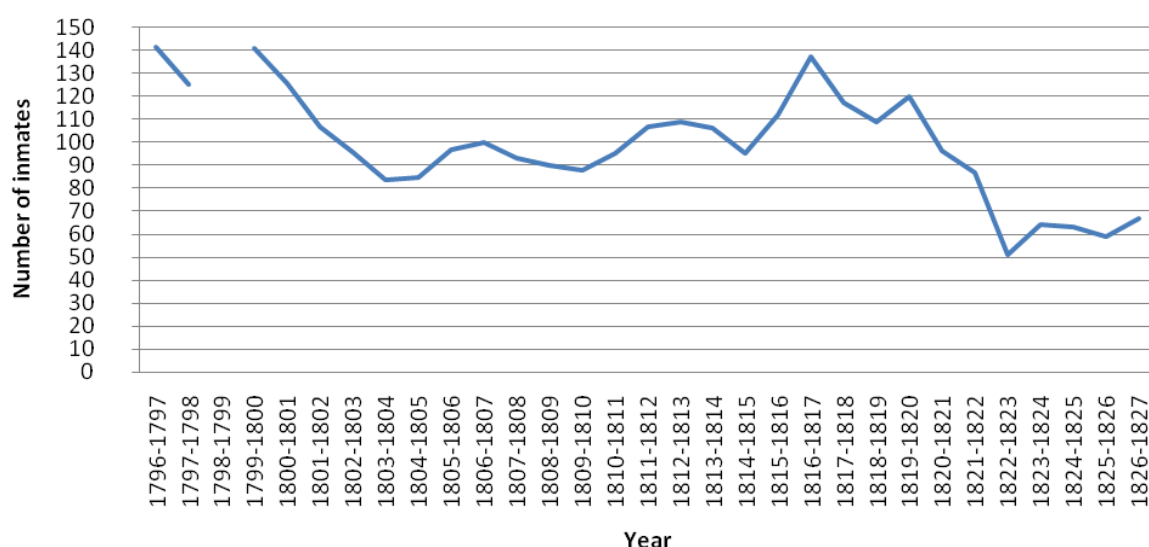
Source: Headley, Workhouse Account Book, 1795-1829, HRO 57M75/PO16

such, the treasurer probably collated these numbers using the workhouse populations from one Michaelmas Quarter Session to the next in the following year. The workhouse was purpose-built with an imposing entrance (Appendix 7a) and a square formation enclosing a courtyard (Appendix 7b). There were several different workrooms, a brew house, two dining rooms, stabling, two prison cells and a room to hold the deceased (Appendix 7c). The union catered for 16 parishes during the course of this period and had an agreement with a contractor. Again, as shown in Figure 4.4, the workhouse housed more poor during years of hardship, particularly in 1800-1802, 1805-1807, 1811-1814 and 1816-1821. These fluctuations reflect the periods of distress in the south of England that Wells has identified.<sup>84</sup> However, from 1822 we see a marked decline in the number of poor living within the workhouse. So although socio-economic conditions worsened, fewer individuals were in the workhouse after 1822 compared to before.

<sup>83</sup> Figures based on calculating the average number of inmates within the workhouse per year from monthly counts.

<sup>84</sup> R. Wells, 'Social Protest, Class, Conflict and Consciousness in the English Countryside 1700-1880' in M. Reed and R. Wells (eds.), *Class, Conflict and Protest in the English Countryside, 1700-1880* (London, 1990), pp. 121-214.

Figure 4.4: Average annual number of inmates in the Easebourne Union workhouse, 1796-1827



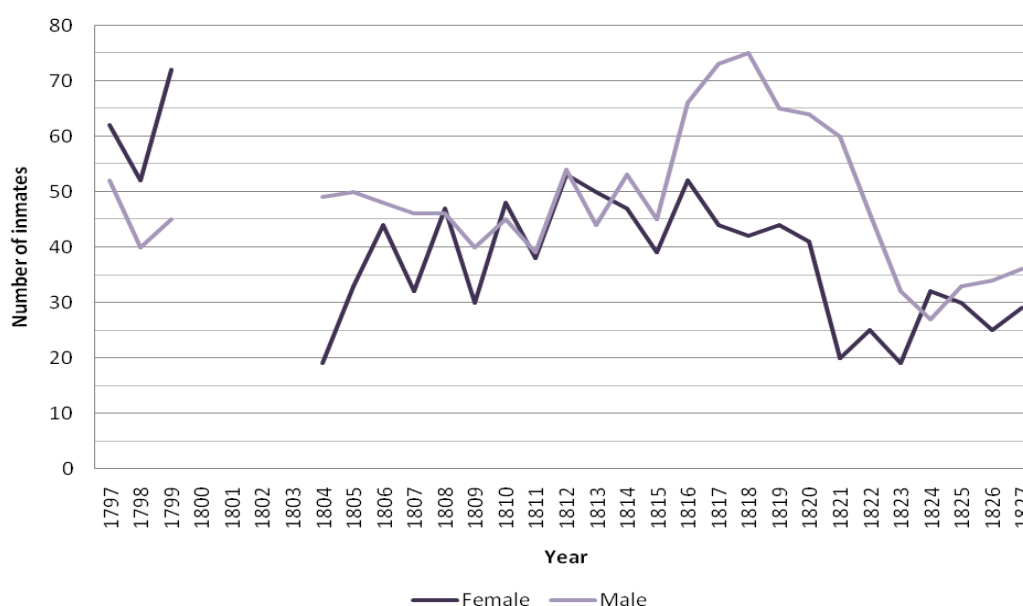
Source: Easebourne Union, Copies of the yearly accounts of William Bridger, Treasurer of the Easebourne United Parishes, 1797-1827, PHA/7869.

Examining the sex and ages of the inmates using this data will add some detail to this pattern.

Figure 4.5 shows the numbers of females and males in the workhouse from 1797-1827. We have to assume that these figures represent the population of the workhouse just prior to the delivery of the report to the Michaelmas Quarter Sessions in the September or October of each year.<sup>85</sup> From these numbers we can observe that there were more female inmates than male inmates prior to the four year gap for which there is no age-specific data (1800-1804). After 1804 there was always a greater number of male inmates in the workhouse compared to female inmates except for in the year 1813. In addition, while the number of female inmates reached over 50 in number on just two occasions during this period, 1812 and 1816, the number of male inmates reached over 50 in eight years, 1812, 1814 and 1816-1821. The dramatic rise in the number of males entering the workhouse between 1815 and 1821 correlates with the demobilisation of soldiers at the end of

<sup>85</sup> These counts do not add up to the 'average' numbers given throughout the year (used in Figure 4.3) or the 'greatest' and 'lowest' numbers of paupers also given in the report.

Figure 4.5: Average annual number of female and male inmates in the Easebourne Union workhouse, 1797-1827



Source: Easebourne Union, Copies of the yearly accounts of William Bridger, Treasurer of the Easebourne United Parishes, 1797-1827, PHA/7869.

the Napoleonic Wars and the post-war economic depression.<sup>86</sup> Figure 4.5 conceals the varying proportions of different age groups within this pattern though.

The age-specific data provided by the Easebourne accounts can help answer the question of the extent to which Gilbert's Act workhouses were primarily concerned with the accommodation of the vulnerable. Children and the elderly were necessarily vulnerable according to Gilbert's definition, whilst those of middle-age could be vulnerable through their health, such as illness or a disability, or through their situation, such as being a single parent, pregnant, widowed or a widower. Admission and discharge registers would have provided information as to the reasons for admittance, but these had either not been used or had not survived in this region. Nevertheless, the Easebourne treasurer returned the number of inmates in the workhouse according to three categories: those aged 14 and under, those aged 60 and over and those of middle-age, 15-59

<sup>86</sup> See Wells, 'Social Protest, Class, Conflict and Consciousness' and E.L. Jones, *Seasons and Prices: The Roles of the Weather in English Agricultural History* (London, 1964), pp. 153-165.

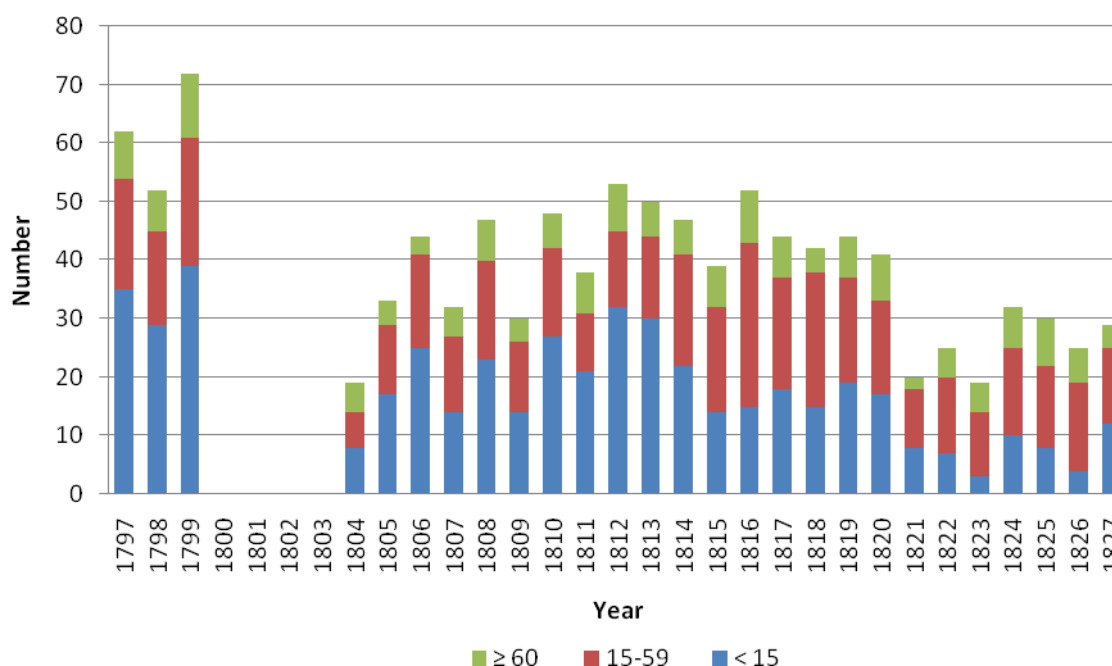
year olds. The majority of inmates in the workhouse throughout the period were aged 14 and under (42%). The elderly, those aged 60 and over, comprised a significant proportion of the workhouse population (29%). What is interesting, however, is that the average proportion of the elderly within the Easebourne Union workhouse throughout three decades was similar to the number of 15-59 year olds within the house (29%).

This age-specific data can be analysed in more detail if it is displayed according to sex. Figures 4.6 and 4.7 show the numbers of inmates within the workhouse within these age categories according to sex. The first figure shows that girls under 15 years of age were the largest group of female residents in the workhouse until 1815 when the numbers of young females aged under 15 in the workhouse declined and the numbers of females aged between 15 and 59 increased. The number of females aged between 15 and 59 was exceeded by the females below 15 years of age for a brief period of two years, 1819 and 1820, but then remained the largest group of women within the house until the record stops in 1827. Elderly female residents, those aged 60 years and over, were the smallest female population within the workhouse, except for several years in the 1820s when the numbers of those aged between 15 and 59 declined.

Figure 4.7 illustrates that males aged less than 15 years were the largest group of male residents in the workhouse until 1818 when they matched the number of male residents aged 60 years and older. The number of boys in the workhouse then declined until 1824 when the numbers increased again into the mid-1820s. The number of males aged between 15 and 59 was the smallest group within the workhouse until 1816. This age-group only returned to being the smallest age-group of males within the workhouse in 1824. Between 12 and 19 elderly men, those aged 60 years and over, were accommodated in the workhouse between 1804 and 1816. Thereafter the numbers had gradually increased to 28 in 1821. From that year their number had generally declined, although from 1819 to 1827 elderly men remained the largest male age-group within the workhouse.

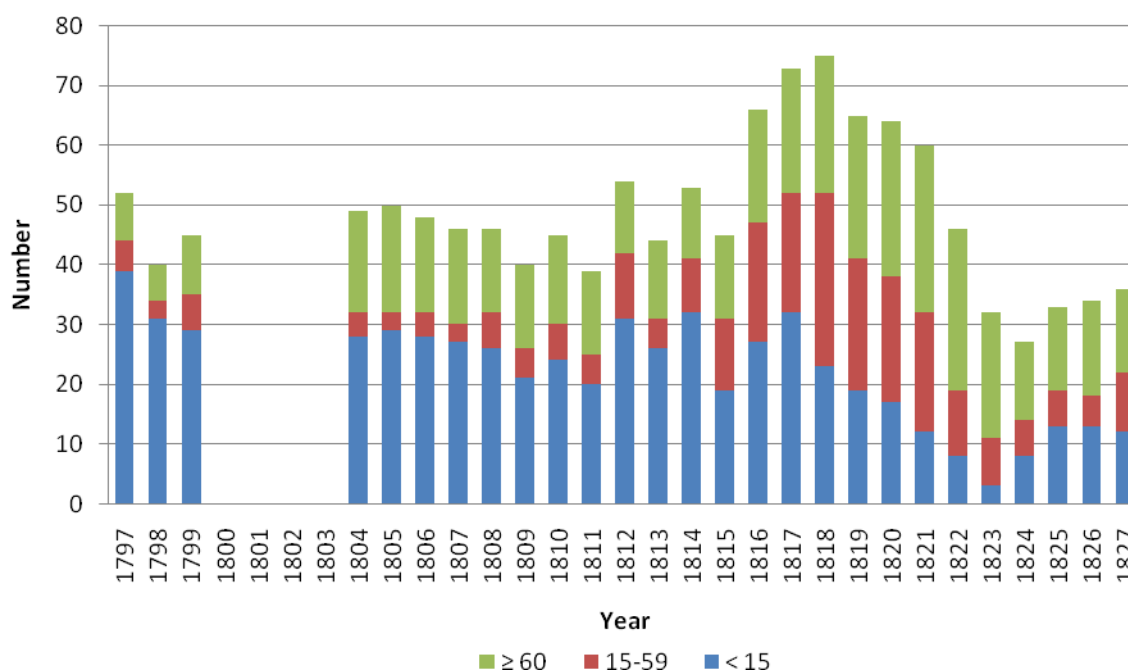
There are significant patterns amongst the easily-recognisable vulnerable groups, the young and the elderly. After 1804, boys outnumber girls and elderly men consistently outnumber elderly women. Overall, more vulnerable-aged males seem to have been placed in the workhouse than vulnerable-aged

Figure 4.6: Female inmates in the Easebourne Union workhouse according to age, 1796-1827



Source: Easebourne Union, Copies of the yearly accounts of William Bridger, Treasurer of the Easebourne United Parishes, 1797-1827, PHA/7869.

Figure 4.7: Male inmates in the Easebourne Union workhouse according to age, 1796-1827



Source: Easebourne Union, Copies of the yearly accounts of William Bridger, Treasurer of the Easebourne United Parishes, 1797-1827, PHA/786.

females. The numbers of elderly females and males, however, generally appear to have been stable throughout the period, especially compared to the other age-groups. In the 1820s there was a considerable decrease in the number of young female and male inmates. This may have been the result of concerted efforts amongst the Easebourne Union officials to apprentice children.

Although many people worked before the age of 15 and after the age of 59, the category of inmates devised by the treasurer between '15 and 59' can be used to examine the number of people of working age within the workhouse.<sup>87</sup> According to Figure 4.6, the number of female inmates from this category was relatively stable, although there were increased numbers in particular years such as 1816. As already noted, there are very small numbers of men aged 15-59 years in the workhouse until 1816 when the number dramatically rises into the early 1820s. The demobilisation of soldiers after the Napoleonic Wars, and poor harvests, meant that many individuals who would have normally been able to work during the year could not obtain work. Only the most able-bodied from the community were employed and, therefore, those individuals who had not previously asked for relief had now done so. As Wells states, years 1821-23 were detrimental years for the labouring classes and 1825 was a particularly wet year, so for the number of 15-59 year old males within the house to then decline year on year from 1822 to 1826 suggests another policy was at work.<sup>88</sup> The implementation of a Select Vestry or appointment of an assistant overseer in the constituent parishes may have reduced the numbers of people claiming relief (see chapter five). The establishment of employment or allotment schemes could have also had an impact.<sup>89</sup> In addition, the use of alternative accommodation, such as parish cottages, could have also reduced their number. Lord Egremont's official emigration scheme (for parishioners of Petworth and surrounding parishes) was

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<sup>87</sup> Using a sample of 581 autobiographies, Humphries illustrates that many children born between 1627 and 1790 started working aged 11.5 years (mode) and those born between 1791 and 1820 started at the younger age of 10.28 years (mode). Medians of 12.00 and 10.00 respectively were also calculated. J. Humphries, *Childhood and Child Labour in the British Industrial Revolution* (Cambridge, 2010), p. 176.

<sup>88</sup> Wells, 'Social Protest, Class, Conflict and Consciousness', p. 129.

<sup>89</sup> There were not many allotment schemes before 1830 but there were some 'potato grounds', see J. Burchardt, *The Allotment Movement in England: 1793-1873* (Woodbridge, 2002).



not in place until 1832, however, although families and single people were leaving West Sussex throughout the 1820s.<sup>90</sup>

Overall, there was a fluctuating, yet consistently significant, proportion of people in the Easebourne workhouse of middle-age. Yet, without more specific information about each pauper it is impossible to identify those within this category who were actually ‘vulnerable’. Registers would have not only provided such information, but they would have also given us an indication for how long particular individuals stayed within the workhouse at a time. Indeed, it may be the case that middle-aged men were only spending a few nights in the workhouse during the winter when the demand for work was at its lowest. Some comparative analysis, with other Gilbert’s Act workhouse populations and those from other pre-1834 poor law institutions, would be illuminating. The lack of readily available research on indoor relief during this period, however, currently hinders this work.<sup>91</sup>

#### **4.3.2 Relief provision to the vulnerable**

Before I examine the relief provided within the workhouse, it is important to outline that individuals whom the Gilbert’s Act workhouse was designed for were not always admitted to the workhouse. Analysis of the Sutton Case Papers (see chapter three), which contain the relief decisions of the union Guardians at committee meetings, reveals that many other forms of relief were offered to the poor.<sup>92</sup> Table 4.3 displays the relief provision to easily identifiable vulnerable groups whom Gilbert intended to enter a Gilbert’s Act workhouse, i.e. the elderly, the young, widows and widowers (with or without children), pregnant women and single women with children (illegitimate or otherwise) or without and deserted women whose husbands had definitely died or left. From these 33 cases,

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<sup>90</sup> S. Haines and L. Lawson, *Poor Cottages & Proud Palaces: The life and work of Reverend Thomas Sockett of Petworth 1777-1859* (Hastings, 2007), pp. 155-158.

<sup>91</sup> For instance, Ottaway focuses on the outdoor relief provision of the elderly in three communities in the late eighteenth-century, rather than indoor provision. The three parishes are Terling (Essex), Puddletown (Dorset) and Ovenden (township in the parish of Halifax, West Yorkshire). Ottaway notes that the workhouse at Ovenden housed more elderly than Terling at approximately ten per year. Notably, Puddletown ‘did not keep any of its adult poor in a workhouse’, S.R. Ottaway, *The Decline of Life: Old Age in Eighteenth-Century England* (Cambridge, 2004), p. 203.

<sup>92</sup> Sutton Union, Sutton Case Papers, 1837-1849, WSRO WG3/4.

Table 4.3: Selected relief provision to typically 'vulnerable' groups of people in the Sutton Union

Provision Pauper	Workhouse		Outdoor relief			Employment			Relative		Other	
	Workhouse	Child in workhouse	Money	Kind	Money and kind	To search for work	See employer about wages	Employ found by Guardian	Husband/father to provide money	Relative to maintain person at the moment	Cannot interfere/ nothing more provided	Unknown provision
<b>Elderly</b>	✓ (1)		✓ (2)	✓ (1)	✓ (1)		✓ (2)				✓ (1)	✓ (3)
<b>Young</b>	✓ (1)					✓ (1)						
<b>Widows, widowers and deserted women</b>	✓ (1)	✓ (1)	✓ (2)*	✓ (1)				✓ (2)*	✓ (1)		✓ (1)	✓ (3)
<b>Single women</b>	✓ (1)	✓ (1, parent refuses)	✓ (3)		✓ (2)					✓ (1)	✓ (2)	✓ (1)

\* One of the relief claimants in both these categories was provided money and the Guardian was to also find them employment.

*Further notes:*

Elderly - 60 years and over

Young - 18 years and under

Single women – include those without children, those in pregnancy, and those with bastard children.

Source: Sutton Union, Sutton Case Papers, 1837-1849, WSRO WG3/4.

just 5 resulted in an order to go into the workhouse and only 2 stipulated that individuals' children should enter the workhouse. Other forms of relief provided to the claimants were outdoor relief in money and/or in kind (usually flour), employment, although some were told to find their own, and the care of a relative. It seems this Board was economising, using other strategies, some of which were at no cost to the parishes, to relieve the poor. Outdoor relief was by far the most popular form of relief provision, and qualitative information from other Gilbert's Act adoptees illustrates a similar pattern. For instance, in the parish of Headley A'Court reported that a total of six poor were in receipt of regular outdoor relief 'all either old or young.'<sup>93</sup>

The ill and infirm were another vulnerable group which a Gilbert's Act workhouse was supposed to accommodate. But again, there were many other forms of relief being provided instead of admittance into the workhouse. Table 4.4 details 13 cases of illness and infirmity extracted from the Sutton Case Papers, where the relief decision is mentioned. Here the overwhelming majority of relief was provided in money and in kind. In two of the cases medical relief was offered within the individuals' own homes. In one instance, it was directed that a friend look after the individual until she herself could make a claim for relief in person at the next Board meeting. This decision appears strategic, not least as this individual may have recovered and therefore be able to earn her own living by the time of the next Board meeting.

In only three of the cases the individuals were admitted to the workhouse. Two of these cases were of young men who had either had an accident or were previously in hospital, whilst the other case was of an infirm man aged 79 who was admitted into the workhouse with his wife. These cases, therefore, represent longer-term illnesses from which, in the case of the two men, the individuals needed time to recover and also the elderly needed constant care. In these cases, it made economic sense to provide their board and lodging.

Clearly some of the vulnerable whom Gilbert wanted to be occupants of the workhouse were provided with alternative forms of relief. With this in mind, the rest of this section outlines the relief provision of different vulnerable groups

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<sup>93</sup> A'Court's correspondence, 'Notes on the magisterial division of Alton', 'Headley', 23 February 1835, TNA MH32/1.

Table 4.4: Cases of illness and infirmity where outcome is noted from the Sutton Case Papers

Case details	Outcome
Ill man	No relief on account of settlement
Ill daughter (typhus fever)	Medical relief at home
Ill man (aged 40)	Outdoor relief in money
Ill daughter	Outdoor relief in money
Ill husband going into an infirmary	Family receive outdoor relief in money and kind
Ill children (2)	Outdoor relief in money, medical relief at home and relief in kind as medical man suggests
Ill wife	Outdoor relief in kind
Ill man (25) who had been in hospital	Admitted to the workhouse and found work
Ill husband (79)	Husband and wife admitted to the workhouse
Friend's daughter ill	To be looked after by friend and woman to attend the next meeting
Ill man (accident)	Outdoor relief in kind
Ill man (accident) (aged 17)	Admitted to the workhouse
Widow with two children, one unable to work	Guardian to appoint widow (work for the parish)

Source: Sutton Union, Sutton Case Papers, 1837-1849, WSRO WG3/4.

within the Gilbert's Act workhouse, firstly children, then the elderly and infirm.

### a) Children

Nearly half of the total population within the Easebourne Gilbert's Union workhouse were children aged 14 years or under. Similarly when the Boldre workhouse was first opened, of the approximately 40 people admitted between 20 and 30 were children.<sup>94</sup> An important question to ask is how children reached the workhouse in the first instance. Section thirty of Gilbert's Act states that children who become chargeable to the parish 'from Accident or Misfortune' were to be placed into the workhouse. 'Accident and Misfortune' could be interpreted in many different ways, but overall it advocated the placement of any young vulnerable parishioner in the workhouse. As a consequence, some children would have entered with their parent(s). For instance, the Sutton Case Papers contain details about the claim of Mrs. Barttlet, aged between 50 and 60, 'whose husband

<sup>94</sup> Walter *et al.*, 'An account of a new poor-house', p. 5.

deserted her' and her family. One of her children (male, aged 7-8 years old) earned 1s a week 'hurding Cows' and the mother gained one gallon of flour a week from the parish. This was not enough, and the Guardian of Burton was told to 'give the Woman & her Boys an Order to be admitted into the Poorhouse'.<sup>95</sup> Sometimes just part of a family entered the house, even when both mother and father were alive and living together but their combined salary was not enough to maintain them. George Fletcher earned 12s a week, paid no rent, had a wife and five children, the youngest reaching the age of 2. The Board of Guardians recommended that the Burton Guardian consider sending 'apart of the Family into the Poorhouse' unless they thought it was more 'proper to allow them some outdoor relief'.<sup>96</sup>

The Guardians of the Sutton Union frequently admitted children into the workhouse without their parents. For instance, in 1837 a widow by the name of Bauchman from Bury with two girls aged thirteen and sixteen, requested some money for the youngest child and some clothes. The Guardians ordered that the youngest child should enter the workhouse and that no outdoor relief should be allowed.<sup>97</sup> The only restriction placed upon the Guardians was that if the child was under seven they had to gain the permission of their parent(s).<sup>98</sup> In the same year, widow Phoebe Ladler from the same parish applied for relief. She had three children, two boys whose wages combined to nine shillings and six pence per week, and one girl aged six, who earned nothing. The Board ordered that the Guardian of Bury 'should give her an Order to send the Girl into the Poor House'. They noted in the case papers that 'the Pauper refuses to send the s[ai]d Child into the House'.<sup>99</sup> It is evident that the Guardians had to comply with the Act and accept her refusal and the family could therefore remain together.<sup>100</sup> Even when both parent(s) and their child(ren) entered the house there was still a risk that the families would be split up when living in the workhouse. In the Alverstoke

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<sup>95</sup> Sutton Union, Sutton Case Papers, 9 July 1838, WSRO WG3/4.

<sup>96</sup> Sutton Union, Sutton Case Papers, 5 March 1840, WSRO WG3/4.

<sup>97</sup> Sutton Union, Sutton Case Papers, no day or month 1837, WSRO WG3/4.

<sup>98</sup> 22 Geo. III c.83, XXX.

<sup>99</sup> Sutton Union, Sutton Case Papers, 15 May 1837, WSRO WG3/4.

<sup>100</sup> Older children were admitted alone, for instance William Marsh, a 17 year old also from Bury who had 'been working for a Blacksmith having a bad arm' was offered the workhouse, even though we can guess his residence was only temporary, Sutton Union, Sutton Case Papers, no day or month 1837, WSRO WG3/4.

workhouse, children slept in a room under the care of just two or three women. These women were there 'for the children to mix with instead of their own mothers at all times'. The children could have been a 'disturbance to her [the mothers'] work and the workers in the same place'.<sup>101</sup> Clearly, women's work was of importance to the management of the workhouse.

Gilbert, in his plan, argued that the 'future Diminution of the Poor's Rates' depended on developing children's morals, 'Habits of Virtue and Vice' and industriousness.<sup>102</sup> Guardians concurred and directed their attention to 'the reformation in the morals of the young in particular'.<sup>103</sup> There is little surprise then that when children entered the workhouse their lives were, as with their elders, inextricably linked to employment and education. For instance, in 1837 the Poor Law Commission told the East Preston Board to make clear classifications and separation of their paupers in the house to bring it into line with the organisation within New Poor Law Union workhouses. The response of the Guardians was to highlight the divisions they had long implemented, including a separate area where just 'children male and female are daily employed in Sack making under the personal superintendence of the Governor'.<sup>104</sup> Gilbert's Act itself does not detail how children should be employed in the workhouse, so Boards often made their own policies. For instance, the Alverstoke Board made the children knit stockings, make mops and pick oakum.<sup>105</sup> The children in South Stoneham knitted stockings in 1822, although just two years later they received the decision of group of local magistrates, which stated:

all Labourers [should] be found work even Boys at the Age of 10  
Years and Girls at the Age of 12 Years are recommended to be  
kept in employment which direction the Guardian has acted up

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<sup>101</sup> Alverstoke, Guardians' Minute Book, Annual report 1820, HRO PL2/1/1.

<sup>102</sup> Gilbert, 'Plan for the better relief and employment of the poor', p. 11.

<sup>103</sup> Alverstoke, Guardians' Minute Book, 24 February 1800, HRO PL2/1/1.

<sup>104</sup> Copy of Memorial signed by the Visitor and Guardians of East Preston [Gilbert's] Union to PLC, WSRO WG2/7.

<sup>105</sup> Alverstoke, Guardians' Minute Book, 1 April 1806, HRO PL2/1/1.

to, by receiving such Boys and Girls (for whom employment cannot otherwise be found) into the House.<sup>106</sup>

It is clear that the magistrates, as well as the Visitor and Guardians, were keen to get the children into employment.

Whilst such employments may have fostered habits of industry amongst the children, the Guardians treated their labour as a source of income. When the Alverstoke Guardians assessed the employment of the children in 1806 they noted that oakum picking in particular was making a 'profit'.<sup>107</sup> Under Gilbert's Act it was legal to place, 'let' or 'farm' children out to work in manufactories away from the workhouse. Although this practice was undertaken in some general parish workhouses, such as Wimborne (Dorset) which sent children to a watch chain manufactory, it was not a popular strategy amongst Gilbert's adoptees.<sup>108</sup> Instead contracts were often forged with those who could superintend the children within the workhouse. In 1804 the Alverstoke Guardians decided to enter into an agreement with Mr. John White of Gosport who had 'proposed to employ a certain number of the Children in the House to work for him in the Manufactory and to allow a certain Sum per Week for the labour of each Child'.<sup>109</sup> This policy idea was repeated nine years later.<sup>110</sup>

Although the education of children was not stipulated in Gilbert's Act, some committees provided schooling. Education within the workhouse appears to have been organised informally, as employment appears to have been the Guardians' main concern. The Guardians of the Sutton Union started educating

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<sup>106</sup> South Stoneham, Vestry Minute Book, 4 June 1822 and 5 January 1824, SCRO PR9/14/2.

<sup>107</sup> Alverstoke, Guardians' Minute Book, 1 April 1806, HRO PL2/1/1. Furthermore, the South Stoneham Board had noted the 'fair progress' the stocking manufactory was making, South Stoneham, Vestry Minute Book, 4 June 1822, SCRO PR9/14/2.

<sup>108</sup> In Wimborne the vestry sent both girls and boys to a watch chain making manufactory in the hamlet of Holt. Although this was within the same parish of Wimborne, it was not within the workhouse and was a contentious issue amongst the parents of the children, Wimborne Minster Insurance Policy, 1815, DHC PE/WM OV8/2; minutes in Wimborne Minster, Vestry Minute Book, 1745-1808, DHC PE/WM VE1/1; minutes in Wimborne Minster, Select Vestry Order book, 1818-1822, DHC PE/WM VE2/1; Wimborne Minster, Overseers' Correspondence, Henry Jenkins, Contractor (Christchurch) to Overseers (Wimborne Minster), 1 March 1819, DHC PE/WM OV13/4; Wimborne Minster Overseers' Correspondence, Henry Jenkins, Contractor (Christchurch) to Mr. John Drew, Vestry Clerk (Wimborne Minster), 13 March 1821, DHC PE/WM OV13/6.

<sup>109</sup> Alverstoke, Guardians' Minute Book, 3 August 1804, HRO PL2/1/1.

<sup>110</sup> Again, the Board thought it was desirable if a manufacturer could employ the children in the workhouse manufactory and pay for the labour, Alverstoke, Guardians' Minute Book, 20 April 1813, HRO PL2/1/1.

the children in the house by paying a lady called Mary Bacon ‘One Shilling for Sunday, and a Sundays Dinner’ for her efforts in ‘teaching all the Children of the House, to read, and to say their prayers every Sunday throughout the year’.<sup>111</sup> Due to the amount of employment the children were undertaking, their education was probably restricted to the Sabbath Day. A similar practice was in place at the Easebourne Union, where a Sunday School was established in 1800 organised and part-funded by a local vicar.<sup>112</sup> There were ‘two weekly schools’ in the Otterbourne and Boyatt Union.<sup>113</sup> Many committees decided to pay for the teacher a fixed sum per week, such as the Schoolmistress at Lymington.<sup>114</sup> Many Guardians had, however, secured the help of volunteers to teach the children. The clerk to the Reverend Morgan Reynolds, for instance, provided the children Catechetical instruction free of charge.<sup>115</sup> A large proportion of their education was undoubtedly religious. In one year the Sutton Guardians bought 24 prayer books and 24 testaments alongside 48 spelling books and 72 ‘spelling cards’.<sup>116</sup>

Many children were sent to schools within the immediate vicinity of the workhouse. In the Hursley workhouse there was apparently no room for a school room, so the children went to the village school at the cost of 3s each per week, paid by the parish. The children returned to the workhouse for meals and lodgings.<sup>117</sup> In Alverstoke, a school was established according to the ‘National system’, the monitorial system of education used in Church of England National Schools.<sup>118</sup> It appears that both workhouse girls and boys attended. Here the children were taught reading and writing, and practised sewing and serving which the Guardians believed would be useful experience for their future

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<sup>111</sup> Sutton Union, Guardians’ Minute Book, 4 February 1793, WSRO WG3/1/1.

<sup>112</sup> Easebourne Union, Letters concerning the establishment of a Sunday school, letter from E.M. Poznty(?) to Mr. Tyler (Petworth), 26 November 1800 and R. Lloyd (Midhurst) to Mr. Tyler (Petworth), 14 November, no year, PHA/10940.

<sup>113</sup> A’Court’s correspondence, ‘Notes on every Parish in the Winchester Division’, ‘Otterbourne & Boyatt’, November 1834, TNA MH32/1.

<sup>114</sup> At 3s 6d per week; A’Court’s correspondence, ‘Notes on the Parishes in the Lymington Division’, ‘Hordle’, 3 December 1834, TNA MH 32/1.

<sup>115</sup> Sutton Union, Guardians’ Minute Book, 2 October 1809, WSRO WG3/1/6.

<sup>116</sup> Sutton Union, Guardians’ Minute Book, 6 May 1816, WSRO WG3/1/8. In 1821 it was recorded that six testaments and six small common prayer books for the use of the children, Sutton Union, Guardians’ Minute Book, 1 January 1821, WSRO WG3/1/9.

<sup>117</sup> A’Court’s correspondence, ‘Notes on every Parish in the Winchester Division’, ‘Hursley’, 1 March 1834, TNA MH32/1.

<sup>118</sup> The Monitorial System grouped pupils according to ability for teaching.



employment.<sup>119</sup> This highly structured educational programme differs greatly from the occasional education provided in the aforementioned institutions. Indeed, the amount of education provided to children had varied over time as well as from place to place. For instance, in 1796 the children of Boldre workhouse attended a Sunday School, but by 1834 A'Court was staggered to find that '[t]here is in fact no school whatever'.<sup>120</sup>

Children, unlike their elderly and infirm counterparts, were expected to leave the workhouse. Gilbert's Act stipulates that the Visitor and Guardians should only be kept 'until such Child or Children shall be of sufficient Age to be put into Service, or bound Apprentice to Husbandry, or some Trade or occupation'.<sup>121</sup> This policy was adhered to. The Visitor and Guardians of the Sutton Union thought that children should be removed from the workhouse as soon as possible, and in 1792 they agreed that they should be employed in agricultural service as soon as they were capable.<sup>122</sup> In 1821 the Alverstoke Board reminded themselves that they needed to apprentice the boys and send the girls into service.<sup>123</sup> Some older children were even ordered into the house until work could be found for them. In 1839, 16 year old Ellen from Duncton had 'no means of living' and was residing with her mother since her father had died. She was working at Mr. Musletts of Petworth but was 'obliged to leave it an account of Chilblains'. The Guardians recommended that she enter the workhouse so that the matron, Mrs. Bryan, could 'do what she can for her & endeavour to get her a place [in service]'.<sup>124</sup>

## **b) Aged, ill and infirm**

As shown by Tables 4.3 and 4.4, the elderly, ill and infirm were not automatically shown into the workhouse. Only 1 of the 11 relief claimants aged 60 years and

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<sup>119</sup> Alverstoke, Guardians' Minute Book, Annual report 1820, HRO PL2/1/1. Apparently 64 boys and 58 girls attended but it is unclear whether these children all came from the house or from the parish as a whole.

<sup>120</sup> Walter *et al.*, 'An account of a new poor-house', p. 20 (apparently the elderly went with the children); A'Court's correspondence, 'Notes on the Parishes in the Lymington Division', 'Boldre', 3 December 1834, TNA MH32/1.

<sup>121</sup> 22 Geo III c.83, XXX.

<sup>122</sup> Sutton Union, Guardians' Minute Book, 1 October 1792, WSRO WG3/1/1.

<sup>123</sup> Alverstoke, Guardians' Minute Book, Annual report 1821, HRO PL2/1/1.

<sup>124</sup> Sutton Union, Sutton Case Papers, 7 February 1839, WSRO WG3/4.

older resulted in admission to the workhouse and only a few of those suffering long-term ailments were accommodated. The workhouse could be used to intimidate vulnerable individuals and sometimes admission depended on them adhering to certain terms. A pauper by the name of Moody, aged 81, claimed relief for himself, his second wife and their two daughters from Barlavington parish. He had been receiving three shillings per week with three gallons of flour and was managing to pay his own house rent. On application for further relief, the Guardians stated they 'are [of the] Opinion that no furt[her] Relief be allowed him, but their be he told unless he sets rid of his two... [daughters] his Relief will be taken off, and will be sent into the House.'<sup>125</sup> The Guardians wanted the family to stop claiming for extra outdoor relief and to send his daughters out to work or into an apprenticeship. At Lymington the elderly were told to 'give up the Pension' they received and enter into the workhouse.<sup>126</sup> In one such case the vestry threatened to discharge an elderly man called John Alyes 'unless he Assigns his Pension to this Parish'.<sup>127</sup>

There is little information about the relief provision of the elderly, ill and infirm once *within* the workhouse, not least because other groups, such as the young and able-bodied, seem to have been of more concern to the Boards. Nevertheless, we can develop a sense of how these groups were treated on an everyday basis through an examination of the spaces provided for the elderly, ill and infirm and some suggestions as to how they were employed.

Many workhouses had a separate room for the elderly, and separate rooms for the ill and infirm. The Bishopstoke and Lymington workhouses, for instance, had sick wards, and the latter also had two special rooms for lying in women and two for the 'sick and refractory'.<sup>128</sup> This was not always the case though. A'Court, when visiting the Hursley workhouse, was shocked by the disorganisation caused by the lack of division between 'the old – the idle and

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<sup>125</sup> Sutton Union, Sutton Case Papers, 2 October 1837, WSRO WG3/4.

<sup>126</sup> Lymington, Vestry Minute Book, 16 August 1821 and 22 February 1827, HRO 42M75/PV2.

<sup>127</sup> Lymington, Vestry Minute Book, 6 September 1827, HRO 42M75/PV3. These parishioners are likely to have been registered as Chelsea Out-pensioners, not least as Chelsea pensions are mentioned in the minutes in relation to other individuals' cases, e.g. Lymington, Vestry Minute Book, 30 August 1821, HRO 42M75/PV2.

<sup>128</sup> A'Court's correspondence, 'Notes on every Parish in the Winchester Division', 'Bishop Stoke', November 1834, TNA MH32/1; A'Court's correspondence, 'Notes on the Parishes in the Lymington Division', 'Hordle', 3 December 1834, TNA MH32/1.

profligate'. Yet, Hursley did have (according to the plan, see Appendix 3) a 'cage' for the placement of disorderly inmates. The provision of separate spaces for the inmates, therefore, varied from place to place and was often restricted by architecture and cost. When designing their workhouse, the Alverstoke Guardians planned to build a separate ward for the aged and infirm as well as a detached hospital ward.<sup>129</sup> Later they claimed their 'aged and infirm [were] comfortably lodged'.<sup>130</sup> As the plan suggests (Appendix 6), they had separate infirmaries for female and male residents at two opposite sides of the workhouse and a separate 'infirm room' located at the centre of the workhouse. The Guardians were worried that the purpose of these rooms would change after a contractor took over the maintenance of the workhouse. As a consequence, article seventeen of the contract clearly stated the contractor must 'reserve as many other rooms as the Visitor and Guardians may consider necessary for the comfort of the aged and infirm'.<sup>131</sup>

Special treatment in the Alverstoke workhouse extended beyond considerations of bricks and mortar. During the harsh winter of 1808, described in the minute book as 'severe and long', the Alverstoke Guardians decided 'that the old people were obliged to have fires in their rooms'. This had reportedly 'caused a greater expenditure of Coals than usual' because the extra fuel was purchased in a small amount during the cold season rather than in bulk prior to the peak season.<sup>132</sup> With no mention of the other areas of the house, the elderly were provided with warmth regardless of the expense to the parish. These vulnerable poor were also provided with 'extras'.<sup>133</sup> Special food provision to the vulnerable was especially advocated by Gilbert. In a pamphlet published prior to the passage of the law, he explained that it was very unjust that the able-bodied would 'generally consume the best provisions'.<sup>134</sup> The supply of tea to all men and

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<sup>129</sup> Alverstoke, Guardians' Minute Book, 24 February 1800, HRO PL2/1/1.

<sup>130</sup> Alverstoke, Guardians' Minute Book, 5 May 1800, HRO PL2/1/1.

<sup>131</sup> Alverstoke, Guardians' Minute Book, 18 December 1822, HRO PL2/1/1.

<sup>132</sup> Alverstoke, Guardians' Minute Book, 19 April 1808, HRO PL2/1/1.

<sup>133</sup> Workhouse dietaries developed by the Poor Law Commission show that 'old people' of sixty years of age and upwards were provided with tea, butter, sugar and meat (some in lieu of other foods but not always). The six Poor Law Commission approved dietaries are reproduced in P. Higgenbotham, *The Workhouse Cookbook* (Stroud, 2008), pp. 53-55, also a discussion of the provision of alcohol, tobacco and tea in parish workhouses prior to the passage of the Poor Law Amendment Act on pp. 35-39.

<sup>134</sup> Gilbert, 'Plan for the better relief and employment of the poor', p. 7.

women in the house was common, but the elderly and infirm were allowed extra tea and also some sugar.<sup>135</sup> Yet, not surprisingly, these provisions were constantly being monitored due to their cost. In Alverstoke, the special workhouse committee examined the possibility of reducing these extras, but decided that ‘the indulgence of Tea & Sugar to all such infirm & old Persons’ shall remain at the discretion of the Visitor and Guardian. In addition the Medical Officer of the workhouse was to inform the committee of ‘such Cases as in his Opinion [which] may require the indulgence medicinally.’<sup>136</sup>

There is little indication that the elderly, ill and infirm undertook a strict employment regime within the Gilbert’s workhouse. Some boards, such as the Alverstoke Visitor and Guardians, recognised that many of the inmates were ‘past labour’.<sup>137</sup> Nevertheless, in workhouses such as Easebourne there were separate workrooms for the ‘Old People to pick Wool in’ (Appendix 7c). When these vulnerable groups did undertake work, however, there is evidence to suggest that men and women usually undertook different tasks. Elderly and infirm female inmates undertook general domestic tasks. In Boldre their main tasks were ‘cooking, mending, and washing’.<sup>138</sup> At Lymington A’Court noted that the old and infirm and young females were also engaged in household work and mending clothing.<sup>139</sup> Male elderly and infirm were designated more specific tasks. Thus, at Easebourne the governors and subsequently the contractors instructed the ‘old men’ to make brooms and use spun yarn to create mops, at Boldre the ‘old men’ worked in the workhouse garden.<sup>140</sup> At Lymington the ‘old men feed the pigs – look after the parish Cow and Horse – occasionally assist in the Garden & take out daily a given quantity of vegetables into the Town for sale on the Parish account’.<sup>141</sup> These jobs were not as strenuous as farm labouring. It appears that

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<sup>135</sup> Alverstoke, Guardians’ Minute Book, 6 August 1818, HRO PL2/1/1.

<sup>136</sup> Alverstoke, Guardians’ Minute Book, 15 January 1819, HRO PL2/1/1.

<sup>137</sup> Alverstoke, Guardians’ Minute Book, 20 April 1813, HRO PL2/1/1.

<sup>138</sup> Walter *et al.*, ‘An account of a new poor-house’, p. 6.

<sup>139</sup> A’Court’s correspondence, ‘Notes on the Parishes in the Lymington Division’, ‘Lymington’, 3 December 1834, TNA MH32/1.

<sup>140</sup> For brooms see summary 1797-1798 and 1798-1799 and for woollen mops see summary 1809-1810 in Easebourne Union, Copies of the yearly accounts of William Bridger, Treasurer of the Easebourne United Parishes, 1797-1827, PHA/7869; Walter *et al.*, ‘An account of a new poor-house’, p. 6.

<sup>141</sup> A’Court’s correspondence, ‘Notes on the Parishes in the Lymington Division’, ‘Lymington’, 3 December 1834, TNA MH32/1.

the Guardians, master and matron had considered the abilities of inmates before allocating them work.

#### 4.3.3 Employing the ‘vulnerable’

Gilbert strongly believed in promoting ‘industry’ amongst paupers and thought this could be achieved by ‘compelling every poor Person to labour who is able to work; to take proper Care of those who are not’.<sup>142</sup> Gilbert’s aim has been misinterpreted in the past, with Nicholls arguing that the Gilbert’s workhouse was ‘strictly...a poorhouse...to designate it a workhouse seems a misnomer’.<sup>143</sup> He was comparing Gilbert’s workhouses with what came later, the New Poor Law Union workhouses where work was used to deter individuals from entering the institution (see chapter seven). Because Gilbert’s workhouses were supposed to accommodate ‘none but the Aged, Infirm, and Impotent, who are not able to maintain themselves by their Labour’, this did not mean that some form of work was not undertaken. As Gilbert stressed in his plan, the inmates were ‘to be *employed in doing as much Work as they can*’.<sup>144</sup> Gilbert Act adoptees explicitly embraced this principle. The Board at Mere, for instance, noted that they were ‘employing the Poor in the house *capable of Work*’.<sup>145</sup> Similarly, at Boldre the ‘inhabitants are all employed in that business they are most fit for’.<sup>146</sup>

Many inmates were engaged in work which contributed to the functioning of the workhouse. As the analysis of tasks undertaken by the elderly suggests, this work was gender-specific. Female inmates were predominantly engaged in domestic tasks whilst men were predominantly working outside. At Lymington, women would sit and work in the kitchen whilst the men were outside apart from when they were allowed in a separate ‘sitting room’ where they were engaged in less strenuous tasks.<sup>147</sup> The gendered division of labour is reflected in the spaces of workhouses, especially those which had been adapted or built after the

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<sup>142</sup> Gilbert, ‘Plan for the better relief and employment of the poor’, pp. 1-2.

<sup>143</sup> G. Nicholls, *History of the English Poor Law*, Volume 2: 1714-1853 (London, 1898), p. 89.

<sup>144</sup> Gilbert, ‘Plan for the better relief and employment of the poor’, p. 7. My emphasis.

<sup>145</sup> Mere, Vestry Minute Book, 11 April 1822, WSA 2944/78.

<sup>146</sup> Walter *et al.*, ‘An account of a new poor-house’, p. 6.

<sup>147</sup> A’Court’s correspondence, ‘Notes on the Parishes in the Lymington Division’, ‘Lymington’, 3 December 1834, TNA MH32/1.

adoption of Gilbert's Act. For instance, in the Hursley workhouse (Appendix 3) the women's day room was situated next to the kitchen. Opposite these rooms were the bake and wash houses. The Alverstoke workhouse (Appendix 6) placed the women's yard and rooms on the matron's side of the building which included a kitchen, scullery and wash house. The men's yard and rooms were situated on the master's side of the building where there was space for a manufactory and workshop. As this plan suggests, some Gilbert's Boards employed the inmates within manufactories alongside domestic tasks. These appear to have been predominantly clothing manufactories. In the Easebourne Union, women prepared and span 'coarse wool for collar clothes and the refuse for mops, flax for coarse linen fabrick for sheets and shirting' as well as blankets.<sup>148</sup> In Alverstoke, many paupers were placed 'under the Instruction of Women, who learn'd them to knit Stockings...and several employd in a Manufactory if Blankets, Coverlids, flannel, Spinning Mop yarn &c.' Many of these items were actually sold to the house itself, with the rest taken to local markets.<sup>149</sup> At Boldre inmates were employed in spinning, and the master had even developed a 'tune' to be sung whilst working. The '*spinning-wheel tune*', as it was called, possessed a rhythm 'well adapted to the motion of the wheel'.<sup>150</sup>

Employing the poor in this way was not always, unsurprisingly, a profitable venture. To start with, the establishment of Board-managed manufactories was slow and the resulting financial advantages took a long time to shine through. As the Alverstoke Guardians commented over five years into their adoption of Gilbert's Act: 'the Manufactory has...not come up to what the Committee originally expected, [but] it is nevertheless in a progressive state of improvement'.<sup>151</sup> A similar situation was felt by the Easebourne Guardians. When summing up the state of employment for the sessions in 1797 the treasurer, William Bridger, wrote:

[t]he remarks in former years' accounts to the sessions,  
respecting the mode of Employing the Paupers, still continue to

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<sup>148</sup> Easebourne Union, Copies of the yearly accounts of William Bridger, Treasurer of the Easebourne United Parishes, 1797-1798 summary, PHA/7869.

<sup>149</sup> Alverstoke, Guardians' Minutes Book, Annual report 1804, HRO PL2/1/1.

<sup>150</sup> Walter *et al.*, 'An account of a new poor-house', p. 19.

<sup>151</sup> Alverstoke, Guardians' Minute Book, 8 April 1806, HRO PL2/1/1.

apply. The profits of the manufacture are barely, if at all, sufficient to answer the Expences of a superintendabr [superintendent] &c; without computing the Interest of the Capital; wear & Tear of Tackle &c.<sup>152</sup>

In the following year this had continued and after the goods were sold, the takings at market were similar to the cost of the raw materials. The point of making the vulnerable work as much as they could was to provide some income for their maintenance. By 1798 the treasurer thought it was not just the uneconomical modes of work they were undertaking. Bridger wrote 'their unskilfullness or want of attention has, tis conceived, wasted more [money] than their Earnings' could solely provide for.<sup>153</sup>

Obtaining profits by working the vulnerable was difficult, and many larger institutions resorted to obtaining a workhouse contractor. The Easebourne Union established agreements with third parties to maintain the poor, as permitted under section two of Gilbert's Act. These contracts allowed the 'governor' to become (or be replaced by) a contractor.<sup>154</sup> The Sutton Union was the first of Egremont's Unions to contract out their workhouse in 1793, just two years after the formation of the Union. The impact on the employment of those in the workhouse was immediate. The chosen contractor was Mr. Northwood who had worked in Hereford for five years and had been 'brought up' in sacking manufactory.<sup>155</sup> As a result, by the next August a sacking manufactory was considered for the employment of the poor and not long after it was established

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<sup>152</sup> Easebourne Union, Copies of the yearly accounts of William Bridger, Treasurer of the Easebourne United Parishes, 1796-1797 summary, PHA/7869.

<sup>153</sup> Easebourne Union, Copies of the yearly accounts of William Bridger, Treasurer of the Easebourne United Parishes, 1798-1799 summary, PHA/7869.

<sup>154</sup> 22 Geo. III c.83, II stipulated 'from Time to Time to make Agreements with any Person or Persons for the Diet or Cloathing of such poor Persons who shall be sent to the House or Houses to be provided under the Authority of this Act, and for the Work and Labour of such poor Persons, so that no such Agreement shall be made for any longer Time than twelve Months, and so that the same shall be, and every such Agreement is hereby declared to be, under the strictest Inspection and Controul of the Visitor, Guardian, and Governor of such Poor House, and also of the Justices of the Peace for the Limit where such Poor House shall be; two of which Justices, upon Proof of any Abuse, shall have Power to dissolve such Contract.'

<sup>155</sup> Sutton Union, Correspondence and proposals for farming the poor, 21 July 1793, PHA/6570. It is clear that he took the position of contractor later that year, Sutton Union, Minute Book, 2 December 1793, WSRO WG3/1/1.

and sacks were sold.<sup>156</sup> The Easebourne Union was soon to follow. After ‘more than 4 years Trial, under three Several Governors’, they decided to find a contractor. On 1 May 1798, Easebourne contracted out their poor at two shillings and eight pence per head per week. This rate varied from year to year. From therein, the workhouse inmates worked in a coarse woollen manufactory until at least 1827. Wool and hemp were transported to the house, and the poor made blankets and sheets as well as horse cloths and hempen sacks.<sup>157</sup>

Not all inmates experienced dramatic employment changes when a contractor took charge. When the Alverstoke Board decided to contract for the maintenance of their poor, it is clear that no new form of employment was found in the manufactory.<sup>158</sup> Domestic employment also had to continue as before. The Alverstoke Guardians directed, under Article 4, that the contractor had to ‘employ as many paupers or other persons as may be necessary for cooking and serving up the victuals...for washing, cleansing and keeping an order the Poor House’.<sup>159</sup> In addition, the workhouse gardens were also consistently worked.<sup>160</sup> Farnham had *already* established a blanket manufactory when they needed a contractor in 1794. It was expected that this enterprise would continue into the future, not least as it was detailed upon the advertisement alongside the number of poor the contractor had to maintain and the size of the workhouse garden.<sup>161</sup>

It was a common practice that the poor were provided with a nominal amount of money for their efforts. These payments took various forms and

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<sup>156</sup> Sutton Union, Guardians’ Minute Books, 4 August 1794, WSRO WG3/1/2. By December Richard Altrue and Elizabeth Matthews were appointed and given board in the house to superintend the sacking manufacture, Sutton Union, Guardians’ Minute Book, 1 December 1794, WSRO WG3/1/2.

<sup>157</sup> The manufactory is mentioned throughout the summaries from the summary of 1798-1799 to 1826-1827. For detail about the horse cloths and hempen sacks see summary 1804-1805, for brooms see summary 1797-1798 and 1798-1799, and for woollen mops see summary 1809-1810 in Easebourne Union, Copies of the yearly accounts of William Bridger, Treasurer of the Easebourne United Parishes, PHA/7869.

<sup>158</sup> The idea to let out the poor came up at a meeting on a workhouse committee report of the 20 April 1813, whereby it was thought that ‘a manufacturer could be obtained who for the use of the manufactory premises would employ the Children’ and for which instead of paying the contractor a sum per week per head Alverstoke Guardians believed *they* would be paid for their children’s labour, Alverstoke, Guardians’ Minute Book, HRO PL2/1/1.

<sup>159</sup> Alverstoke, Guardians’ Minute Book, 18 December 1822, HRO PL2/1/1.

<sup>160</sup> BPP 1844 (543) Report from the Select Committee on Gilbert’s Act, interview of Joseph Cave, p. 152. In the 1820s the Alverstoke Guardians’ noted that the garden is still worked on by the workhouse residents, Alverstoke, Guardians’ Minute Book, 8 February 1821, HRO PL2/1/1.

<sup>161</sup> *Hampshire Chronicle*, 12 May 1794. 110 poor to maintain and a garden of 1.5 acres.



became known as an ‘allowance’, a ‘gratuity’ and also, as in West Sussex, ‘encouragement money’, as at Easebourne.<sup>162</sup> This allowance came out of the profits of all types of labour - both within and out of the workhouse - including women’s ‘household’ tasks such as ‘needle work in making Paupers Clothes &c’ and ‘Knitting worsted and yarn for stockings’. At Easebourne it was set at a rate of two pence from every shilling.<sup>163</sup> Such payments were subject to change throughout the lifetime of the institution. The committee appointed by the Alverstoke Guardians to examine the management of the workhouse in 1822 believed that the ‘[g]ratuities and rewards given to the paupers and others in the poor house...have very considerably increased during the last three years’. The committee advised the Board that these sums ‘ought to be discontinued’.<sup>164</sup> For some Gilbert’s Unions and Parishes encouraging the poor to adopt certain modes of behaviour, to be moral and industrious, conflicted with cost.

#### **4.3.4 A space solely for the vulnerable?**

The stipulations in Gilbert’s Act should have created what Digby called an ‘asylum for the impotent poor’.<sup>165</sup> It was important to Gilbert that the able-bodied were provided relief outside of the workhouse because the ‘[c]lamorous and Disorderly always make confusion; they disturb the Peace and Quiet of the Old and Infirm’.<sup>166</sup> Allowing the able-bodied into the workhouse would have been a violation of the law and go against the spirit of the Act. In view of this, it is worth

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<sup>162</sup> When the Alverstoke Gilbert’s Parish was investigating the employment systems of other places, they found that the Houses of Industry at Alton and Winton (Winchester) as well as the Gilbert’s Parish of Farnham deducted ‘gratuities’ for encouragement, Alverstoke, Guardians’ Minute Book, 26 November 1799, HRO PL2/1/1.

<sup>163</sup> Although the way in which it was distributed is unknown, i.e. it could have been provided at the governors’ or Guardians discretion, in proportion to the number of days or hours worked or simply to all those who did work. Easebourne Union, Copies of the yearly accounts of William Bridger, Treasurer of the Easebourne United Parishes, 1796-1797 and 1797-1798 summaries, PHA/7869.

<sup>164</sup> Alverstoke, Guardians’ Minute Book, 28 August 1822, HRO PL2/1/1. This committee was predominantly concerned with cutting parochial expenses as it delivered a report which wanted to reduce the cost of administration through the use of a non-professional to act as a vestry clerk, the abolition of certain salaried positions (treasurer and steward), to make sure those receiving outdoor relief to be provided with bread instead of money unless in an emergency and having a contractor farm and maintain the poor, Alverstoke, Guardians’ Minute Book, 28 August 1822, HRO PL2/1/1.

<sup>165</sup> A. Digby, *Pauper Palaces* (London, 1978), p. 32.

<sup>166</sup> Gilbert, ‘Plan for the better relief and employment of the poor’, p. 6.

exploring whether the able-bodied entered Gilbert's Act workhouses and, therefore, whether this allowed the workhouse to be used as a residence for all individuals in need of relief. This section begins with an analysis of workhouse population numbers according to month before turning to qualitative sources about whether the able-bodied entered the workhouse.

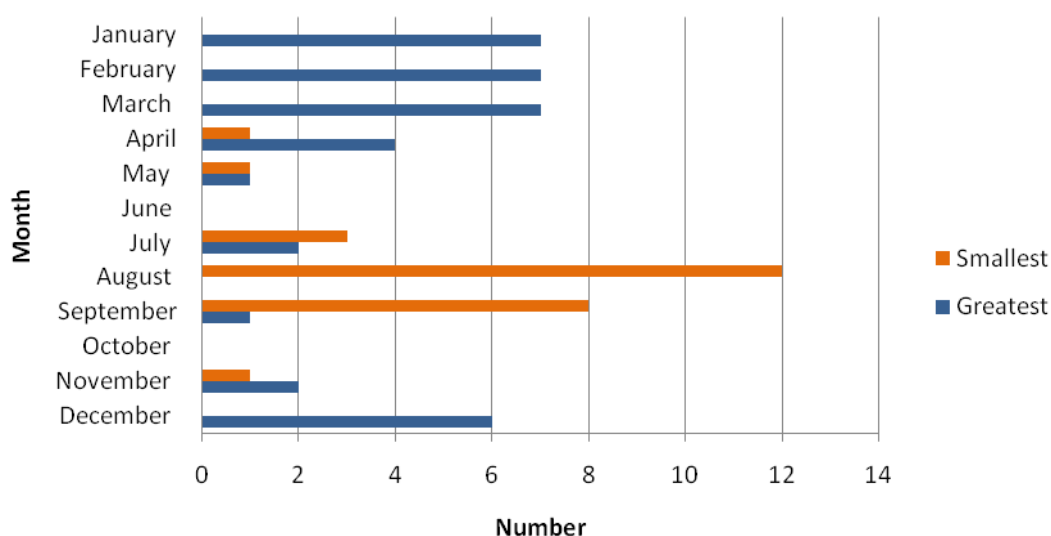
To start with, it is worth remembering that in some Gilbert's Parishes and Unions there were a significant number of people of 'working-age' in the workhouse. Whether these were unwell or infirm inmates or whether they were capable of labouring is rarely clear. From workhouse population figures organised according to month it may be possible though to make some insight into the stability of the population over the year. The proposition is, if Gilbert's Act workhouses contained just the elderly, infirm and children, then we would expect a stable population within the house over the entire year. If there were able-bodied inmates within the workhouse, we might expect them to leave during the time of year when employment was plentiful - May to September - and re-enter the workhouse when it was not.<sup>167</sup> Two sources lend themselves to this analysis: the numbers of parishioners from the Headley parish entering the Headley Gilbert's Act workhouse and the Returns kept by the treasurer of the Easebourne workhouse. According to the Headley archive, there was actually little significant difference in the number of inmates belonging to the Headley workhouse over the course of the year, between 18.22 people and 19.22 each month of the year between 1795 and 1820. This could be a reflection of the capacity of the workhouse and the informal and formal agreements between the parishes and the contractors. Nevertheless, the highest number within the workhouse is in January and the lowest is in September. The Easebourne workhouse population returns show a similar pattern (Figure 4.8), with the highest number of inmates in the house from November to April and the lowest from July through to September.

There is a notable link between the time of the year and the population of the workhouse. Yet this information may obscure as much as it reveals. For instance, if the workhouse population declines when work is plentiful, then those

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<sup>167</sup> The pasture harvest was approximately from late May through to August and the arable harvest from mid to late July through to September.

Figure 4.8: Frequency of the ‘greatest’ and ‘smallest’ population months in the Easebourne Union workhouse, 1797-1827\*



\* In some years the treasurer noted two or three months with the greatest or smallest populations. These have been included in the figure as separate entries.

Source: Easebourne Union , Copies of the yearly accounts of William Bridger, Treasurer of the Easebourne United Parishes, 1797-1827, PHA/7869.

not usually ‘able to maintain themselves by their Labour’, as Gilbert puts it, may have been leaving the workhouse rather than the able-bodied *per se*.<sup>168</sup> The seasonality of workhouse numbers may have reflected two other issues. First, it costs more to live in the winter, increasing the pressure on elderly people, in particular, to seek poor relief. Second, research on the number of sick episodes and sick days among members of the Hampshire Friendly Society between 1895 and 1981 show that sickness rates peak in the first quarter of the year (January to March), decline during the second and third quarters and increase during the fourth quarter (October to December). This pattern is consistent with results on sickness rates from other time periods.<sup>169</sup> Overall this information suggests that the increasing population in the winter could be caused by the growing needs of vulnerable groups and sick parishioners, rather than simply the middle-aged

<sup>168</sup> Gilbert, ‘Plan for the better relief and employment of the poor’, p. 7.

<sup>169</sup> B. Harris, M. Gorsky, A. Guntupalli and P.R.A. Hinde, ‘Long-term changes in sickness and health: further evidence from the Hampshire Friendly Society’ (unpublished paper).

able-bodied poor. In addition, the able-bodied may have resided in the house whilst working in the workhouse manufactory, workshops and garden, a phenomenon which both sources cannot expose. They may have also entered and exited the workhouse in a relatively short period. The Guardians and claimants, in this scenario, were therefore using the workhouse as a temporary measure. As noted, there are no known admissions and discharge registers for Gilbert's Unions and Parishes in the south, therefore a more detailed analysis of the people who entered its doors cannot be undertaken.<sup>170</sup>

Qualitative sources provide a more nuanced picture of the adherence and non-adherence to Gilbert's policy. In the Sutton Case Papers, it is clear that some Gilbert's Parishes and Unions adhered to the legislation. For instance, William Peachey of Slindon, aged 22, explained that he had been out of work for five weeks and did not save any money during the harvest. The Guardians suggested that 'Mr Cooper would continue to employ him'.<sup>171</sup> In some instances, obtaining assistance was not a smooth process. On many occasions it appears that the Visitor in the Sutton Union had to remind the Guardians of their responsibility to provide relief or employment for their able-bodied parishioners. For example, Thomas Rout claimed that his family, of a wife and seven children, were 'totally destitute' because not only was he unable to obtain employment for his children, his usual income from working in the woods (up to 12 shillings a week) would not commence again until the middle of winter. He had approached the Guardian and the farmers of Slindon on a previous date, but he claimed 'they have no work'. Thomas Sockett, the Visitor, was very forthright in making the parish recognise their responsibility for providing relief. Writing to Mr. William Lane, the Guardian of Slindon, he states it is the role of:

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<sup>170</sup> Some further work on the West Sussex Gilbert's Unions could expose significant dips in the total workhouse population during the harvest, suggesting that some unions adhered to the rules more than others. The records are good for Sutton and excellent for East Preston whereby the population can be traced every month from 1791-1853 with only a few gaps: East Preston Union, Treasurers' Books, 1791-1814, WSRO WG2/1; East Preston Union, Treasurers' Books, 1814-1834, WSRO WG2/3; East Preston Union, Treasurer's Book, Receipts and Payments, 1834-1853, WSRO WG2/5. Hitchcock's thesis demonstrates this is possible with the surviving registers of workhouses in the late-seventeenth and early-eighteenth century, leading to important suggestions as to the state of paupers who received indoor relief, T. Hitchcock, 'The English Workhouse: A Study in Institutional Poor Relief in Selected Counties, 1696-1750' (unpublished PhD thesis, University of Oxford, 1985).

<sup>171</sup> Sutton Union, Sutton Case Papers, 10 October 1839, WSRO WG3/4.

a guardian to take care that the man & his family do not suffer from a want of necessary food - I need not remind you that you alone are responsible to the law in this and all similar cases, & without any reference to any other officers or rate payers.

There was, Sockett thought, no need to send Rout to the board when the parish should be able to order relief to him on their own accord. Sockett was angry with the manner in which Slindon parish was allocating 'employment and support' to the paupers.<sup>172</sup> Lane responded to Sockett, with a list of excuses for their ill-treatment of Thomas Rout, but partially redeemed himself by informing him that Rout was now out on the roads and when he was 'not employed we have made it up in provisions'.<sup>173</sup> The Visitor even had to arrange for groups of paupers to be treated according to the law. Abraham Carver (who had a wife and three children) and Thomas Harwood (wife and four children) from Sutton turned up at the Board together in July 1840. Both had worked for Mr. Hawkins of Bignor Park but both work and wages were drying up. With the Guardian of Sutton parish not being present, the Visitor Thomas Sockett wrote to him stating these labourers 'must be found employ at fair wages, or in some way provided with food for their families - The Guardian is personally responsible to do this'.<sup>174</sup>

It is also clear that the Sutton Union and other Gilbert's Act adoptees did the opposite. For instance, in March 1840 three labourers in their twenties entered the Board room together from the parish of Bury.<sup>175</sup> They claimed that they had hardly worked during the winter, although they had found employment with Mr. Guring for the hay and harvest season and from Mr. Ireland, and had constant work in Greatham during the summer in the previous year. The solution was for the parish overseers 'to find these some Employment by Task work - or to given them an Order to go in into the House an[d] to give them some children Relief...to keep them from starvg'.<sup>176</sup> Whether this was a temporary measure or not is difficult to decipher. Nevertheless, evidence from other Gilbert's Unions

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<sup>172</sup> Sutton Union, Sutton Case Papers, 23 July 1840 and letter from Thomas Sockett (Petworth) to William Lane, 23 July 1840, (Slindon), WSRO WG3/4.

<sup>173</sup> Sutton Union, Sutton cases papers, William Lane (Slindon) to Thomas Sockett (Petworth), 26 July 1840, WSRO WG3/4.

<sup>174</sup> Sutton Union, Sutton Case Papers, 27 July 1840, WSRO WG3/4.

<sup>175</sup> James Elliot (aged 22 and apparently 'drunk'), George Sadler (also 22) and George Humphreys (aged 20).

<sup>176</sup> Sutton Union, Sutton Case Papers, 5 March 1840, WSRO WG3/4.

and Parishes suggests that the placement of the able-bodied within the workhouse was a long-held policy. The Easebourne workhouse had a woollen manufactory, but it was common practice that '[m]en and boys, who are able, are let to work at Husbandry to the neighbouring Farmers'. According to the treasurer, placing the able out to work in such a manner was the 'only employment that Yields any Profit to the undertaking'.<sup>177</sup> A'Court noted that other parishes were following a similar scheme, such as the Hursley and Bishopstoke Boards which allowed their able-bodied men to work for 'private' individuals, the wages of which were put into the parish purse.<sup>178</sup> Lymington Board followed a slightly different scheme. Here men who worked outside of the workhouse received their own wages and paid a small amount towards their 'maintenance' each week.<sup>179</sup>

#### 4.4 Conclusion

Gilbert's Act was proposed with clear intentions, intentions which had appealed to many parish vestries and local landowners. Adopting the Act permitted the parishes to provide special attention to those who were in poverty through no fault of their own, thereby safeguarding their entitlement to relief, whilst permitting economising practices, such as employing the poor and contracting out. These two very different, although not incompatible, benefits of adopting Gilbert's Act had infiltrated into the rationales of adoptees. Yet, in practice, maybe one rationale became more important than the other. Indeed, there were many adoptees in the 1790s and several adoptions of the Act into the 1820s, suggesting that economy rather than the care of the vulnerable was a prime

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<sup>177</sup> Easebourne Union, Copies of the yearly accounts of William Bridger, Treasurer of the Easebourne United Parishes, 1797-1798 summaries, PHA/7869. This strategy did not change when a contractor was appointed. As Bridger states, 'the strongest Paupers he still continues to hire out for Husbandry work', Easebourne Union, Copies of the yearly accounts of William Bridger, Treasurer of the Easebourne United Parishes, 1798-1799 summary, PHA/7869; the 'Earnings of Paupers let out to Labour during the above part of the year', i.e. from 1 May 1798 to Lady Day 1799 was reported to be £19 12s 6d.

<sup>178</sup> A'Court's correspondence, 'Notes on every Parish in the Winchester Division', 'Bishop Stoke' and 'Hursley', 1 March 1834, TNA MH32/1.

<sup>179</sup> Lymington, Vestry Order Book, 1807-1817, HRO 42M75/PV10, see especially order on 9 May 1808.

motivation for obtaining Gilbert's Act. This suggests that enabling legislation could be adopted, and therefore used, akin to a strategy, to enable a parish to change their policies during a time of added pressure on poor relief provision.

Ultimately, did Gilbert's Parishes and Unions care for the vulnerable – as was Thomas Gilbert's intention – or did they further harm their vulnerable charges? Reaching an answer is not clear-cut due to the multiple ways in which the Act was practised on the ground. Not only did the application of Gilbert's Act vary from place to place, but it also varied over time. Whilst one place adopted one strategy of caring for the vulnerable, it did not mean all of the areas adopted this strategy. Educating children, for instance, was not stipulated in Gilbert's Act but it was both ad hoc and limited and also organised. The comforts provided to the elderly and infirm in one place were reduced in another. Whilst Headley may not have admitted the able-bodied into the Gilbert's Act workhouse, many other Gilbert's Parish and Union workhouses did. Enabling legislation could also be adapted to suit the challenges faced in particular local contexts.

The placing of some of the able-bodied into a Gilbert's Act workhouse may have been the most economical way of maintaining the poor, but it violated the rules of Gilbert's Act and went against the 'spirit' of the Gilbert's Act workhouse. These findings reflect those which resulted from the research undertaken by the Poor Law Commission on the operations of Gilbert's workhouses in other parts of the country in the 1830s. The Commission reported that in Wallingford (Oxfordshire) the Board let in both the vulnerable and the able-bodied which, to the Commission's surprise, they had not even endeavoured to separate. In addition, the Thurgarton Gilbert's workhouse (Nottinghamshire) had turned into a 'deterrent' institution during the last ten years of the old poor laws by enforcing a 'workhouse test'. To the Webbs this meant that the Gilbert's house was really 'nothing better than a General Mixed Workhouse of the old type'.<sup>180</sup> Estimating how widespread this practice was amongst Gilbert's Parishes and Unions is, however, very difficult. There are also two further complications. It was not always the case that the Guardians let all and every able-bodied person into the workhouse or not. Boards did not have such clear-cut policies. In addition, there were varying levels of ability amongst the 'able-bodied' and 'vulnerable', which

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<sup>180</sup> Webb and Webb, *English Poor Law History, Part 1*, p. 275.

made individuals' labour desirable at some times of the year but not at others. This research hints at this complexity, but further research is needed to expose the decision-making of Guardians and parish officers when providing indoor and outdoor relief to individual parishioners.<sup>181</sup>

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<sup>181</sup> The decisions made in vestry minute books could be used in further analysis. These vestry minutes have a good survival rate in West Sussex compared to the other counties, although their contents are yet to be analysed. Relief for the able-bodied was further complicated by the provision of house rent or a parish house, employer-overseer agreements and work on the roads and in parish quarries.



## Chapter 5: Enabling Acts (II) Sturges Bourne's Acts

This is the second chapter of two which examine the adoption and implementation of enabling legislation passed during the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries. This chapter explores the adoptions of Sturges Bourne Acts within the context of Wessex and West Sussex. The first section summarises the genesis of the Acts and outlines the main provisions of the legislation, with the following section detailing practices adopted prior to the passage of these Acts which had, in many respects, mirrored the provisions of Sturges Bourne's Acts. Thereafter, the chapter examines the *adoption* of the legislation in England and in the chosen region before analysing the *implementation* of the legislation. Although Sturges Bourne policies were implemented in different ways, their application re-drew the distinction between the 'deserving' and 'undeserving' poor which ultimately changed individuals' entitlement to relief during the last years of relief provision under the old poor laws.

### 5.1 Sturges Bourne's Committee and the Acts

The economic and social crises at the start of the nineteenth century had 'put poor law reform back on the list of urgent matters for the country's political leaders.'<sup>1</sup> After the Napoleonic Wars ended in 1815, two large sectors of the economy, agriculture and manufacturing, became severely depressed. According to Wells, the 'war-induced high farm-product prices' deflated, whilst there was no longer any need to produce the 'artefacts of war'. Demobilisation also led to a 'baby boom', and men who had previously been in military service re-entered the labour market. Whilst in the manufacturing areas of England these factors caused a 'relatively short' depression, in agricultural areas the depression was both intense and enduring with national expenditure on the poor rates notably

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<sup>1</sup> A. Brundage, *The English Poor Laws, 1700-1930* (Basingstoke, 2002), p. 48.

increasing from 1816 onwards.<sup>2</sup> As Eastwood contends, ‘the post-war depression generated the most acute crisis in the entire period’ between 1780 and 1840.<sup>3</sup>

Some time before the Napoleonic Wars, national debates considered the reform – or even abolition – of the poor laws. Thomas Malthus, writing in the 1790s, thought that the poor laws provided a safety net for all of the poor without taking into account how ‘deserving’ these individuals were of relief provision. Consequently, he asserted that poor relief had encouraged people to marry early and have large families without due regard for the additional pressure this would place on the household economy. David Ricardo drew inspiration from Malthus’ account and argued that whilst the provision of poor relief had caused population growth it had also increased the prevalence of poverty. The poor laws had moved away from their charitable purpose, and relief was so prolific that both the poor and rich in society had suffered.<sup>4</sup> Such perspectives had their roots in the mid-eighteenth century when Reverend Thomas Alcock (in 1752) and later Joseph Townsend (1786) argued that, essentially, the poor laws had ‘caused the very indigence it was intended to relieve’.<sup>5</sup> More moderate positions were also taken. Although there are significant differences between their viewpoints, Jeremy Bentham, Edmund Burke and Patrick Colquhoun had all essentially argued that rather than abolish the poor laws they should be operated according to different rules.<sup>6</sup> These ‘rules’ included distinguishing between those individuals who were merely poor, those who had to work to earn a living, and those indigent poor who were unable to work to obtain a living. Bentham and Colquhoun, however, did make a case for a reduction in the scope of relief.<sup>7</sup>

Within this context, following what Eastwood described as a ‘detailed statistical inquiry into the operation of the poor laws and the scale of relief payments’ by the government, a Select Committee was appointed in 1816 in the

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<sup>2</sup> R. Wells, ‘Poor-Law Reform in the Rural South-east; the Impact of the ‘Sturges Bourne Acts’ during the Agricultural Depression, 1815-1835’, *Southern History*, 23 (2001), p. 53.

<sup>3</sup> D. Eastwood, *Governing Rural England: Tradition and Transformation in Local Government 1780-1840* (Oxford, 1994), p. 128.

<sup>4</sup> B. Harris, *The Origins of the British Welfare State: Social Welfare in England and Wales, 1800-1945* (Basingstoke, 2004), p. 42.

<sup>5</sup> J.R. Poynter, *Society and Pauperism: English Ideas on Poor Relief 1795-1834* (London, 1969), p. 40.

<sup>6</sup> For further details see Poynter, *Society and Pauperism*; G. Himmelfarb, *The Idea of Poverty: England in the Early-Industrial Age* (London, 1984).

<sup>7</sup> Harris, *Origins of the British Welfare State*, p. 42.

House of Commons to investigate the poor laws.<sup>8</sup> The Committee was formed of forty gentlemen including two pivotal members; Thomas Frankland Lewis (later a Commissioner of the New Poor Law) and chairman William Sturges Bourne (later member of the Royal Commission on the Poor Laws 1832-34).<sup>9</sup> In his native Hampshire, Sturges Bourne was active in county politics and served as a chairman on the Hampshire Quarter Sessions (1817-22).<sup>10</sup> The Select Committee interviewed numerous parish officials and uncovered a variety of maladministration cases. The aim of Sturges Bourne and his Committee, though, was not to abolish the old poor laws but to develop legislation which permitted administrative reform. In particular, the Committee saw the need to deal with the 'irresponsibility' of the standard, open vestry.<sup>11</sup> Interestingly, at the same time as this inquiry, the House of Lords had instigated their own Select Committee which resulted in the publication of a 'more anodyne document, reassuringly Pittite', containing a vague account of the need for change in the management of the poor laws rather than solid policy ideas about how to achieve it. Although the House of Lords document was commended in the Lords, it was not acted upon.<sup>12</sup> Sturges Bourne, however, believed that his report contained useful stipulations for the country. He presented a series of Bills to Parliament, two of which became the Sturges Bourne Acts.

His first Act was passed in 1818.<sup>13</sup> The Act permitted vestries to reset the weighting of all votes according to the following scheme: people assessed up to £50 had one vote, and thereafter a sliding scale up to an assessment of more than £150, who received 6 votes. This meant that the more property someone had, the more voting power they had. All individuals who did not pay rates could no longer vote and were barred from attending vestry meetings.<sup>14</sup> The weighting of votes in such a manner, and a subsequent amendment which allowed joint stock

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<sup>8</sup> Eastwood, *Governing Rural England*, p. 128.

<sup>9</sup> Brundage, *The English Poor Laws*, p. 48.

<sup>10</sup> D. Eastwood, 'Bourne, William Sturges (1769–1845)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford, 2004). Online. Available: <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/3012> [last accessed 17 January 2009].

<sup>11</sup> B. Keith-Lucas, *The Unreformed Local Government System* (London, 1980), p. 98.

<sup>12</sup> Eastwood, *Governing Rural England*, p. 130.

<sup>13</sup> 58 Geo. III c.69.

<sup>14</sup> Keith-Lucas, *The Unreformed Local Government System*, p. 98.

companies and non resident ratepayers to vote, meant the Act was controversial.<sup>15</sup> Key political figures at the time, such as William Cobbett, Thomas Wakely and Joshua Toulmin-Smith, criticised the Act for making access into a vestry even more exclusive than previous legislation.<sup>16</sup> Nevertheless, according to the reasoning of the Committee, the major ratepayers would better control the expenditure of the poor rates and reduce corruption. As Keith-Lucas puts it, the measure was to take the administration of poor relief 'out of the hands of the poor themselves.'<sup>17</sup>

The 1819 Sturges Bourne Act provided parish vestries with two, optional, tools to tighten-up relief expenditure. Any vestry was permitted to 'establish a Select Vestry for the concerns of the Poor' consisting of between five and twenty 'Substantial Householders or Occupiers within such Parish'.<sup>18</sup> The option of appointing a Select Vestry meant that 'the traditional open, amateur, and essentially voluntarist structure of local government' was under notice.<sup>19</sup> The Select Vestry had to be voted in by the majority of members of the open vestry, and thereafter renewed annually. Each annual appointment of the Select Vestry had to be drawn up into an official agreement and supported with the signature of one acting magistrate.<sup>20</sup> A chairman would be elected by the Majority of the members of the Select Vestry, and had a casting vote on unresolved decisions.<sup>21</sup> The Select Vestry had to meet at least once every fourteen Days.<sup>22</sup> The job of the Select Vestry was well defined:

to examine into the State and Condition of the Poor of the Parish, and to inquire into and determine upon the proper Objects of Relief, and the Nature and Amount of the Relief to be given; and in each case take into Consideration the Character and Conduct of the poor Person to be relieved, and shall be at liberty to

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<sup>15</sup> Passed in 1819, 59 Geo. III c. 85.

<sup>16</sup> Keith-Lucas, *The Unreformed Local Government System*, p. 99.

<sup>17</sup> Keith-Lucas, *The Unreformed Local Government System*, p. 98.

<sup>18</sup> 59 Geo. III c.12, I.

<sup>19</sup> Eastwood, *Governing Rural England*, p. 132.

<sup>20</sup> 59 Geo. III c.12, I. The Select Vestry could operate from any time, but it would expire fourteen days after the annual appointment of overseers.

<sup>21</sup> 59 Geo. III c.12, I.

<sup>22</sup> 59 Geo. III c.12, I.

distinguish, in the Relief to be granted between the deserving, and the idle extravagant or profligate<sup>23</sup>

Once such inquiries were made, it was the job of the parish overseers to abide by the decisions of the Select Vestry and administer relief accordingly, except in cases of 'sudden Emergency or urgent Necessity'.<sup>24</sup> One magistrate could also issue relief in an emergency, and two magistrates – after hearing a complaint from an individual – could also overrule the relief decisions of the Select Vestry.<sup>25</sup> The Select Vestry did not just have to hand out relief, in cash or kind, for the Act also permitted relief to be offered as a loan to be repaid in weekly instalments.<sup>26</sup>

Sturges Bourne's legislation also permitted the appointment of assistant overseers, the second important feature of the 1819 Act. This required the annual sanction of two magistrates. In return for undertaking 'all such of the Duties of the Office of Overseer of the Poor', and any specified in the contract of his appointment, the assistant would receive a salary set by the members of the vestry.<sup>27</sup> This section of the Act had also encouraged 'a few would-be bureaucrats to devote themselves to parish administration.'<sup>28</sup> This legislation, therefore, represented a growing 'professionalism' within the poor law, akin to a 'poor law civil service'.<sup>29</sup>

The 1819 Act also contained a series of other optional directives, but it is generally thought that parish officials had paid little attention to them. One such clause allowed parishes to procure 20 acres of land on which to work the poor.<sup>30</sup> The 1819 Act also allowed parish vestries to both build and expand parish workhouses for the accommodation of the poor.<sup>31</sup> Parishes were also permitted to enter into arrangements with the vestries of adjoining parishes for the hiring or

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<sup>23</sup> 59 Geo. III c.12, I.

<sup>24</sup> 59 Geo. III c.12, I.

<sup>25</sup> 59 Geo. III c.12, II.

<sup>26</sup> 59 Geo. III c.12, XXIX. Magistrates could have also made an Order for the repayment of a loan, and non-payments could result in imprisonment in a Common Gaol or House of Correction.

<sup>27</sup> 59 Geo. III c.12, VII. An assistant overseer could continue working until he resigns, dies or the parish revoke his appointment.

<sup>28</sup> Eastwood, *Governing Rural England*, p. 177.

<sup>29</sup> Brundage, *The English Poor Laws*, p. 52

<sup>30</sup> 59 Geo. III c.12, XII, XIII and XIV.

<sup>31</sup> 59 Geo. III c.12, VIII. Also permission to sell parish workhouses is given in section X.

purchasing of workhouses for the accommodation of the poor.<sup>32</sup> In addition, many parishes which thought it expedient to establish workhouses may have already been providing accommodation under older 'enabling' legislation, such as Knatchbull's Act and Gilbert's Act. Of course, the lack of attention surrounding these sections of the 1819 Act does not mean that the legislation did not impact upon the ways parishes accommodated and worked the poor.

According to Wells, appointing a Select Vestry whilst providing relief according to Gilbert's Act was forbidden in Sturges Bourne's 1819 Act.<sup>33</sup> Indeed, several parish officials at the time thought along the same lines, with three parishes in Hampshire informing the Poor Law Commission in the Rural Queries that they could not adopt Sturges Bourne's Act because they had adopted Gilbert's Act.<sup>34</sup> Yet, as Wells himself noticed, parishes can be found *acting* according to both enabling pieces of legislation.<sup>35</sup> After an examination of the Act, however, it becomes clear that this was not strictly illegal. A penultimate section of the Sturges Bourne's 1819 Act contains a proviso expressing that the Act does not intend to alter the 'Powers, Directions, Provisions or Regulations' of Gilbert's Act and those stipulations contained in Local Acts 'for the Maintenance, Relief or Regulation of the Poor'. Sturges Bourne's Act did not seek to alter the provisions of the earlier Acts, such as Gilbert's Acts and Local Acts. All parishes under earlier Acts were, therefore, permitted to decide for themselves whether to adopt the provisions of Sturges Bourne's Act as well.<sup>36</sup> It was thus perfectly legitimate for a parish to adopt several pieces of enabling legislation.

Due to Sturges Bourne's central aim - to reduce the costs of relief - there is little doubt that the Acts had 'fundamental consequences for the experience of

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<sup>32</sup> 59 Geo. III c.12, XI. Two magistrates had to ratify the arrangement and that no building or buildings should be more than three miles from the parish which is hiring or purchasing the accommodation.

<sup>33</sup> Wells, 'Poor-Law Reform in the Rural South-east', p. 88. Note that Wells does not cite Sturges Bourne's Act itself.

<sup>34</sup> Parishes of Boldre, Millford and Milton (Hampshire); BPP 1834 (44) Report from His Majesty's Commissioners for Inquiring into the Administration and Practical Operation of the Poor Laws. Appendix B.1. XXXI Answers to the Rural Queries in Five Parts. Part 2. Question 22.

<sup>35</sup> Funtingdon and Tillington in the Easebourne Union.

<sup>36</sup> 59 Geo. III c.12, XXXVI. One section of Sturges Bourne's 1819 Act referred to the stipulations of Gilbert's Act about to the sale, purchase and renting of land and buildings for the use of the poor, 59 Geo. III c.12, XVIII.

being poor'.<sup>37</sup> How Sturges Bourne's Acts 1819 provisions were implemented is the subject of the second half of this chapter.

## 5.2 Predating practices

According to Eastwood, '[n]either' the adoption of a Select Vestry or employment of an assistant overseer 'was new'.<sup>38</sup> Separate committees had already been formed with the specific task of managing the welfare of the poor. Dorchester, for instance, had a system akin to a Select Vestry from 1794, deciding in 1821 to place the committee under the regulations of Sturges Bourne.<sup>39</sup> Similar committees also existed in rural parishes in southern England. In 1788 the vestry of Titchfield appointed a committee to attend the overseers at their monthly meetings, a committee which also had powers to examine relief claimants and attend to other matters relating to poor relief.<sup>40</sup> A 'Select Committee' was appointed in 1809 in St. Mary's Extra, Southampton, to meet four times a year to examine poor relief expenditure and settle the overseers' accounts.<sup>41</sup> Committees were frequently formed to undertake a specific task for the vestrymen at a particular moment in time. For instance, in the spring of 1798 the Wincanton vestrymen established a committee of nine men 'to examine into the Managemt. and expenditure of the Workhouse'.<sup>42</sup> The pre-existence of these similar arrangements was acknowledged by the Sturges Bourne Committee who, conscious of the need not to make their stipulations compulsory, contained a proviso that the Act did not have to affect 'any Select Vestry which in any Parish has been established and acted upon by virtue of any ancient Usage or Custom'.<sup>43</sup>

Assistant overseers were also appointed in parishes prior to the 1819 Act. Eastwood suggests that before the start of the nineteenth century assistants were

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<sup>37</sup> S. King, *Poverty and Welfare in England 1700-1850: A Regional Perspective* (Manchester, 2000), p. 26.

<sup>38</sup> Eastwood, *Governing Rural England*, p. 129.

<sup>39</sup> Eastwood, *Governing Rural England*, p. 176.

<sup>40</sup> Titchfield, Vestry Minute Book, 12 April 1788, HRO 37M73/PV1.

<sup>41</sup> St. Mary's Extra, Vestry Minute Book, 4 April 1809, SCRO PR6/6/1.

<sup>42</sup> Wincanton, Vestry minute Book, continued to appoint an assistant overseer, 2 May and 25 May 1798, SRO D\PC\winc/1/3/1.

<sup>43</sup> 59 Geo. III c.12, XXXVI.

predominantly employed in urban parishes. After the turn of the century, ‘support for the concept of assistant overseers seems to have grown considerably’.<sup>44</sup> Neuman identified seven parishes in Berkshire with assistants (the earliest in 1786) and Eastwood provides three examples from Oxfordshire before 1819 (the earliest in 1799).<sup>45</sup> Many rural parishes in Wessex and West Sussex employed assistant overseers prior to the legislative reforms too. The earliest found during this research was elected in the large, sparsely populated parish of Chew Magna in 1769.<sup>46</sup> Many assistants in Wessex were first elected around and after the turn of the century. In south Somerset a cluster of parishes first employed assistants at this time. The vestrymen of Bruton appointed a salaried overseer in 1792, and the nearby parish of Wincanton, neighbouring Pitcombe and Mere parishes soon followed.<sup>47</sup> According to Nicholls, writing in the late-nineteenth century, the appointment of assistant overseers was particularly desirable for vestrymen in large, rural parishes where collecting the rates and distributing poor relief was particularly onerous and this was presumably the rationale here.<sup>48</sup>

Such assistants were sometimes called assistant overseers, or a variety of other names such as ‘perpetual’, ‘deputy’, ‘acting’ and ‘standing’ overseers.<sup>49</sup> Such names subsequently filtered into the language of post-Sturges Bourne years.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> Eastwood, *Governing Rural England*, p.177.

<sup>45</sup> Hungerford (1786), Reading St. Giles and St. Lawrence, Cholsey, Sunninghill, Tilehurst and Uffington in M. Neuman, *The Speenhamland County: Poverty and the Poor Laws in Berkshire, 1782-1834* (New York, 1982), p. 181; Henley-on-Thames (1799), Eynsham (1811) and Bampton (1812) in Eastwood, *Governing Rural England*, p. 177.

<sup>46</sup> Chew Magna, Vestry Minute Book, 23 January 1769, SRO D\P\che.m/9/1/1.

<sup>47</sup> Wincanton appointed their assistant in 1798, Pitcombe in 1800 and Mere in 1811. Wincanton, Vestry Minute Book, 11 April 1798, SRO D\PC\winc/1/3/1; Bruton, Select Vestry Minute Book for administration of poor, 12 April 1792, SRO D\P\brut/9/1/1; Pitcombe, Overseers’ Account Book, 23 March 1800, SRO D\P\pitc/13/2/1; Mere, Overseers’ Account Book, under accounts lists of April 1811-April 1814, W&SA 438/20.

<sup>48</sup> G. Nicholls, *History of the English Poor Law*, Volume 2: 1714-1853 (London, 1898), p. 187.

<sup>49</sup> Wincanton, Vestry Minute Book, continued to appoint an assistant overseer, 11 April 1798, SRO D\PC\winc/1/3/1; Bruton, Select Vestry Minute Book for administration of poor, appointed 12 April 1792, terms used March 1792-August 1792, SRO D\P\brut/9/1/1; Pitcombe, Overseers’ Account Book, a deputy overseer appointed on 23 March 1800 (under minute 23 March 1816), SRO D\P\pitc/13/2/1; Mere, Overseers’ Account Book, perpetual overseers notes in accounts of April 1811-April 1814, W&SA 438/20; Eversley, Vestry Minute Book, election of a standing overseer, 22 April 1822, HRO 6M77/PV1.

<sup>50</sup>For instance, the Pitcombe vestry called their assistant a ‘Deputy’ (1824), the Wincanton vestry called their assistant a ‘Perpetual’ Overseer (1832) and the Bruton vestry called theirs an ‘Acting Overseer’ (1834); Bruton, Special rate for unemployed poor, vestry



Early assistant overseers undertook a wide variety of tasks relating to parish administration, many collecting the poor rates and distributing relief. It is possible that some overseers were employed to undertake just one of these duties. In 1811 the Bruton vestry appointed Thomas Bord as a 'rating Overseer' to collect the rates. His salary was twenty pounds a year, but only half came from the poor rates. Each ordinary overseer was to contribute five pounds from their own pockets as it was a task they should have undertaken themselves.<sup>51</sup> Several years later, Thomas received a pay rise to thirty five pounds per annum as long as he undertook both tasks of collecting the rates and distributing poor relief.<sup>52</sup> Paid overseers also governed the parish workhouse, surveyed the highways (thereby employing able-bodied men and boys on the roads) and acted as the parish clerk. The multiple duties of a paid overseer continued after the passage of the 1819 Act. In Oxfordshire, Eastwood discovered that one assistant overseer (1821-32) had collected and distributed the rates, acted as a parish clerk, farmed the poor, supervised smallpox inoculation, run the parish school, played the church organ and attended vestry meetings.<sup>53</sup> Whilst the range of duties covered by this assistant may have been unusual, the overlapping of parish duties was commonplace. Arrangements were even made for the assistant overseers to live in parish poorhouses.<sup>54</sup> Due to the prevalence of Gilbert's Unions and Parishes within the region, it was not unusual to find that the parish also elected an assistant who would serve as a Guardian on the union committee.<sup>55</sup>

Whilst the formal appointment and payment of assistants has already received some attention, a practice which has been left unnoticed is the payment of individuals on an ad hoc basis. For instance, after Lady Day 1803, the

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minute of 9 Oct 1834, SRO D\P\brut/13/1/3; Wincanton, Vestry Minute Book, 29 March 1832, SRO, D\PC\winc/1/3/2; Pitcombe, Overseers' Account Book, Account of 1824, SRO D\P\pitc/13/2/1.

<sup>51</sup> Bruton, Select Vestry Minute Book for administration of poor, 15 April 1811, SRO D\P\brut/9/1/2.

<sup>52</sup> Bruton, Select Vestry Minute Book for administration of poor, 4 May 1817, SRO D\P\brut/9/1/2

<sup>53</sup> The assistant overseer was from Bampton; Eastwood, *Governing Rural England*, pp. 177-178.

<sup>54</sup> For instance, two new rooms were built onto the poorhouse at North Petherton primarily for the residence of the assistant overseer; North Petherton, Vestry Minute Book, Notice 20 February 1831 for a meeting on 25 February 1831, SRO D\P\pet.n/9/1/2.

<sup>55</sup> For instance Yateley, Vestry Minute Book, 26 March 1840, HRO 67M78A/PV1. The salary per year was twenty pounds, Yateley, Overseers' Account Book, 1837-1853, HRO 67M78/PO6.

Wincanton vestrymen gave two men five guineas each for assisting the overseers during the last year.<sup>56</sup> Although the exact nature of this assistance was unrecorded, it was likely to have involved either collecting rates or distributing relief. Such payments were also offered to ordinary parish overseers. For instance, five pounds was given to one overseer of Eversley for the ‘laborious duty’ he undertook over the previous year.<sup>57</sup> In what way the overseer went beyond his ordinary duties is not known, but by paying this individual the parish had appointed a pseudo-assistant overseer. How many other parishes paid for assistance in a similar way would be difficult to calculate, not least because these payments may not have been recorded.

### **5.3 The adoption of Sturges Bourne’s Acts**

#### **5.3.1 Sturges Bourne in England and the south of England**

Parishes could adopt both of the main enabling aspects of the Sturges Bourne Acts or just one, i.e. just a Select Vestry or assistant overseer. Indeed, the Webbs claimed that the appointment of an assistant overseer was far more popular than the appointment of a Select Vestry.<sup>58</sup> The answers to question 32 in the Rural Queries help to crudely illustrate this point in selected southern counties.<sup>59</sup> There are, however, some methodological problems to consider with this source. Some parishes stated that their vestry acted akin to a Select Vestry or that they had a ‘Perpetual’ or ‘Acting’ Overseer.<sup>60</sup> As such, they were recorded as having a Select Vestry and an assistant overseer respectively, although it does not seem that they had a formal agreement for the appointment, ratified by a magistrate. As such,

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<sup>56</sup> Wincanton, Vestry Minute Book, 11 April 1803, SRO D\PC\winc/1/3/1.

<sup>57</sup> Eversley, Vestry Minute Book, 22 May 1822, HRO 6M77/PV1.

<sup>58</sup> S. Webb and B. Webb, *The Parish and the County* (1906, London, 1963), p. 166.

<sup>59</sup> BPP 1834 (44) XXXII Report from His Majesty’s Commissioners for Inquiring into the Administration and Practical Operation of the Poor Laws. Appendix B.1. Answers to the Rural Queries in Five Parts. Part 3. Question 32. The question read ‘Have you a Select Vestry and Assistant Overseer; and what has been the effect?’.

<sup>60</sup> BPP 1834 (44) XXXII Report from His Majesty’s Commissioners for Inquiring into the Administration and Practical Operation of the Poor Laws. Appendix B.1. Answers to the Rural Queries in Five Parts. Part 3. Question 32. Select Vestry: Bramshaw (Hampshire); Alternative wording of assistant overseer: Pitton and Farley (West Sussex) and North Bavant (Wiltshire).

this data does not hold an exact representation of the prominence of particular adoption scenarios. Regardless of such issues, 56 responses to the Rural Queries from Wessex and West Sussex had explicitly stated that their parish adopted at least one of the two main provisions of Sturges Bourne's 1819 Act and a similar number had neither provision in place (58) (Table 5.1). Thus, when taking into account the number of parishes which failed to respond to the question, 37.6% parishes answering the Queries from this region positively stated they had adopted one or more of the two main provisions of Sturges Bourne's 1819 Act. There are, however, three different scenarios which those adopting the legislation could have entered – by appointing a Select Vestry, an assistant overseer, or both. We can deduce that those parishes which had engaged with the legislation were more likely to just appoint an assistant overseer, or appoint an assistant overseer alongside with a Select Vestry, than adopt a Select Vestry alone.

The main limitation of figures of adoption derived from the Queries is that they only formally record the number of parishes which had either a Select Vestry or assistant overseer or both at the time the enquiry was taken. Many more parishes had previously appointed a Select Vestry and an assistant overseer and subsequently abandoned them. The Rural Queries provide some hints of this complexity where responses provide a potted history of their relationship with the Act, adopting and dropping policies over time. For instance, a West Sussex respondent wrote '[t]here has been a Select Vestry, but it is now discontinued, not being deemed beneficial.'<sup>61</sup> At North Curry (Somerset) there was no Select Vestry, and the assistant overseer had only been appointed nine months prior to the Return.<sup>62</sup>

The adoption and dropping of these policies can be traced on a larger scale through the use of Parliamentary Returns produced by the Select Committee on Poor Rate Returns who, from 1819 to 1834, collated the number of parishes with Select Vestries and assistant overseers in England and Wales. Using these Returns some historians have acknowledged the fluctuating numbers of Select Vestries and assistant overseers in existence. The Webbs, for instance, stated that the number of parishes with Select Vestries in England and Wales

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<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, Pulborough (West Sussex).

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, North Curry (Somerset).

Table 5.1: Parishes with Select Vestries and assistant overseers in 1832, according to the Rural Queries (question 32)<sup>63</sup>

County	Number of parishes answering in county	Number of parishes					% of parishes				
		Select Vestry only	Assistant overseer only	Both	Neither	No answer	Select Vestry only	Assistant overseer only	Both	Neither	No answer
Dorset	15	0	1	0	6	8	0.0	6.7	0.0	0.4	53.3
Hampshire	57	2	14	8	24	9	3.5	24.6	14.0	42.1	15.8
Somerset	20	1	6	5	5	3	5.0	30.0	25.0	25.0	15.0
West Sussex	32	0	7	1	13	11	0.0	21.9	3.1	40.6	34.4
Wiltshire	25	0	5	6	10	4	0.0	20.0	24.0	40.0	16.0
Total	149	3	33	20	58	35	2.0	22.1	13.4	38.9	23.5

Source: BPP 1834 (44) XXXII Report from His Majesty's Commissioners for Inquiring into the Administration and Practical Operation of the Poor Laws. Appendix B.1. Answers to the Rural Queries in Five Parts. Part 2. Question 32.

<sup>63</sup> See footnote 36 of chapter four for a list of the responses from the Rural Queries excluded from this table.

declined over time (2002 in 1822, 2868 in 1828, and 2392 in 1832).<sup>64</sup> Figure 5.1 shows the percentage of parishes in England and selected southern counties of England which appointed a Select Vestry between 1819 and 1834. Select Vestries were initially more popular in the parishes of the southern selected counties than England as a whole. The number of parishes which adopted Select Vestries rose during the first half of the 1820s. However, the number of vestries in other areas of the country rose much more rapidly so that by 1825 the percentage of parishes with Select Vestries in the selected southern counties was slightly lower than the national average. Thereafter the number of Select Vestries throughout the country and within the southern selected counties fell. The Royal Commission attributed the rising cost of provision to this decline in the number of Select Vestries.<sup>65</sup> This fall was, however, more dramatic in the southern counties compared to England as a whole. By 1833-4 fewer than 10% of parishes in the study counties had a Select Vestry in operation. Between 1833 and 1834, England saw a small increase in the uptake of Select Vestries, but the numbers of Select Vestries in the selected southern counties continued to fall.

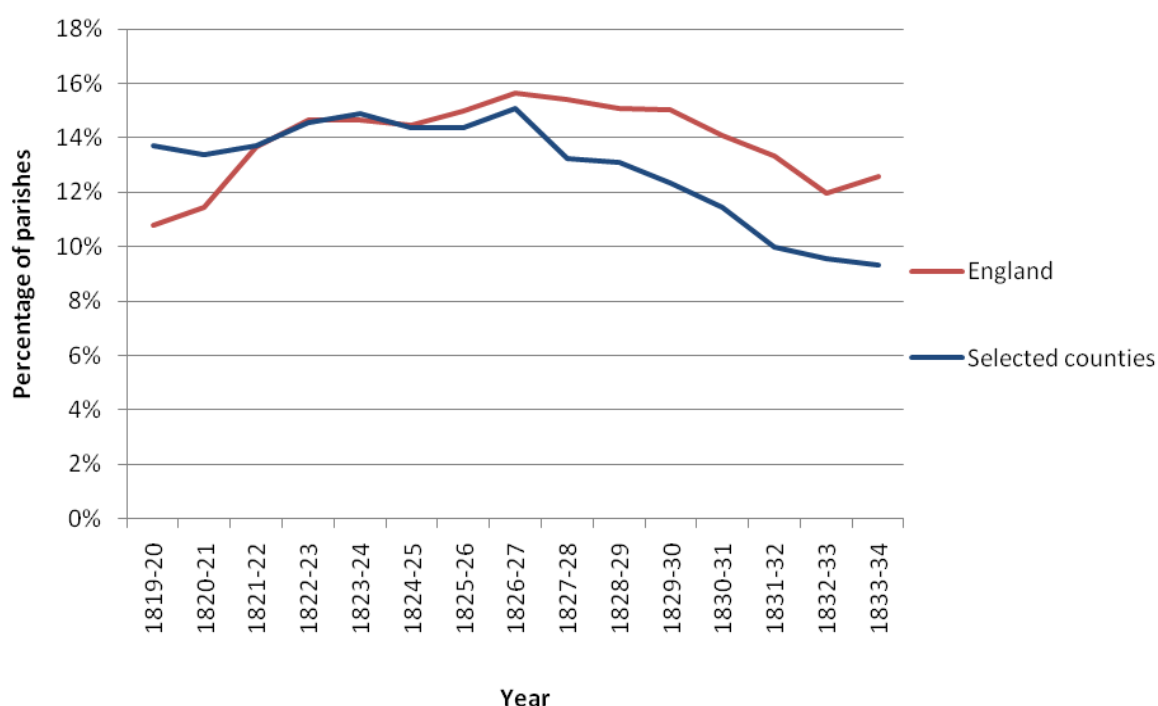
There was a very different pattern in assistant overseer appointments compared to Select Vestry appointments (Figure 5.2). The proportion of parishes with assistant overseers in both England and the study counties had increased over time, though this policy was always more popular in Wessex and West Sussex than in England as a whole. Between 1825 and 1827 there was a significant increase in the proportions of parishes with assistants, and, again, a steady increase during the early 1830s.

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<sup>64</sup> Webb and Webb, *The Parish and the County*, pp. 157-163.

<sup>65</sup> Harris, *Origins of the British Welfare State*, p. 44.

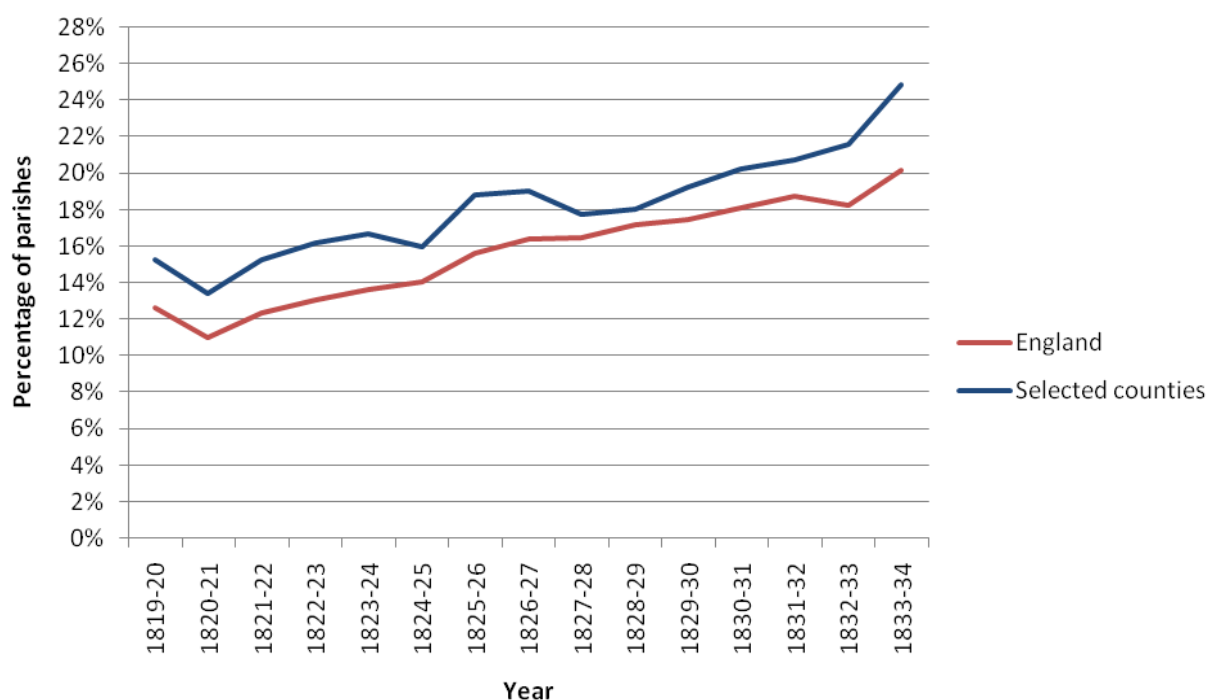
Figure 5.1: Percentage of parishes in England and selected southern counties of England with a Select Vestry, 1819-1834



Source: **1819-1820:** BPP 1821 (748) Report from the Select Committee on Poor Rate Returns, Appendix B, p. 11; **1820-1821:** BPP 1822 (556) Report from the Select Committee on Poor Rate Returns, Appendix C, p. 21 (537); **1821-1822:** BPP 1823 (570) Report from the Select Committee on Poor Rate Returns, Appendix B, p. 10; **1822-1823:** BPP 1824 (420) Report from the Select Committee on Poor Rate Returns, Appendix B, p. 8; **1823-1824:** BPP 1825 (334) Report from the Select Committee on Poor Rate Returns, Appendix B, p. 8; **1824-1825:** BPP 1826 (330) Report from the Select Committee on Poor Rate Returns of the year 1825, Appendix B, p. 8; **1825-1826:** BPP 1826-27 (316) Poor rates. An account of the amount of money levied and expended for the relief of the poor, in each county in England and Wales, in the year ending 25th March 1826, p. 2; **1826-1827:** BPP 1828 (124) Poor rates. Abstract of returns of the amount of money levied and expended for the relief of the poor, in each county in England and Wales, in the year ending 25th March 1827, p. 2; **1827-1828:** BPP 1829 (78) Poor rates. Abstracts of returns of the amount of money levied and expended for the relief of the poor, in each county in England and Wales, in the year ending 25th March 1828; and also, of the number of removals and appeals during the same period, p. 2; **1828-1829:** BPP 1830 (141) Poor rates. Abstract of returns of the amount of money levied and expended for the relief of the poor, in each county in England and Wales, in the year ending 25th March 1829, p. 2; **1829-1830:** BPP 1830-31 (219) Poor rates. Abstract of returns of the amount of money levied and expended for the relief of the poor, in each county in England and Wales, in the year ending 25th March 1830, p. 2; **1830-1831:** BPP 1831-32 (216) Poor

rates. Abstract of returns of the amount of money levied and expended for the relief of the poor, in each county in England and Wales, in the year ending 25th March 1831, p. 2; **1831-1832**: BPP 1833 (32) Poor rates. Abstract of returns of the amount of money levied and expended for the relief of the poor, in each county in England and Wales, in the year ending 25th March 1832, p. 2; **1832-1833**: BPP 1834 (335) Poor rates. Abstract of returns, showing the amount of money levied and expended for poor's rate and county rate in each county in England and Wales, in the year ending 25 March 1833, p. 2; **1833-1834**: BPP 1835 (284) Poor rates. Abstract of returns, showing the amount of money levied and expended for poor's rate and county rate in each county in England and Wales, in the year ending 25 March 1834, p. 1.

Figure 5.2: Percentage of parishes in England and selected southern counties of England with an assistant overseer, 1819-1834



Source: Same sources as Figure 5.1.

Figures 5.1 and 5.2 conceal some important variations in the appointments of Select Vestries and assistant overseers in the southern selected counties. As such, Figures 5.3 and 5.4 have been created from the Returns, each displaying the proportion of parishes in Dorset, Hampshire, Somerset, Sussex and Wiltshire which established Select Vestries and appointed assistant overseers respectively.<sup>66</sup> These graphs reflect the national and regional trends presented in Figures 5.1 and 5.2: the appointment of Select Vestries declined in popularity whilst assistant overseers increased from the mid-1820s. Just as striking, however, is the evidence these present for the immediate uptake of Select Vestries and assistant overseers by the study counties. By the end of the tax year 1820, 13.7% of parishes in these counties had a Select Vestry and 15.29% had employed an assistant overseer. The proportion of parishes with a Select Vestry and with an assistant overseer, however, clearly fluctuated over time. It is interesting to note that Select Vestries and assistant overseers were frequently more prevalent in some counties, such as Somerset and Sussex, compared to others, such as Dorset and Wiltshire. All of these figures, however, conceal the numbers of parishes which adopted the policies at particular moments in time and the numbers of parishes which continued to use Select Vestries and assistant overseers from year to year.

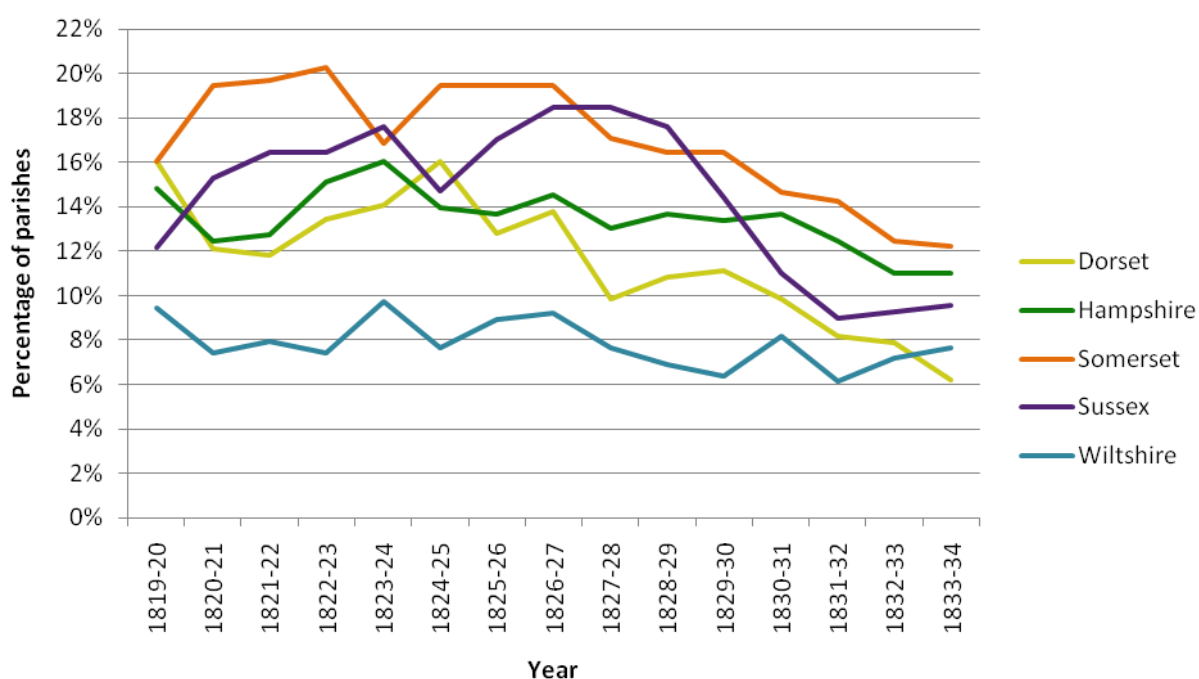
Overall, a significant proportion of parishes had adopted the provisions of Sturges Bourne at any one particular point beyond 1819. We cannot tell from the Returns, however, exactly *which* parishes had adopted and maintained the enabling Act at what times. As such, more relief regimes had been impacted by Sturges Bourne's Act than the figures suggest. Why parishes adopted, as well as dropped, Sturges Bourne's two policy ideas will be explored in the next section.

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<sup>66</sup> Proportions have been worked out using the statistics contained in the Returns listed in note 10, and the total number of parishes within each county taken from the *Gazetteer* – Dorset 305, Hampshire 337, Somerset 498, Sussex 346 and Wiltshire 391.

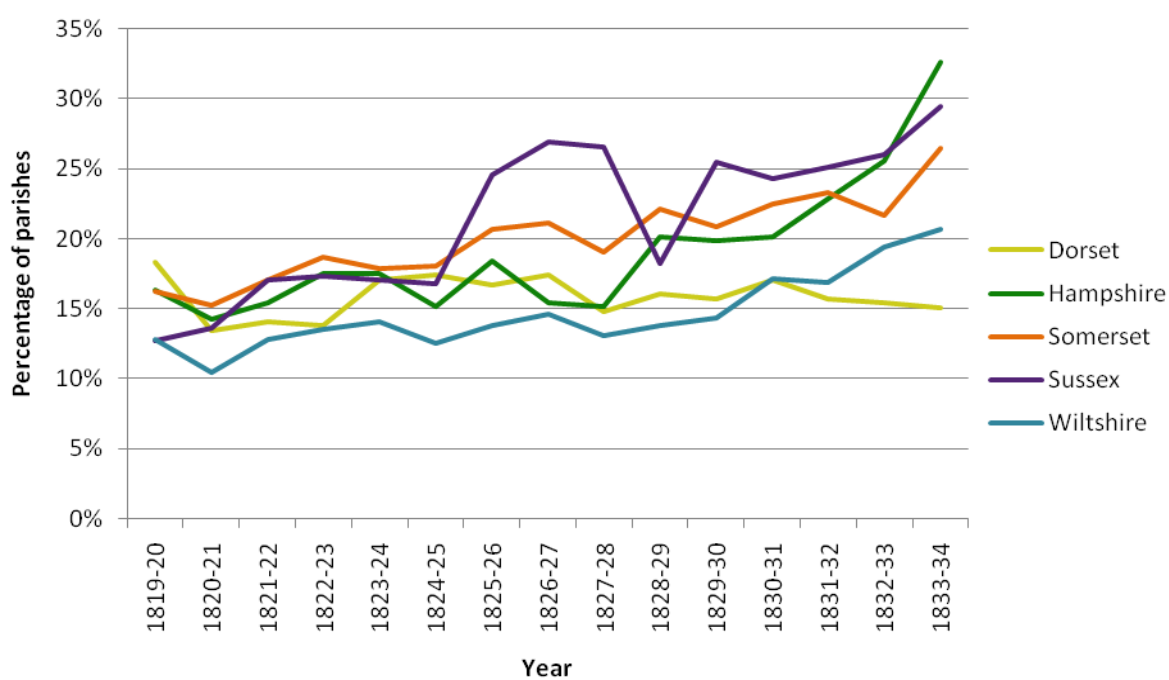


Figure 5.3: Percentage of parishes in Dorset, Hampshire, Somerset, Sussex and Wiltshire with a Select Vestry, 1819-1834



Source: Same sources as Figure 5.1.

Figure 5.4: Percentage of parishes in Dorset, Hampshire, Somerset, Sussex and Wiltshire with an assistant overseer, 1819-1834



Source: Same sources as Figure 5.1.

### 5.3.2 Why were Sturges Bourne's provisions adopted?

The main and obvious reason why the provisions of Sturges Bourne's 1819 Act were adopted by open vestries was to reduce poor relief expenditure. This is further illustrated by the data presented above, where both schemes tended to gain popularity during years of economic strain. Many of the parishes which responded to the Rural Queries in the south explicitly noted that a saving had been accrued in the poor rates after implementation of the Act.<sup>67</sup> In addition, a larger number still noted, albeit rather vaguely, that the Act was advantageous or produced a good effect in the parish.<sup>68</sup> At the same time, however, Barcombe (Dorset) argued that the rates had not lowered, and a further five parishes claimed the Act had little effect on the parish.<sup>69</sup> As shall be explored in the next section of this chapter, the actual day-to-day tasks undertaken by Select Vestries and assistant overseers varied between parishes. The effect of Sturges Bourne's Act was, therefore, linked to the ways in which open vestries *used* the machinery offered by the legislature.

The appointment of assistant overseers and Select Vestries was influenced, as well as restricted, by a number of other factors. As noted, assistant overseers were particularly useful in rural parishes with sporadically scattered populations. At Burghclere (Hampshire) it was reported that '[a]n Assistant Overseer is necessary in this parish, the cottages being scattered.'<sup>70</sup> Here, it was likely that the parish asked the assistant overseer to both collect the poor rates as well as distribute poor relief payments. Select Vestries, on the other hand, could only be implemented in parishes which had a sufficient number of large landowners to create the Select Vestry in the first place; indeed the Act stipulated that at least five individuals were needed for a Select Vestry. Many rural parishes

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<sup>67</sup> BPP 1834 (44) XXXII Report from His Majesty's Commissioners for Inquiring into the Administration and Practical Operation of the Poor Laws. Appendix B.1. Answers to the Rural Queries in Five Parts. Part 2. Question 32. Eling and Romsey Extra (Hampshire); Arundel (West Sussex); Box, Chippenham, Fisherton Anger and Ramsbury (Wiltshire); <sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, Amporn, East Woodhay, Minstead, Odiham, Sherfield English, Weyhill and Widley; (Hampshire); Batcombe, Brompton Regis, Crowcombe, Nether Stowey, Nether Wallop, Stogumber and Stoke St. Gregory (Somerset); Rogate (West Sussex); Corsham (Wiltshire).

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, Barcombe (Dorset); Bentley Liberty, Whitchurch and Bishop's Hull (Hampshire); Curry Rivell (Somerset); Tillington (West Sussex).

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, Burghclere (Hampshire).

in the south of England were dominated by a small number of large landowners. At Old Shoreham it was reported by J.S. Turner that neither an assistant overseer nor a Select Vestry was in action because 'there being no resident Farmer in the Parish but myself, I have served 13 years in succession.'<sup>71</sup> These landholding patterns would have dampened the popularity of Select Vestries in the selected counties of the south of England.

There were two stages to the formal adoption of Sturges Bourne's provisions: a vote from the ratepayers in favour of the provision and the approval of magistrates to adopt this stipulation (one magistrate's signature for a Select Vestry appointment and two for an assistant overseer appointment). The adoption of the policies was always a subject of negotiation between ratepayers and between the ratepayers and magistrates. At both stages, therefore, plans to adopt the legislation could be scuppered. By far the more controversial of the two key policies was the Select Vestry, not least because it placed relief administration in the hands of the few, besides, many parishes had a long tradition of appointing assistants for their overseers. Many open vestries had, not least due to the newly restricted and weighted votes under the 1818 Act, adopted and elected Select Vestries with ease. Yet, other open vestries had very unpredictable decision-making processes. The parish of Hinton Charterhouse, near Bath, held a vote to adopt a Select Vestry. It was observed that the 'principal paymasters' voted in favour of the Select Vestry, but the small ratepayers had opposed this move and it was subsequently not appointed. Apparently, one man who had lived in the parish for forty years and had never sat on the vestry decided on that day to vote against the measure.<sup>72</sup> This reinforces social historians' long-held assumptions that the smaller ratepayers had sympathies

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<sup>71</sup> In Old Shoreham (West Sussex) there were only three farmers and neither a Select Vestry or assistant overseer was adopted because the person answering the Queries (J.S. Turner) stated that 'there being no resident Farmer in the Parish but myself, I have served 13 years in succession', BPP 1834 (44) XXXII, Report from His Majesty's Commissioners for Inquiring into the Administration and Practical Operation of the Poor Laws. Appendix B.2. Answers to the Town Queries in Five Parts. Part 3. Questions 28 and 32. Old Shoreham. In 1870, Wilson classified 65% of parishes in Sussex (using a sample of 300 parishes) as either 'one estate', 'not much divided' or 'in few hands'. J.M. Wilson, *The Imperial Gazetteer of England and Wales*, 6 volumes (Edinburgh, 1870), cited in B. Short, 'Landownership in Victorian Sussex' in K.C. Leslie and B. Short (eds.), *An Historical Atlas of Sussex: An Atlas of the History of the Counties of East and West Sussex* (Chichester, 1999), pp. 98-99.

<sup>72</sup> 1823 (570) Report from the Select Committee on Poor Rate Returns, Appendix E, 'Somerset', 'Charterhouse Hinton', p. 18.

with the labouring class. Not only did this impact on the initial votes for a Select Vestry, but it also generated complex administrative histories. As Wells noticed, the 'Westbourne select vestry was soundly defeated on one occasion, while Ticehurst's retreated several times'.<sup>73</sup> Yet the re-appointment of Select Vestries also depended on the effectiveness of Select Vestries. Indeed, if a Select Vestry had not actively undertaken measures to reduce relief expenditure it was unlikely that it would be appointed again. Linked to this effectiveness is the amount of interest those elected to serve on Select Vestries had paid to their role as Select Vestrymen. Amport (Hampshire) had a Select Vestry but later reported that 'it is now given up, in consequence of non-attendance of the members.'<sup>74</sup> The seemingly trivial issue of attendance could prevent the successful operation of a Select Vestry. Some parishes even levied fines upon those who failed to turn up, to ensure that a sufficient number of people were present to make decisions.<sup>75</sup> It appears that the Royal Commission's claim that Select Vestries were poorly attended, mentioned in chapter two, was accurate.

The formal adoption of Sturges Bourne's provisions, as with other enabling pieces of legislation, required the approval of magistrates. According to Wells, the magistrates at the Battle Petty Sessions had supported and even promoted the policies developed and decisions made by the Select Vestries. Indeed, the majority of relief refusals brought to the sessions by individuals remonstrating against the decisions were rejected, especially those based on moral grounds. This reinforced the views and decisions made by the Select Vestries and assistant overseers which had, in turn, buttressed the legitimacy of adopting the measures. This, to Wells, was strong evidence that in the south-east magistrates generally 'supported the central tenets of Sturges Bourne'.<sup>76</sup> Such a harmonious relationship does not appear to have been universal throughout the south of England. Evidence from Parliamentary Papers suggests a much more complex relationship. It was reported by many parish officers that Select Vestries

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<sup>73</sup> Wells, 'Poor-Law Reform in the Rural South-east', p. 96.

<sup>74</sup> BPP 1834 (44) XXXII Report from His Majesty's Commissioners for Inquiring into the Administration and Practical Operation of the Poor Laws. Appendix B.1. Answers to the Rural Queries in Five Parts. Part 2. Question 32. Amport (Hampshire).

<sup>75</sup> Fine of two shillings and sixpence levied in Nether Wallop, Nether Wallop, Vestry Minute Book, 11 April 1825, HRO 93M93/PV1. A fine of sixpence levied in Hartley Wintney, Hartley Wintney, Vestry Minute Book, 25 March 1830, HRO 85M76/PV2.

<sup>76</sup> Wells, 'Poor-Law Reform in the Rural South-east', pp. 82 and 88.

brought beneficial effects, including a reduction in the poor rates, and magistrates supported their endeavours.<sup>77</sup> Yet it was also noted that parishes encountered difficulties with their magistrates. In Shepton Mallet, Somerset, a Select Vestry was officially appointed by the ratepayers in 1822, but the magistrates refused to ratify it.<sup>78</sup> As Snell noted, this was because Sturges Bourne's Acts were a 'move against the power of the magistracy' in that whilst open vestry decisions could be overturned by one magistrate, Select Vestry decisions had to be overturned with two.<sup>79</sup> The independence that appointing a Select Vestry would bring parish authorities was certainly understood by the parish officials. It is telling that one Hampshire vestry believed

that no effectual measures can be adopted for the employment of the Poor till the Parish shall be made less dependent upon the Magistrates, by placing itself under the operation of the Act for the establishment & regulation of Select Vestries.<sup>80</sup>

Even in places where Select Vestry appointments had been ratified by magistrates, magistrates could undermine the efforts of Select Vestries with ease through overturning their decisions in the aforementioned manner. At Holcombe, Somerset, the magistrates had paid 'little or no courtesy...to the orders of the select vestry'. According to the parish officers, the poor would constantly 'fly to a magistrate' for an appeal of the vestry's decision, thereby giving relief claimants 'the upper hand of the parish'. The Select Vestry, they contended, needed 'stronger and more efficient powers...independent of magistrates'.<sup>81</sup> In the following year, the Select Vestry led to no savings and the poor rates had only increased.<sup>82</sup> By 1825 the Select Vestry was abandoned,<sup>83</sup> the

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<sup>77</sup> 1823 (570) Report from the Select Committee on Poor Rate Returns, Appendix E, 'Somerset', 'Lydeard St. Lawrence', p. 18; 1824 (420) Report from the Select Committee on Poor Rate Returns, Appendix F.1., 'Somerset', 'Banwell', p. 21.

<sup>78</sup> 1823 (570) Report from the Select Committee on Poor Rate Returns, Appendix E, 'Somerset', 'Shepton Mallet', p. 18; there is no evidence to suggest that the vote was not legitimate.

<sup>79</sup> K.D.M. Snell, *Annals of the Labouring Poor: Social Change and Agrarian England 1660-1900* (Cambridge, 1985), p. 117.

<sup>80</sup> Millbrook, Vestry Minute Book, 9 November 1820, SCRO PR10/8/1.

<sup>81</sup> 1823 (570) Report from the Select Committee on Poor Rate Returns, Appendix E, 'Somerset', 'Holcombe', p. 18.

<sup>82</sup> 1824 (420) Report from the Select Committee on Poor Rate Returns, Appendix F.1., 'Somerset', 'Holcombe', p. 20.

<sup>83</sup> 1825 (334) Report from the Select Committee on Poor Rate Returns, Appendix G, Somerset, 'Holcombe', p. 21.

blame for its demise placed on the ‘determined opposition shown to all its measures, by the magistrates’.<sup>84</sup> As Dunkley suggests, the ability of magistrates to order relief on behalf of claimants, either on appeal or in cases of emergency, rendered some Select Vestries ‘ineffective’.<sup>85</sup> This strikes at the more general tension between parish officials and magistrates in the administration of relief under the old poor laws. The vestry clerk of Chiddingly (East Sussex) believed the business of the Select Vestry would be ‘done much better’ without the ‘interference’ of a Magistrate.<sup>86</sup> Nonetheless, many other parish officials believed that magistrates were not an interference, but had provided a useful mechanism by which claimants could be heard again thereby keeping the parish in check.<sup>87</sup> Magistrates could evidently make or break a Select Vestry.

Although the appointment of assistant overseers was not controversial amongst the magistrates, the position was understandably loathed by relief claimants. During the Swing Riots assistant overseers were the subject of much abuse. Griffin, who has studied the Swing Riots in the south-east, found numerous cases of assistant overseers being threatened and removed from the parish. For instance, at Bethersden (near Ashford in Kent), the assistant overseer was the recipient of several threatening letters and ‘was peppered with shot from close range, only narrowly avoiding injury.’<sup>88</sup> In November 1830 labourers removed the assistant overseer at Brede (East Sussex) by placing him in a cart, which had been especially constructed to employ the men on the roads, and

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<sup>84</sup> 1826 (330) Report from the Select Committee on Poor Rate Returns, Appendix F, ‘Somerset’, ‘Holcombe’, p. 18.

<sup>85</sup> P. Dunkley, ‘Paternalism, the Magistracy and Poor Relief in England, 1795-1834’, *International Review of Social History*, 24 (1979), p. 378.

<sup>86</sup> BPP 1834 (44) XXXIII Report from His Majesty’s Commissioners for Inquiring into the Administration and Practical Operation of the Poor Laws. Appendix B.1. Answers to the Rural Queries in Five Parts. Part 4. Question 44. Chiddingly (East Sussex).

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.* On viewing the answers given to Question 44 (‘What do you think would be the effect, immediate and ultimate, of making the decision of the Vestry or Select Vestry in matters of Relief final?’) for the counties of Dorset, Hampshire, Somerset, Wiltshire and West Sussex. e.g. Downton (Wiltshire), Samuel Payne (assistant overseer) expressed that the vestry’s decision to be final ‘[w]ould not be beneficial. Magistrates in this neighbourhood rarely supersede the decisions of Select Vestries of character. In small parishes where no Gentry reside great oppression from the Farmers would follow this plan. Magistrates seldom or never order relief, if the Overseer offers to take the Pauper into the Poorhouse.’ The Castle Coombe (Wiltshire) parish answered that the removal of the magistrate from the welfare process would cause ‘an immediate rural rebellion throughout the country.’

<sup>88</sup> C.J. Griffin, ‘As Lated Tongues Bespoke’: Popular Protest in South-East England, 1790-1840’ (unpublished PhD thesis, University of Bristol, 2002), p. 31.

pulling it beyond the parish boundaries. The Battle authorities were so worried about the targeting of assistant overseers in such a manner that plans were floated that they should be relieved of their duties.<sup>89</sup> Clearly, the assistant overseer represented the ratepayers and tightening relief regimes. Although assistant overseers aroused hostility from relief claimants, for being the 'face' of the parish authorities, they remained popular with ratepayers.

Overall, the popularity of Select Vestries waned over time, especially from the mid-1820s, because parish officials and ratepayers began to doubt their efficacy. Some parishes were either unable to use the Select Vestries to reduce relief expenditure or their efforts in doing so were undermined by the magistracy. Assistant overseers gained popularity over time, perhaps because it was thought that they might be more effective. Yet the evidence suggests that their appointment was not necessarily due to the impact they may have had on reducing poor relief. Assistant overseers undertook many arduous activities for parish officers. Nevertheless, their wages were generous and ratepayers expected that their appointment would reduce relief expenditure.

#### **5.4 Relief provision under Sturges Bourne**

As already mentioned, the fundamental reason why parishes adopted Sturges Bourne's enabling legislation was to save money. However, the two main provisions of Sturges Bourne, Select Vestries and assistant overseers, involved both time and, in the latter case, money to appoint. When such investments did not incur savings parishes were quick to drop the enabling legislation. As such, it was important for parishes to follow the guidelines which Sturges Bourne outlined in the 1819 Act itself. First and foremost, the Act allowed for the more streamlined provision of relief from the parish. Under the Act, parishes could form a committee whose sole duty it was to allocate relief and employ one individual whose purpose it was to help administrate the relief. Secondly, Sturges Bourne's legislation encouraged Select Vestries and assistant overseers to be sparing with relief. As the legislation states, Select Vestries were 'empowered and

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<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 68-69.

required to *examine* into the State and Condition of the Poor' and to '*inquire* into and determine upon the proper Objects of Relief'. Select Vestries were instructed to distinguish between 'the deserving, idle, extravagant or profligate Poor' and also make judgements as to the 'Character and Conduct of the poor person to be relieved'.<sup>90</sup> The Act was eager for parishes to probe into the lives of each individual relief claimant in order to provide relief. Not only were parishes meant to judge relief claims according to whether the claimant needed the relief, but also whether they deserved relief. The assistant overseer would help a Select Vestry to orchestrate relief provision according to this by devoting their time to 'all the Duties of the Office of Overseer of the Poor'.<sup>91</sup>

It is clear that open vestries understood Sturges Bourne's guidelines when adopting the Act. Many wrote in their minute books, albeit rather vaguely, that their Select Vestry was established for the 'management' or 'concerns' of the poor and that assistant overseers were to do all the duties of the overseer.<sup>92</sup> The immediate tasks of the Select Vestries were usually to review the relief provided to those in regular receipt of money and then to continue these assessments with those who claimed relief irregularly, as will be discussed below. The archive holds more descriptive instructions for the appointment of assistant overseers, not least because these individuals had to sign an official agreement (which required the sanction by two magistrates). Alongside the task of making rates, collecting the rates, keeping the accounts, sometimes of the poorhouse as well as the overseers' disbursements, the assistants were also meant to instigate investigations into claimants. At Droxford John Dollar was instructed to 'make enquiry as to the Character and Circumstances of the Person or Persons applying for such relief'.<sup>93</sup> At Bishop's Waltham James Perrin was told to 'enquire into the character circumstances & condition of all Persons applying for relief of his her & their family & to report thereon to the rest of the Parish officers'.<sup>94</sup> Other

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<sup>90</sup> 59 Geo. III c.12, I. My emphasis.

<sup>91</sup> 59 Geo. III c.12, VII.

<sup>92</sup> Select Vestry e.g. Pawlett, Vestry Minute Book, 27 May 1831, SRO D\P\pawl/9/1/1; North Petherton, Vestry Minute Book, 7 April 1820, SRO D\P\pet.n/9/1/2; assistant overseer, e.g. St. Mary Bridgwater, Vestry Minute Book, 5 April 1836, SRO D\P\bw.m/9/1.

<sup>93</sup> Droxford, Vestry Minute Book, 11 November 1819, HRO 66M76/PV1.

<sup>94</sup> Bishop's Waltham, Vestry Minute Book, 9 July 1819, HRO 30M77/PV1.



parishes' instructions were similar, closely following the language as well as the ethos of Sturges Bourne's legislation.

It is clear from these archival snippets that ratepayers really felt that they were initiating a new way of governing poor relief within their parish. With this in mind, the second half of this chapter examines the operation of this enabling Act. It explores what Select Vestries and assistant overseers did and the methods deployed by them to do it within four separate sections. The first two sections examine how Select Vestries and assistant overseers went about inspecting the poor and gathering information as to their character and conduct and, therefore, how relief provision was curtailed based on this information. The second two sections closely follow the techniques deployed by Select Vestries to curtail outdoor relief and place those in regular receipt of outdoor relief within parish workhouses.

#### **5.4.1 Inspecting the poor**

At the parish pay-table, the Select Vestry wanted to see the poor, to question them as to their situation. Particular members of families were asked to attend the Board. In Botley, in 1822, the Select Vestry ordered that Joseph Thomas and all of his family should attend at the next meeting.<sup>95</sup> The Select Vestrymen wanted to obtain more detailed information about their circumstances. Occasionally specific groups of the poor were asked to attend. One Select Vestry asked all people receiving relief for bastard children to appear at a meeting.<sup>96</sup> There were serious repercussions for those not adhering to the Select Vestries' stipulations. In 1833, for instance, the Winsford Select Vestry asked Ann Crockfield to bring her eldest daughter, aged about ten, to attend the next vestry.<sup>97</sup> When she failed to attend her regular allowance was stopped.<sup>98</sup> At a

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<sup>95</sup> Botley, Select Vestry Minute Book, Select Vestry minute of 22 May 1822, HRO 40M75/PV2. *From herein I shall define the type of vestry minute from which the information derives from, either an open vestry or Select Vestry, because, as explained in chapter three, ordinary vestry books were used to record Select Vestry minutes.*

<sup>96</sup> St. Peter and St. Paul Fareham, Select Vestry Minute Book, select vestry minute of 22 May 1819, PCRO CHU43/2C/1.

<sup>97</sup> Winsford, Vestry Minute Book, Select Vestry minute of 15 April 1833, SRO D\P\wins/9/1/1.

subsequent meeting, Ann presented her daughter to the Select Vestry. At this point Ann suffered from a loss of regular relief for a fortnight. She claimed her daughter had been unable to attend to the previous vestry meeting because she had a lame foot. The excuse did not wash with the Select Vestry: Ann's pay was reduced to five shillings a month on the basis that her eldest daughter was 'fit' to be bound as an apprentice.<sup>99</sup> Occasionally, acquaintances would be sent to the vestry on behalf of another person. In the April of 1824, William Fidow required some assistance. He sent someone to claim for some relief from a Select Vestry on his behalf. The vestrymen were not satisfied with the representation and stipulated that William must attend 'himself' or he would be issued with no relief.<sup>100</sup>

Once at the pay-table, it was expected that the poor would reveal their circumstances, including their occupations, earnings and living arrangements, relief being refused if such information was not divulged. At Botley, William Whitlock was not allowed any further relief because he failed to give an account of his earnings over the last fortnight.<sup>101</sup> A similar stance was taken by open vestries during the 1820s. William Evans attended a Wimborne Minster vestry in October 1829 but on failing to give an account of his earnings his house rent was no longer paid by the parish.<sup>102</sup> In his family's worsening situation, William's wife made a visit to the pay-table. As well as being frowned upon for being 'without her husband', she had also failed to give an account of her husbands' earnings.<sup>103</sup> When this information was finally provided by the family, it was looked upon with suspicion. The following month William attended the vestry and detailed his weekly earnings (twelve shillings and ten pence) and rent (one shilling and sixpence). This was, according to the vestry, a very unsatisfactory

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<sup>98</sup> Winsford, Vestry Minute book, Select Vestry minute of 29 April 1833, SRO D\P\wins/9/1/1.

<sup>99</sup> Winsford, Vestry Minute Book, Select Vestry minute of 13 May 1833, SRO D\P\wins/9/1/1.

<sup>100</sup> St. Bartholomew Corsham, Select Vestry Order Book, Select Vestry minute of 4 April 1824, W&SA PR/Cosham: St. Bartholomew/1812/9.

<sup>101</sup> Botley, Select Vestry Minute Book, Select Vestry minute of 6 September 1825, 40M75/PV2.

<sup>102</sup> Wimborne Minster, Select Vestry Order Book, Select Vestry minute of 6 October 1829, DHC PE/WM VE2/3. Another man, James Cole, in the same meeting was refused further relief in consequence of not giving the vestry any account of his and his family's earnings and their ages. The parish vestrymen decided not to pay his house rent.

<sup>103</sup> Wimborne Minster, Select Vestry Order Book, Select Vestry minute of 3 November 1829, DHC PE/WM VE2/3.

account of his earnings.<sup>104</sup> It is little wonder that Select Vestries resorted to asking employers directly for a list of their employees and their weekly wages.<sup>105</sup> In some instances the employer's wages were placed under scrutiny. Mr. Watts, of Fareham, was accused by the Select Vestry of not paying sufficient wages to a male labourer called Edwards. Edwards, and his family, were offered the workhouse, rather than an increase in outdoor relief, possibly in hope that Watts would amend his rate.<sup>106</sup>

Through their investigations of the poor Select Vestries also knew about the alternative forms of welfare available to their poor parishioners. As the Select Vestry asked individuals about their circumstances at the pay-table, they had not only revealed details about their family circumstances and living arrangements, but also their membership of local friendly societies (referred to as the 'Club'). On hearing that the Clubs would not pay out for claims, the Select Vestry would take the issue further for fear that they would have to relieve the individual from the parish funds. When an unwell Nathaniel Hayward turned up to a Select Vestry stating his Club refused him pay, the gentlemen decided that their assistant overseer (and workhouse master) should take the matter to a magistrate.<sup>107</sup> Select Vestries even 'topped up' these Club payments in order to provide individuals and their families with adequate costs to cover their subsistence. Elizabeth Clothier, a parishioner of Chew Magna, received just eighteen pence per week from the Club, probably on account of illness. The Select Vestry agreed that this payment was too low and she was given five shillings per month from the parish purse.<sup>108</sup> Parishes also *used* the poor's membership of such Clubs to reduce their own expenses. For instance, in 1830 the parish of Wimborne Minster decided Thomas Scutt should go into the poorhouse and it was ordered that the overseers should receive his 'Club money'

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<sup>104</sup> Wimborne Minster, Select Vestry Order Book, Select Vestry minute of 1 December 1829, DHC PE/WM VE2/3.

<sup>105</sup> All Saints Whiteparish, Vestry Minute Book, Select Vestry minute of 22 September 1832, W&SA PR/Whiteparish: All Saints/830/32.

<sup>106</sup> St. Peter and St. Paul Fareham, Select Vestry Minute Book, Select Vestry minute of 23 June 1819, PCRO CHU43/2C/1.

<sup>107</sup> St. Bartholomew Corsham, Select Vestry Order Book, Select Vestry minute of 18 August 1826, W&SRO PR/Corsham: St. Bartholomew/1812/9.

<sup>108</sup> Chew Magna, Vestry Minute Book, vestry minute of 3 December 1824, SRO D\P\che.m/9/1/1.

in return.<sup>109</sup> Due to the benefits these Clubs brought the parish finances, there is little wonder why the Select Vestrymen also encouraged the poor to retain their membership of such Clubs. One man was given three shillings a week ‘as long as he remain on the Club’.<sup>110</sup>

Even if the poor did not attend the pay-table, the vestry still sought to know more about claimants’ circumstances. The assistant overseer was ordered to survey the poor, and relay any information obtained back to the parish vestry that would then make their decision as to whether relief should be provided. Indeed, the assistant overseer (who was also the workhouse master) of Wimborne Minster was authorised by the parish vestrymen to ‘hire a Horse at the expense of the parish to inspect the state of the poor in the outskirts of the parish’.<sup>111</sup> On many occasions, vestries and Select Vestries ordered the assistants to visit particular individual claimants and assess whether or not they actually needed relief. For instance, one assistant overseer was asked to call in on a man (who had asked for money to pay for his rent) and ‘enquire into his Case’.<sup>112</sup> Whilst the assistant overseer was pivotal in inspecting the poor, evidence from minute books suggests that the everyday lives of the poor were under closer scrutiny by the wider rate-paying community. For instance, one man applied for ‘assistance’ during his wife’s illness. The woman had been seen by a man called Mr. Paul (not an assistant but likely to have been a member of the Select Vestry) ‘fetching water’ the morning of the claim. After this tip off, her illness was deemed fictitious by the Board.<sup>113</sup>

The poor, of course, continued to make claims for relief beyond their parish of residence back to their parish of settlement. Maybe those poor out of the vestry’s sight could be those very poor who could be at most risk from

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<sup>109</sup> Wimborne Minster, Select Vestry Order book, Select Vestry minute of 22 July 1831, DHC PE/WM VE2/3. There is evidence that the vestries of Wimborne Minster had been held in the ‘Club Room’ since 1809 and select vestries had been meeting there into the 1830s. This indicates that there was a close relationship between the club and the vestry, Wimborne Minster, Vestry Minute Book, 1809-1849, DHC PE/WM VE1/2.

<sup>110</sup> Chew Magna, Vestry Minute Book, vestry minute of 3 December 1824, SRO D\P\che.m/9/1/1.

<sup>111</sup> Wimborne Minster, Vestry Minute Book, vestry minute of 26 March 1833, DHC PE/WM VE1/2.

<sup>112</sup> St. Bartholomew Corsham, Select Vestry Order Book, Select Vestry minute of 29 September 1826, W&SA PR/Cosham: St. Bartholomew/1812/9.

<sup>113</sup> Winsford, Vestry Minute Book, Select Vestry minute of 31 March 1834, SRO D\P\wins/9/1/1.

economising practices. It appears that some Select Vestries explicitly rejected these letters, such as that at St. Bartholomew Corsham. On one occasion, all the letters they had received from Manchester, Leeds and Brentford asking for relief, were rejected.<sup>114</sup> Another Select Vestry recorded the letters they had received, frequently noting alongside: ‘not to be answer’d’.<sup>115</sup> Occasionally an assistant overseer would be asked to attend the non-resident poor by a vestry, in order for that assistant to obtain first-hand information as to their circumstances. In 1835 the vestrymen of Clutton, for instance, sent their assistant overseer to Monmouthshire to enquire into the case of William Parker who requested regular non-resident relief payments.<sup>116</sup>

#### **5.4.2 ‘Character and conduct’**

As outlined above, Sturges Bourne’s second Act promoted the provision of relief according to claimants’ ‘Character and conduct’, and consequently the morals of the poor fell under greater scrutiny. The poor laws had always allowed welfare providers to issue relief according to the Elizabethan principle that a distinction should be made between the ‘deserving’ and the ‘undeserving’ poor. Receiving welfare provision meant that ‘the range of personal choice that paupers might make about their personal conduct and ethical behaviour’ was reduced. As Hindle has stated in relation to the poor of the 1600s, the distinction between deserving and undeserving was manifested through a series of expectations: church attendance, industriousness, sobriety and deference.<sup>117</sup> The Sturges Bourne Act of 1819 allowed parishes to return to these standards with great dynamism. Although administrative records do not lend themselves to a comparison of policies pursued in these areas just before and after the appointment of Select Vestries and assistant overseers, both Select Vestry minutes and open vestry minutes (which detail the work of assistant overseers)

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<sup>114</sup> St. Bartholomew Corsham, Select Vestry Order Book, Select Vestry minute of 14 October 1825, W&SA PRCosham: St. Bartholomew/1812/9.

<sup>115</sup> Wimborne Minster, Select Vestry Order Book, Select Vestry minute of 9 March 1830, DHC PE/WM VE2/3.

<sup>116</sup> Clutton, Vestry Minute Book, vestry minute of 14 August 1835, SRO D\P\clut/9/1/1.

<sup>117</sup> S. Hindle, ‘Civility, Honesty and the Identification of the Deserving Poor in Seventeenth-Century England’ in H. French and J. Barry (eds.), *Identity and Agency in England, 1500-1800* (Basingstoke, 2004), p. 38.

can shed light on the ways in which parish officials dealt with administering relief according to 'Character and conduct'.

Those in regular receipt of outdoor relief, and those living in workhouses, were expected to attend church. The Select Vestry of All Saints in Whiteparish noted that if the workhouse residents did 'not attend some place of worship on Sundays their Days allowance for the Day be stop'.<sup>118</sup> The Botley Select Vestry issued similar directions, although specifically targeting 'every man who is on the Parish'.<sup>119</sup> These policies had not only resulted from Select Vestry discussions, but open vestries were also issuing similar directives.<sup>120</sup> However, unlike open vestries, Select Vestries frequently remonstrated with individuals who could have prevented their own poverty, especially those whose unemployment was believed to be their own fault. In the parish of St. Peter and St. Paul Fareham, Richard Couzens and William Hawkins were refused relief on the grounds that 'they had left their work and from their general Character they were therefore considered as idle & profligate'.<sup>121</sup> Henry Noble's claim for 'work' was rejected by the Select Vestry of All Saints in Whiteparish, who also requested that he brought a letter 'stating the reason he was Discharged from Esq. Boltons employ'.<sup>122</sup> The parish obviously had their suspicions that Henry had been dismissed due to his own misdemeanours and as such, this errand had no other purpose than to reprimand Henry.<sup>123</sup> It was not just leaving or being dismissed from work that put individuals' entitlement to assistance in jeopardy. At Botley, John Dowling was not employed by the parish because 'he has neglected to apply for work which he knew of'.<sup>124</sup> Women's work was also thrown under the spotlight. One man's regular family allowance was stopped on account that 'his wife refuses to

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<sup>118</sup> All Saints Whiteparish, Vestry Minute Book, Select Vestry minute of 5 December 1834, W&SA PR/Whiteparish: All Saints/830/32.

<sup>119</sup> Botley, Select Vestry Minute Book, Select Vestry minute of 17 July 1822, HRO 40M75/PV2.

<sup>120</sup> E.g. In Bury it was 'Agreed that all Pauper's attend church; Bury, Vestry Minute Book, vestry minute, of 29 May 1828, WSRO Par33/12/1.

<sup>121</sup> St. Peter and St. Paul Fareham, Select Vestry Minute Book, Select Vestry minute of 22 May 1819, PCRO CHU43/2C/1.

<sup>122</sup> All Saints Whiteparish, Vestry Minute Book, Select Vestry minute of 6 July 1832, W&SA PR/Whiteparish: All Saints/830/32.

<sup>123</sup> All Saints Whiteparish, Vestry Minute Book, Select Vestry minute of 22 September 1834, W&SA PR/Whiteparish: All Saints/830/32.

<sup>124</sup> Botley, Vestry Minute Book, Select Vestry minute of 19 May 1823, HRO 40M75/PV1.

work'.<sup>125</sup> The vestry thought that both adult men and women were supposed to undertake paid work before turning to the vestry for relief.

It was the desire of the Select Vestry that claimants were both sober and could 'demonstrate their gratitude for relief and their respect for the ratepayers and parish officers'.<sup>126</sup> Not only was drunkenness disruptive, it was expensive. As a consequence, general policies were developed by many Select Vestries with the aim of stamping out drunkenness amongst the poor. They decided to 'discontinue all relief to persons who are found spending their time or money in a public house'.<sup>127</sup> At Fareham more drastic action was taken. Relief was not only to be stopped to those 'found Tippling in a Publick House' but it was decided that a 'list of persons receiving parochial relief be given to the Landlords of all the Publick Houses'.<sup>128</sup> This was the parish authorities' attempt to get landlords to control the amount of parish relief sinking into their tills, regardless of the fact that this was directly opposed to publicans' business interests. The magistrates were asked by the Select Vestry at Wimborne Minster to reprimand one Landlord who not only sold alcohol during Divine Service but also allowed two paupers to drink so much one Sunday that they were 'unable to return home till monday morning'.<sup>129</sup> Parishes were willing to wield these ideals against particular individuals as well. Henry Cannon was refused work by the Wincanton Select Vestry because he was a 'habitual drunkard'.<sup>130</sup> By 1833 the parish of Botley no longer operated a Select Vestry, but the open vestry still penalised Joseph Terry for 'repeated drunkenness' by refusing to find him employment.<sup>131</sup>

Behaviour which did not reflect deference undoubtedly impacted upon the welfare received by the poor. Regular relief was often curtailed for behaviour referred to as 'bad conduct' or for 'misdemeanours'. The Wincanton Select Vestry gave Robert Day three shillings temporary relief rather than his regular

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<sup>125</sup> Wincanton, Vestry Minute Book, Select Vestry minute of 29 December 1831, SRO D\PC\winc/1/3/2.

<sup>126</sup> Hindle, 'Civility, Honesty and the Identification of the Deserving Poor', p. 47.

<sup>127</sup> Chew Magna, Vestry Minute Book, Select Vestry minute of 1 October 1819, SRO D\P\che.m/9/1/3.

<sup>128</sup> St. Peter and St. Paul Fareham, Select Vestry Minute Book, Select Vestry minute of 10 November 1819, PCRO CHU43/2C/1.

<sup>129</sup> Wimborne Minster, Select Vestry Order Book, Select Vestry minute of 19 June 1821, DHC PE/WM VE2/1.

<sup>130</sup> Wincanton, Vestry Minute Book, Select Vestry minute of 20 December 1831, SRO D\PC\winc/1/3/2.

<sup>131</sup> Botley, Vestry Minute Book, vestry minute of 6 January 1833, HRO 40M75/PV1.

allowance for bad conduct.<sup>132</sup> James Burin would have received a new pair of shoes had he not ‘abused some of the members of the Select Vestry’ in Winsford. Instead they gave him four shillings towards the cost of a pair.<sup>133</sup> Relief was also curtailed for less dramatic acts of disrespect towards the vestry. Two men were turned away by the Select Vestry in Whiteparish because they not attended at the ‘proper time’.<sup>134</sup> While bad conduct was condemned, it appears that good conduct was rewarded, albeit rarely. James Phillips received two pounds for his ‘[g]eneral good conduct’ in Botley.<sup>135</sup>

Vestrymen were particularly opposed to the poor owning dogs, not because it was living capital, like a pig or donkey, or were expensive to maintain, but because dogs were essential for poaching. As Hay explains, ‘above all else the poacher relied on his dog...they were inseparable companions that warned of keepers, drove hares into the nets, and could pull down an injured deer.’<sup>136</sup> In 1824, the Select Vestry of St. Bartholomew in Corsham decided ‘that no Pauper will be granted any Relief in future who keep Dogs.’<sup>137</sup> Although this was a common policy prior to the turn of the nineteenth century, the economically depressed circumstances of the 1820s caused it to be further reinforced.<sup>138</sup> The Select Vestries of Chew Magna and Fareham reiterated the same rules.<sup>139</sup> Open vestries continued to adopt similar measures. In 1828 the vestrymen of Bury decided that paupers should have their pay withheld until they got rid of their dogs and guns.<sup>140</sup> At Botley, those with dogs would not be ‘exonerated from

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<sup>132</sup> Wincanton, Vestry Minute Book, Select Vestry minute of 20 December 1831, SRO D\PC\winc/1/3/2.

<sup>133</sup> Winsford, Vestry Minute Book, Select Vestry minute of 9 December 1833, SRO D\P\wins/9/1/1.

<sup>134</sup> All Saints Parish Whiteparish, Vestry Minute Book, Select Vestry minute of 11 October 1834, W&SA PR/Whiteparish: All Saints/830/32.

<sup>135</sup> Botley, Select Vestry Minute Book, Select Vestry minute of 17 July 1822, HRO 40M75/PV2.

<sup>136</sup> D. Hay, ‘Poaching and the Game Laws on Cannock Chase’ in D. Hay, P. Linebaugh, J.G. Rule, E.P. Thompson and C. Winslow (eds.), *Albion’s Fatal Tree: Crime and Society in Eighteenth-Century England* (London, 1975), p. 194.

<sup>137</sup> St. Bartholomew Corsham, Select Vestry Order Book, Select Vestry minute of 4 June 1824, W&SA PR/Cosham: St. Bartholomew/1812/9.

<sup>138</sup> For an early example: Whitechurch Canoniscom, Vestry Minute Book, vestry minute of 2 August 1796, DHC PE/WCC VE1/3.

<sup>139</sup> Chew Magna, Vestry Minute Book, Select Vestry minutes of 27 February 1824, 20 April 1827 and 8 March 1833, SRO D\P\che.m/9/1/3; St. Peter and St. Paul Fareham, Select Vestry Minute Book, Select Vestry minute of 10 November 1819, PCRO CHU43/2C/1.

<sup>140</sup> Bury, Vestry Minute Book, vestry minute of 29 May 1828, WSRO Par33/12/1.



paying the poors rate'.<sup>141</sup> In 1824 in Southampton, which was under a Local Act at the time, the 'Court of Guardians' ruled that one woman's weekly pay should be stopped on account of her keeping a dog. It was reported in the local press that soon after the decision, the woman presented a dead dog at the pay-table, clearly to prove to the authorities that she no longer kept it.<sup>142</sup>

Although relief was overwhelmingly tailored to each individual's behaviour, there were moments when Select Vestries issued general policies in relation to the 'conduct' of their parishioners. The Millbrook Select Vestry, for instance, set a rate of allowance at three pence per gallon loaf for those individuals 'whose Conduct shall appear not to deserve any more allowance'.<sup>143</sup> Usually individuals were given less relief according to their stage in the life-course, or whether they were a widow(er) or single woman with a bastard child(ren), as examined in section 5.4.1. The Millbrook Select Vestry, however, had moved one step beyond this to produce blanket policies based on character.

### **5.4.3 The attack on outdoor relief**

The early-nineteenth century witnessed the growth of the use of scales in rural southern England, as discussed in chapter two. According to the Rural Queries, a significant proportion of parishes within each county were allocating outdoor relief according to a scale (Table 2.1). Select Vestries were concerned about the amount of outdoor relief being given to individuals and their families according to these scales and made adjustments to them, regardless of the fact that many scales were set and initiated by magistrates. In Hampshire, where 74 per cent of parishes answering the Rural Queries were allocating relief according to a scale, Select Vestries paid particular attention to this type of outdoor relief. In 1822 at Nether Wallop, it was decided that 'married paupers applying for Relief be allowed so much as will make up their wages the amount of a Gallon Loaf and

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<sup>141</sup> Botley, Vestry Minute Book, vestry minute of 27 April 1834, HRO 40M75/PV1.

<sup>142</sup> *Southampton Herald*, 31 May 1824.

<sup>143</sup> Millbrook, Vestry Minute Book, Select Vestry Minute of 25 June 1821, SCRO PR10/8/1.

sixpence Pr Head for their respective families'.<sup>144</sup> Many Select Vestries focused on altering the scales with a view to save money. In the same year, at East Woodhay, it was agreed that all monthly allowances would be reduced in proportion to the reduction in the price of provisions.<sup>145</sup> In other parishes a seasonal reduction in monthly allowances was implemented. At Hambledon in 1824 it was stipulated that all persons who received monthly pay and 'who leave the Parish for work during the Harvest month' shall receive no allowance during that month, and that half of everyone's monthly pay during harvest 'shall be taken off'.<sup>146</sup> In the following year the policy became more stringent: that all monthly pay would be stopped during the harvest month.<sup>147</sup>

All regular outdoor relief maintenance payments, whether allocated according to a Speenhamland-style scale or not, came under closer scrutiny in parishes which had adopted the provisions of Sturges Bourne's Act. Many Select Vestries had made lists of those receiving outdoor relief. The Select Vestry of Broomfield, near Bridgwater, for example, decided to start a brand new book to detail the 'Allowances of the poor' in the year of their election (1821). On the left-hand side of each page the claimants' names were recorded, alongside the sum of their weekly allowance and details of their family. Along the top of the page were columns 'Character', 'Wages', 'Employers', 'Complaints of the Poor', what they were 'allow'd' and 'Why allow'd or disallow'd'.<sup>148</sup> These relief tables allowed the parish to review the relief allocated to the poor, both regular and extra amounts, in relation to the broader household economy.<sup>149</sup> Confirming the purpose of these charts, the Select Vestry agreed several times throughout 1821 that these payments were 'Sufficient for the support of the Paupers'.<sup>150</sup> Other parishes had similar ideas, whilst others created lists to check up upon more specific groups of

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<sup>144</sup> Nether Wallop, Vestry Minute Book, Select Vestry minute of 21 June 1822, HRO 93M83/PV1.

<sup>145</sup> East Woodhay, Vestry Minute Book, Select Vestry minute of 23 April 1822, HRO 27M77/PV1.

<sup>146</sup> Hambledon, Vestry Minutes, Select Vestry minute of 7 August 1824, HRO 46M69/PV1.

<sup>147</sup> Hambledon, Vestry Minutes, Select Vestry minute of 23 July 1825, HRO 46M69/PV1.

<sup>148</sup> Broomfield, Allowances to the poor, Select Vestry minute of 16 May 1821, SRO D\P\broo/13/2/2.

<sup>149</sup> Some children had the word 'base' written next to their name indicating that they were a bastard.

<sup>150</sup> For instance, Broomfield, Allowances to the poor, Select Vestry minutes of 16 May, 13 June and 27 June 1821, SRO D\P\broo/13/2/2.

relief claimants.<sup>151</sup> Wimborne Minster parish officers, for instance, made lists of people with bastards and those receiving house rents.<sup>152</sup> The open vestry of St. Peter and St. Paul of Fareham directed the parish surgeon to provide the Select Vestry with a list of all persons 'Ill and unable to work on Wednesday morning in every week' previous to the meeting of the Select Vestry.<sup>153</sup> The Select Vestry was to allocate relief with this information in mind and catch those faking ailments.

When lists of those receiving outdoor relief were made, individuals' relief was subject to alteration. Parishes embarked on creating both blanket policies, which applied to particular claimant groups, and made relief decisions which took into account the circumstances of each individual claimant. At Eversley, the vestry decided to reduce the weekly allowance of all of their parish widows receiving outdoor relief down to two shillings per week and the practice of granting half a year's rent provision was discontinued.<sup>154</sup> In 1822 at Fareham 'the earnings of each Individual, his wife, and Children receiving parochial relief were ascertained and at the following Select Vestry meeting many individuals' names were noted alongside comments such as 'no further relief', relief 'to cease', 'no relief' and relief 'to be discontinued.'<sup>155</sup> This was a case-by-case evaluation of those receiving regular maintenance payments. Those poor living in parish workhouses did not escape similar bulk reductions in relief. Indeed, many workhouses did not have a master or matron or contractor to maintain the poor within the house, so cooking and heating the house was at the expense of each resident. The Bruton Select Vestry, for instance, decided in 1819 to reduce the allowance given to indoor paupers residing in the workhouse by six pence per week.<sup>156</sup>

The Act, as mentioned above, permitted Select Vestries to give out loans rather than provide relief, and magistrates were empowered to chase individuals

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<sup>151</sup> From 1820 Beaminster kept a book containing similar tables, containing the names of individuals and families, plus their ages and respective earnings, Beaminster, Lists of families with earnings, 1820-1836, DHC PE/BE OV9/1.

<sup>152</sup> Wimborne Minster, Select Vestry Order Book, Select Vestry minute of 11 August 1829, DHC PE/WM VE2/3.

<sup>153</sup> St. Peter and St. Paul Fareham, Select Vestry Minute Book, Select Vestry minute of 21 July 1819, PCRO CHU43/2C/1.

<sup>154</sup> Eversley, Vestry Minute Book, vestry minute of 9 October 1834, HRO 6M77/PV1.

<sup>155</sup> St. Peter and St. Paul Fareham, Select Vestry Minute Book, Select Vestry minutes of 22 and 26 May 1819, PCRO CHU43/2C/1.

<sup>156</sup> Bruton, Select Vestry Minute Book for administration of poor, Select Vestry Minute of 11 July 1819, SRO D\P\brut/9/1/2.

for repayments. Loans were often allocated for purchasing one-off items rather than for maintenance, for example the loan of money to purchase a saw to William Strongmell by the Select Vestry of St. Peter and St. Paul Fareham.<sup>157</sup> Whilst these loans enabled individuals to procure expensive items, in the past many parishes would have either bought these items for the individual, or at least paid for part of the item's cost. Some Select Vestries decided to permit smaller loans to certain relief claimants. At Botley, for example, it was directed that no mechanic or handicraft person be allowed money when out of work except in the form of a loan.<sup>158</sup> Clearly, this policy was meant to deter individuals from claiming relief unless it was absolutely essential. Larger sums of money, on occasion, were offered to individuals without the stipulation that the sum of money should be paid back to the parish purse. Such sums were expended on items to enable the individual to work. The Select Vestry at Hambledon gave John Merritt six pounds so that he could purchase a horse and cart and thus earn a living for himself and his family. The members of the Select Vestry noted that he had 'been Lame a long time and a great expence to the parish'.<sup>159</sup> Hambledon Select Vestry had also given five pounds to George Kiln on condition that he would not apply for parish relief in two years.<sup>160</sup>

Occasional payments - sometimes called 'Extras' - were also curtailed under the direction of Select Vestries. For instance, rent had been commonly paid by many parishes in the rural south of England, but this practice was increasingly challenged.<sup>161</sup> At East Woodhay, for instance, the Select Vestry decided that the custom be put a stop to.<sup>162</sup> St. Bartholomew Corsham Select

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<sup>157</sup> St. Peter and St. Paul Fareham, Select Vestry Minute Book, Select Vestry minute of 16 June 1819, PCRO CHU43/2C/1.

<sup>158</sup> Botley, Select Vestry Minute Book, Select Vestry minute of 29 April 1823, HRO 40M75/PV2

<sup>159</sup> Hambledon, Vestry Minute Book, Select Vestry minute of 20 November 1830, HRO 46M69/PV1.

<sup>160</sup> Hambledon, Vestry Minute Book, Select Vestry minute of 21 January 1826, HRO 46M69/PV1.

<sup>161</sup> BPP 1834 (44) XXXI Report from His Majesty's Commissioners for Inquiring into the Administration and Practical Operation of the Poor Laws. Appendix B.1. Answers to the Rural Queries in Five Parts. Part 2. Question 21. According to question 21 of the Rural Queries many parishes had paid the poor rates for individuals: 82.5% of parishes in Hampshire and (a combined average of) 81.2% of parishes in Dorset, Hampshire, Somerset and Wiltshire.

<sup>162</sup> East Woodhay, Vestry Minute Book, Select Vestry minute of 3 May 1825, HRO 27M77/PV1.

Vestry told the overseers to ‘call on the Landlords’ instead.<sup>163</sup> The latter direction was an obvious attempt by the Select Vestry to reduce the poor rates without worsening the circumstances of their tenants. Other one-off payments were also curtailed, including clothing and textiles. Again, lists of claimants receiving clothing were created, suggesting the parish wanted stricter control over who was receiving these items and how many they had claimed over time.<sup>164</sup> Some Select Vestries even decided to set dedicated days for the receipt of clothing and textile requests at the pay-table.<sup>165</sup> Again, this was an attempt to control the volume of claims and distributions. If separate accounts were kept for clothing only, it was likely that they were used to check what individuals had received from the parish on previous occasions.<sup>166</sup> Numerous other strategies were also developed. Firstly, limits were set on the clothing provided to parish apprentices. The Select Vestry of Angmering, for instance, set a maximum cost of thirty shillings for each female taken into service.<sup>167</sup> Secondly, clothing was given out but the cost was to be paid back as a loan. William Savage was provided with a shirt whilst being the patient of a local infirmary. Rather than being given the shirt, he was to reimburse the parish ‘in the Harvest’ when his wages may have permitted it.<sup>168</sup> Thirdly, items were issued to the poor with the hope of obtaining the article back again. Bruton started to loan out blankets to the poor - prior to the passage of the Acts - in 1815. Each numbered blanket was recorded next to the name of a person and then the

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<sup>163</sup> St. Bartholomew Corsham, Select Vestry Order Book, Select Vestry minute of 9 December 1825, W&SA PR/Cosham: St. Bartholomew/1812/9.

<sup>164</sup> For instance St. Bartholomew Corsham, Select Vestry Order Book, Select Vestry minute of 24 May 1824, W&SA PR/Cosham: St. Bartholomew/1812/9.

<sup>165</sup> For instance the Select Vestry in Broomfield decided to have two days in the year clothing the poor and that those two days to be on or about Michaelmas and Lady Day, Broomfield, Allowances to the poor, Select Vestry minute of 18 September 1821, SRO D\P\broo/13/2/2. Four years later they decided to allocate four days on which the poor could be clothed - the nearest vestry meeting following the Quarters Days of Lady Day, Midsummer, Michaelmas and Christmas, Broomfield, Allowances to the poor, Select Vestry minute of 29 April 1825, SRO D\P\broo/13/2/2.

<sup>166</sup> Broomfield also had a separate clothing account book, whereby claims are listed under the individual’s name which allowed the parish officers to check the previous claims of individuals’ (and families) relief provision with ease (rather than trawl through accounts recorded in date order), Broomfield, Clothing accounts, 1810-1836 SRO D\P\can 13/2/10.

<sup>167</sup> Angmering, Vestry Minute Book, Select Vestry minute of 27 May 1829, WSRO Par6/12/1. Another policy was released in 1835 whereby parish children going into service would have ten shillings worth of clothes allocated to them instead of an pre-existing system where children were given weekly pay and clothing, Angmering, Vestry Minute Book, Select Vestry minute of 19 May 1829, WSRO Par6/12/1.

<sup>168</sup> All Saints Whiteparish, Vestry Minute Book, Select Vestry minute of 12 April 1833, W&SA PR/Whiteparish: All Saints/830/32.

month within which the blanket had to be returned, usually the following spring.<sup>169</sup>

Some parishes decided to reduce poor relief expenditure on clothing and other items through other strategies. In 1832, Wincanton Select Vestry established a clothing 'society' with the purpose of *assisting* poor parishioners in procuring clothing. Similar to the rules of charity-based Penny Clothing Clubs, every poor person was allowed to contribute one penny a week to a clothing fund which had its own dedicated secretary and treasurer.<sup>170</sup> At the end of the financial year, the parish would then add half of the amount saved during the year from the poor rates. If the scheme worked, the Select Vestry managed to get the poor to fund the cost of two thirds of their own clothing.<sup>171</sup> Also in the early 1830s, the Select Vestry of Wimborne Minster directed that a subscription be raised for the purpose of procuring clothing, fuel and other necessities for the use of the poor.<sup>172</sup> As such, the parish tried to alleviate their financial burdens through the promotion of charity. Giving relief in fuel, such as wood and coal, was also curtailed under Select Vestries. Claims for services which enabled the poor to heat their homes had also been withdrawn. In the west of Somerset, parishes employed someone to dig peat-turf for the poor. The Select Vestry of Winsford noted in 1835, a year before its expiration on the creation of the

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<sup>169</sup> Bruton, Select Vestry Minute book for the administration of the poor, Select Vestry minute of 31 December 1815, SRO D\P\brut/9/1/2. The blanket loan scheme was popular in rural southern parishes after the passage of the Poor Law Amendment Act and into the 1840s, but had been increasingly funded through public subscription and private charity and managed by the parish rather than simply paid through the poor rates. For example, in Burpham a blanket loaning scheme was established in 1844 after Mr. Whieldon of Stanmore had paid five pounds to the parish for the purpose, Burpham, Vestry Minute Book, vestry minute of 30 September 1844, WSRO Par31/12/1. Some parishes prevented the poor from acquiring blankets on the poor rates before the start of winter, e.g. claim of woman for a blanket refused until 'winter comes', for instance Broomfield, Allowances to the poor, Select Vestry minute 13 June 1821, SRO D\P\broo/13/2/2.

<sup>170</sup> P. Jones, 'Clothing the Poor in Early-Nineteenth-Century England', *Textile History*, 37 (2006), 17-37.

<sup>171</sup> Wincanton, Vestry Minute Book, Select Vestry minute of 12 Jan 1832, SRO D\PC\winc/1/3/2. Rules to join the society were clarified in a meeting on 27 January 1832.

<sup>172</sup> Wimborne Minster, Select Vestry Order Book, Select Vestry minute of 18 November 1831, DHC PE/WM VE2/3.

Dulverton New Poor Law Union, that such fuel would no longer be provided for everyone.<sup>173</sup>

Vestrymen had generally assumed that if someone could maintain an animal, they could maintain themselves. Animals should be sold before relief should be sought. This may have also been a factor in their dislike of dog ownership, although other animals were also perceived as a source of income. Relief claimants with pigs were told to sell them before they were granted relief. For instance, Robert Martin was refused a shirt for his boy on account of 'haveing sow & pig'.<sup>174</sup> Larger animals which assisted labourers to undertake heavy tasks were also used as a reason to refuse relief. James Norris was instructed by one Wiltshire Select Vestry to get rid of an ass before he tried to claim for relief again.<sup>175</sup> The Chew Magna Select Vestry thought that Joshua Emery 'ought' to sell his two donkeys 'to support his family'.<sup>176</sup> Select Vestries sometimes refused loans to those labourers who would buy animals to assist them in their work. Isaac Bauchamp's request for a loan to enable him to buy a donkey had been rejected by a Select Vestry in Whiteparish notwithstanding his wish to draw heath from the common which may have allowed him to leave the weekly parish allowance lists.<sup>177</sup>

Many Select Vestries continued to administer long-established parish employment schemes for their under- and unemployed outdoor poor. Such schemes are too complex to detail in full here and have been discussed elsewhere.<sup>178</sup> Parish employment practices had been in operation since the

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<sup>173</sup> Whilst some people still had their turf cut by someone employed by the parish some individuals' claims were refused, such as Grace Grunter who had previously benefitted from the service, Winsford, Vestry Minute Book, Select Vestry minutes of 23 June 1834 and 20 July 1835, SRO D\P\wins/9/1/1.

<sup>174</sup> Broomfield, Allowances of the poor, Select Vestry minute of 16 May 1821, SRO D\P\broo/13/2/2. Pigs, unlike all other animals, caused a noticeable odour as well, leading to complaints from fellow parishioners, Winsford, Vestry Minute book, Select Vestry minute of 15 September 1834, SRO D\P\wins/9/1/1. Complaints had also been received by parishes officers from the public about the pigsties in workhouse gardens, Wimborne Minster, Vestry Minute Book, vestry minute of 23 September 1800, DHC PE/WM VE 1/1.

<sup>175</sup> St. Bartholomew Corsham, Select Vestry Order Book, Select Vestry minute of 7 May 1824, W&SA PR/Cosham: St. Bartholomew/1812/9.

<sup>176</sup> Chew Magna, Vestry Minutes, Select Vestry minute of 31 October 1834, SRO D/P\che.m/9/1/3.

<sup>177</sup> All Saints Parish, Vestry Minute Book, Whiteparish Select Vestry minute of 6 July 1832, W&SA PR/Whiteparish: All Saints/830/32.

<sup>178</sup> Much recent research is yet to be published, for instance C.J. Griffin, "Employing the Poor": the Experience and Unemployment in post-Napoleonic Rural England'

Elizabethan Poor Laws and were common throughout southern England by the 1800s. It is no surprise, therefore, that Select Vestries also organised similar practices. The Wincanton Select Vestry, for instance, directed unemployed labourers to dig up parts of the parish land ('Ball Common' and the 'Brick yard') and to build and maintain parish roads.<sup>179</sup> In 1832 the Wincanton Select Vestry decided to set a separate 'labour' rate and allocated labourers to work for ratepayers.<sup>180</sup> This was a more elaborate employment system which held ratepayers accountable for the wages of labourers. Such schemes gained popularity in the rural south and south-east of England in the 1820s. This may have been the result of the publicity which surrounded the apparently successful adoption of a similar scheme at Oundle, in Northamptonshire in 1822.<sup>181</sup> Throughout the south, parishes such as Eversley adopted the labour rate system directly as a result of hearing or reading about the 'Oundle plan', though others, such as Wincanton, only adopted the practice after it had been formally legitimised in the 1832 'Labour Employment Act'.<sup>182</sup> Similarly, the Select Vestry of Bruton set up a scheme 'according to the provisions of the said Act'. Within this scheme the able-bodied men with families would receive between seven and

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(unpublished paper); P. Jones, 'Captain Swing and rural popular consciousness: nineteenth-century southern English history in context' (unpublished PhD thesis, University of Southampton, 2002). For an analysis of when individuals were employed by the parish see S.A. Shave, 'The Dependent Poor? (Re)constructing the Lives of Individuals 'on the parish' in rural Dorset, 1800-1832, *Rural History*, 20 (2009), 67-97.

<sup>179</sup> Wincanton, Vestry Minute Book, vestry minutes of 9 March 1832 and 24 October 1833, SRO D\PC\winc/1/3/2.

<sup>180</sup> Wincanton, Vestry Minute Book, vestry minutes of 3 November 1832, 14 December 1832 and 12 December 1833, SRO D\PC\winc/1/3/2. The labour rate (or Roundsman systems) system is where a parish agrees 'a rate, levied against the poor rate assessment, which either had to be paid or the rate-payer had to "discharge" the rate by employing "surplus" labour (defined as the number of labourers left over after an allocation of labourers based on either the rates, rental or acreage) at a set wage, Griffin, "Employing the Poor", p. 29.

<sup>181</sup> Griffin, "Employing the Poor", p.29; R. Wells, 'Social Protest, Class, Conflict and Consciousness in the English Countryside 1700-1880' in M. Reed and R. Wells (eds.), *Class, Conflict and Protest in the English Countryside, 1700-1880* (London, 1990), p. 142; M. Rose, *The English Poor Law 1780-1930*, (Newton Abbott, 1971), pp. 57-58.

<sup>182</sup> Griffin states that the plan was reported in local newspapers such as the *Reading Mercury*; Eversley, Vestry Minute Book, Select Vestry minute of 17 November 1822, HRO 6M77/PV1; Wells, 'Social Protest, Class, Conflict and Consciousness', p. 142, cited in Griffin "Employing the Poor", p. 30. The Act was passed on 9 August 1832 and is officially entitled 'An Act for the better Employment of Labourers in Agricultural Parishes until the Twenty-fifth Day of March One thousand eight hundred and thirty-four' (2 & 3 Geo. IV c.96).



eight shillings per week and 'Lads and aged Persons' would receive between four and six shillings.<sup>183</sup>

When parish work was made available to the poor it was important that the wages could sustain labouring families. At the same time, regulating labour costs ensured parish work was not more desirable than ordinary work, and by setting minimum wages the ratepayers could ensure that they were not being undercut by one another. After enquiring into the wages given to 'independent' labourers, one Select Vestry paid to their labourers no 'more [than] one shilling per week less than the wages given by the occupiers for labour of equal value'.<sup>184</sup> It is clear that many Select Vestries also followed the directions of magistrates when setting minimum wages. At New Alresford, single men were given sixpence per day for their labour, by the 'recommendation' of the magistrates.<sup>185</sup> Select Vestries not only set the wages of those working on and off the parish, they made enquiries for those searching for work. In 1823, the Broughton Select Vestry heard how William Gale was unable to gain enough custom as a collar maker. The Select Vestry offered to 'find him such work as the Officers shall direct at the regular pay of the Parish'.<sup>186</sup> Other Select Vestries were more opportunistic. In 1819 Mr. Billis, the Fareham assistant overseer, was directed to take the 'names of all single men applying for relief with a view of sending them to Work at the Arundel Canal'.<sup>187</sup>

The 1830s witnessed the growth of parish allotment provision.<sup>188</sup> Select Vestries used allotment schemes explicitly to reduce outdoor relief expenditure. The ratepayers who were allotted to employ labourers in Wimborne Minster were directed to provide their workers with a quarter to half an acre of arable land each. The labourer 'in their leisure hours and parts of their families not otherwise employed may cultivate'. No land rent would be charged until the end

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<sup>183</sup> The scheme was repeated in 9 October 1834, Bruton, Special rate for unemployed poor, vestry minutes of 11 October 1833, SRO D\P\brut/13/1/3; SRO D/P/brut/13/1/3.

<sup>184</sup> All Saints Parish, Whiteparish, Vestry Minute Book, Select Vestry minutes of, 22 September 1832 and 23 November 1832, W&SA PR/Whiteparish: All Saints/830/32.

<sup>185</sup> New Alresford, Vestry Minute Book, Select Vestry minute of 2 November 1832, HRO 45M83/PV1.

<sup>186</sup> Broughton, Vestry Minute Book, Select Vestry minute of 8 May 1823, HRO 137M71/PV1.

<sup>187</sup> St. Peter and St. Paul Fareham, Select Vestry Minute Book, Select Vestry minute of 29 May 1819, PCRO CHU43/2C/1.

<sup>188</sup> J. Burchardt, *The Allotment Movement in England: 1793-1873* (Woodbridge, 2002).

of the first year and if it could not be paid by a labourer the overseers were obliged to pay instead. To encourage the labourers to cultivate their land well, the Select Vestry planned to reward those who had ‘managed their land best’ and had ‘received the least aid’ from the parish.<sup>189</sup> Whilst this promoted industrious habits and ‘independence’ from parochial relief amongst the labouring poor, it would also reduce the poor rates. More conventionally Select Vestries rented land and allotted portions to individuals. In 1831 the Wimborne Minster parish, building upon their earlier policies, considered renting an entire farm before settling on renting a portion of land for spade husbandry.<sup>190</sup> The stipulations linked to allotment provision could be particularly stringent. In 1833 the Select Vestry at New Alresford decided to hire ten acres of land which would be let to male labourers

on condition that such poor persons shall discharge themselves from all liberty for the parish to find him work & relief after the expiration of six months from the time of such taking[.]

William Butler was the first candidate for the scheme and was given one and a half acres. Regardless of the harsh conditions linked to land provision, the Select Vestry paid for the ploughing and sowing of Butler’s patch, with wheat and barley, apparently by way of ‘encouragement.’<sup>191</sup> As noted above, Sturges Bourne’s 1819 Act did permit parishes to acquire up to 20 acres of land for the employment of the poor. According to Burchardt this policy was ‘rarely acted on’.<sup>192</sup> Although the evidence presented here may suggest otherwise, Select Vestries’ impulses cannot be deciphered from the vestry minutes themselves. Although allotment provision may have originated from Sturges Bourne’s legislation, or other pieces of legislation, it may have simply ‘originated with the

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<sup>189</sup> If any rent after the first year was irrecoverable, the overseers were obliged to pay for it from the parish rates, Wimborne Minster, Select Vestry Order Book, Select Vestry minute of 27 November 1829, DHC PE/WM VE2/3.

<sup>190</sup> Wimborne Minster, Select Vestry Order Book, Select Vestry minute of 27 November 1829, DHC PE/WM VE2/3. Plans mentioned but no evidence the policy was undertaken, Wimborne Minster, Select Vestry Order Book, Select Vestry minute, 26 November 1831, DHC PE/WM VE2/3. The piece of land desired was offered by the landowner (Mr. Machell) at fifty pounds per year, an offer which was rejected by the board, Wimborne Minster, Select Vestry Order Book, Select Vestry minute of 28 November 1831, DHC PE/WM VE2/3.

<sup>191</sup> New Alresford, Vestry Minute Book, Select Vestry minute of 29 November 1833, HRO 45M83/PV1.

<sup>192</sup> Burchardt, *The Allotment Movement*, p. 34

gentry or clergy', as the Assistant Commission Captain Pringle noted in his observations of Hampshire in 1832.<sup>193</sup> As Select Vestries were comprised of this section of the community, it is little wonder that they devised land provision schemes.

#### **5.4.4 Renewed interest in workhouse policy**

Although Sturges Bourne's 1819 Act was not a 'workhouse act', unlike Knatchbull's, Select Vestries were often concerned with workhouse provision. As Wells has suggested, Select Vestries frequently developed new workhouse policies. Drawing on the example of the Ticehurst Select Vestry, he notes that at their first meeting many able-bodied relief recipients and the children of relief receiving families had been asked to enter the workhouse.<sup>194</sup> Similarly, a Hampshire Select Vestry directed that 'all Persons having relief whose Friends or Children cannot support them are to be taken into the House'.<sup>195</sup>

Whilst some Select Vestries filled up their workhouses to reduce relief costs, others sought to change the poor within the workhouse itself. In one parish, the Select Vestry decided to collate a '[l]ist of people to leave the poorhouse or to be taken before the justices and prosecuted according to law.'<sup>196</sup> In All Saints Whiteparish it was decided that 'families occupying apartments in the poor houses...be given notice by the overseers to quit and give up possession at the end of one month from the date of notice'. Here families were forced to live independently, out of parish funded accommodation.<sup>197</sup> Such Select Vestries may have encouraged those who could live exclusively through their own means to do so, and those unable, more vulnerable groups of the poor, to enter instead. These policies differ from those issued by Select Vestries, such as at Ubley and St. Peter and St. Paul in Fareham. The Select Vestry at Ubley decided to charge poorhouse

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<sup>193</sup> BPP 1834 (44) I Report from His Majesty's Commissioners for Inquiring into the Administration and Practical Operation of the Poor Laws. Appendix A. Reports from Assistant Commissioners. Part 4. Captain Pringle, p. 297.

<sup>194</sup> Wells, 'Poor-Law Reform in the Rural South-east', p. 65.

<sup>195</sup> St. Peter and St. Paul Fareham, Select Vestry Minute Book, Select Vestry minute of 7 July 1819, PCRO CHU43/2C/1.

<sup>196</sup> Chew Magna, Vestry Minute Book, Select Vestry minute of 15 February 1833, SRO D\P\che.m/9/1/1.

<sup>197</sup> All Saints Whiteparish, Vestry Minute Book, Select Vestry minute of 15 September 1834, W&SA PR/Whiteparish: All Saints/830/32.

residents a weekly rent.<sup>198</sup> At Fareham, individuals were charged weekly for placing their children in the workhouse.<sup>199</sup> These Select Vestries were trying to recoup some of the money expended in keeping a workhouse. This is further demonstrated by the decision reached by the Select Vestry of St. Peter and St. Paul at Fareham in 1819:

Ordered that the men and boys in the Poor House be kept at Home on Wednesday the 23<sup>rd</sup> of June to be examined as to the worth of their Labour.<sup>200</sup>

Evidently, Select Vestries wanted to know the amount of money which could potentially be obtained through working the workhouse inmates.

Select Vestries also considered the adequacy of their parish accommodation to maintain their poor. Small alterations were made by other Select Vestries, such as the repairs made to the High Litton workhouse in the 1820s.<sup>201</sup> The Select Vestry in Corsham decided to elect a committee to examine the state of the poorhouse. After the men had reported their findings, substantial repairs were made to the house, the committee directing that partitions should be placed in three of the bedrooms to make six separate spaces - an indication that the Select Vestry wanted to place more people into the poorhouse.<sup>202</sup> In Droxford, the assistant overseer was directed by the open vestry to examine Widow Holme's home to point out alterations which would be needed to convert the property into a poorhouse.<sup>203</sup> In the following week, the vestry decided to rent an alternative property for the reception of the poor.<sup>204</sup> At Hartley Wintney, regardless of the fact that the parish had united with others to form the

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<sup>198</sup> Ubley, Vestry Minute Book, vestry minutes of 7 January 1825 and 11 July 1828, SRO D\P\ubl/9/1/1.

<sup>199</sup> St. Peter and St. Paul Fareham, Select Vestry Minute Book, Select Vestry minute of 14 June 1823, PCRO CHU43/2C/1.

<sup>200</sup> St. Peter and St. Paul Fareham, Select Vestry Minute Book, Select Vestry minute, 9 June 1819, PCRO CHU43/2C/1.

<sup>201</sup> For instance, the repairs made to the poorhouses at High Littleton with Hallatrow, High Littleton with Hallatrow, Vestry Minute Book, Select Very minute 12 September 1828, SRO D\P\lit.h/9/1.

<sup>202</sup> St. Bartholomew Corsham, Select Vestry Order Book, Select Vestry minute of 31 May 1824, W&SA PR/Corsham: St. Bartholomew/1812/9. A work tender was accepted on 2 July 1824 and sum of £200 for the alterations was loaned by the overseers and churchwardens on 17 June 1825.

<sup>203</sup> Droxford, Vestry Minute Book, vestry minute of 23 April 1822, HRO 66M76/PV2.

<sup>204</sup> Droxford, Vestry Minute Book, vestry minute of 1 May 1822, HRO 66M76/PV2.

Farnborough Gilbert's Union in 1794, the Select Vestry procured a building exclusively for the use of *their* parish poor in the 1832.<sup>205</sup>

Workhouse management regimes were also in the sights of the Select Vestries. Indeed, there was a particular enthusiasm amongst Select Vestries to start 'farming' their indoor poor to save the parish money. The Corsham Select Vestry decided to farm out their poor to Mr. Isaac Roberts, a man who would have maintained and employed the indoor poor.<sup>206</sup> In other parishes, such as Bishop's Waltham, it was the open parishes which directed the Select Vestry to obtain a contract.<sup>207</sup> Nevertheless, in previous years the Select Vestry at Bishop's Waltham had considered farming the poor of the parish independently of the open vestry.<sup>208</sup> Although Select Vestries wanted to farm the poor, they also wanted greater control over the everyday management of the workhouses. The new workhouse rented by the Hartley Wintney vestrymen was put 'under the direction of the Select Vestry of the said Parish'.<sup>209</sup> From the 'articles of agreement' between Mr. Isaac Roberts and the Corsham Select Vestry, it is clear that the Select Vestry still wanted some control over the management of the workhouse. The articles allowed members of the Select Vestry to visit the poorhouse and settle disputes between Roberts and the residents.<sup>210</sup> This was also in place in Fareham where the contractor was 'subject to the inspection of the select vestry'.<sup>211</sup> Another article of the Corsham agreement stipulated that the Select Vestry must give consent to Roberts when he brought in paupers receiving outdoor relief to work in the poorhouse.<sup>212</sup>

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<sup>205</sup> Hartley Wintney, Vestry Minute Book, vestry minute of 6 March 1832, HRO 85M76/PV2.

<sup>206</sup> St. Bartholomew Corsham, Select Vestry Order Book, 22 April 1825 (adverts) and 20 May 1825 (appointment and terms of agreement, articles six, seven and twenty one), W&SA PR/Corsham: St. Bartholomew/1812/9.

<sup>207</sup> Bishop's Waltham, Vestry Minute, vestry minute of 17 March 1828, HRO 30M77/PV1.

<sup>208</sup> Bishop's Waltham, Vestry Minute Book, Select Vestry minute of 28 April 1828, HRO 30M77/PV2

<sup>209</sup> Hartley Wintney, Vestry Minute Book, vestry minute of 6 March 1832, HRO 85M76/PV2.

<sup>210</sup> St. Bartholomew Corsham, Select Vestry Order Book, Select Vestry minutes of 22 April 1825 (adverts) and 20 May 1825 (appointment and terms of agreement), W&SA PR/Corsham: St. Bartholomew/1812/9.

<sup>211</sup> St. Peter and St. Paul Fareham, Select Vestry Minute Book, vestry minute of 1 March 1826, PCRO CHU/43/2B/3.

<sup>212</sup> St. Bartholomew, Corsham, Select Vestry Order Book, select vestry minute of 20 May 1825 (appointment and terms of agreement), W&SA PR/Corsham: St. Bartholomew/1812/9.

## 5.5 Conclusion

The provisions contained in Sturges Bourne's 1819 Act had impacted upon the way in which poor relief was provided to welfare recipients. Although, because of the agricultural depression, many vestries were tightening up relief provision, Sturges Bourne's policies had facilitated parishes to adopt a more rigorous approach to relief administration. Select Vestries paid attention to relief scales and other regular maintenance costs, extra payments, employment – on the parish or otherwise – and indoor relief. Blanket policies reduced the relief provided to defined groups of claimants. Loans were made with the intention that they would be paid back, and at the same time employment stipulations were developed to promote self-sufficiency and reward industriousness. These were all measures introduced with the intention of saving the parish money. In particular the inspection of the poor and the attempts to gauge individuals' character and conduct were illustrative of a more residualist relief system at work. This enabling legislation tended to reinforce the distinction first developed in the Elizabethan era, between the 'deserving' and 'undeserving' poor. Furthermore, Sturges Bourne's provisions had permitted a select group of individuals to scrutinise the lives of relief claimants – their living arrangements, their work, their illegal pursuits, their ailments, their possessions and their leisure activities. Knowledge of these aspects of claimants' lives allowed officials to further narrow individuals' opportunities to obtain statutory relief. Although an open vestry could have undertaken such inquiries, Sturges Bourne's legislation supported and encouraged these actions.

Although the minutiae of parish policy developed in relation to assistant overseers and under the auspices of the Select Vestry were complex, they had not always derived from the parish itself. Magistrates exerted some influence over their decisions, which suggests that there was some cooperation between the magistrates and the parish authorities in some localities. Select Vestries also took on board the policies developed by other parishes. As noted above, the Oundle plan found its way to Eversley and was subsequently implemented in 1822. This raises interesting questions about the nature of social policy development under the old poor law, surrounding the role and importance of policy transfer in the

administration of poor relief. The next chapter examines this very process, both under the old and New Poor Laws, with special reference to how local knowledge was promoted as best practice. Select Vestries had also developed policies which mirrored those being promoted by organisations, outside of the statutory relief system. Indeed, the provision of allotments from 1830 onwards had been linked to the efforts of the Labourer's Friend Society 'whose effective campaign' had 'promote[d] allotments as the most plausible remedy for the social problems of the countryside'.<sup>213</sup> Again, it appears that not all policies which were implemented by local poor law authorities had originated within those authorities, but rather they derived from other poor law authorities and organisations peripheral to the poor laws. This is a theme in both chapters six and seven.

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<sup>213</sup> J. Burchardt, 'Rural Social Relations, 1830-50: Opposition to Allotments for Labourers', *Agricultural History Review*, 45 (1997), p. 166. For research on the work of the Labourer's Friend Society and other societies during this period also see R. Wells, 'Historical Trajectories: English Social Welfare Systems, Rural Riots, Popular Politics, Agrarian Trade Unions, and Allotment Provision, 1793-1896', *Southern History*, 25 (2003), pp. 100-105; J. Burchardt, *The Allotment Movement in England: 1793-1873* (Woodbridge, 2002), pp. 70-97.

## Chapter 6: Local Knowledge and Best Practice

Before the creation of the Poor Law Commission under the aegis of the Poor Law Amendment Act of 1834, there was no central welfare authority to suggest ways in which parishes could cope with the rising demand for poor relief. Beyond the basic stipulations of the various statutory poor laws, parish officials were forced to seek solutions from one another. As illustrated in chapter two, notwithstanding the importance of knowledge dissemination in poor law practice, this topic has hitherto received no systematic attention. The first half of this chapter examines the ways in which officials exchanged information on relief provision. This information was presented and promoted as ‘best practice’, including how ‘best’ to establish new workhouses, how ‘best’ to furnish the poor with food and clothing, and even how ‘best’ to deliver first aid.<sup>1</sup> The chapter then explores how parish officials sought ideas about ‘best practice’ from other individuals, such as contractors and local gentry. The second half of the chapter considers how local knowledge and best practice were transferred from place to place after the passage of the Amendment Act. Overall this chapter demonstrates that local knowledge was not constrained by parish boundaries prior to 1834, nor strictly ‘top down’ thereafter.

### 6.1 Under the old poor laws, c.1780-1834

#### 6.1.1 Correspondence

Parish officials commonly corresponded with other officials to exchange information. Within a month of adopting Gilbert’s Act the committee at Alverstoke had received ‘information’ from a number of other institutions. Alton

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<sup>1</sup> ‘Best practice’ is a recently coined phrase, thought to have been first used in 1984 in an accounting handbook. Whilst its usage is still rather confined to the world of business, it means (and will be used here to describe) ‘the practice which is accepted by consensus or prescribed by regulation as correct; the preferred or most appropriate style’, *Oxford English Dictionary*.



provided details on ‘the manner of employing the poor there – the sort of manufactory carried on – the mode of feeding the Paupers – the Cost of building the House of Industry – the earnings of the people and other information.’<sup>2</sup> The united parishes at Winchester and Farnham had furnished the Alverstoke committee with a similar account, although the latter had also informed them of ‘the Cost of the Buildings ground and Workshops with the dimensions these’.<sup>3</sup> Arguably, the Farnham workhouse had the greatest impact on the establishment of the Alverstoke workhouse. Farnham had rebuilt their workhouse in 1791 and it soon gained a reputation as a model workhouse. Eden noted how the house was built ‘on a good plan, and stands in an excellent situation’ and since its usage the mortality rates amongst the poor had ‘much decreased’.<sup>4</sup> In the very first meeting of the Alverstoke committee, the men asked Mr. Wilmot to evaluate the old workhouse and ‘plan and Estimate’ for ‘a House of Industry to be erected on Ever Common agreeably to the plan of Farnham’.<sup>5</sup> They subsequently introduced ‘a plan formed on the principles of the Farnham Workhouse together with such improvements as may be thought advantageous’.<sup>6</sup> The Alverstoke committee did not simply want to build an exact copy of the Farnham workhouse, they wanted to adapt it according to their own requirements. Accordingly, Mr. Wilmot ‘laid before the Committee a ground plan of Farnham Workhouse but on a scale proportioned to the magnitude of this parish together with some suggestions of his for improvement’.<sup>7</sup>

Officials also became curious as to how other workhouses were being managed. The Alverstoke committee first examined the provisions given to inmates in other workhouses. In Farnham 2s 10d was expended on each pauper per week, whilst the Winton [Winchester] workhouse spent a penny less. These costs were then compared with those incurred by the Alverstoke Guardians whilst running their old workhouse. Mr. Wooldridge, the Alverstoke workhouse master

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<sup>2</sup> Alton had placed an advert in a newspaper asking for offers for a contract to build a new workhouse in late 1792, *Hampshire Chronicle*, 10 December 1792. The workhouse was to be 146ft by 23ft and 25ft high and was to be completed in 1793. It is probably of no coincidence that Alton, situated near Farnham, was building a new workhouse at this time, and although I have found no direct evidence that it had also adopted Gilbert’s Act.

<sup>3</sup> Alverstoke, Guardians’ Minute Book, 26 November 1799, HRO PL2/1/1.

<sup>4</sup> F.M. Eden, *The State of the Poor*, Volume 3 (1797, Bristol, 2001), pp. 716-718.

<sup>5</sup> Alverstoke, Guardians’ Minute Book, 9 November 1799, HRO PL2/1/1.

<sup>6</sup> Alverstoke, Guardians’ Minute Book, 26 November 1799, HRO PL2/1/1.

<sup>7</sup> Alverstoke, Guardians’ Minute Book, 26 November 1799, HRO PL2/1/1.

who also kept accounts, reported that on average 3s 9<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub>d was expended on their residents. This dissimilarity was, according to the Alverstoke committee, not due to any difference in the cost of provisions. Rather, these other workhouses had fed their poor differently, had grown their own vegetables and reared their own pigs. The Alverstoke committee noted that about one third of the residents within these workhouses had contributed towards the cost of their own maintenance. The Alton inmates earned the largest sum, at 3s 4d, and the Farnham and Winton inmates raised 2s 4d and 2s respectively.<sup>8</sup> These details about feeding and working the poor had enabled the Alverstoke men to make some predictions as to their own savings. The establishment of a workhouse farm and a change in the workhouse dietary would save the ratepayers £340. They went on: '[s]upposing therefore that only <sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub> of the poor of this Parish are employed and that the average of this weekly earnings is only 2/ each that will amount to £270'. In addition, they thought that the new workhouse would keep 'away the Lazy', or those 'idle and disorderly', creating a saving to the estimate of £114.<sup>9</sup> In total, the Alverstoke committee believed that the new system would immediately save the ratepayers of Alverstoke approximately £924.<sup>10</sup>

Information was requested by officials as and when it was needed. In 1820s Alverstoke, this information led to change in the management of the poor. Several of the men attended the poorhouse of a neighbouring parish to ascertain 'whether the Poor were well fed and clothed' after the parish decided to farm their poor. The sub-committee had also contacted 'the several parishes of Fareham, Brighton, South Stoneham, Newington, Portsmouth, and Maidstone' about farming policies.<sup>11</sup> Their survey stretched, on this occasion, along the south coast and into the south-east. Portsmouth was the only one of these coastal parishes to have been surveyed by Eden, who described its workhouse as 'neither well

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<sup>8</sup> Alverstoke, Guardians' Minute Book, 26 November 1799, HRO PL2/1/1.

<sup>9</sup> This estimate was reached as follows: 'Your Committee is not too sanguine when it declares its firm belief that by employing the poor in manufactories and cultivating the ground 20 idle and disorderly persons at least will be driven from the House of Industry by which the Parish will save[?] including Cloath's about 4/6 each p week or £234 p Annum from which however deduct what they might have earned £210 a Net saving by keeping away 20 persons of £114.'

<sup>10</sup> Alverstoke, Guardians' Minute Book, 26 November 1799, HRO PL2/1/1.

<sup>11</sup> Brighton was under a Local Act by 1822, South Stoneham may have been under Gilbert's Act by 1822 (see Figure 4.2 in chapter four) and the Newington mentioned here could have been Newington in either Oxfordshire or Kent.

contrived, nor well managed'.<sup>12</sup> Something had obviously changed by 1822. The evidence gathered by the Alverstoke sub-committee suggested that large financial savings could be made through farming their poor out. After the 'most diligent Enquiries and mature Deliberation', the sub-committee recommended the Alverstoke workhouse should follow suit.<sup>13</sup> They decided to follow, more precisely, the scheme at Maidstone which, although not a Gilbert's Act workhouse, had a long history of operating a workhouse economically.<sup>14</sup> The rationale of the Alverstoke men appears clear: '...because it appears to your committee that by such conditions the necessary comforts of the Poor are amply and liberally provided for' plus 'the duties of the contractor as well as of the Parochial offices are accurately and effectual precautions are adopted for the prevention of errors and abuses in carrying the system into execution'.<sup>15</sup> At the end of August, the committee reported that 'the Parish generally had experienced great Benefit by adopting the System of Farming the Poor'.<sup>16</sup> Evidently, written enquiries from one welfare provider to another had exerted an important influence over both the establishment and management of southern workhouses.

### 6.1.2 Visits

Visits to well-managed workhouses in neighbouring districts were also important sources of information. There are many pieces of documentary evidence to suggest that parish officers had visited their neighbouring institutions. Parish officials from Bradford-on-Avon knew about the 'plan adopted in the work-house of the neighbouring parish of Westbury' for clothing their poor. They could specify the sources of the materials used at Westbury to make clothing, aprons

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<sup>12</sup> Eden, *The State of the Poor*, Volume 2, p.227.

<sup>13</sup> Alverstoke, Guardians' Minute Book, 'Report of the Committee received at a public meeting of owners and occupiers [of] Alverstoke', 28 August 1822, HRO PL2/1/1.

<sup>14</sup> Maidstone had a workhouse in operation from 1720, see T. Hitchcock, 'The English Workhouse: A Study in Institutional Poor Relief in Selected Counties, 1696-1750' (unpublished PhD thesis, University of Oxford, 1985), p. 267.

<sup>15</sup> They finally set out their rules and regulations for contracting out on the 18 December 1822, Alverstoke, Gilbert's Union Minutes, 28 August and 18 December 1822, HRO PL2/1/1.

<sup>16</sup> Alverstoke, Gilbert's Union Minutes, 28 August 1822, HRO PL2/1/1.

and petticoats, as well as its costs and manufacture.<sup>17</sup> The amount of such detailed information indicates parish officers were conferring with one another. The information exchanged could also be formal in nature. For instance, the Select Vestry at Millbrook considered adopting the 'Bye Laws and Regulations' for the management of the poor used in Eling, a neighbouring parish.<sup>18</sup> There is even clearer evidence that officials visited one another's workhouses. Nearly four years after they adopted Gilbert's Act, the Alverstoke Guardians crossed the Solent to visit the workhouse on the Isle of Wight, situated in Newport. The Alverstoke chairman, Robert Forbes, later announced that the Visitors and Guardians had 'been to the House of Industry in the Isle of Wight, enquired into the Economy of that House, and had adopted into this; some of its regulations.'<sup>19</sup> The workhouse they visited had not been established under Gilbert's Act, but was one of only two rural Incorporations in the south of England.<sup>20</sup> The parishes of the Isle of Wight were incorporated in 1770 under a Local Act which permitted a group of Guardians to provide for the poor who could not maintain themselves by admitting them to a workhouse, and to let them procure employment outside during the harvest season.<sup>21</sup> After mentioning the visit, the chairman Robert Forbes went into immense detail about food provision. The Newport inmates were 'served at one Table, each person having its allowance in a Tin pan, three times each day always Hot.' The paupers were given meat five times a week, in addition to potatoes, other vegetables and beer and 'yet', as Forbes stated, 'the Sustenance of each person does not cost above 2s "7½d per Week'. His notes had, of course, embraced the discourse of economy. It was this evidence, gathered on their visit, that placed a '[s]trong conviction therefore on the minds of the

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<sup>17</sup> T. Bush, J. Jones, Junr., T. Tugwell and W. Barker, 'Parochial Regulations Relative to the Management of the Poor of Bradford, Wilts; with Notes, Tending to Promote Economy and Comfort in the Work-House' (Bristol, 1801), p. 37.

<sup>18</sup> Millbrook, Vestry Minute, 11 June 1821, SCRO PR10/8/1.

<sup>19</sup> Alverstoke, Guardians' Minute Book, 'Report of the Committee to the Parish in Vestry at Easter, 1803', HRO PL2/1/1.

<sup>20</sup> The other Incorporation created under a Local Act was located in East Sussex (Glynde).

<sup>21</sup> For a summary of their Local Act see 'Fourth Annual Report to The Right Honourable Lord John Russell', T. F. Lewis, J.G. Shaw Lefevre and G. Nicholls to Lord John Russell, 4 August 1838, Fourth Annual Report of the Poor Law Commissioners (London, 1838), pp. 18-19.

[Alverstoke] Committee that the Visitor & Guardians had adopted the best and most Economical plans'.<sup>22</sup>

The Isle of Wight Incorporation continued to be a source of inspiration for the Alverstoke committee. Some fifteen years after their first recorded visit, a sub-committee of three men from Alverstoke set out to explore the progress made in the island's workhouse. They reported that they had 'examined every part of that Institution accompanied by the Governor and Matrons and can bear testimony to the excellent system maintained there', concluding that 'there are various regulations in that establishment which it may be desirable to adopt.' It was the provision of food, and the way in which it was provided, which again caught the sub-committee's attention. The men recommended making the workhouse dietary more liberal than that provided on the Isle of Wight. They also suggested baking and boiling potatoes, 'avoiding the expensive plan of mashing'. In addition, each table would have a set proportion to be distributed equally between the diners. Each table would accommodate inmates of a similar age, although the sexes would be divided: the boys' tables would be under the superintendence of the '[i]ndividuals who now instruct them in reading and writing' and the elderly would also be divided. As a consequence, more equipment for the distribution of food would be acquired ('Buckets, Trenchers and Wooden Cans') and furniture for the elaborate seating arrangements ('Tables and Benches'), the latter of which was to be marked and numbered to indicate the parishes' ownership of the property. In order for this to take effect the sub-committee requested that all of the ages of the inmates were ascertained. Interestingly, the three Alverstoke men reported that while the Island had informed their suggestions, 'your Sub Committee are not prepared to recommend that in every particular Instance the Example of the House of Industry at Newport should govern that of Alverstoke.'<sup>23</sup> This indicates that they had paid particular attention to how they could *adapt* the practices seen at the Incorporation to their own, smaller, workhouse on the mainland.

Fieldtrips made by individuals to institutions of interest were important in the dissemination of information. Conversely, individuals with experience of

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<sup>22</sup> Alverstoke, Guardians' Minute Book, 19 March 1803, HRO PL2/1/1.

<sup>23</sup> Alverstoke, Guardians' Minute Book, 29 September 1818, HRO PL2/1/2.

reforming workhouses would visit those *seeking* the advice. John Rutter was a printer and solicitor from Shaftesbury. In the early-nineteenth century he had attended vestry meetings in Shaftesbury during which 'his attention was aroused and his feelings excited by various cases of misery'. Essentially, regardless of high expenditure on the poor rates, he argued that these funds had not prevented 'want, or even...nakedness'.<sup>24</sup> Reform was, he concluded, necessary. Rutter sought information 'from the Governors of...establishments at Boldre near Lymington, at Sturminster [Newton, Dorset], at [St.] Martin's in the Fields London, and from several others.' Whilst Rutter only mentioned the names of these parishes, it was the scheme in Fordingbridge (Hampshire) which had caught his attention. In June 1808 a new 'plan of management' was established in the workhouse. Prior to this change, the workhouse was 'a disgrace and burden to the Parish.' Regardless of the high poor rates of 9s in the pound, the poor had apparently benefited very little. The food and clothing provided was not sufficient, 'the out-door poor were indolent and miserable, the in-door poor were anything but industrious and comfortable'.<sup>25</sup>

One individual – Jesse Upjohn – was pivotal to these reforms. Upjohn gained the support of 'a Committee of the respectable inhabitants' of Fordingbridge in reforming their workhouse. In addition, magistrates and 'neighbouring Gentlemen' had also 'afforded very material support to the new system, and greatly contributed to its success'. He believed his direction and superintendence had produced good results: Children were taught 'industrious and sober habits' and 'immorality and profligacy' became rare. Women who were 'little above the dregs of debauchery' on entering the workhouse, now left the workhouse with 'considerable competition' arising over them for employment as servants. After the initial outlay of expenses to commence this process, the rates had been reduced to 6s in the pound. The format of this case of an inadequate workhouse system being transformed into a successful one is by no means unique, as subsequent sections will suggest. Nevertheless, the connection between the two men, Upjohn and Rutter, is illuminating. Rutter called Upjohn

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<sup>24</sup> J. Rutter, 'A Brief Sketch of the State of the Poor, and of the Management of the Houses of Industry; Recommended to the Consideration of the Inhabitants of the Town of Shaftesbury, and Other Places', second edition (Shaftesbury, 1819), p. iv.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 23-26.

‘one of our Townsmen’. Whilst Rutter explicitly expresses how he had examined Upjohn’s ‘documents’, in likelihood the two men had met to exchange their ideas in person.<sup>26</sup>

### **6.1.3 Contractors, the wealthy and the steward**

Pamphlets, correspondence and visits predominantly occurred between the welfare authorities. Parish officials sought, and were influenced, by those who had made their living working within the welfare system. Of increasing importance in the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth century workhouse was the contractor. This position was not just of importance to workhouses operating under Gilbert’s Act, as described in chapter four.<sup>27</sup> As suggested in that chapter, the contractor was required to manage the workhouse in return for a fixed payment and the profits (if there were any) of the inmates’ labour. Consequently, finding the right contractor for their particular needs, as determined by the parish officials, was important.

Contractors competed within a national job market, and acquiring their services required advertisements in national as well as local newspapers. After the Sutton Union advertised in a national newspaper for contractors in 1793 they received offers from individuals close to home – from Chichester and Hastings - as well as offers from Hereford, Oxford, Norwich, Winchcomb (Gloucestershire) and Tamworth (Staffordshire).<sup>28</sup> After the Easebourne Union submitted a similar advert in 1818 they received offers from Easebourne itself, Burwash (East Sussex), Ropley Stoke (Hampshire), Birdcage Walk (London) and Watford (Hertfordshire).<sup>29</sup> After an advert in 1821, offers came from Steyning (West Sussex) and Colchester, Epping and South Ockendon in Essex.<sup>30</sup> The authors of

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<sup>26</sup> Rutter, ‘A Brief Sketch’, pp. 23-24.

<sup>27</sup> Several other workhouses in the region had contractors, for instance St. Bartholomew’s parish in Corsham (Wiltshire) mention having a contract with Isaac Roberts and require a new contractor, ‘or proper Person to take the Management of the Poor’ on the same terms as Isaac Roberts, St. Bartholomew Corsham, Select Vestry Order Book, 31 March 1826, W&SA PR/Corsham: St. Bartholomew/1812/9.

<sup>28</sup> Another place may have also been mentioned but this was illegible on the letter.

<sup>29</sup> Also one unreadable address, Easebourne Union, Correspondence and proposals to farm the poor, 1818, PHA/10937.

<sup>30</sup> Easebourne Union, Letters of application (some with testimonials) for the management of the poor, 1821, PHA/9638.

these proposals outlined the terms upon which they could accept the contract. In 1825, prospective contractors Charles Mott and N.L. Drouet wrote to Alverstoke stating 'our wish is to meet the Visitor and Guardians upon the lowest possible terms' whilst being 'remunerated fairly for the very irksome and disagreeable duties attendant upon the undertaking.' Their letter also exposes that contractors, just like parish officials, were also familiar with one another's business. Whilst detailing the prices for which they would maintain the poor, Mott and Drouet made reference to the very agreeable price for maintaining the poor offered to the contractor Mr. Pilbrow in Maidstone.<sup>31</sup> Such knowledge may have helped to secure the committee's agreement.

'Farming' the poor was criticised at the time, not least due to the potential for corruption and the abuse of the poor themselves.<sup>32</sup> Although cheaper offers were more likely to be accepted the officials were also interested in the contractors' aptitude and ideas. Contractors caught the attention of the officials for their sound management skills and the ability to implement structured work, which they thought would produce industrious paupers as well as savings. The committee embraced new employment ideas for the workhouse with particular enthusiasm. The Sutton Union committee accepted an offer from Mr. Northwood

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<sup>31</sup> Alverstoke, Guardians' Weekly Report Book, 6 January 1825 and n.d., HRO PL2/1/3. It appears as though these contractors also contacted Alverstoke in 1823 about wanting to contract for the poor, although for eight years previous a man called Mr. Millage maintained the poor, Alverstoke, Guardians' Minute Book, extract from vestry book dated 1 April 1823, HRO PL2/1/1. At the moment it is only known that Charles Mott held contracts with Newington (Surrey) and Lambeth, although this evidence suggests his business also went further south. In addition to this business, he was a food wholesaler in London. Between 1834 and 1842 he was an Assistant Poor Law Commissioner. In 1844 Mott became superintendent of a newly opened Haycock Lodge, in Newton-le-Willows in Lancashire, a private lunatic asylum, which took private patients and pauper lunatics. After complaints about the treatment of patients within the intuition, and a Select Committee inquiry, it was revealed that Mott had actually encouraged George Coode, one of the Assistant secretaries of the Commission, to invest in the private asylum. This business was actually transacted through George's sister Louisa, A. Brundage, *The Making of the New Poor Law: The Politics of Inquiry, Enactment, and Implementation, 1832-1839* (London, 1978), p. 20; D. Hirst, 'Mott, Charles (bap. 1788, d. 1851)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford, 2004) Online. Available: <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/42189> [last accessed 28 April 2010]. For more information about the scandal see D. Hirst, 'A ticklish sort of affair': Charles Mott, Haycock Lodge and the economics of asylumdom', *History of Psychiatry*, 16 (2005), 311-332.

<sup>32</sup> K.D.M. Snell, *Annals of the Labouring Poor: Social Change and Agrarian England 1660-1900* (Cambridge, 1985), p. 106.



who had worked in Hereford for 5 years previously and had a great knowledge of the manufacture of sacks, an employment he suggested that would be manageable and profitable.<sup>33</sup> By the following August, a sacking manufactory was considered for the employment of the poor and not long after a manufactory was established and sacks were soon sold.<sup>34</sup> Other types of employment were only briefly mentioned thereafter, and in 1795 they sold their spinning wheels to the neighbouring Easebourne Gilbert's Union.<sup>35</sup> Into the 1830s, the committees of Gilbert's Unions in West Sussex continued to express their particular desire to work with contractors who had previously been involved in sacking manufactory.<sup>36</sup>

Parish officials also drew on the experience of those involved in local charities. Parish blanket loaning schemes are a case in point.<sup>37</sup> Often founded and funded by wealthy individuals, charities intertwined with statutory welfare provision. In 1800 a local reverend wrote to Mr. Tyler, Lord Egremont's steward, to express great happiness that 'the Guardians of the Easebourne Poor House approve of my proposal for a Sunday School' in the workhouse. Although they had the correct books, they required a schoolmaster or mistress with wages of about £3 per annum. He explained that 'Lady Montague Mr Pagnty and myself will contribute'.<sup>38</sup> Mrs. Pagnty was keen on funding their religious education, not least because she thought the children had been 'in a state of perfect ignorance'.<sup>39</sup> Parish work and training schemes were established in a similar way. For instance,

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<sup>33</sup> Sutton Union, Correspondence and proposals for farming the poor, 21 July 1793, PHA/6570. It is clear that he took the position of contractor later that year, Sutton Union, Guardians' Minute Book, 2 December 1793, WSRO WG3/1/1.

<sup>34</sup> Sutton, Guardians' Minute Books, 4 August 1794, WG3/1/2. By December, Richard Altrue and Elizabeth Matthews were appointed and given board in the house to superintend the sacking manufactory, Sutton Union, Guardians' Minute Book, 1 December 1794, WSRO WG3/1/2.

<sup>35</sup> Sutton Union, Miscellaneous accounts and calculations, February 1795, PHA/6598.

<sup>36</sup> Gilbert's Union which consisted of Sidlesham, Selseam, Birdham, Itchenor and Appledram, Advert for contracting out the poor, *Hampshire Telegraph and Sussex Chronicle*, 4 February 1833.

<sup>37</sup> For instance, the Burpham blanket charity started around 1840 when Mr. Whieldon of Stanmore advanced the sum of £5 per annum for the purchase of blankets to be distributed to the poor of the parish, Burpham, Vestry Minute Book, 30 September 1844, WSRO Par31/12/1.

<sup>38</sup> Easebourne, Easebourne Union, Letters concerning the establishment of a Sunday school, letter from E.M. Poznty (?) to Mr. Tyler (Petworth), 26 November 1800, PHA/10940.

<sup>39</sup> Easebourne, Letters concerning the establishment of a Sunday school, R. Lloyd (Midhurst) to Mr. Tyler (Petworth), 14 November, no year, PHA/10940.

in 1797 the Hampshire parish of Bentley established a ‘School for employing Girls by knitting Gloves’ by public subscription. Within the first year, the girls in the school had made 2197 pairs of yarn gloves, 60 pairs of worsted gloves and their parents had made (within their own homes) 971 pairs of gloves. This ‘school’ was not dissimilar to a workhouse manufactory combined with a warehouse, holding materials and finished garments to sustain a cottage industry. The Bentley vestrymen gave this away by saying, however, that it was a beneficial scheme for the poor as there was no other possible way of employing female children (and their mothers) for the best part of the year. As such, in 1798, the poor rates were expended on the school and a mistress (of not more than £10 a year) akin to those established within workhouses.<sup>40</sup> Although little remains in the archive about how such schemes originated, it is clear that they were funded, and therefore supported, by those not directly employed by the parish.

Contractors and individuals from the wider community transmitted new ideas into the *parish* workhouse system. For those welfare authorities under the oligarchic control of a large landowner, the transfer of information was to be somewhat different. As mentioned in chapter three, the full-time clerk and steward to Lord Egremont was William Tyler. Tyler also oversaw the agents on Egremont’s other estates at Somerset, Yorkshire and Ireland. He was appointed clerk to the committees of parishes operating under Gilbert’s Act as soon as the welfare authorities were established.<sup>41</sup> Regardless of the fact he was Egremont’s employee, Tyler also received a generous wage from the authorities he served, and was subject to the same rules as the voluntary members of the committees and even received penalties for non-attendance at meetings.<sup>42</sup> Being a clerk to several welfare authorities meant that he was able to transfer information between them. In 1818, for instance, the Easebourne Union committee received offers from contractors to manage the workhouse. He noted that the expiring contract with Mr. Mills was set at 3s 6d per head per week, but his new offer was

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<sup>40</sup> Bentley, Overseers’ Account and Rate Book, 1 January 1798, HRO 1M80/PO2.

<sup>41</sup> Tyler was appointed in the first official meeting of the Sutton Board, Sutton Union, Guardians’ Minute Book, 21 May 1791, WSRO WG3/1/1.

<sup>42</sup> Tyler received 10 guineas from the Sutton Board in 1791-1792, 8 guineas a year from 1792-1793, 12 guineas a year from 1793-1794 and £20 1795-1796, Sutton Union, Guardians’ Minute Books, 6 February and 2 July 1792, 4 May 1795, WG3/1/2. For details on the forfeit for not attending a meeting, Sutton Union, Guardians’ Minute Book, 3 November 1800, WSRO WG3/1/3.

3d more. Mr. Mills' price, and the other offers which came in the post, were compared, then Tyler compared these offers against the rate contracted for the 'Petworth Poor' and the 'Sutton Poor'.<sup>43</sup> It is likely that other aspects of workhouse management were compared in a similar manner, if not noted down. This fragment of evidence represents a much broader role of Egremont's steward. Tyler was pivotal in not only introducing welfare reforms to West Sussex, but also agricultural improvements, including experimenting with new crop varieties from London and promoting new animal breeds, most notably Southdown sheep. New agricultural machinery, such as ploughs and threshing machines, was also dispersed between Egremont's estates.<sup>44</sup> This reflects the purpose of a steward more broadly, 'as "mediator" between rural and urban communities, and between aristocrats and rural labourers', thereby obtaining information in one place and acting upon it within another.<sup>45</sup>

#### 6.1.4 Publications

Parish officials, contractors and the benevolent wrote and spoke to one another, whilst stewards went about their daily duties making contracts and suggestions. Through these discussions, tried-and-tested practices and new ideas penetrated parish boundaries, entering into the realms of statutory welfare. There was one further way in which information about welfare practices could move: through publications. This was always the case under the Poor Laws, *The Compleat Parish-Officer* being an early example.<sup>46</sup> During the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries, however, these publications contributed to a national debate about the causes of poverty, the condition of the poor and poor law

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<sup>43</sup> The 'Petworth Poor' were maintained at 3s/6d per head for 50 and subsidy for when wheat went above £16 per load, and the 'Sutton Poor' at 3s/9d a head for 40 and subsidy when wheat went beyond £18 per load, Easebourne Union, Correspondence and proposals to farm the poor, 1818, PHA/10937.

<sup>44</sup> S. Webster, 'Estate Improvement and the Professionalisation of Land Agents on the Egremont Estates in Sussex and Yorkshire, 1770-1835', *Rural History*, 18 (2007), p. 57.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 54. For some more information about the tasks of other stewards in Sussex see M. Lill, 'William Cooke, Steward of the Sheffield Estate 1828-1832', *Sussex Archaeological Collections*, 144 (2006), 177-190.

<sup>46</sup> G. Jacob, *The Compleat Parish-officer: containing I. The authority and proceedings of high-constables, ... II. Of churchwardens; ... III. Of overseers of the poor, ... IV. Of surveyors of the highways ... To which are added, the statutes relating to hackney-coaches and chairs* (London, 1718). This popular handbook was printed in nine further editions in the eighteenth century.

reform. Young's *Annals of Agriculture* played a part in this national debate, bringing both the discussion of legislature and local reforms to wider attention.<sup>47</sup> Importantly these journals also serialised the work of early social investigators including Fredrick Morton Eden's three volume history *The State of the Poor*. *The State of the Poor* in particular had put 'the views of a moderate and well-informed man' on the stage of national welfare debate, alongside the likes of Thomas Malthus and Jeremy Bentham.<sup>48</sup> Indeed, Eden was cynical about the ability of the parliamentary acts to relieve the condition of labourers - his 'natural law remedy for the disease was the substitution of voluntary charity and self-help for the Poor Laws.'<sup>49</sup> As Poynter acknowledges, the pages contained 'fact and comment, rather than a treatise'.<sup>50</sup> Eden reported the living conditions and welfare provision from selected parishes and townships over the whole of England. This social investigation was widely read, not only by national policy-makers, but by parish officials. This meant his work was of local as well as national significance. Others also undertook their own investigations in the style of Eden. Rutter recorded, with graphic descriptions, the contents and conditions of poorhouses in the town of Shaftesbury in his pamphlet *A Brief Sketch of the State of the Poor and the Management of the House of Industry*. Other individuals made use of the contents of Eden's volumes. A group of men from Bradford-on-Avon, writing about their endeavours in their workhouse, footnoted the changes made in food provision in the Norwich, stating: '[s]ee a very curious and useful account of this work-house in Sir Fredric Eden's second Vol. p. 477'. So useful were such publications, the Wiltshire men asked:

...would it not be advantageous to the kingdom at large, to have  
in every workhouse of magnitude, a small library of those books,

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<sup>47</sup> *Annals of Agriculture and other Useful Arts* was published between 1784 and 1815 and was written and edited by Arthur Young and co-edited with Reverend John Symond. Young was active in researching relief provision and contributing to national debates surrounding policy reform, see J.R. Poynter, *Society and Pauperism: English Ideas on Poor Relief 1795-1834* (London, 1969).

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 106.

<sup>49</sup> R. Cowherd, *Political Economists and the English Poor Laws: A Historical Study of the Influence of Classical Economics on the Formation of Social Welfare Policy* (Ohio, 1977), p. 17.

<sup>50</sup> Poynter, *Society and Pauperism*, p. 106

which refer to the management of the poor, or which treat of domestic economy?<sup>51</sup>

Evidently, there was an appetite for 'fact and comment' at the parish-level.

Whilst national surveys had been published for all to see, the endeavours of other individuals about local reforms were also published, usually in the form of a pamphlet, and available locally. This meant that studies of the conditions of the poor and their welfare provision, in places outside of Eden's circuits, made it onto people's bookshelves. There were two sorts of 'local' publication. The first were publications purporting to have successfully reformed their workhouses. Examples include the aforementioned pamphlet produced in 1801 by four parish officials in Bradford-on-Avon and a pamphlet written in 1797 about the workhouse on the edge of the New Forest at Boldre. It was authored by the famous naturalist William Gilpin, Reverend of Boldre, alongside John Walter and Thomas Robbins.<sup>52</sup> Whilst these individuals' intentions may have been to inspire reforms akin to their own, such publications acted to advertise their own personal successes as well as those of the parish. The second type of publication was written primarily to rally up support from individuals of a new scheme of welfare provision. For instance, Rutter's pamphlet was written to raise people's awareness of 'the existing distresses in the Town of Shaftesbury, and the proposed remedy'.<sup>53</sup> As suggested above, pre-existing practices had served as an inspiration to these remedies. There were, therefore, direct links between the first and second types of publication.

The first type of publication contained a series of instructions or a story of how a bad workhouse could be successfully reformed. A multi-authored pamphlet about the Bradford-on-Avon workhouse was written as if it could have been used as a handbook. Indeed, their seven-point plan at the start of the publication

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<sup>51</sup> Bush *et al.*, 'Parochial Regulations Relative to the Management of the Poor', p. 16

<sup>52</sup> J. Walter, T. Robbins and W. Gilpin, 'An account of a new poor-house erected in the parish of Boldre: in New Forest near Lymington' (London, 1796). There is an array of literature written by the Reverend William Gilpin and literature about his influential writing on landscapes. He published a series about his 'Picturesque Tours' and is thought to have influenced the naturalist Gilbert White, resident of Selbourne. See M. Andrews, 'Gilpin, William (1724–1804)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford, 2004). Online. Available: <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/10762> [last accessed 11 July 2008]; G.S. Bowen, *The Reverend William Gilpin: Vicar of Boldre 1777-1804* (Lymington, 2004).

<sup>53</sup> Rutter, 'A Brief Sketch', p. v.

contains instructions on how to allocate relief. Outdoor relief, it stated, should be allocated for a limited period, an additional overseer should be appointed to see the poor, 'unworthy' persons should be taken off of allowance lists with no appeal and testimonies should be procured for those remaining on allowance lists. Other points stressed the need to prevent people from becoming a future burden on the poor rates: the most industrious poor should be given relief in distress to prevent them from selling their goods and entering the workhouse and medical aid should be given to everyone without delay as immediate attention would prevent relapses.<sup>54</sup> Their final piece of advice was to have a well-managed workhouse. From this five sets of rules applied: 'Regulations Relative to the Committee for Superintending the Work-house', 'Regulations Relative to the Internal Management of the Work-house', 'Rules To be observed by the Poor in the Work-house' and 'General Regulations Relative to the Work-house, and Out-Poor'.<sup>55</sup> Subsequently, the workhouse dietary was described and several recipes were detailed at length, including those for four 'cheap Soups', two ways of preparing rice and two potato-based dishes.<sup>56</sup> The last sections of the pamphlet contained advice about medical treatment, including practical guidance on 'the Recovery of the Apparently Dead', how to treat 'the dying', and how to prevent and suppress epidemic fevers and chills.<sup>57</sup> Whilst the former piece of advice was put forward by The Royal Humane Society, much of the latter came from local medical men.<sup>58</sup>

Conversely, the pamphlet produced by Gilpin was a more descriptive account of the reforms introduced by the parish officers. The reformers wrote that the old parish workhouse was such a 'wretched place' that in 1792 the parish officers and ratepayers decided 'to build a new one on a better site'. They obtained a 'respectable master and mistress' to have management of the house and 'a monthly Committee of the gentlemen and farmers of the parish' was

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<sup>54</sup> Bush *et al.*, 'Parochial Regulations Relative to the Management of the Poor', pp. 6-12.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 17-47.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 49-56.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 57-75.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, Dr. Percival's advice and Dr. Haygarth's advice on 'Rules of Prevention and Suppression of Epidemic Fevers, For the use of the poor' pp. 57-59 and pp. 59-60 respectively; Dr. Ferriar's 'Directions as to the Treatment of the Dying' on pp. 68-73 and advice on the treatment of 'Chills' was 'communicated by an eminent [an anonymous] Physician in Bristol', pp. 73-76.

organised to oversee it.<sup>59</sup> The reformed workhouse was a success, at least according to pamphleteers. The result was that the poor were costing the parish 'less than half the expence they cost the parish before' the new workhouse was operational.<sup>60</sup> This was teamed with moral reform. The wild landscape of the Forest was supposedly encouraging the parishioners' own wild characters, appearances and morals.<sup>61</sup> One case, of a female pauper called Young, was instructive. They mentioned that Young's father had once been sent to Winchester jail for deer-stealing, and her mother was 'a noisy, bawling woman'. Young, as well as suffering from a disease in her hands, was 'agitated'. Once in the workhouse, she became penitent and calmer than the rest of her family, and soon became the superintendent of several working children. As such, she became part of the 'workhouse family'.<sup>62</sup> The pamphlet contained numerous other vignettes with similar happy-endings.

The information in these pamphlets did not just arise from the meetings held between parish officers. The footnotes provided in the Bradford-on-Avon pamphlet reveal references not only to Eden's *State of the Poor* but to other publications. Thomas Ruggles' *History of the Poor* (1793), also serialised in *Annals of Agriculture*, was referred to in the pamphlet on several occasions.<sup>63</sup> Ruggles, an acting magistrate in Essex and Suffolk, had implemented a woollen manufactory in a workhouse school in 1787. The Bradford-on-Avon men thought that this was 'an interesting experiment' and Ruggles' accounts, illustrating that a small profit could be ascertained from the industry, were quoted in the Bradford-on-Avon pamphlet in their entirety.<sup>64</sup> Ruggles' information was also used to support the policy that articles should be made, or bought directly from a manufacturer, rather than purchased from a local shop-keeper.<sup>65</sup> When the Bradford-on-Avon men described the workhouse dietary, they quoted Count

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<sup>59</sup> Walter *et al.*, 'An account of a new poor-house', p. 3.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 8.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 22, they stated that 'a forest is not the best nursery of virtue'.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, her case is detailed on pp. 23-25. Workhouse residents and the master and matron are referred to as a family throughout the pamphlet.

<sup>63</sup> T. Ruggles, *The History of the Poor; their Rights, Duties, and the Laws respecting them in a Series of Letters* (1793), two volumes. Further editions were produced throughout the 1790s.

<sup>64</sup> Bush *et al.*, 'Parochial Regulations Relative to the Management of the Poor', pp. 25-27; 'an interesting experiment' used to describe the manufactory is on p. 25.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 37.

Rumford's opinion that the use of barley meal in soup was 'at least three or four times as nutritious' as wheat flour, and noted how 'Count Rumford's boilers' might be advantageous for the cooking of potatoes.<sup>66</sup> As Poynter suggests, Rumford 'saw himself as a scientist with the mission to apply the discoveries of science to the everyday life of the poor'.<sup>67</sup> He was interested in the poor, the minutiae of workhouse life and implemented measures against mendacity in Munich. His published work was, in the words of Poynter, one of the strongest 'foreign influences' on British social policy.<sup>68</sup>

Reports of reforms closer to home had also been a source of inspiration to other parishes. The well-read gentlemen of Bradford-on-Avon referred to Reverend Thomas Gisborne's plan for supplying milk 'at a cheap rate' which had featured in the reports of the Society for Bettering the Condition and Increasing the Comforts of the Poor (SBCP).<sup>69</sup> The Society was established in 1796 by 'a group of evangelical churchmen, friends of William Wilberforce'. The founding member, Sir Thomas Bernard, was a retired conveyancer, former governor of Massachusetts and avid philanthropist. The SBCP's aims were to promote 'the science' of welfare, to promote Christian values and to examine, in their words, 'everything that concerns the happiness of the poor'. Many members were well known landed gentry, the 'illustrious committee', as Poynter puts it, formed of 'bishops, lay peers, Members of Parliament and philanthropists such as William Morton Pitt, Patrick Colquhoun and the Earl of Winchilsea'. Its patron was the King George III.<sup>70</sup> After a request from the Bishop of Durham, Gisborne documented how, in Barton under Needwood (Staffordshire), a 'respectable tradesman' decided to use nineteen acres of land to keep dairy cattle.<sup>71</sup> The milk was then carried to the centre of the village and sold at a reduced price and in

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<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 46 and 44 respectively.

<sup>67</sup> Poynter, *Society and Pauperism*, p. 88.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 87.

<sup>69</sup> T. Gisborne, 'Extract from an account of a mode adopted in Staffordshire for supplying the poor with milk', article 23 in T. Bernard (ed.) *The Reports of the Society for Bettering the Condition and Increasing the Comforts of the Poor*, Volume 1 (London, 1798) pp. 129-134. They had also paraphrased a method of making bread (on page 34) which was printed in the same SBCP publication, T. Bernard, 'Process of making bread with all the bran added, so as greatly to increase the weight, and quantity of nutrient', in T. Bernard (ed.) *The Reports of the Society for Bettering the Condition and Increasing the Comforts of the Poor*, Volume 1 (London, 1798), added to the end of the publication 12 April 1800.

<sup>70</sup> Poynter, *Society and Pauperism*, p. 91.

<sup>71</sup> Gisborne, 'Extract from an account', p. 129.



amounts 'regulated by the number of children in the family, and by other similar circumstances.' The plan was of benefit to the poor who, after observing its carriage from the field to the village, believed that it had not been adulterated in any way.<sup>72</sup>

Endeavours at Shrewsbury also received extensive coverage by pamphleteers who thought the workhouse 'admirably directed'.<sup>73</sup> The six parishes of Shrewsbury established a workhouse under the management of a board of Directors after the passage of a Local Act in 1784.<sup>74</sup> In the 1790s, a pamphlet was published about its management and thereafter Eden also described the establishment.<sup>75</sup> Such exposure meant that the Shrewsbury workhouse gained a reputation, just as the Farnham workhouse had, as a well-managed institution.<sup>76</sup> For instance, the Bradford-on-Avon gentlemen mentioned the ventilation system at Shrewsbury, developed by Sir Jerome Fitzpatrick, and several other matters relating to its domestic economy.<sup>77</sup>

Overall, these pamphlets' footnotes reveal that a variety of other publications had served as sources of information for their welfare practices. Whilst the publications were referred to in such a way which tended to reinforce their own ideas, they still acted to inspire change. The Boldre-based pamphlet appears to have been widely read by parish officials in the south of England, not least because extracts from the pamphlet were placed in the SBCP's own publications.<sup>78</sup> The extracts were selected by the Bishop of Durham, and he

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<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 130.

<sup>73</sup> Bush *et al.*, 'Parochial Regulations Relative to the Management of the Poor', p. 47.

<sup>74</sup> Eden, *The State of the Poor*, 'Shrewsbury', Volume 2, p. 622. For an analysis of the Shrewsbury Incorporation during the early nineteenth century and its uneasy relationship with central welfare authorities during the New Poor Law see V. Walsh, 'Old and New Poor Laws in Shropshire, 1820-1870', *Midland History*, 2 (1974), 225-243.

<sup>75</sup> I. Wood, 'Some Account of the Shrewsbury House of Industry, The Establishment and Regulations; With Hints to Those Who May Have Similar Institutions to View', second edition containing 'The Third Edition of the Bye-Laws, Rules, and Ordinances, of the said House' (London, 1791); Eden, *The State of the Poor*, 'Shrewsbury', Volume 2, pp. 622-641.

<sup>76</sup> For more detail about the welfare system at Shrewsbury under the old poor laws see S. Webb and B. Webb, *English Poor Law History, Part 1: The Old Poor Law* (1927, London, 1963), pp. 121-125.

<sup>77</sup> Bush *et al.*, 'Parochial Regulations Relative to the Management of the Poor', ventilation on p. 21, boilers for potatoes on p. 44, a recipe used in the workhouse to make beer on p. 47, mention of butter being made in the workhouse on p. 54.

<sup>78</sup> The Bishop of Durham, 'Extract from the Rev. Mr. Gilpin's account of the new poor-house at Boldre, in Hampshire', article 32 in T. Bernard (ed.), *The Reports of the Society for Bettering the Condition and Increasing the Comforts of the Poor*, Volume 1 (London, 1798), pp. 174-182.

apparently ‘knew Gilpin well’.<sup>79</sup> The reforms administered by Gilpin *et al.* then reached far and wide. As noted above, Rutter referred to Boldre in his pamphlet about the need for a joint workhouse for the parishes of Shaftesbury, but relied heavily upon the details of the Fordingbridge workhouse. Fordingbridge also grabbed the attention of the parish of Fletching near Uckfield (East Sussex), nearly 100 miles from Fordingbridge. Fletching was under the watchful eye of Lord Sheffield, John Baker Holroyd, an intermittent Member of Parliament and militiaman who had bought Sheffield Park in 1769.<sup>80</sup> He invested significant amounts of money on the ‘improvement of his estate’, including for the relief of the poor.<sup>81</sup> He was, more generally, concerned with the poor rates in the district of North Pevensey, and was keen to implement reforms which bettered the ‘condition’ of the labouring poor, including being prepared to pay for the building of a new workhouse, the parish was only being charged for interest on the outlay.<sup>82</sup>

Fletching, as noted above, was involved in plans to form a Gilbert’s Union with 11 other parishes, but these ideas fell by the wayside for unknown reasons.<sup>83</sup> The parish officers then produced a poster, presumably under Sheffield’s instruction, outlining that ‘the establishment of a workhouse in so large a parish as FLETCHING, should no longer be delayed.’ When constructed, a handbill was drafted informing local residents of the near-completion of their new workhouse.<sup>84</sup> It was also sent to nearby large landowners, including Lord Egremont.<sup>85</sup>

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<sup>79</sup> The Bishop of Durham at this time had previously held the position of Bishop of Salisbury; Bowen, *The Reverend William Gilpin*, p. 18.

<sup>80</sup> Bought from the Earl of de la Warr.

<sup>81</sup> J. Cannon, ‘Holroyd, John Baker, first earl of Sheffield (1741–1821)’, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford, 2004). Online. Available: <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/13608> [last accessed 11 July 2008].

<sup>82</sup> Printed poster announcing the near-completion of the Workhouse at Fletching and the detailed regulations to be observed in it, n.d., PHA/6075.

<sup>83</sup> Proposal for the formation of a Gilbert Union to build a workhouse at Piltdown or Chelwood Common for the parishes of Newick, Isfield, Little Horsted, Ringmer, Uckfield, Framfield, Buxted, Maresfield, Fletching, Chailey, Lindfield and Horsted Keynes; n.d., ESRO, AMS4899/1. The failure of the plan is noted by an antiquarian and confirmed by some fruitless archival searching, but there is no indication of why the plan did not come into fruition. Letter from H.D. Gilbert (Uckfield, Sussex) to Mr. Bridges, 26 July 1959, with AMS4899/1.

<sup>84</sup> Printed poster announcing the near-completion of the Workhouse at Fletching and the detailed regulations to be observed in it, n.d., PHA/6075.

<sup>85</sup> The two Lords corresponded generally. Several letters from Lord Sheffield to Lord Egremont are catalogued in the Petworth House collection (PHA/69), which may add

The parish officers of Fletching found Boldre's policies a source of inspiration for their own reforms. They believed that:

the parish of Boldre was nearly the same as that of the parish of Fletching: the workhouse was in ruins, a considerable sum of money was borrowed, a substantial, convenient and airy workhouse was built on a better site; at the head of which a respectable governor and matron were placed, and the minister and parish officers met monthly to superintend the establishment, and notwithstanding the mode of subsisting the poor was not as parsimonious as it might have been, yet the expence was reduced to less than half what it had been before.

Thereafter they copied the exact accounts contained in Gilpin *et al.*'s pamphlet, illustrating that miraculous savings could be accrued after changes to their welfare system. Whilst the vestrymen at Fletching wanted to build a new workhouse, they were not willing to adopt Boldre's policies wholesale. Indeed, akin to Boldre, the workhouse would not exclude the able-bodied and work was thought to be essential to the success of the house. Amongst the Fletching rules and regulations, it was stipulated that all children and women were to be instructed in 'spinning, weaving, hosiery, or other manufacture' as well as 'tayloring, [and] shoemaking'. Rather than enter into an agreement with contractor or allow the master and matron to superintend the work, Fletching designed a hybrid system. People were employed to instruct the poor, keeping a third of the produce made, whilst a master and matron managed all other aspects of the workhouse. The matron of the house would oversee the girls' domestic work and ensured that girls were fit for service when they left the house.<sup>86</sup> By the end of July 1811, a new workhouse had been built and was ready to receive inmates.<sup>87</sup> Despite the direct inspiration the East Sussex gentlemen owed to

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further details about how policy was being communicated between the two large landowners.

<sup>86</sup> Printed poster announcing the near-completion of the Workhouse at Fletching and the detailed regulations to be observed in it, n.d., PHA/6075.

<sup>87</sup> The provision of relief had, however, been controversial between the years 1814 and 1818 when disputes occurred between Lord Sheffield and rival landowners (Sir Thomas Wilson, 7<sup>th</sup> Baronet and magistrate) and other magistrates who believed the poor had been ill-treated. These individuals were blamed for provoking the poor to rebel against the relief policy, see H. Rawlings, 'Lord Sheffield's Last Stand', *Danehill Parish Historical*

Boldre's reforms, Fletching had the confidence to tweak them to form their own plans.

## **6.2 Under the New Poor Law, c.1834-1847**

Regardless of the presence of a central welfare authority, evidence can still be found after the 1834 Amendment Act of welfare officials conferring with one another in the form of correspondence and visits. The first part of this section, therefore, examines the knowledge networks between Boards of Guardians. The next two sub-sections examine the role of the Poor Law Commission in the transfer of locally derived knowledge. The lens is firstly drawn to the role of the Assistant Poor Law Commissioners and then finally to the role of the Commission based at Somerset House.

### **6.2.1 Boards of Guardians**

Despite the creation of the central authority, the lines of communication established between welfare officials under the old poor laws did not collapse. Boards of Guardians worked together to administer relief according to the stipulations of the Amendment Act. In the 1830s and 1840s unions in the south of England communicated in order to place their poor in workhouses when their own parish housing was not sufficient, or when they were still in the process of building a central workhouse. The Kingsclere Guardians (Hampshire) placed their poor in the Newbury Union (Berkshire), and the Fareham Guardians (Hampshire), with a workhouse too large for their needs, approached the neighbouring union of Droxford (Hampshire) to offer spaces in their workhouse.<sup>88</sup> The Dulverton Union (Somerset), which consisted of eleven

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*Society Magazine*, 4 (1993), 10-28. My thanks to Malcolm Lill, PhD student at the University of Sussex, for bringing this publication to my attention.

<sup>88</sup> Terms of the Newbury Union were copied into the a minute book including calculations showing that they would take the Kingsclere poor at four shillings and six pence per head per week, Kingsclere Union, Minute Book, 13 December 1836, HRO PL3/11/1. It appears that this agreement continued into 1837 because of in March the Kingsclere Union requested that their 'Bedsteads & Furniture there be brought home', Kingsclere Union,

parishes on edge of Exmoor, remained without a workhouse until 1854.<sup>89</sup> In 1839 the Guardians contacted the Tiverton Guardians (Devon), asking them to take some people into their workhouse.<sup>90</sup> The terms offered by the Tiverton Guardians were, however, declined by the Dulverton Board and they decided to approach the Williton Union (Somerset) about a similar arrangement.<sup>91</sup> Negotiations did not commence until 1844 after an Assistant Commissioner had intervened.<sup>92</sup> The Dulverton and Williton Unions entered into dialogue and terms were then agreed.<sup>93</sup> After being informed of the scheme from the Dulverton Guardians, the Commission believed the arrangement was illegal - regardless of their Assistant's ideas.<sup>94</sup> This may have been in reaction to the Droxford-Fareham 'scandal' (1836-37) where three boys accommodated in Fareham had been severely punished by the workhouse master and schoolmistress.<sup>95</sup>

Other unions discussed the possibility of merging permanently. Indeed, the Droxford Union had initially hoped to unite with the Fareham Union.<sup>96</sup> In June 1836 the Cranborne Union (Dorset) decided to approach the Wimborne Union (Dorset) about consolidating the two unions. The Cranborne Board believed such intentions would lead to 'additional means of classification for the

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Minute Book, 28 March 1837, HRO PL3/11/2; Fareham Union Guardians decided to contact the Droxford Guardians, Fareham Union, Minute Book, 1 January 1836, HRO PL3/7/1; Droxford Guardians accept the arrangement, Droxford Union, Minute Book, 19 February 1836, HRO PL3/7/1.

<sup>89</sup> This seems to have resulted from a small population and low population density. The Union contained 11 parishes but in 1831 it had a population of 4951. In 1841 this had increased to 5481, Dulverton Union, Minute Book, front page, n.d. (although volume contains the minutes of meetings held between 1836 and 1842), SRO D\G\D/8a/1.

<sup>90</sup> Dulverton Union, Minute Book, 7 September 1839, SRO D\G\D/8a/1; meeting of a Committee from each Board of Guardians held at the Tiverton Workhouse, Dulverton Union, Minute Book, 21 September 1839, SRO D\G\D/8a/1; minutes on the terms discussed, Dulverton Union, Minute Book, 19 October and 16 November 1839, SRO D\G\D/8a/1.

<sup>91</sup> Dulverton Union, Minute Book, 30 November 1839, SRO D\G\D/8a/1.

<sup>92</sup> Dulverton Union, Minute Book, 23 November 1844, SRO D\G\D/8a/1.

<sup>93</sup> Clerk instructed to write to the Williton Union Guardians, Dulverton Union, Minute Book, 7 December 1844, SRO D\G\D/8a/1. A letter received from the Williton Union was read to the Board, Dulverton Union, Minute Book, 18 January 1845, SRO D\G\D/8a/2. The terms of the Williton Board rejected and the Poor Law Commission notified of the proposed scheme, Dulverton Union, Minute Book, 1 February 1845, SRO D\G\D/8a/2.

<sup>94</sup> A letter from the Poor Law Commission states that the scheme could not be legally entered into and the Clerk was directed to write to the Williton Union informing them of the decision, Dulverton Union, Minute Book, 15 February 1845, SRO D\G\D/8a/2.

<sup>95</sup> This culminated in a welfare scandal. See R. Wells, 'Andover Antecedents? Hampshire New Poor-Law Scandals, 1834-1842', *Southern History*, 24 (2002), 91-217; S.A. Shave, 'Rascally handled': New Poor Law Scandals and the working out of social policy' (unpublished MSc dissertation, University of Southampton, 2006).

<sup>96</sup> Droxford Union, Minute Book, 1 January 1836, HRO PL3/8/1.

paupers', that is the possibility of having more workhouse accommodation in which inmates could be divided, 'saving a considerable expenditure'.<sup>97</sup> After a meeting of two committees formed from both Boards of Guardians, and the approval of the Commission, the merger was complete.<sup>98</sup> These communications illustrate how Guardians from neighbouring unions worked together to provide relief under the new workhouse system. Nevertheless, the majority of correspondence between unions about the administration of the Amendment Act involved more mundane, everyday matters.

In the early years of the New Poor Law, unions had to procure items and the services of individuals to effectively run a workhouse-based welfare system. Boards of Guardians shared information about what new items and employees they should find, and copied each other's methods of acquiring them. In 1836 the Warminster Union Guardians (Wiltshire), for instance, decided to advertise for a medical officer by placing advertisements in several county newspapers. Their direction to the union clerk was to make the advertisement 'similar to the one issued by the Guardians of the Devizes Union' (Wiltshire).<sup>99</sup> Furnishing the workhouse economically, with inexpensive and yet long-lasting furniture and equipment, was a major priority. The Guardians preferred to buy tried and tested goods. In 1835 the Mere Union Guardians (Wiltshire) asked bedstead makers in Bristol whether they could provide a sample of single and double frames which they had made for the Bradford-on-Avon Union (Wiltshire).<sup>100</sup> Similarly, the Clutton (Somerset) Guardians purchased a piece of drying apparatus, complete with flue and chimney, which was based on one fitted in the nearby Axbridge Union (Somerset) workhouse.<sup>101</sup> How the Guardians knew of others' purchases is not specified in the records, although suppliers of these items may have used their past sales record to persuade other Boards of Guardians to purchase their goods. Indeed, the Guardians at the Shaftesbury Union (Dorset) contacted the

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<sup>97</sup> Cranborne Union, Minute Book, 16 June 1836, DHC BG/WM A1/1.

<sup>98</sup> Cranborne Union, Minute Book, 14 July 1836, DHC BG/WM A1/1; Cranborne and Wimborne Union, Minute Book, (minutes of the Wimborne Union) 20 June, 14 July and 5 September 1836, DHC BG/WM A1/2. The first meeting of Guardians in the consolidated Union, Cranborne and Wimborne Union, Minute Book, 29 September 1836, DHC BG/WM A1/2.

<sup>99</sup> Warminster Union, Minute Book, 29 February 1836, W&SA H15/110/1.

<sup>100</sup> Mere Union, Minute Book, 11 December 1835, W&SA H12/110/1.

<sup>101</sup> Clutton Union, Minute Book, 14 March 1845, SRO D\G\CL/8a/9.

neighbouring Wincanton Union (Somerset and Dorset) to ascertain the respectability of people offering tenders for the workhouse.<sup>102</sup>

There is evidence, though, that Boards of Guardians were often proactive in seeking information about goods. The Clutton clerk noted that the Guardians had correspondence with Barnstaple Union (Devon) about their 'Steam Cooking Apparatus'.<sup>103</sup> The clerk had also been directed to write to the Guardians of the Keynsham and Bridgwater Unions (Somerset) 'to know how the Cocoa nut fibre answers for bedding'.<sup>104</sup> The Keynsham Union Guardians were willing to report that the fibre had been used and was found to be satisfactory.<sup>105</sup> Guidance on clothing and medical supplies was also sought by Guardians in a similar manner. For instance, Wincanton Union needed to acquire new clothing and wanted to inspect the clothing provided in nearby Sherborne (Dorset).<sup>106</sup> The Bridgwater Guardians desired to know how Yeovil (Somerset) obtained trusses for the poor.<sup>107</sup> Sometimes, however, it was the product produced by a particular union rather than the opinions of the Guardians which was in demand. For instance, Kingsclere Union (Hampshire) asked Cuckfield Union (West Sussex) about the terms on which they would supply them with shoes.<sup>108</sup> This request was likely to have been provoked by an advertisement or a handbill.

Communication between Boards of Guardians went further than obtaining advice on the best articles to purchase for the workhouse and its inmates. Once the Shaftesbury Union contacted the unions of Blandford (Dorset), Sturminster Newton (Dorset), Tisbury (Wiltshire) and Wincanton 'to ascertain whether any and what kind of relief is extended to able-bodied Labourers in their respective Unions being in employ on the ground of having large families'.<sup>109</sup> More frequently though Boards of Guardians were seeking guidance about the new administrative methods through which the New Poor Law Union workhouses should be run. The Guardians of the Cranborne and Wimborne Union (Dorset)

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<sup>102</sup> Shaftesbury Union, Minute Book, 5 November 1838, DHC BG/SY A1/2.

<sup>103</sup> The Clutton Union then invited tenders from companies to supply the same equipment, Clutton Union, Minute Book, 27 April 1838, SRO D\G\CL/8a/3.

<sup>104</sup> Clutton Union, Minute Book, 19 January 1838, SRO D\G\CL/8a/2.

<sup>105</sup> Clutton Union, Minute Book, 2 February 1838, SRO D\G\CL/8a/2.

<sup>106</sup> Wincanton Union, Minute Book, 13 January 1841, SRO D\G\WN/8a/4.

<sup>107</sup> Bridgwater Union, Minute Book, 22 December 1837, SRO D\G\BW/8a/2.

<sup>108</sup> Kingsclere Union, Minute Book, 23 and 30 May 1837, HRO PL3/11/2.

<sup>109</sup> Shaftesbury Union, Minute Book, 12 November 1838, DHC BG/SY A1/2.

wrote to the master of Abingdon Union requesting a copy of the forms he used to keep 'account of the Clothing taken from Paupers on their admission into the Workhouse'.<sup>110</sup> In the following month the Guardians wrote to the master of the Poole Union (Dorset) 'for a Print of the Stamp used by him in marking the Bedding and Clothes used in the House'.<sup>111</sup> Forms and stamps had little direct impact upon the relief of the poor, but Guardians had shared other information that directly impacted upon relief practices, not least regarding dietary schemes. Although a circular letter containing six 'model' dietary tables had been sent to Boards of Guardians by the Commission in 1836, it was left to the Guardians to 'select...one which appears to be the best adapted for each particular Union'.<sup>112</sup> As the Assistant Poor Law Commissioner Charles Mott suggested, '[u]niformity of diet as to quality can hardly be attained, nor indeed is it absolutely necessary.' The dietary tables adopted by each union were subject to constant revision throughout the nineteenth century, according to both the costs of different foodstuffs and what Mott called 'provincial habits'.<sup>113</sup> Realising the flexibility of the dietary system, Boards of Guardians compared their dietary tables. In 1838, the Clutton Union requested a copy of Shepton Mallet's (Somerset) dietary table and the 'opinion' of the Guardians on it.<sup>114</sup> Within a week the Clutton Board had obtained both the dietaries used in the Shepton Mallet and Keynsham Union workhouses and planned, alongside the medical officers, to consider the 'best' dietary table to be adopted in the workhouse.<sup>115</sup> Such comparisons continued into the 1840s.<sup>116</sup>

The minute books demonstrate that the conversations between the Guardians were not only conducted by letter. Just as the Alverstoke Gilbert's Act

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<sup>110</sup> Cranborne and Wimborne Union, Minute Book, 28 December 1840, DHC BG/WM A1/3.

<sup>111</sup> Cranborne and Wimborne Union, Minute Book, 25 January 1841, DHC BG/WM A1/3.

<sup>112</sup> 'Circular Letter relative to Workhouse Dietaries', Second Report of the Poor Law Commissioners (London, 1836), p. 63 (dietaries pp. 64-66). The word 'model' has only been used by P. Higginbotham, *The Workhouse Cookbook* (Stroud, 2008), p. 51.

<sup>113</sup> Appendix B.8, 'General Report to Central Board, from Assistant Commissioners', Charles Mott Esq., Second Annual Report of the Poor Law Commissioners (London, 1836), p. 355.

<sup>114</sup> Clutton Union, Minute Book, 12 April 1838, SRO D\G\CL/8a/3.

<sup>115</sup> Clutton Union, Minute Book, 20 April 1838, SRO D\G\CL/8a/3. They knew that both of the dietaries had received the sanction of the Commissioners, Reverend Henry Hodges(?) Mogg, Clerk (Clutton) to PLC, 12 May 1838, TNA MH12/10320.

<sup>116</sup> In 1847 the Mere Union announced that it would adopt the dietary used in the Wincanton Union, Snook, Clerk (Mere) to PLC, 23 February 1847, TNA MH12/13820.



Guardians visited the Isle of Wight Incorporation prior to the New Poor Law, Guardians of various New Poor Law Unions paid visits to each other. The Bridport (Dorset) Guardians wanted to observe several meetings of the Beaminster (Dorset) Guardians, but would not 'vote, or take part in any matter or proceeding under the consideration of the Board'.<sup>117</sup> The Clutton and Keynsham Unions cooperated over similar visits. In July 1836 the Reverend Junior Kitson of Marksbury parish requested permission for two Keynsham Guardians to sit in on a Board meeting of the Clutton Guardians and inspect their plans for the new workhouse.<sup>118</sup> Permission was granted and the Keynsham Guardians reciprocated the favour by allowing the Clutton Guardians to attend one of their meetings.<sup>119</sup> Planning the workhouse infrastructure through a consideration of the workhouses already standing, as had been the case before the Amendment Act, continued. Many examples can be drawn upon to illustrate this point. In 1836, for instance, the Kingsclere Guardians had come to a final decision on what building to construct after consulting 'the Plans already adopted in other Unions'.<sup>120</sup>

Some unions which were advanced in the process of establishing the new workhouse system became something akin to a training ground for the staff of other unions, Guardians often arranging for their employees to receive training within other unions before taking up their duties. For instance, the Mere Guardians asked the neighbouring Wincanton Union if it would be possible for their newly-appointed workhouse schoolmistress to 'pass a short time in the [Wincanton's] work house school...to learn the system'.<sup>121</sup> The request for practical experience, demonstrates that the Guardians did not just want to know what their union staff should do, they wanted their staff to know how to do it.

Guardians also looked to their neighbours for advice on staff wages. The activities of the Droxford Board in 1844 provide a case in point. Inmates were permitted to practise their religion within the workhouse grounds and could be visited by 'any licensed minister of the[ir] religious persuasion'.<sup>122</sup> Some Boards

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<sup>117</sup> Beaminster Union, Minute Book, 13 April 1837, DHC BG/BE B3/1.

<sup>118</sup> Clutton Union, Minute Book, 15 July 1836, SRO D\G\CL/8a/1.

<sup>119</sup> Clutton Union, Minute Book, 22 July 1836, SRO D\G\CL/8a/1.

<sup>120</sup> Kingsclere Union, Minute Book, 16 February 1836, HRO PL3/11/1.

<sup>121</sup> Wincanton Union, Minute Book, 15 May 1844, SRO D\G\WN/8a/5.

<sup>122</sup> 'Letter to the Right Honourable Lord John Russell, on the subject of the Religious Instruction of the Inmates of Workhouses [from the Poor Law Commissioners]' in an

allowed inmates to visit local places of worship, usually under the supervision of workhouse staff, whilst other Boards, such as Droxford, decided that ministers would visit the workhouse on a regular basis. Uncertain of the rate to pay a Chaplain for such visits, the clerk asked eight nearby unions for details of their Chaplains' tasks and salaries. After seven replies, the Board decided that although their Chaplain had more onerous duties than the neighbouring unions, his salary should be reduced to forty pounds.<sup>123</sup> There was an additional incentive to set the wages of other, more mobile, groups of union staff in this way. A master and matron resigned from the Clutton Union to work for the Stroud Union (Somerset) on the 'inducement' of higher wages. When the Schoolmaster and Schoolmistress wanted to follow, the Clutton Guardians commented bitterly that such actions would generate 'extravagant rivalry between Boards of Guardians'.<sup>124</sup> Boards would compare wages not only for reasons of economy but also to retain their employees. The Fareham Union, for instance, desired the details of the wages and allowances (e.g. food and lodgings) given to the master and matrons of seven unions 'from the County of Hants'.<sup>125</sup> One Guardian asked the Commission for advice on the wages to be given to the medical officers of the Bridgwater Union, informing the Commission of the wages set by the Sherborne and Dorchester Unions.<sup>126</sup> Such comparisons did not always mean the Guardians could overcome demands for higher wages, as chapter seven will show.

### **6.2.2 The 'eyes and ears of Somerset House'**<sup>127</sup>

As demonstrated, information about how to supply a workhouse with goods and services passed between unions, in the form of correspondence and visits. The Commission had also been pivotal in the spread of locally-derived knowledge and

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annex to the letter a copy of 19<sup>th</sup> Section of the Poor Law Amendment Act, Second Annual Report of the Poor Law Commissioners (London, 1836), p. 67.

<sup>123</sup> Droxford Union, Minute Book, 13 August 1844, HRO PL3/7/3; Droxford Union, Minute Book, 10 December 1844, HRO PL3/7/4.

<sup>124</sup> Clutton Union, Minute Book, 4 June 1841, SRO D\G\CL/8a/6.

<sup>125</sup> The seven unions were Alton, Andover, Basingstoke, Hartley Wintney, Lymington, Romsey and Winchester, Fareham Union, Minute Book, 26 January 1844, HRO PL3/8/2.

<sup>126</sup> Reverend G.H. Templer (Shapwick) to PLC, 12 June 1837, TNA MH12/10243. Position as a Guardian identified in Bridgwater Union, Minute Book, 12 May 1836, SRO D\G\BW/8a/1.

<sup>127</sup> A. Brundage, *The English Poor Laws, 1700-1930* (Basingstoke, 2002), p. 71.

practices. In 1834 the Commission appointed nine Assistants, their number increasing to 21 by 1836. The Assistants were first sent to the southern counties of England 'which were most heavily pauperised'. When they arrived in their districts, usually formed of several counties, they had 'to secure the general assent of the parochial officials and the local Justices to an immediate grouping of parishes into Unions.'<sup>128</sup> After this, they oversaw the appointment of Guardians and encouraged the establishment of a workhouse. The Assistants had much to endure. They experienced resistance to the Act in the north of England, in particular, and the heavily entrenched local interests which had presided across much of the country.<sup>129</sup> A more optimistic analysis of the latter issue has, however, indicated that the Assistants 'were able to secure a modicum of bureaucratic efficiency against the odds' so that locally-established powers 'would never again go entirely unquestioned'.<sup>130</sup> Regardless of the power struggles involved in founding New Poor Law Unions, by the end of the 1830s 587 unions had been formed.<sup>131</sup> After the establishment of unions, it became the duty of Assistants to offer directions on how to manage a workhouse-based relief system. Assistants visited Boards of Guardians, but such visits were infrequent because of the number of unions they had to oversee. It was much more common for Assistants to offer directions through correspondence. Within their spoken and written words, the Assistants advocated the 'best' means of administering relief according to the Amendment Act. It is worth examining an example of this in detail in order to understand both how and why this had occurred and its impact.

Many Boards of Guardians in the south of England turned to the Assistants for advice when implementing work programmes into their workhouse. The main form of employment advocated by Assistants Charles Ashe

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<sup>128</sup> S. Webb and B. Webb, *English Poor Law History, Part 2: The Last Hundred Years* (1929, London, 1963), p. 113.

<sup>129</sup> M. Rose, 'The Allowance System under the New Poor Law', *Economic History Review*, 19 (1966), 607-620; N. Edsall, *The Anti-Poor Law Movement, 1834-44* (Manchester, 1971); J. Knott, *Popular Opposition to the 1834 Poor Law* (New York, 1986); F. Driver, *Power and Pauperism: The Workhouse System 1834-1884* (Cambridge, 1993), pp. 112-130; D. Ashforth 'The Urban Poor Law' in D. Fraser (ed.) *The New Poor Law in the Nineteenth-Century* (London, 1976), pp. 128-146; A. Digby, *Pauper Palaces* (London, 1978); A. Brundage, 'The Landed Interest and the New Poor Law: A Reappraisal of the Revolution in Government', *English Historical Review*, 87 (1972), 27-48.

<sup>130</sup> P. Harling, 'The Power of Persuasion: Central Authority, Local Bureaucracy and the New Poor Law', *English Historical Review*, 107 (1992), p. 53.

<sup>131</sup> S. King, *Poverty and Welfare in England 1700-1850: A Regional Perspective* (Manchester, 2000), p. 227.

A'Court and Edward Carleton Tufnell was bone-crushing. A'Court, who had been with the Commission since its formation, initially formed unions within a district predominantly comprised of Dorset, Hampshire and Wiltshire. The first unions to be formed, and therefore the first to have adopted bone-crushing, belonged to Hampshire (Alton and Fordingbridge) and Wiltshire (Alderbury, Tisbury and Warminster).<sup>132</sup> The Hartley Wintney Union (Hampshire) was soon to follow. In October 1838 they installed a bone mill 'at the recommendation and the knowledge of the Assistant Commissioner'.<sup>133</sup> In 1838, the Fareham Union enquired into the benefits of having a mill. After receiving a letter from A'Court, they decided to defer their decision until he had visited them personally, when they would receive 'the benefit of his personal advice and assistance' on the matter.<sup>134</sup> In the summer of 1835, Tufnell travelled with A'Court to form various unions across these three counties.<sup>135</sup> Thereafter, Tufnell started forming his own unions, in Dorset, Somerset and Kent.<sup>136</sup> It appears that Tufnell was influenced by A'Court's decisions, and would often refer to A'Court's strategies in his correspondence to the Commission when he was explaining what he was doing.<sup>137</sup> Unsurprisingly, Tufnell was also a keen advocate of bone-crushing. By the end of 1840, the able-bodied were crushing bones in 15 unions in Hampshire, 7 in

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<sup>132</sup> Appendix D.2, 'Number of the Unions formed, with the Agency of each Assistant Commissioner; the Number of Parishes united; and the Average Amount of Poor's Rates', First Annual Report of the Poor Law Commissioners (London, 1835), p. 406; BPP 1845 (41) Union workhouses. A return of all union workhouses under the Poor Law Amendment Act, in which the pauper inmates thereof are or have been employed in grinding or crushing bones. [herein BPP 1845 (41) Return]

<sup>133</sup> Copy of Minutes of Board of Guardians, South Molton Guardians (meeting held 9 December 1845), BPP 1846 (75) House of Commons Papers; Accounts and Papers. Poor law. Copy of any letter and general rule issued by the Poor Law Commissioners, relative to the employment of paupers in pounding, grinding, and otherwise breaking bones; &c. [herein BPP 1846 (75) House of Commons Papers], p. 12.

<sup>134</sup> Fareham Union, Minute Book, 21 September 1838, HRO PL3/8/1a.

<sup>135</sup> Various correspondence of A'Court July – September 1835 in TNA MH32/2. A'Court informed the Commission that he was at Mere but wanted to meet with Tufnell at Shaftesbury, and commented that '[i]t is delightful to act with such a colleague' and happy to work in a place where he was so well known, A'Court to PLC, 10 September 1835, TNA MH32/2.

<sup>136</sup> Appendix D.5, 'Statement of the Number of Unions Formed, with the Agency of each Assistant Commissioner; the Number of Parishes united; the Population; and the Average Amount of the Poor rates', Second Annual Report of the Poor Law Commissioners (London, 1836), p. 570 (whole table pp. 569-570).

<sup>137</sup> For instance, details on the setting of rates by A'Court, Tufnell (Shaftesbury) to PLC, 1 September 1835, TNA MH32/69.

Wiltshire, 5 in Dorset, and 3 in Somerset.<sup>138</sup> In April 1842 Tufnell started superintending the Gloucestershire unions, where he suggested that they should also adopt bone-crushing employment for the able-bodied. The Stroud Guardians, for instance, stated that ‘the crushing of bones was first introduced into our workhouse not only under the sanction of Mr. Tufnell...but by the recommendation of that gentleman.’<sup>139</sup>

It is clear that the Assistants thought this form of employment was the best possible form of employment. The Cranbrook Guardians (Kent) requested Tufnell ‘to suggest the *best mode* of employing the able-bodied inmates of the workhouse’ and ‘in answer to this letter...Mr. Tufnell recommended the crushing of bones’.<sup>140</sup> This process, whereby the Assistants offered a form of ‘best practice’, was replicated on numerous further occasions.<sup>141</sup> To further persuade some Guardians, the Assistants had even drawn upon the successes of certain unions when proposing that other unions should adopt a similar practice. When the Warminster Guardians informed the Commission that they had hired out labourers and received their wages in return, the Commissioners were shocked. A’Court was also concerned, claiming that he had no knowledge that the ‘ruinous system’ had been underway and informed the Commissioners that had written to the clerk immediately suggesting they bought crushing equipment ‘as used in the Alderbury Union’.<sup>142</sup> Alderbury was likely to have been the very first New Poor Law Union to have adopted bone-crushing. Rather than answering the questions of the Wimborne Union Guardians, A’Court directed them to ask Mr. Whitworth, the clerk of the Alderbury Union for a sketch of the equipment used by the inmates in the workhouse, the price of the equipment, the price they received per bushel of crushed bones and whether there was any ‘inconvenience’ found from

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<sup>138</sup> There may have been more because the return was taken in 1844; BPP 1845 (41) Return.

<sup>139</sup> Copy of Minutes of Board of Guardians, Stroud Union Guardians (meeting held 16 January 1846), BPP 1846 (75) House of Commons Papers, p. 46.

<sup>140</sup> Letter from the Cranbrook Board of Guardians to PLC, 21 November 1845, BPP 1846 (75) House of Commons Papers, p. 31.

<sup>141</sup> One further example: the South Molton Union (Devon) Guardians stated that ‘the introduction of the bone-crushing system was adopted in this union at the suggestion and on the recommendation of an Assistant Poor Law Commissioner’, Copy of Minutes of Board of Guardians, South Molton Guardians (meeting held 9 December 1845), BPP 1846 (75) House of Commons Papers, p. 12.

<sup>142</sup> J. Boor, Clerk (Warminster Union) to PLC, 7 May 1836, TNA MH12/13863. A’Court’s note on the back of the letter is dated 11 May 1836.

the ‘offensiveness of the Bones’.<sup>143</sup> Even when unions had commenced employing inmates on bone-crushing, they had continued to contact each other for similar information. The Bridport Guardians, who had adopted the employment in 1840, wrote to the Winchester and Andover Guardians two years later to ascertain the weight of bones they gave to each able-bodied man to crush per day.<sup>144</sup> Evidently, Boards Guardians which had established bone-crushing employment in their workhouses were both sources of inspiration and information to their fellow Boards of Guardians.

The diffusion of advice from Assistants resulted in uneven patterns of practices. The Webbs noted that bone-crushing ‘had been widely adopted in the new workhouses after 1835’.<sup>145</sup> This was in part true, in that bone-crushing, similar to other employments such as stone-breaking and oakum picking, was practised throughout England and Wales. According to Returns made in 1844, a total of 104 unions in England and 2 in Wales were employing workhouse inmates in bone-crushing.<sup>146</sup> It is important to note though that this survey necessarily did not record the many unions which had implemented and subsequently ceased bone-crushing prior to 1844, the Clutton Union in north Somerset being one such example.<sup>147</sup> The Returns do show, however, a high concentration of bone-crushing in unions in Wessex (53 unions), other counties in the south-west (15 unions) and the south-east (18 unions) (see Table 6.1). This was as Nicholls detailed when he wrote that the employment was predominantly practised in the ‘western and southern counties’.<sup>148</sup> As all workhouses had to employ their poor, and bone-crushing did not require expensive equipment, all unions could have *potentially* adopted the scheme. It does not appear to be the case that bone-crushing occurred in the areas where bone dust may have been in higher demand as fertiliser, such as the arable-intensive south-east. This suggests

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<sup>143</sup> Cranborne and Wimborne Union, Minute Book, (Wimborne Union minute) 13 June 1836, DHC BG/A1/2.

<sup>144</sup> Bridport Union, Minute Book, 12 January 1842, BG/BT A1/2. 1840 start date in BPP 1845 (41) Return, p. 4.

<sup>145</sup> Webb and Webb, *English Poor Law History, Part 2*, p. 179.

<sup>146</sup> The 1844 Returns were printed in BPP 1845 (41) Return.

<sup>147</sup> Clutton Union, Minute Book, 24 February 1843, SRO D\G\CL/8a/7.

<sup>148</sup> G. Nicholls, *History of the English Poor Law*, Volume 2: 1714-1853 (London, 1898), p. 368.

Table 6.1: Bone-crushing in New Poor Law Unions according to region, 1844

<b>Region</b>	<b>Counties</b>	<b>Number of unions bone-crushing</b>
Wessex	Dorset	10
	Somerset	12
	Southampton [Hampshire]	19
	Wiltshire	12
	Total	53
South-West	Cornwall	3
	Devon	7
	Gloucestershire	5
	Total	15
South-East	Kent	2
	Surrey	3
	Sussex	13
	Total	18
Home Counties	Bedfordshire	2
	Berkshire	2
	Hertfordshire	2
	Total	6
East Anglia	Cambridge	1
	Lincoln	1
	Norfolk	2
	Total	4
Midlands	Derbyshire	2
	Oxfordshire	4
	Salop [Shropshire]	1
	Staffordshire	1
	Total	8
<b>Country</b>	<b>Union</b>	
Wales	Bridgend and Cowbridge	1
	Newtown and Llanidloes	1
	Total	2

Source: BPP 1845 (41) Return.

that the efforts of A'Court and Tufnell had resulted in a distinctly regional pattern.

### 6.2.3 The Commission's correspondence and publications

After the passage of the Amendment Act, information about local practices was not only circulated between Guardians, and the Assistant Commissioners in conjunction with Boards of Guardians. The Commission itself had acted as a catalyst for the spread of local knowledge and practices. This happened in two main ways: through correspondence from the central Commission, and the subsequent selection, publication and circulation of this correspondence and other similar articles of information.

In the years of 1836 to 1845 the Commission received an average of 29,954 letters per annum. After the initial establishment of New Poor Law Unions, it was reported that the majority of this correspondence related 'to the appointment of Union paid Officers, the regulation of their salaries, the alteration of their districts, the consideration and examination of complaints preferred against them, & their dismissal when these complaints are substantiated.'<sup>149</sup> In these letters, the Commission did not simply offer guidance, or reiterate the contents of the Amendment Act. It also referred to the activities within other unions. For instance, in 1835 George Lefevre told the chairman of the South Stoneham Union that they would like to soon issue an Order to prohibit the provision of outdoor relief to all able-bodied poor. This Order had already, Lefevre proudly announced, been issued to the Hursley Union.<sup>150</sup> The South Stoneham Board of Guardians were informed, therefore, that Hursley were more advanced in administering welfare under the New Poor Law. This would have at least reinforced the message that the Commission thought it was desirable for South Stoneham to soon follow suit.

A great many of the letters which passed between the Boards of Guardians of individual unions were published in the Commission's 'Official Circular'.<sup>151</sup>

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<sup>149</sup> George Nicholls, George Cornewall Lewis and Edmund W. Head (Poor Law Commissioners, Somerset House) to Sir George Gray Bart. MP, 18 September 1846 ('Statement of the manner in which the Business of the Commission is transacted', p. 42) TNA HO45/1682. There are nearly 17,000 volumes of letters in the record series TNA MH12.

<sup>150</sup> G. Lefevre to G. Best, 23 November 1835, TNA MH12/11035.

<sup>151</sup> Official Circulars of Public Documents and Information directed by the Poor Law Commissioners to be printed chiefly for the use of the Boards of Guardians and their officers (London).



These contained information ‘directed by the Poor Law Commissioners to be printed, chiefly for the use of the members and permanent officers of Boards of Guardians, under the Poor Law Amendment Act.’<sup>152</sup> A clue to their purpose comes from their starting sentence, usually along the lines of: ‘[t]he Poor Law Commissioners, on a review of their minutes, directed that the minutes and correspondence on the following subjects should be printed and circulated for the information of Guardians and officers of the several Unions’.<sup>153</sup> Accordingly, the circulars contained information on a wide range of topics and not just in the format of a piece of correspondence. One issue of the ‘Official Circular’ in 1845 contained information on the potato crop, the auditing of accounts, legislation relating to lunatics, medical attendance to the poor, using the press to locate deserters and copies of a recent General Order.<sup>154</sup> There were, therefore, two tiers of information provided in circulars: general advice about how to administer relief according to the Amendment Act, and the legally binding General Orders. The latter will be discussed in more detail in the following chapter. Of more importance here is the selection and publication of correspondence containing local practices - and the Commission’s views on such practices.

Between 1840 and 1846, the practices or queries of at least 428 different unions were referred to within the Official Circulars. Using the number of unions established by 1840, a staggering 73 per cent of unions had their queries or practices put up on a national stage.<sup>155</sup> And this did not cease when the Poor Law Board had taken over.<sup>156</sup> The Official Circulars contained a précis of the letter sent to the Commission and the full Commission’s response, as mentioned above. Each piece of correspondence selected and published was slightly different from those previously published, indicating that each piece had been something akin to a precedent case.<sup>157</sup> Firstly, the query of the corresponding union was outlined

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<sup>152</sup> Official Circulars, issue 1 May 1845, no. 47, p. 65.

<sup>153</sup> Official Circulars, issue 1 May 1845, no. 47, p. 293.

<sup>154</sup> Official Circulars, issue 1 December 1835, no. 54, pp. 177-192.

<sup>155</sup> Many pieces of correspondence redacted the name of the union, which suggests that the publication had drawn upon the correspondence and practices of many more unions. Figure of 587 unions from King, *Poverty and Welfare*, p. 227.

<sup>156</sup> Between 1847 and 1851 a total of 407 different unions were referred to in the Official Circulars.

<sup>157</sup> I would suggest, albeit tentatively, that these circulars are related to the contents of the ‘Index of Subjects’ registers held at TNA in the series MH15, although this link needs further research.

and then the Commission's response. This response often contained information relating to how other unions had resolved their own dilemmas. A particularly detailed response of this nature was published in an Official Circular of July 1842. Bicester Union (Oxfordshire) wrote to the Commission to enquire as to the 'best plan to adopt in erecting a mill to employ the able-bodied men'. The Commission offered some general advice about the types of flour mills available to buy, mills comprising of steel were common but those containing stones resulted in smoother flour. They then referred to the Frome Union's steel mill (Somerset), which was expensive to run and had since discontinued, and the Hungerford and Reading Union (Berkshire) mills which contained a much favoured burr stone. The Commission then offered the details of the suppliers of the mills, their costs and the numbers of able-bodied men whom could work on each mill at once. The Commission then took into account the local contexts of Bicester, which was apparently less 'pauperized' than Hungerford, and 'recommended to the notice of the Board, a mill similar to that at Reading'.<sup>158</sup> This information may have, the Commission believed, been of use to other Guardians making similar decisions.

It is clear that Boards of Guardians had taken notice of the contents of the Official Circulars. As detailed above, the Commission offered little advice on how to employ the indoor poor. Most of their effort was expended on how to employ the outdoor poor and dispelling myths that workhouse employments were lowering the market price of manufactured goods.<sup>159</sup> According to the Commissioner George Nicholls there was 'no order or direction by the Commissioners on the subject [of bone-crushing], the mode of employment being left to the discretion of the guardians'.<sup>160</sup> Whilst no formal directions can be detected in the correspondence between the Commission and selected unions in the south of England, the Commission had advocated this form of employment on at least one occasion. In 1842 the Honiton Guardians (Devon) wrote to the Commission saying that they had encountered difficulty in finding suitable employment for their able-bodied men. The Commission responded by informing

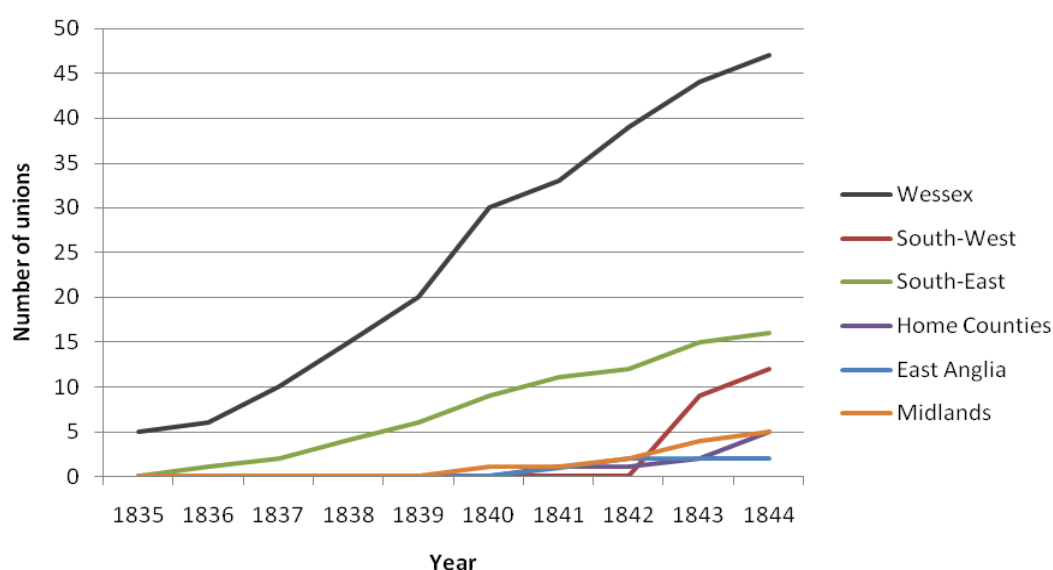
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<sup>158</sup> Full title: 'Employment of able-bodied paupers in the workhouse – best kind of mill to be used for', letter from PLC to Guardians of Bicester Union, 5 March 1842, in Official Circulars, issue 30 July 1842, no. 20, p. 298.

<sup>159</sup> Such as needlework.

<sup>160</sup> Nicholls, *A History of the English Poor Law*, p. 368.

Figure 6.1: The adoption of bone-crushing in New Poor Law Union workhouses in England, 1835-1844



Source: 87 of the 104 New Poor Law Unions in England which returned the date when bone-crushing was first implemented, BPP 1845 (41) Return. The regions constructed here are based on those presented in Table 6.1.

the Guardians that stone-breaking, hand corn milling and oakum picking were suitable employments, as well as bone-crushing. This letter was then selected and published as a circular in February 1843.<sup>161</sup> This caused a steep rise in the adoption of bone-crushing in the south-west, as shown in Figure 6.1. In 1843 and 1844 unions in Devon (6) and in neighbouring counties, such as Somerset (5), started employing the poor on bone-crushing. The publication of their advice in the Official Circular thus impacted on the practices being adopted by unions in England and Wales.

The Official Circulars were not just published for the perusal of Boards of Guardians. Their contents were also referred to by the Commission when responding to queries from Boards of Guardians. For instance, the Beaminster Union was in correspondence with the Commission about the allowances of tea

<sup>161</sup> Full title: 'As to the Employment of Able-Bodied Paupers. – Honiton Union', letter from PLC to Guardians of the Honiton Union, 18 February 1842, in Official Circulars, issue 13 February 1843, no. 23, pp. 42-43; Webb and Webb also notice this circular, *English Poor Law History, Part 2*, p. 179, footnote 2.

and sugar for the infirm poor. The Commission advised them to refer to number 20 of the Official Circular on the subject.<sup>162</sup> This contained a report from the Assistant Commissioner Henry Parker regarding the allowance of ‘extras’.<sup>163</sup> The Guardians discussed the Commission’s directions with the union staff. The Circulars would also be shown to the poor themselves. The Warminster Guardians decided that copies of a circular issued by the Commission, about how vagrants should be detained in the workhouse until midday after their evening’s stay, would be pinned up in the workhouse.<sup>164</sup>

Unlike general advice, rules issued by the Commission in the form of General Orders were legally binding. Boards of Guardians did not, however, fear challenging the Commission over the contents of General Orders. The modification of the workhouse rules provide a straightforward example of this point. In 1835 the Commission released ‘Orders and Regulations’ which stipulated how workhouses should be managed.<sup>165</sup> In 1842 the Commission decided to update the rules because many minute issues had arisen through the ‘practice’ of implementing the law over the previous seven years.<sup>166</sup> For example, rather than holding religious services at workhouses, many Guardians had allowed the inmates to attend local churches and chapels. The Order contained two new rules: that ‘a member of the established church’ and ‘a dissenter from the established church’ may attend public worship except able-bodied female paupers with illegitimate children.<sup>167</sup> The South Stoneham Guardians challenged this policy, asking whether they could allow the mothers of illegitimate children to

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<sup>162</sup> Poor Law Commission to Samuel Cox, Clerk (Beaminster), 19 January 1844, TNA MH12/2707; Item V. ‘Workhouse – Dietaries – Report of Mr. Parker, one of the Assistant Commissioners, pointing out the inconveniences and expense resulting from allowing the Inmates of Workhouses a certain number of ounces of Tea and Sugar, and suggesting a remedy’, in Official Circulars, issue 1 May 1845, no. 47, p. 301.

<sup>163</sup> Full title: ‘Workhouse – Dietaries – Report of Mr. Parker, one of the Assistant Commissioners, pointing out the inconveniences and expense resulting from allowing the Inmates of Workhouses a certain number of ounces of Tea and Sugar, and suggesting a remedy’, in Official Circulars, issue 1 May 1845, no. 47, p. 301.

<sup>164</sup> The circular was issued by the Commission on 5 January 1844; J. Boor, Clerk (Warminster Union) to PLC, 9 January 1844, TNA MH12/13866.

<sup>165</sup> Appendix A.9, ‘Order and regulations to be observed in the Workhouse of the – Union’, First Annual Report of the Poor Law Commissioners (London, 1835), pp. 96-110.

<sup>166</sup> Report ‘To the Right Honourable Sir James Graham, Bart., Her Majesty’s Principal Secretary of State for the Home Department’, G. Nicholls, G. Cornwall Lewis and E. Walker Head to Sir James Graham, 2 May 1842, Eighth Annual Report of the Poor Law Commissioners (London, 1842), pp. 12-13.

<sup>167</sup> Appendix A.3, ‘General Order – Workhouse Rules’, Eighth Annual Report of the Poor Law Commissioners, articles 32 and 33, p. 85.

leave the workhouse and attend public worship.<sup>168</sup> It appears they were not alone in their request. In the following year the Commission released another General Order specifically allowing women with illegitimate children to attend public worship 'in like manner as the other inmates'.<sup>169</sup> The Order applied to 80 different unions, including South Stoneham, and one lone parish.<sup>170</sup> As the next chapter will demonstrate though, Guardians could not always convince the Commission to alter their Orders.

Another publication which was important in the dissemination of local knowledge and best practice was the Annual Poor Law Report. The production of Annual Reports was compulsory. Similar to the process by which an annual report had to be completed by Gilbert's Act committees and submitted to magistrates, the Commissioners had to submit a 'general Report of our Proceedings' for perusal by the principal Secretaries of State. The Report was also to be presented before both Houses of Parliament.<sup>171</sup> The Reports contained several key components: a copy of the report submitted to the Secretary of State from the three Commissioners, and a series of appendixes. These usually contained reports from the Assistant Commissioners on their progress in implementing the new system in their districts, documents issued by the Commission, correspondence received by the Commission and Returns on the numbers of people receiving relief in each union. Copies of the report were sent to the clerk and chairman of every Board of Guardians and union auditors. Some Assistants asked for more copies and sent these to local landowners and other individuals interested in the new welfare system.<sup>172</sup> On several occasions during 1836 and 1837, A'Court asked for a few copies of the Second Annual Report to be

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<sup>168</sup> J. Patterson, Clerk (South Stoneham) to PLC, 7 July 1842, TNA MH12/11036.

<sup>169</sup> Appendix B.1, 'General Order – Modifying Articles 32 and 33 of Workhouse Rules', 7 February 1843, Ninth Annual Report of the Poor Law Commissioners (London, 1843), p. 378.

<sup>170</sup> Appendix B.1, 'General Order – Modifying Articles 32 and 33 of Workhouse Rules', 7 February 1843, Ninth Annual Report of the Poor Law Commissioners (London, 1843), pp.377-378. A note after this General Order states that a similar Order was also issued on the 7 April 1843 to St. Columb Major Union.

<sup>171</sup> 4 & 5 Will. IV c.76, V. Also noted in Report 'To the Right First Honorable Lord John Russell, His Majesty's Principal Secretary of State for the Home Department', T. Frankland Lewis, J. G. Shaw Lefevre and G. Nicholls to Lord John Russell, 8 August 1835, First Annual Report of the Poor Law Commissioners (London, 1835), p. 1.

<sup>172</sup> Brundage, *The Making of the New Poor Law*, pp. 101-102.

sent to him in Southampton and on the Isle of Wight.<sup>173</sup> In 1838 he met a magistrate in Dorchester who supported the Amendment Act and wished to obtain back copies of the Annual Reports.<sup>174</sup> ‘Influential proponents’ were also sent copies on request.<sup>175</sup> Evidently, the Annual Reports had reached a wide audience, from those implementing the Amendment Act to those individuals whom the Commission wanted to gain the confidence of.

The material published within the Reports had been selected very carefully, so there is little surprise that they have been tagged as the ‘official publicity channel’ of the Commissioners.<sup>176</sup> The coverage given to Sussex proves this point. One union which had adopted the principles of the Amendment Act in an exemplary manner was Westhampnett. The Webbs called it a “‘model Union” of the time’.<sup>177</sup> Brundage thought it ‘a model of strict poor relief from the outset’.<sup>178</sup> Due to the influence of the large landowner, the 5<sup>th</sup> Duke of Richmond, parishes smoothly transferred from administering relief under Gilbert’s Act to the Amendment Act. This may not be surprising. The Duke was a cabinet minister well-disposed to the ideas of Nassau Senior, and the ‘elected’ Westhampnett Guardians comprised of Richmond’s tenant farmers. The union clerk was his land agent and solicitor. Apparently, the enthusiasm of the Duke persisted and he remained chairman of the Board of Guardians until his death.<sup>179</sup> In the First Annual Report, the Assistant Commissioner, Henry Pilkington, wrote that able-bodied men of the parishes of Yapton and Felpham had been doing ‘nothing’ in gravel pits in 1834. Within a year they had ‘a better system of discipline’: inmates had been put to work on a corn-mill. However, as Pilkington announced, there

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<sup>173</sup> A’Court (Wilton, leaving for Southampton) to PLC, 29 December 1836, TNA MH32/3; A’Court (Newport, Isle of Wight) to PLC, 23 February 1837, TNA MH32/4. In the following year A’Court provided the Commission with a list of Unions and individuals whom should be sent a copy, and obtained a few spare copies for his own distribution; A’Court (Southampton) to PLC, 8 October 1837, TNA MH32/4.

<sup>174</sup> A’Court (Southampton) to PLC, 22 November 1838, TNA MH32/4.

<sup>175</sup> Brundage provides the example of Lord Howick who request six copies, Brundage, *The Making of the New Poor Law*, p. 102. The First Annual Report is stamped with the price of four shillings, indicating that it could be purchased as well, First Annual Report of the Poor Law Commissioners (London, 1835).

<sup>176</sup> Brundage, *The Making of the New Poor Law*, p. 99.

<sup>177</sup> Webb and Webb, *English Poor Law History, Part 2*, p. 132

<sup>178</sup> Brundage, *The English Poor Laws*, p. 72.

<sup>179</sup> The Duke had visited the workhouse several times a week and occasionally visited the lunatics being cared for in Bethnal Green, B. Fletcher, ‘The Early Years of the Westhampnett Poor Law Union 1835-1838’ (unpublished MSc dissertation, University of Southampton, 1981), p. 90.

was not enough labour within the house ‘to keep the mill going’.<sup>180</sup> A transcription of the clerk’s letter featured within Pilkington’s report, full of encouraging statements.<sup>181</sup> This may have been of some relief to the Commission because, on Pilkington’s first visit, disturbances had ‘prevailed amongst the labourers’.<sup>182</sup> The Second Annual Report contained statements from officials from all over Sussex claiming to have witnessed similar savings and a reduction in ‘surplus labourer’.<sup>183</sup> Sussex was, however, a county of contrasts. The Reports said little about the reluctance of another landowner, Lord Egremont, to allow his Gilbert’s Union to dissolve or abide by the new relief system.<sup>184</sup> This difference was well known and was even the topic of much mockery in the local press.<sup>185</sup> In addition, the city of Chichester continued to administer relief under their Local Act of 1753.<sup>186</sup>

Regardless of their inherent bias, it is worth sketching-out how the Annual Reports had been used to implement the Amendment Act. The publication had been used by the Commission in a similar way to their Official Circulars: to inform Boards of Guardians of the Commission’s viewpoints and policies. For instance, in the early months of 1838 the two unions of Warminster

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<sup>180</sup> Appendix B.9, ‘Report from Henry Pilkington, Esq. to the Poor Law Commissioners for England and Wales’, First Annual Report of the Poor Law Commissioners (London, 1835), p. 296.

<sup>181</sup> Such as, ‘[w]e have but few applications for relief’, ‘[w]e have no complaints from the inmates’, ‘the paupers...all expressed themselves perfectly satisfied’, Raper, Clerk of Westhampnett Union (Chichester) to Henry Pilkington, 22 July 1835, Appendix B.9, ‘Report from Henry Pilkington, Esq. to the Poor Law Commissioners for England and Wales’, First Annual Report of the Poor Law Commissioners (1835), pp. 296-297.

<sup>182</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 295.

<sup>183</sup> By 59% (the Quarter ending 25 December 1835 compared with the average expenditure of the three Year previous to the formations of the unions), Appendix B.3, ‘Report as to the Operation and Effects of the Poor Law Amendment Act, in the County of Sussex; by William Henry Toovey Hawley, Esq., Assistant Poor Law Commissioner’, Second Annual Report of the Poor Law Commissioners, p. 239.

<sup>184</sup> S.A. Shave, ‘The welfare of the vulnerable in the late 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> centuries: Gilbert’s Act of 1782’ *History in Focus*, ‘Welfare’ edition (2008). Online. Available: <http://www.history.ac.uk/ihr/Focus/welfare/articles/shaves.html> [last accessed 28 April 2010]; C. Choomwattana, ‘The Opposition to the New Poor Law in Sussex, 1834-1837’ (unpublished PhD thesis, Cornell University, 1986).

<sup>185</sup> The radical newspaper, the *Brighton Patriot*, was eager to attack the Duke of Richmond (nicknamed ‘Duky’) for conspiring with the Commissioners, whilst commending Lord Egremont for resisting change. Egremont, with the help of Thomas Sockett, was called ‘a friend of the poor’; *Brighton Patriot and Local Free Press*, August 1836, cited in S. Haines and L. Lawson, *Poor Cottages & Proud Palaces: The life and work of Reverend Thomas Sockett of Petworth 1777-1859* (Hastings, 2007), p. 188.

<sup>186</sup> Although in 1833 they appear to have implemented the ‘workhouse test’, B. Fletcher, ‘Chichester and the Westhampnett Poor Law Union’, *Sussex Archaeological Collections*, 134 (1996), p. 185.

and Cricklade and Wootton Bassett (Wiltshire) wanted to provide relief to several able-bodied men in the harsh winter weather.<sup>187</sup> The Commission replied to both unions in the same way. They stated that the Act permitted outdoor relief in cases of sudden and urgent emergency (52<sup>nd</sup> section), that they had to be notified of every case and that they should look at pages 41 and 42 in the Third Annual Report (1837) for the Commission's views.<sup>188</sup> These pages contain the options of the Commissioners on this matter: that Boards of Guardians should offer the workhouse, to try and receive labour in return for any relief and that Boards should encourage people only to claim relief as a last resort.<sup>189</sup> The Commissioners also wrote that whilst the harsh winter had induced the Guardians in Kent, Berkshire and Oxfordshire to enquire as to how to proceed, they 'had not received a single application' for outdoor relief provision.<sup>190</sup> Such a response was common practice when policies had already been noted in the pages of a published report.

References to the Annual Reports had extended beyond matters of indoor and outdoor relief. In 1845 the Mere Guardians informed the Commission that they wanted to provide a woman and her five children with twenty pounds to move to Canada, to live with their husband/father who had left three years previously.<sup>191</sup> Rather than receive the approval that they had been expecting, the Commission regarded the family to have been 'deserted'. The Guardians were told to read a couple of pages in the Eighth Annual Report (1842) which discouraged the use of the poor rates for emigration where a father absconded.<sup>192</sup> On another occasion, an enquiry from a Vicar and Churchwarden, emigration was sanctioned

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<sup>187</sup> J. Boor, Clerk (Wimborne Union) to PLC, 31 January 1838, TNA MH12/13864; James Pratt, Clerk (Cricklade and Wootton Bassett Union) to PLC, 7 February 1838, TNA MH12/13720.

<sup>188</sup> PLC to J. Boor, Clerk (Warminster Union), 5 February 1838, TNA MH12/13864; PLC to James Pratt, Clerk (Cricklade and Wootton Bassett Union), 13 February 1838, TNA MH12/13720.

<sup>189</sup> 'Third Annual Report to The Right Honourable Lord John Russell', T. F. Lewis, J. G. Shaw Lefevre and G. Nicholls to Lord John Russell, 17 July 1837, Third Annual Report of the Poor Law Commissioners (London, 1837), pp. 41-42

<sup>190</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 40.

<sup>191</sup> Snook, Clerk (Mere Union) to PLC, 16 April 1845, TNA MH12/13820.

<sup>192</sup> PLC to Snook, Clerk (Mere Union), 22 April 1845, TNA MH12/13820; 'Eighth Annual Report, to the Right Honourable Sir James Graham, Bart. Her Majesty's Principal Secretary of State for the Home Department', G. Nicholls, G. Cornwall Lewis, E. Walker Head to Sir James Graham, 2 May 1842, Eighth Annual Report of the Poor Law Commissioners (London, 1842), pp. 38-39.



but again the Commissioners referred to their Annual Reports.<sup>193</sup> The same pages of the Eighth Report were noted alongside a reiteration in the Eleventh Report (1845). The latter did, however, suggest that the victuals, utensils and clothing for the emigrants' voyage should be provided from the poor rates.<sup>194</sup> Not only do these examples illustrate some development in the Commissioners' policy-making, but they also indicate that the Commission intended that both parish officials as well as Guardians would read their Reports.

### 6.3 Conclusion

The multiple ways in which parish officials could obtain information about how to 'best' administer the poor laws meant that local practices were not confined to be contained within parish and union boundaries. Under the old poor laws, parish officers communicated and visited one another's parishes with great enthusiasm. This custom continued after 1834 between Boards of Guardians. In the latter case, this illustrates that the implementation and of the New Poor Law was not simply a top-down process. It was one where Guardians sought advice from each other and trained each others' staff. In the former, it demonstrates that although both welfare practices and experiences were diverse, there may have been more similarities than we had hitherto considered. These are not similarities based on the generosity of poor relief, as King has argued.<sup>195</sup> Rather, there were administrative similarities, based on policy and practices. These are not similarities which can be easily clustered into large geographical units, such as counties and regions, as King has claimed. Rather, similarities had existed between neighbouring parishes - and parishes 100 miles apart. The spoken and, critically, written word allowed for the exchange of information between parish

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<sup>193</sup> T. Blundell, Vicar, and John Ford, Churchwarden (Mere) to PLC, 24 April 1846, TNA MH12/13820.

<sup>194</sup> The PLC told the Guardians to read pages 37 and 38 from the Eighth Annual Report and pages 32 and 33 from the Eleventh Annual Report, PLC to Guardians of Mere Union, 29 April 1846, TNA MH12/13820; 'Eleventh Annual Report to the Right Ho. Sir James Graham Bart., Her Majesty's Principal Secretary of State for the Home Department', G. Nicholls, G. Cornewall Lewis, E. Walker Head to Sir James Graham, 1 May 1838, Eleventh Annual Report of the Poor Law Commissioners (London, 1845), p. 33.

<sup>195</sup> King, *Poverty and Welfare*.

officials and Boards of Guardians over substantial distances. This illustrates that each parish official and, later, each Board of Guardians was part of a broader network comprised of their fellow welfare administrators. It was a network in which administrators could engage in an informal dialogue, and therefore disseminate information horizontally, outside a rigid top-down model.

Welfare administrators had an acute awareness of the progress made in establishing and managing welfare systems both nearby, in their county as a whole, and to some extent even in the country as a whole. Under the old poor laws, this knowledge had in part been produced through the experiences of contractors and the publication of local experiments. The national circulation of contractors and publications enabled information to travel significant distances. And the publication of such local practices by the SBCP boosted their presence amongst the information-hungry welfare administrators.

Let us therefore make the inquiry into all that concerns the POOR, and the promotion of their happiness, a SCIENCE; let us investigate *practically*, and upon *system*, the nature and consequences, and let us unite in the extension and improvement, of those things which experience hath ascertained to be beneficial to the poor. Let the labours of the industrious, the talents of the wise, the influence of the powerful, and the leisure of the many, be directed to this important subject[.]<sup>196</sup>

With such an introduction as this, how could the extracts of local experiments presented in the SBCP's publications be perceived by a reader as anything other than recommendations about how best to provide relief to the poor? Their tactics - and subsequent impacts - are clearly comparable with that of another religious society, the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge (SPCK), during an earlier period in the history of English social policy.<sup>197</sup> The interest of these organisations in workhouse reforms meant that knowledge of the reforms even travelled

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<sup>196</sup> T. Bernard, 'Preliminary Address to the Public' in T. Bernard (ed.), *The Reports of the Society for Bettering the Condition and Increasing the Comforts of the Poor*, Volume 1 (London, 1798), p. xii.

<sup>197</sup> T. Hitchcock, 'Paupers and Preachers: The SPCK and the Parochial Workhouse Movement' in I. Davison, T. Hitchcock, T. Keirn and R.B. Shoemaker (eds.), *Stilling the Grumbling Hive: The Response to Social and Economic Problems in England, 1689-1750* (Stroud, 1992), pp. 146-166.

beyond England.<sup>198</sup> The steward had served as an additional means through which information could move. Whether under the direction of Lord Egremont or not, Tyler was able to compare farming out prices. In all likelihood, he was also able to standardize the rules and nature of relief provision, and therefore the welfare experience, of a large number of relief recipients living within parishes owned by, or in contact with, Lord Egremont. Equally, the presence of the steward at committee meetings could have stifled parish officials' desires to communicate, and therefore innovate, beyond his Lordship's realms.

Although the Commissioners were often unaware of the extent of conferring between the Boards of Guardians, they were certainly familiar with how they had been providing relief. Assistant Commissioners played a pivotal role in overseeing the implementation of the Amendment Act and all subsequent New Poor Law legislation. How Assistant Commissioners had offered advice, and how Boards of Guardians sought it in the first instance, had a direct impact on the ways in which welfare had been provided. Reflecting on the labour enforced in workhouses, Nicholls wrote:

[t]he Kind of labour on which the inmates of the several workhouses should be employed, rested entirely with the boards of guardians, who best knew the circumstances of their several districts.<sup>199</sup>

Nicholls' impression was inaccurate. The kind of labour on which the inmates of the several workhouses were employed had actually been influenced by the Assistant Commissioners, regardless of their local contexts. Both A'Court and Tufnell had the same answer for all unions enquiring what sort of work they should implement in their workhouse. They disseminated a particular localised practice, and promoted it as a form of best practice, as the best possible way in which labour could be obtained from the able-bodied male inmates. This calls into question the nature of Boards of Guardians. The very fact that Boards of Guardians were susceptible to ideas of best practice from the Assistant Commissioners weakens the notion, at least within the south, that the locality had

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<sup>198</sup> After being printed in the SBCP's publications, the reforms at Boldre were sent to Philadelphia where it was reprinted for Philadelphian parishes, Bowen, *The Reverend William Gilpin*, p. 18.

<sup>199</sup> Nicholls, *History of the English Poor Law*, p. 368.

retained its independence after 1834. The willingness of local authorities to accept advice could be perceived therefore as a vindication of Apfel's and Dunkley's findings that many local elites had sympathy for poor law reform.<sup>200</sup>

The second half of this chapter has illustrated how the Commissioners at Somerset House interacted with and actively spread local practices. Advice was not formed and had not been disseminated in a simple way. Their Annual Reports were undoubtedly, as Brundage puts it, a 'means of influencing public opinion', in favour of the New Poor Law.<sup>201</sup> How the publications of the Commission were used to disseminate best practice should now also receive serious consideration. The Annual Reports and Official Circulars impacted on welfare provision in a similar way to how publications, produced prior to passage of the Amendment Act, impacted on welfare provision. Of course, the choices as how to provide relief under the old poor laws were wide-ranging and there were less stipulations over what types of relief could be offered to different 'classes' of poor, as the Commission put it. Yet, the reduction in the variety of ways in which relief could be offered did not mean that guidance was not needed. As Spicker suggests, '[w]herever there are rules, there have to be meta-rules'.<sup>202</sup> These meta-rules vest power with individuals to make new stipulations. The next chapter examines the decisions made by the Poor Law Commission and the genesis of General Orders.

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<sup>200</sup> W. Apfel and P. Dunkley, 'English Rural Society and the New Poor Law: Bedfordshire, 1834-47', *Social History*, 10 (1985), 37-68.

<sup>201</sup> Brundage, *The Making of the New Poor Law*, p. 99

<sup>202</sup> P. Spicker, *Policy Analysis for Practice: Applying Social Policy* (Bristol, 2006), p. 24.

## Chapter 7: Policy from Scandal

As explained in chapter two, although scandals have often been mentioned in studies of the early years of the New Poor Law, the relationship between scandals and policy-making has not been subject to systematic study. This chapter details how two different scandals, both originating in the south of England, fed into national policy-making during the early years of the New Poor Law. The Bridgwater scandal of the mid-1830s impacted upon the formation of new medical relief policies whilst the notorious Andover scandal of the mid-1840s impacted upon the types of employment permitted in workhouses. According to Butler and Drakeford, scandals are created ‘at a time of policy strain...catching a tide that is already beginning to run in a fresh policy direction.’<sup>1</sup> With this understanding in mind, this chapter both outlines the key events of each scandal, with their associated inquiries and impacts and the areas of ‘policy strain’ which the scandals fed into. The implementation of the new post-scandal policies is then discussed. The conclusion draws both of these cases together, illustrating that although scandals impacted upon the creation of policies during the early years of the New Poor Law, they did so in different ways and through different means.

### 7.1 Medical relief policy and the Bridgwater Scandal

#### 7.1.1 Medical relief provision

The founding old poor laws legislation, the Act of 43<sup>rd</sup> Elizabeth, did not make any explicit reference to medical relief. Subsequent legislation was also silent on the provision of medical relief, besides a couple of statutes passed during the early years of George the Third which permitted justices to order medical relief for indoor poor. As such, the provision of medical relief was not compulsory, the provision of medical relief being driven by custom, rather than stipulation.

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<sup>1</sup> I. Butler and M. Drakeford, *Scandal, Social Policy and Social Welfare*, revised edition (Bristol, 2005), p. 238.

Whilst, by the early-nineteenth century, some parishes employed medical men, according to George Cornwall Lewis, appointed as a Poor Law Commissioner from 1839, such provision was not universal. Medical relief, he asserted, ‘did not extend beyond the counties in the south, and east, and the centre of England.’<sup>2</sup> Because there were no legally stipulated minimum standards, the actual standard of care varied from parish to parish. This meant that the provision of medical relief varied from both place to place and over time. In addition, parish stipulated entitlement to medical relief varied. As the analysis of pauper letters shows, individual claimants detailed their ailments in different ways to secure a modicum of assistance in a context of ‘uncertain and uneven entitlement to relief and medical intervention’.<sup>3</sup>

Medical relief was little alluded to in the 1834 Report of the Royal Commission. The Report simply concluded that medical relief was ‘adequately supplied, and economically, if we consider only the price and amount of attendance’.<sup>4</sup> Unsurprisingly then, the Poor Law Amendment Act contained only one reference to medical relief: section 54, which empowered magistrates to order medical attendance in an emergency.<sup>5</sup> To Flinn, this is suggestive of the fact that medical relief under the New Poor Law was built on the ‘foundations inherited’ from what went before.<sup>6</sup> The Poor Law Commissioners soon acknowledged the long-held traditions of parish relief, noting in their First Annual Report the ‘deficiencies’ of medical relief under the old poor laws.<sup>7</sup> The parish doctor had been employed at a small sum per year, on the ‘condition that he should be allowed to make whatever charges he pleased for his attendance’, whilst medicines were supplied ‘at the highest rates.’ Consequently, large profits, especially in more ‘populous parishes’, were being accrued by medical men and

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<sup>2</sup> BPP 1844 (531) Report from the Select Committee on Medical Poor Relief; together with the minutes of evidence, appendix and index, interview of G. Cornwall Lewis, p. 1.

<sup>3</sup> S. King, “‘Stop this Overwhelming Torment of Destiny’: Negotiating Financial Aid at Times of Sickness under the English Old Poor Law, 1800-1840’, *Bulletin of the History of Medicine*, 79 (2005), p. 234.

<sup>4</sup> BPP 1834 (44) Report from His Majesty’s Commissioners for Inquiring into the Administration and Practical Operation of the Poor Laws, p. 146, cited in M. Flinn, ‘Medical Services under the New Poor Law’ in D. Fraser (ed.), *The New Poor Law in the Nineteenth-Century* (London, 1976), p. 48.

<sup>5</sup> 5 & 6 Vict. c.57, LIV.

<sup>6</sup> Flinn, ‘Medical Services’, p. 48.

<sup>7</sup> Appendix A.3, ‘Instructional Letter respecting the Formation of Independent Medical Clubs’, Second Annual Report of the Poor Law Commissioners (London, 1836), p. 50.

apothecaries. There were other ‘evils’ too. People in remote parishes ‘had no adequate protection’ and any individual could be supplied with ‘medicines considerably beyond what is required’.<sup>8</sup> Regardless of the ambiguous position on medical relief created by the Royal Commission, the Poor Law Commissioners immediately believed that medical relief would not only continue under the New Poor Law, but that it would be improved.

Although no statute directly stipulated that medical relief should be provided, two further sections of the Amendment Act allowed Boards of Guardians to appoint medical men. Section 46 permitted Boards to appoint paid officers and section 109 noted that a medical officer could be used to denote ‘any...Person duly licensed to practise as a Medical Man’.<sup>9</sup> Medical officers were appointed under these powers upon the establishment of unions throughout England and Wales. For instance, at the first meeting of the Fareham Union (Hampshire), the Guardians in the presence of A’Court divided the union into two medical districts. The acreage and population of each district, taken by the Guardians from the 1831 census, were unequal.<sup>10</sup> A medical officer was then allocated to each district. The administrative aspects of medical relief were, therefore, forged under the guidance of the Commission. The lack of medical relief stipulations and guidance beyond this point, however, had resulted in numerous difficulties. These centred on several fundamental, albeit interrelated, themes: the qualifications and wages of medical officers, to whom and what medical relief should be allocated and the size of medical districts. It is worth outlining these issues before providing an account of the Bridgwater scandal.

The position of medical officer could only be given to an individual ‘duly licensed’ to act as a medical man, although the Poor Law Commission did not stipulate what qualifications or level of experience such a medical man should have. The quality of medical relief could, therefore, vary greatly depending on whom Boards of Guardians appointed. In their First Annual Report, the Poor Law

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<sup>8</sup> Report ‘To the Right Honorable Lord John Russell, His Majesty’s Principal Secretary of State for the Home Department’, T. Frankland Lewis, J.G. Shaw Lefevre and G. Nicholls to Lord John Russell, 8 August 1835, First Annual Report of the Poor Law Commissioners (London, 1835), pp. 51-52.

<sup>9</sup> 5 & 6 Vict. c.57, CIX.

<sup>10</sup> District one contained 4958 people and 17248 acres and district two contained 7179 people and 14939 acres and the other consisting of 4958 and 17248 respectively, Fareham Union, Minute Book, 29 May 1835, HRO PL3/8/1.

Commission was glad to announce that as a check to the 'expense of medical relief' they 'generally required that medical services should be retained by contract and open tender'.<sup>11</sup> A medical man was paid on a case-by-case basis or, as the Commissioners implied, in a lump sum or at a rate per head of the population of the medical district set before the commencement of their appointment. The latter, competitive, agreements were difficult to engineer. In May 1836, the attention of Assistant Commissioner William Henry Toovey Hawley was brought to the 'troublesome medical contracts' in his Hampshire unions. Of particular concern to Hawley was the offer of 8s per head of the population offered to the Hartley Wintney Guardians by the local medical men, a sum which he thought was too high.<sup>12</sup> The Boards of Guardians of newly established Bridgwater Union had similar problems, which, as will be examined in the next section, had far-reaching consequences. As Digby notes, the financial preoccupations of the welfare authorities meant that 'cost rather than adequate qualification became the driving force' for medical officers' appointments.<sup>13</sup>

Financial considerations also impacted upon entitlement to medical relief. Writing in 1836, the Commissioners had already received queries from Boards of Guardians, asking to whom medical relief could be issued. Their response was that 'actual necessity or destitution is the condition on which all applications for relief, medical or otherwise, are to be decided'.<sup>14</sup> Those in the workhouse had 'passed' the workhouse test, and therefore were deemed to be sufficiently eligible for medical assistance. For those outside the workhouse, the situation was less clear-cut. Although individuals on the 'list' would have been entitled to medical relief, those who were not on the list may have been told to pay for their own medical assistance. The Commission also encouraged the formation of 'independent' sick clubs.<sup>15</sup> Even when an individual was 'entitled' to medical relief, judgements had to be made regarding what treatment would be offered.

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<sup>11</sup> Report 'To the Right Honorable Lord John Russell, His Majesty's Principal Secretary of State for the Home Department', T. Frankland Lewis, J.G. Shaw Lefevre and G. Nicholls to Lord John Russell, 8 August 1835, First Annual Report of the Poor Law Commissioners (London, 1835), p. 52.

<sup>12</sup> Hawley (Hartford Bridge) to Lefevre, 29 May 1836, TNA MH32/38.

<sup>13</sup> A. Digby, *Making a Medical Living: Doctors and patients in the English market for medicine, 1720-1911* (Cambridge, 1994), p. 244.

<sup>14</sup> Appendix A.3, 'Instructional Letter respecting the Formation of Independent Medical Clubs', Second Annual Report of the Poor Law Commissioners, p. 50.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 50.



Medicines were expected to be supplied from the medical officers' own funds, whilst food, primarily consisting of meat and alcohol, was commonly allocated to the sick poor from union funds. It was unclear whether medical men should have to deliver children and undertake surgery, however, and they would often bargain for additional payments for such services. In practice, it was often the decision of the workhouse master and matron or the relieving officer as to whether these procedures were required from a medical officer. Besides, other individuals, such as nurses and midwives, would often perform such tasks for lower wages.<sup>16</sup>

Another source of contention was the size of the medical districts. Doctors, who had previously served just one or two parishes, were now required to attend many parishes. This was problematic in rural unions where large medical districts would 'make it insuperably difficult for even the most conscientious medical officer to operate efficiently.'<sup>17</sup> The medical officer would undertake rounds, visiting parishes on a regular basis. When medical relief was required outside of these times, the poor had to search for their medical officer. In addition, it was assumed by the Commission that medical officers would secure the consent of a relieving officer before providing an individual with medical relief. This generated conflict. Medical officers thought that relieving officers were not capable of judging individuals' medical needs, and the relieving officers believed that medical officers were taking 'little account of the many moral and economic factors' surrounding relief provision.<sup>18</sup> This meant that the poor would have to obtain the attention of two officers, sometimes in different places. In the early years of the New Poor Law, much correspondence passed between the Guardians and the Commission containing details of those who had travelled vast distances to obtain assistance. Henry Williams' walk of 'several miles' to obtain outdoor relief within the confines of the Llantrisant Union, as detailed by Stewart and King, was far from unique.<sup>19</sup> As Digby suggests, the outdoor poor, compared to those in the workhouse, suffered from a 'deterioration

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<sup>16</sup> Flinn, 'Medical Services', p. 50.

<sup>17</sup> Digby, *Making a Medical Living*, p. 244.

<sup>18</sup> Flinn, 'Medical Services', p. 49.

<sup>19</sup> J. Stewart and S. King, 'Death in Llantrisant: Henry Williams and the New Poor Law in Wales', *Rural History*, 15 (2004), p. 74.

in the quality of care'.<sup>20</sup> Such problems were only brought to wider attention through a series of high profile medical relief 'scandals' which exposed these deficiencies of medical provision.

### 7.1.2 The Bridgwater Scandal

The problems at the Bridgwater Union surfaced immediately after its formation by Assistant Commissioner Robert Weale in April 1836 (for a timeline of events see Figure 7.1). The union encompassed 40 parishes in the north-west of Somerset covering parts of Exmoor and the Quantocks and had a low population density. The interests of all parishes were represented at the largest Board of Guardians in Somerset comprising 48 elected members and 15 ex-officio members.<sup>21</sup> Immediately after the formation of a union, it was a common practice to select existing workhouses to temporarily house the poor until a more substantial union workhouse was built. The Bridgwater and North Petherton houses were selected, with the adults going into the former house and children into the latter. Both soon became overcrowded.<sup>22</sup> In the winter of 1836-37, one third of the inmates had died from enteric infection, deaths mainly occurring in the Bridgwater parish house which housed 105 paupers during the winter.<sup>23</sup> Whilst overcrowding and unsanitary conditions were likely to have been the main cause of the deaths, the workhouse diet also received some blame. The Guardians chose to adopt dietary table number three, one of six dietaries which were designed by the Commission for implementation in every union workhouse. This table, akin to three other Commission designed tables, contained the controversial foodstuff gruel which Abraham King, the workhouse medical

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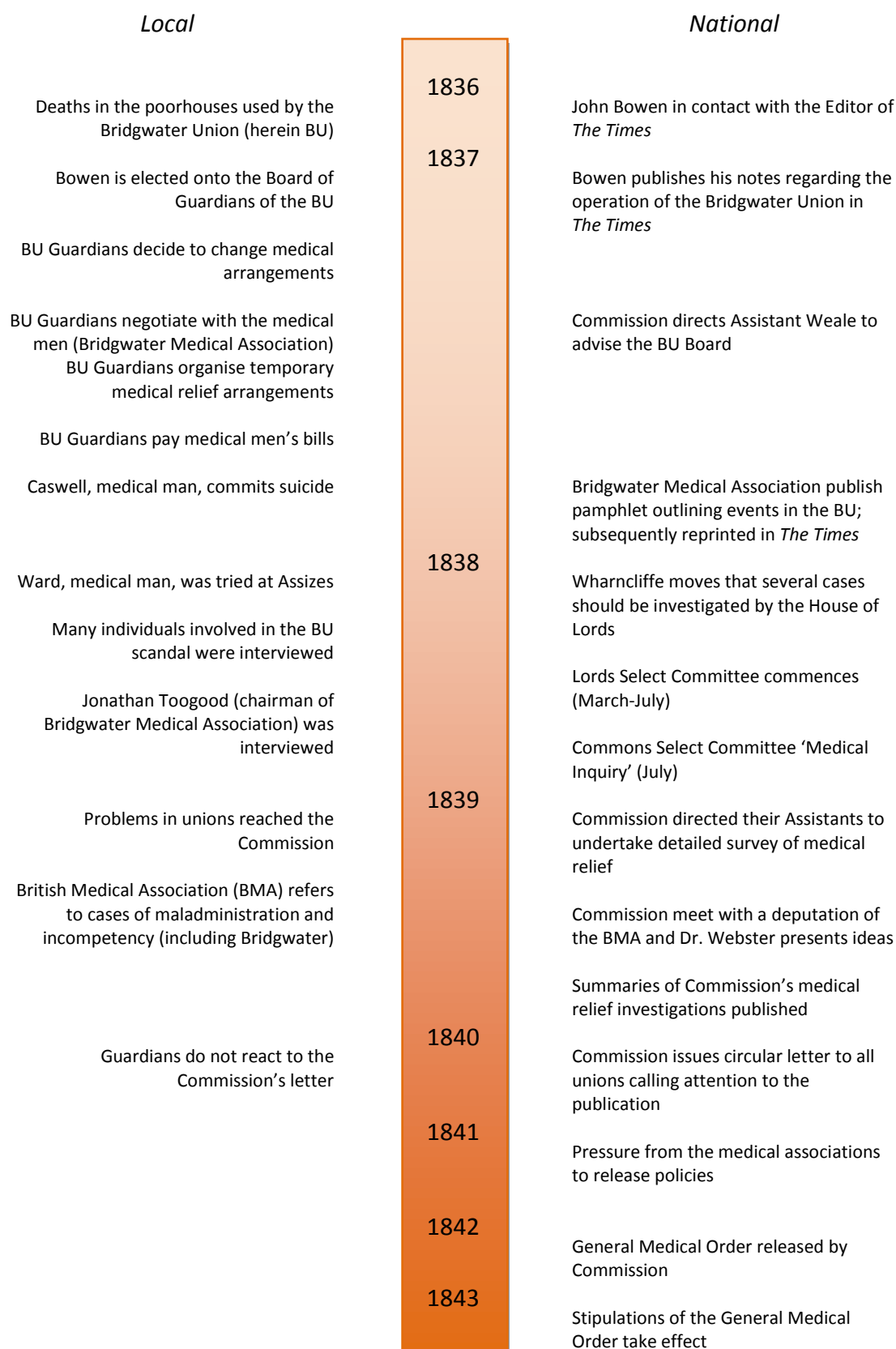
<sup>20</sup> Digby, *Making a Medical Living*, p. 244.

<sup>21</sup> It contained a population of 28,566 (in 1831) and was 10.5 miles in length and 15.5 miles in breadth. Weale's correspondence, Schedule A: Summary of the Unions formed by Robert Weale Esq. Assistant Poor Law Commissioner, 21 October 1837, TNA MH32/85. It was officially established on the 16 April 1836.

<sup>22</sup> C. A. Buchanan, 'John Bowen and the Bridgwater Scandal', *The Proceedings of the Somerset Archaeological and National History Society*, 131 (1987), p. 185.

<sup>23</sup> BPP 1837-38 (719) Report from the Select Committee of the House of Lords appointed to examine into the several cases alluded to in certain papers respecting the operation of the Poor Law Amendment Act; and to Report thereon. With the minutes of evidence taken before the committee, and an index thereto [herein BPP 1837-38 Bridgwater Inquiry], interview of William Baker, p.967; J. Toogood suggests that 40% of their paupers in the union had died, *The Times*, 26 January 1841.

Figure 7.1: Medical relief policy and the Bridgwater Scandal timeline



officer, thought the main cause of the sickness.<sup>24</sup>

Although rumours had spread amongst the Guardians about the overcrowding and sickness, it was not general public knowledge until the following year. Still, Guardian William Baker, who had been appointed to the Visiting Committee, visited the Bridgwater poorhouse and advised the Guardians to change the inmates' diet and to stop sending paupers to the house. He had little success.<sup>25</sup> John Bowen, Baker's friend and colleague, then intervened.<sup>26</sup> Bowen was a Tory and heavily involved in Bridgwater borough's politics.<sup>27</sup> He was a fierce opponent of the New Poor Law and frequently corresponded with the editor of *The Times*. In one such letter, Bowen expressed a dislike of the design of the new Bridgwater Union workhouse which contained windows six feet above the ground. He claimed that the Commission-supported architect Mr. Kempthorne had 'shut out...all enjoyment of the light of heaven' from the poor. The Editor agreed, calling the building 'a nest of Kempthorne dungeons'.<sup>28</sup> After becoming aware of the article, Weale wrote to the Commission explaining that the parish workhouse which Bowen had claimed to be a 'palace' was, in fact, 'ten thousand times more worthy of the name of dungeon'.<sup>29</sup>

Regardless of the tension evident between Bowen and the Commission, Bowen wanted to become a member of the Bridgwater Board of Guardians. It was not his intention though to help administer the New Poor Law, on the contrary, he wanted access to information which would prove the Board's negligence. Bowen was elected in May 1837, and, having the previous month visited the Bridgwater poorhouse and inspected the Report Book of Visiting Committee, he immediately asked for a change of dietary and better treatment of the inmates. He was ignored.<sup>30</sup> In July 1837 Bowen resigned and duly sent his notes to *The Times*.

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<sup>24</sup> Buchanan, 'John Bowen', p. 186; dietaries reproduced in P. Higgenbotham, *The Workhouse Cookbook*, (Stroud, 2008), pp. 53-55.

<sup>25</sup> BPP 1837-38 (531) Bridgwater Inquiry, interview of William Baker, pp. 958, 965-966.

<sup>26</sup> Baker had known Bowen for a number of years they had also worked as overseers together in the town.

<sup>27</sup> Buchanan, 'John Bowen', p. 187.

<sup>28</sup> *The Times*, 12 October 1836.

<sup>29</sup> Weale (Worcester) to PLC, 23 October 1836, TNA MH12/85.

<sup>30</sup> Buchanan, 'John Bowen', p. 187.

Whilst the union evidently had problems caring for their indoor poor, their outdoor poor also suffered from a lack of adequate attention. Many of the medical relief problems derived from the Board's desire to reduce medical relief costs. In the year before the formation of the union, medical salaries for the parishes totalled £577 per annum. After the formation of the union, seven large medical districts were created and seven medical officers were appointed to attend to the poor. Their wages came to £363 per annum. The medical men in the Bridgwater area resented the reduction, but the chairman of the Board stressed that the first year was one of 'probation', implying that their wages would increase the following year.<sup>31</sup> When the year ended in May 1837, the Board decided to discontinue the previous year's arrangements and proposed the creation of 12 medical districts, including one specifically for the attendance of the workhouse. Details of these districts were circulated to the medical officers in the hope that they would respond to the proposal positively.<sup>32</sup> By the following week, five of the medical men had replied. Although their comments cannot be found in the archive, their opinions clearly vexed the Board and discussion was adjourned.<sup>33</sup> On 18 May, a specially arranged meeting of the Board called for another 'fresh Division of the Union', deciding to carve the union into nine medical districts, including one for the attendance of the union workhouse.<sup>34</sup> The salaries proposed varied greatly because they were calculated on the basis of the population of each district. The medical men were then invited by the Board to state their offers, which ranged from 3 pence and 4 pence per head in certain districts and a flat rate of £50 for the workhouse district. Although, cumulatively, these salaries were £50 below the pre-union medical costs, their proposal was once again rejected by the board.<sup>35</sup>

The election of the medical officers to districts was to proceed on 16 June 1837 and the new allocations were to start a fortnight later. In the meantime,

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<sup>31</sup> 'Report of the Poor-Law Committee, 1840', *Provincial Medical and Surgical Journal*, Volume 1, issue 13, 26 December 1841, p. 212; The Medical Association, 'Facts Connected with the Medical Relief of the Poor in the Bridgwater Union', (Bridgwater, 13 November 1837), p. 27, a copy can be found in Correspondence and documents received by the Home Office, TNA HO73/52/62.

<sup>32</sup> Bridgwater Union, Minute Book, 5 May 1837, SRO D\G\BW/8a/1.

<sup>33</sup> Bridgwater Union, Minute Book, 12 May 1837, SRO D\G\BW/8a/1.

<sup>34</sup> Bridgwater Union, Minute Book, 28 April 1837, SRO D\G\BW/8a/1.

<sup>35</sup> 'Report of the Poor-Law Committee, 1840', *Provincial Medical and Surgical Journal*, Volume 1, issue 13, 26 December 1841, p. 212.

some members of the Board were concerned that this would attract unskilled medical men to the union, and argued that those appointed had to possess specific medical qualifications. Anxious that *no* medical men would apply for the positions, the motion was rejected. By early June the medical men were still in disagreement with the Guardians, writing a collective letter expressing that ‘they cannot with justice to the Poor, the Guardians, and themselves, continue their charge at the salaries proposed’.<sup>36</sup> The letter was written during a meeting of the Bridgwater Medical Association, formed of medical men from Bridgwater and the surrounding area, many of whom had previously acted as medical officers. By September 1838, it was documented as a Branch of the Provincial Medical and Surgical Association (PMSA), one of the largest medical associations in Britain.<sup>37</sup> It was at such meetings that the medical men discussed their grievances and continued to exert pressure on the Guardians for fairer wages. Indeed, by June 1837 the medical men resorted to printing a handbill detailing their demands.<sup>38</sup> The public protest caused no material alteration in the views of the Guardians who, whilst acknowledging the men’s concern for the poor, were adamant that no change should occur to the proposed districts and salaries until the second election day.<sup>39</sup>

Locked in a stalemate with the medical men, the Board decided to contact Somerset House to request the Commissioners to recommend ‘a candidate or two’.<sup>40</sup> The Commission, realising the magnitude of the problem, directed Weale to attend the next meeting of the Bridgwater Board.<sup>41</sup> Weale offered little advice, simply agreeing with the Board that the wages demanded by the medical men ‘were more than adequate remuneration for their services and that they be not

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<sup>36</sup> Bridgwater Union, Minute Book, 18 and 26 May and 2 June 1837, SRO D\G\BW/8a/1.

<sup>37</sup> BPP 1837-38 (531) Bridgwater Inquiry, interview of Robert Young, pp. 676-677, 688-689. The Provincial Medical and Surgical Association was founded in 1832; The members were Abraham King, William Lakin Caswell, Baruch Toogood, Joseph Addison, Horatio Nelson Tilsley, John Evered Poole and Richard Beadon Ruddock, and their chairman was Jonathan Toogood; Bridgwater Union, Minute Book, 31 May 1836, SRO D\G\BW/8a/1; The Medical Association, ‘Facts Connected with the Medical Relief’, pp. 4-5.

<sup>38</sup> Handbill received by the PLC 6 June 1837, TNA MH12/10243.

<sup>39</sup> Bridgwater Union, Minute Book, 9 June 1837, SRO D\G\BW/8a/1.

<sup>40</sup> George Warry (Shapwick, Glastonbury) to PLC, 17 June 1837, TNA MH12/10243.

<sup>41</sup> Underdown to PLC, 16 June 1837, TNA MH12/10243; Lefevre to Weale, 22 June 1837, TNA MH12/10243.

accepted.<sup>42</sup> The Board also decided that there should only be six districts, each covering a vast area of land. In consequence, just two of the medical men were allocated to districts, with the remaining vacancies advertised in the local and London press. One of the forthcoming candidates was unfamiliar with the area, whilst three local men took the remaining districts at the low rates offered by the Board.<sup>43</sup> One of these individuals was apprehensive about taking such an expansive district, 10 miles long and 8 miles wide, containing 14 parishes.<sup>44</sup> After raising his concerns, he took the district alongside another local medical man. Overall, of the seven medical men appointed for the first year of the union, just four had been re-employed and on terms they found unsatisfactory.

During these extended negotiations and discussions, the old medical arrangements - in operation from May 1836 to May 1837 - had expired and a temporary medical service was set-up. Thinking on their feet, the Board directed their medical officers to continue their services into July, but 'to attend the poor on the same terms as they did their private patients'.<sup>45</sup> Mindful of the potential cost, the Guardians instructed the relieving officers 'to be sparing in their orders for medical relief'.<sup>46</sup> John Stagg, relieving officer for the Huntspill District, informed the medical officer of the district, Mr. Caswell, that 'I am directed by the Board of Guardians to inform you that you are to discontinue your attendance on the under mentioned Paupers in Woollavington...'.<sup>47</sup> A further four letters were sent to Caswell directing him to stop attending four other paupers.<sup>48</sup> Caswell conformed to these orders reluctantly. On the 2 July, Caswell wrote in his notebook: '[i]n consequence of the Order of Mr. Stagg I have this Day been *reluctantly compelled* to refuse Medicine to George Reynold's Child, Kesia Coles,

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<sup>42</sup>Bridgwater Union, Minute Book, 23 June 1837, SRO D\G\BW/8a/1, pp. 174-175. My emphasis.

<sup>43</sup> 'Report of the Poor-Law Committee, 1840', *Provincial Medical and Surgical Journal*, Volume 1, Issue 13, 26 December 1841, pp. 212-213.

<sup>44</sup> The Medical Association, 'Facts Connected with the Medical Relief', p. 22.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>46</sup> The Medical Association, 'Facts Connected with the Medical Relief', p. 16.

<sup>47</sup> This letter was written on the 1 July 1837; The Medical Association, 'Facts Connected with the Medical Relief', p. 18.

<sup>48</sup> This time sent from an overseer John Knight. Correspondence and documents received by the Home Office, Copy of Letter from Caswell (Huntspill) to the Board of Guardians of Bridgwater, 6 July 1837, sent by Weale to the PLC, December 1837, TNA HO73/52/62, pp. 463-464.

and Nancy Millard.<sup>49</sup> On 6 July, Caswell wrote a letter to the Board of Guardians arguing that they should not stop his attendance of the poor.<sup>50</sup>

For some of his patients, Caswell's protest was too late. Several paupers had been left without medical attendance, with devastating consequences. One case was that of 31 year-old Charlotte Allen, who lodged with Jane Fenn, Richard and Mary Date, a nurse, in the small parish of Nether Stowey.<sup>51</sup> A month before giving birth on 30 June 1837, Charlotte fell ill. She had no savings and was not able to draw on alternative sources of support.<sup>52</sup> As she approached motherhood, Charlotte received 1s and 6d and a loaf of bread every week from her relieving officer, Mr. James Franklin Waites.<sup>53</sup> Thereafter, there was some confusion over who was going to deliver her child. Mary Date informed the relieving officer that Charlotte wanted Kitty Walker (Mary Date's sister) to act as her midwife, even though Charlotte had made no such request.<sup>54</sup> Mary Date had obviously abused her position and exploited the vulnerability of Charlotte to obtain her sister employment. Nevertheless, Kitty Walker was a trained midwife with nine years experience.<sup>55</sup> The birth of Charlotte's child was, however, difficult. Charlotte suffered from a laceration of the perinaeum during 'the violent Efforts of Labour', leading to a prolapsed womb.<sup>56</sup>

From this point Charlotte should have been attended by a medical officer. Kitty thought there was nothing unusual with Charlotte's injuries, and gave her

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<sup>49</sup> BPP 1837-38 (531) Bridgwater Inquiry, interview of J. Toogood, p. 751.

<sup>50</sup> BPP 1837-38 (531) Bridgwater Inquiry, interview of J. Toogood, p. 752.

<sup>51</sup> The Medical Association, 'Facts Connected with the Medical Relief', p. 16.

<sup>52</sup> There was an established Women's Friendly Society based at Stowey, but at the subscription rate of 20s a year Charlotte could not afford to join; BPP 1834 (44) XXXI, Report from His Majesty's Commissioners for Inquiring into the Administration and Practical Operation of the Poor Laws. Appendix B.1. Part 2. Question 14. Nether Stowey (Somerset). With the only possible support from a small charity for regular church attendees, which was unlikely to provide support to pregnant single women, Charlotte relief on the Bridgwater Union for outdoor relief, R.W. Dunning (ed.) *The Victoria History of the Counties of England: History of the County of Somerset*, Volume five, (Oxford, 1985), p. 200.

<sup>53</sup> Correspondence and documents received by the Home Office, Weale to the PLC, December 1837, TNA HO73/52/62.

<sup>54</sup> Correspondence and documents received by the Home Office, Evidence of Mary Date sent by Weale to the PLC, December 1837, TNA HO73/52/62, p. 456; BPP 1837-38 (531) Bridgwater Inquiry, interview of Mary Date, p. 855; BPP 1837-38 (531) Bridgwater Inquiry, interview of Charlotte Allen, p. 941.

<sup>55</sup> Kitty attended many members of the Stowey Female Friendly Society; Correspondence and documents received by the Home Office, Evidence of Kitty Walker (p. 451) and James Franklin Waites (p. 443) sent by Weale to the PLC, December 1837, TNA HO73/52/62.

<sup>56</sup> BPP 1837-38 (531) Bridgwater Inquiry, interview of Charles Locock M.D., (Physician and Accoucheur of Bridgwater), p. 981.



castor oil, senna tea and some hot towels to aid her recovery. Charlotte was certain she should be seen by the medical officer and tried to relay her message to another person, Betty Woolley, who was going to see Mr. Waites for some bread.<sup>57</sup> Betty failed to pass on the details of Charlotte's illness, and Waites subsequently claimed it would be 'indelicate for me to ask Questions.' Waites suggested that Betty went to his wife to explain, after which Mrs. Waites and Betty went to see Charlotte.<sup>58</sup> In the meantime, Kitty had spoken to Mr. Waites which reinforced her opinion that nothing was especially wrong with Charlotte. Mr. Waites did not, therefore, send for a surgeon. Several days later, Charlotte sent another message from her bed, and a medical man, Mr. Ruddock from Stowey, was finally sent. Mr. Ruddock visited Charlotte that Wednesday night, but he did not examine her until the following morning. It was only on this examination that Charlotte was told the extent of her injuries. Mr. Ruddock then notified Mr. King, another medical man, and from then on visited her regularly. This was because the womb needed to be constantly 'replaced' as it 'protruded by some little Exertion on her part.'<sup>59</sup> The type of injury sustained by Charlotte was fairly common, although it was rare for this injury to be so bad on the birth of a woman's first child.<sup>60</sup> According to Mr. Locock, another medical man, Charlotte was 'for many Months [after the birth]...constantly in pain, suffering from very distressing and painful Sensations'.<sup>61</sup>

Whilst Charlotte had developed a life-long but not life-threatening illness, there were two fatalities in the union. One of the four paupers Caswell was instructed not to attend, George Reynold's child, died.<sup>62</sup> Little information has been found about the circumstances surrounding his death, however, the fatality

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<sup>57</sup> These were administered by her co-lodger and nurse Mary Date; Correspondence and documents received by the Home Office, Weale to the PLC, December 1837, TNA HO73/52/62; BPP 1837-38 (531) Bridgwater Inquiry, interview of Charlotte Allen, p. 942; BPP 1837-38 (531) Bridgwater Inquiry, interview of Mary Waites, p. 449; BPP 1837-38 (531) Bridgwater Inquiry, interview of Kitty Walker, p. 451.

<sup>58</sup> BPP 1837-38 (531) Bridgwater Inquiry, interview of James Franklin Waites, p. 772; Correspondence and documents received by the Home Office, Evidence of James Franklin Waites sent by Weale to the PLC, December 1837, TNA HO73/52/62, p. 444.

<sup>59</sup> BPP 1837-38 (531) Bridgwater Inquiry, interview of Charles Locock, p. 980.

<sup>60</sup> Charles Locock said that Medical Men and midwives have 'met the same Accident' on the birth of a woman's first child 'though rarely to this Extent', BPP 1837-38 (531) Bridgwater Inquiry, p. 981.

<sup>61</sup> BPP 1837-38 (531) Bridgwater Inquiry, interview of Charles Locock M.D., p. 980.

<sup>62</sup> The Medical Association, 'Facts Connected with the Medical Relief', p. 18; Correspondence and documents received by the Home Office Evidence of John Stagg, 1 December 1837, TNA HO73/52/62, p. 457.

of John Cook is well detailed. John lived at Pig Cross and had been suffering from croup. One morning, Lucretia Cook was anxious about her child's health and left the house to obtain an order. Mr. Newman asked her about her circumstances, presumably to gauge her need for medical relief, and Lucretia explained that although her husband was a shoemaker, he did not always have work. Lucretia later stated 'I recollect telling him...I was very poor, and in great Distress, and not able to pay a Doctor; and that I had before been attended by a Parish Doctor.' Mr. Newman informed her that she must pay for private medical assistance. Lucretia immediately pawned her son's jacket (for 3s) and found Mr. King, who was not at home, only to hear that he charged 5s for a week's worth of attendance. Lucretia rushed to pawn a gun (for 4s). At eleven o'clock she saw Mr. Parker, a local medical man, and asked him to see her son. Parker gave her medicine, free of charge, and asked her to pass a note onto Newman.<sup>63</sup> The letter stressed that John was '*literally dying for want of surgical assistance*'.<sup>64</sup> Newman took the note to the Board of Guardians and told Lucretia to visit him half an hour afterwards. After Newman had attended the Board, Mrs. Ware (Lucretia's neighbour) went to the 'Hall' (supposedly where the Board had met) and had a note for Lucretia stating that Mr. King would attend John.<sup>65</sup> Mr. King finally arrived that afternoon and visited on several occasions. During this time John's illness had advanced and he died that evening.<sup>66</sup>

The Board's desire to keep the union purse-strings tight had fatal consequences for the medical officers as well as medical relief claimants. After the medical officers had worked, temporarily, for the union for three weeks, their bills were sent into the Board. The Guardians decided not to keep to their word by paying the medical officers on a case-by-case basis as had been agreed. On Friday the 27 October, the Board voted, by a majority of one, to pay a proportion of the bills based on their previous salaries, working out the cost of three weeks' pay.<sup>67</sup> It

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<sup>63</sup> BPP 1837-38 (531) Bridgwater Inquiry, Copy of affidavit in interview of J. Toogood, p. 761.

<sup>64</sup> The Medical Association, 'Facts Connected with the Medical Relief', p. 10.

<sup>65</sup> In the meantime, the relieving officer went into the Cook's house, saw the child and left without speaking to anyone, probably to assess John's need for medical relief. This illustrates the Board of Guardians' inability to trust Parker's opinion.

<sup>66</sup> BPP 1837-38 (531) Bridgwater Inquiry, Copy of affidavit in interview of J. Toogood, pp. 761-762.

<sup>67</sup> The Medical Association, 'Facts Connected with the Medical Relief', p. 24.

transpired that a very small proportion of Caswell's bill had been reimbursed.<sup>68</sup> Some of the Guardians had anticipated the consequences of their actions, and immediately declared that they would defend any legal actions brought against the Board. The following week, Caswell was 'in a State of the greatest Excitement', believing that 'the Guardians had taken advantage of his Poverty'.<sup>69</sup> He could not afford to take legal action against the Guardians being nearly bankrupt from attending more poor than he had intended to, a function of the size of his district, and also having worn out two horses in the process. Caswell committed suicide, his body being found on 4 November.<sup>70</sup>

Caswell's suicide did not mark the end of the problems within the Bridgwater Union. A medical man who was appointed to attend the poor of the Bridgwater workhouse from July 1837, Mr. John Rodney Ward, had lied about his qualifications. He claimed he had obtained a qualification in the Netherlands at Leiden University, but it transpired that he left before the course finished.<sup>71</sup> Unsurprisingly, in 1838 he was convicted at the Wells Assizes Court for botching a surgical procedure.<sup>72</sup> There was a similar trial in the Kingston Union (Surrey) but, according to Hodgkinson, such cases were rare, medical men usually being only reprimanded by the Guardians.<sup>73</sup> That the Bridgwater Medical Association was hostile towards Ward, may have had a factor in Ward's prosecution.<sup>74</sup> However, after the trial, Ward was astonishingly reappointed for a second year. When a 'more moderate' set of Guardians were elected in 1839 his contract was not renewed.<sup>75</sup>

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<sup>68</sup> Caswell's bill was £92 and his payment was £40.

<sup>69</sup> BPP 1837-38 (531) Bridgwater Inquiry, interview of J. Toogood, p. 750.

<sup>70</sup> He was married and had three children, 'Report of the Poor-Law Committee, 1840', *Provincial Medical and Surgical Journal*, Volume 1, issue 13, 26 December 1841, p. 213.

<sup>71</sup> BPP 1837-38 (531) Bridgwater Inquiry, interview of R.J. Ward, pp.1085-1144. He was a Licentiate of the Society of Apothecaries only.

<sup>72</sup> *The Times*, 9 August 1838, cited in Buchanan, 'John Bowen', p. 188.

<sup>73</sup> Ruth Hodgkinson, *The Origins of the National Health Service: The Medical Services of the New Poor Law, 1834-1871* (London, 1967), p. 26.

<sup>74</sup> BPP 1837-38 (531) Bridgwater Inquiry, interview of J.R. Ward, p. 1101.

<sup>75</sup> 'Report of the Poor-Law Committee, 1840', *Provincial Medical and Surgical Journal*, Volume 1, issue 13, 26 December 1841, p. 213.

### 7.1.3 Inquiries and impacts

The events at Bridgwater highlighted many of the fundamental problems with medical relief provision under the early New Poor Law. The competitive tendering desired by the Guardians, and permitted by the Assistant Commissioners, meant that a medical man's willingness to accept low wages, rather than his skills, was a prerequisite to his employment. This drive for economy led to temporary case-by-case payments, hiring unsuitable people to act as medical officers, the founding of large medical districts and, ultimately, the retrenchment of medical relief. As Butler and Drakeford have demonstrated, a scandal could not simply derive from such policy stipulations. A scandal *develops* from 'unanticipated exposure, followed by disapproval' following events created by policy decisions.<sup>76</sup> The events at Bridgwater were made public in a range of publications. In November 1837 the Bridgwater Medical Association wrote a pamphlet summarising their negotiations with the Board of Guardians and their subsequent broken promises. The medical men emphasised their inadequate pay, the temporary measures orchestrated by the Board, and the sufferings of the claimants.<sup>77</sup> They also detailed Charlotte's case, although the facts were exaggerated. Indeed, the pamphlet states that she was suffering from puerperal fever although Charlotte herself did not acknowledge that she had suffered from the disease.<sup>78</sup> Just nine days after the pamphlet was published, it was re-printed in *The Times*.<sup>79</sup> News of the medical relief problems, combined with earlier news of overcrowding in the Bridgwater workhouse, had led to greater awareness of Bridgwater as a troubled union.<sup>80</sup>

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<sup>76</sup> Butler and Drakeford, *Scandal*, p. 223.

<sup>77</sup> The Medical Association, 'Facts Connected with the Medical Relief', pp. 7-8.

<sup>78</sup> This is a disease which 'affected women within the first three days after childbirth and progressed rapidly, causing acute symptoms of severe abdominal pain, fever and debility', C. Hallett, 'The Attempt to Understand Puerperal Fever in the Eighteen and Early Nineteenth Centuries: The Influence of Inflammation Theory', *Medical History*, 49 (2005), p. 1. Charlotte did not mention suffering from puerperal fever in her Select Committee interview. She did, however, mention breastfeeding her child. It was uncommon for mothers suffering from the disease to breastfeed in case it passed onto the child, BPP 1837-38 (531) Bridgwater Inquiry, interview of Charlotte Allen, p. 944.

<sup>79</sup> *The Times*, 22 November 1837; reprinted in G.R. Wythen Baxter, *The Book of The Bastilles, or The History of the Working of the New Poor-Law* (London, 1841), pp. 477-480.

<sup>80</sup> In addition, a petition had been received by the House of Lords from the 'Bridgwater Members of College of Surgeons' which was critical of the administration of medical relief

In March 1838, the Bridgwater Guardians sent a petition to the government expressing their support to the New Poor Law. Although this action was commended by the Poor Law Commission, it was unable to stop public curiosity.<sup>81</sup> The same month, Lord Wharncliffe, a Tory, felt that it was time to investigate what he thought were unfounded allegations about the maladministration of the Amendment Act. There were several cases which had caught his attention, for which he thought papers should be requested and pursued. First, accusations had been made by General Johnson, a magistrate and ex-officio Guardian, about the operation of the New Poor Law in the Bourne Union (Lincolnshire). Wharncliffe was angered that Johnson had ‘take[n] facts on mere hearsay, and not to institute anything like a sufficient investigation’. Second, in the West Riding of Yorkshire, where there had been much ‘violence and outrage’, Clergyman Bull had spoken at public meetings with stories of great cruelty resulting from the new welfare system. While these two cases were not, as far as he was concerned, based on fact, Wharncliffe thought there were several other cases from which he ‘did not think the working of the Poor-law was altogether satisfactory’ and perhaps ‘some alteration should be made in the Act’. It was in this context that knowledge of the events at Bridgwater reached Parliament. According to Wharncliffe, two issues needed investigation, sickness in the poorhouse and the allocation of medical officers. Bowen and his writings were also mentioned. After the Poor Law Commission completed their own investigations, Wharncliffe thought ‘it was his duty to move their Lordships for a Committee to inquire into all those transactions’ as both the circumstances of the Bridgwater Union and actions of the Commissioners appeared unsatisfactory. Lastly, he brought forward the case of a family who wanted to place their children in the Hungerford Union workhouse (Berkshire). Somerset House did not allow such an arrangement as it was tantamount to relief in aid of wages, a position which Wharncliffe thought was most inflexible.

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to the poor; BPP 1837-38 (531) Bridgwater Inquiry, Appendix 5 ‘Abstract of Petitions on the Poor Law presented during Session 1837’, see fifth division, p. 46.

<sup>81</sup> Bridgwater Union, Minute Book, 23 March 1838, SRO D\G\BW/8a/2; Letter, Clerk (Bridgwater Union) to Poor Law Commission, MH12/10244, cited in Buchanan, ‘John Bowen’, p. 193.

Whilst Prime Minister Melbourne thought this an overreaction to several operational problems, and others saw this as a chance to push for the repeal of the Amendment Act itself, the Lords agreed for the papers to be requested. The Earl of Radnor moved for the papers relating to the sickness and dietary in the Dudley Union to be examined, showing further support for the enquiries. This did not mean that the other House was not proceeding with its own investigations. A Commons Select Committee was already underway, to 'Inquire into the Administration of the Relief of the Poor', but according to Wharncliffe it had done little more than collect minutes of evidence from the Poor Law Commissioners themselves.<sup>82</sup>

By the following May, a Select Committee was appointed in the House of Lords with Wharncliffe as Chair, commencing their investigations in March 1838. Regardless of the fact that the inquiry was triggered by many cases of maladministration, the majority of their time was occupied with examining the events at Bridgwater. 787 pages of the 1312 page report consisted of minutes of evidence taken from those involved in the Bridgwater Scandal alone. Key individuals, including Weale, Bowen, in addition to medical and relieving officers and relief claimants from the Bridgwater Union, were interviewed at length. It was only during these investigations that the full extent and state of medical administration in the union had been revealed.<sup>83</sup> At the end of their investigations, the Committee found the evidence to be inconclusive and did not allocate blame to any one party. Yet, this did not mean the contents were of little importance.

Bridgwater also featured within the 1837-8 Commons' Select Committee, the Committee which Wharncliffe had previously been critical of. Although this Committee had initially interviewed each Assistant on the implementation of the new welfare regime, they moved on to explore a number of policy themes.<sup>84</sup> According to the Poor Law Commissioners, medical relief was '[o]ne of the most

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<sup>82</sup> Lord Wharncliffe, House of Lords, 26 March 1838, *Hansard's Parliamentary Debates*, volume 41, cc 1217-1218, 1224-1225 and 1248-1249.

<sup>83</sup> This was the view of J. Toogood; *The Times*, 26 January 1841.

<sup>84</sup> This Select Committee produced a total of 49 reports.

important subjects considered'.<sup>85</sup> The Committee's 'Medical Inquiry', as they called it, began in July 1838, overlapping with the Lords' investigations into Bridgwater.<sup>86</sup> In order to gauge the opinions of those who had experience and knowledge relating to providing medical relief, the Committee interviewed 'several gentlemen connected with that profession'.<sup>87</sup> These included the secretary of the PMSA, Mr. Rumsey, and the president of the British Medical Association (BMA) and long-standing editor of *The Lancet*, Dr. Webster. Ten other men, who either represented medical men in local medical associations, or had acted as medical officers were also selected. It was no coincidence then that Jonathan Toogood, the chairman of the Bridgwater Medical Association, was called upon to give evidence.

Toogood was considered by the Committee to be a man of 'great experience'.<sup>88</sup> He had been a surgeon all of his professional life and had spent 25 years working in the Bridgwater Infirmary. He was also employed as a parish doctor prior to the formation of the Bridgwater Union. His opinions on the organisation and current state of medical relief were unsurprising, considering the recent events at Bridgwater. Toogood thought that allocating large medical districts was problematic.<sup>89</sup> He suggested that medical officers should reside near or in their districts, and that medical officers should be familiar with the neighbourhood in which they practised.<sup>90</sup> He also believed there should be 'a fixed salary for the fixed paupers', rather than any tendering or allowing payments 'per case'.<sup>91</sup> Toogood thus conveyed the views of the Bridgwater Medical Association at a national level. That they were similar to the national medical practitioners' associations, the PMSA and the BMA, must have helped his

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<sup>85</sup> Appendix A.6, 'Letter Accompanying General Medical Order', Eighth Annual Report of the Poor Law Commissioners (London, 1842), p. 138.

<sup>86</sup> Bridgwater inquiry was held from March-July 1838; the medical inquiry was held from July 1838. BPP 1837-38 (518) Forty-fourth, forty-fifth and forty-sixth reports from Select Committee on the Poor Law Amendment Act; with the minutes of evidence, and appendixes. (Medical inquiry.) [herein BPP (528) 1837-8 Medical Inquiry]

<sup>87</sup> BPP (528) 1837-8 Medical Inquiry, 'Report from the Select Committee on the Poor Law Amendment Act', p. 22.

<sup>88</sup> BPP (528) 1837-8 Medical Inquiry, 'Report from the Select Committee on the Poor Law Amendment Act', p. 23.

<sup>89</sup> Districts of 4 or 5 miles in diameter were thought to be satisfactory by Toogood; BPP (528) 1837-8 Medical Inquiry, interview of J. Toogood, p. 367.

<sup>90</sup> BPP (528) 1837-8 Medical Inquiry, interview of J. Toogood, BPP 1837-8 Medical Inquiry, pp. 368-369.

<sup>91</sup> BPP (528) 1837-8 Medical Inquiry, interview of J. Toogood, p. 370.

case. The national associations sent a joint petition to the Commons during the Medical Inquiry, asking for medical relief stipulations. The Committee agreed with their analysis, positing that there were two main deficiencies in medical relief administration:

that the medical districts, in some instances, seem to be inconveniently large...and that the remuneration should be such as to insure the proper attention and the best medicines.<sup>92</sup>

Although the Committee did not themselves stipulate any particular policies, 'the introduction of these and other alterations' was left 'to the discretion of the Poor Law Commissioners.'<sup>93</sup> Instead of making immediate, rash decisions over the medical policy, the Commission wanted to gather further information about the ways in which Guardians providing medical relief.

The following year, the Commission instructed the Assistant Poor Law Commissioners to make detailed reports about medical relief provision in their districts.<sup>94</sup> The Assistants were directed to document how the medical officers were selected, whether they tendered for positions, how medical officers were paid, the size of each district, whether any dissatisfaction had arisen relating to medical relief and what types of individuals or families were being provided with medical relief.<sup>95</sup> Bridgwater, unsurprisingly, did not receive a sparkling report. Bridgwater's new Assistant Commissioner, Daniel Goodson Adey, had already written to the commission explaining '[t]he business of this Union appears to be done in a less satisfactory manner *any* I've visited'.<sup>96</sup> Adey's district contained 35 unions, so clearly that Bridgwater's medical relief provision was still flawed. This did not mean that everything was ticking over nicely in every other place under

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<sup>92</sup> BPP (528) 1837-8 Medical Inquiry, 'Report from the Select Committee on the Poor Law Amendment Act', p. 25.

<sup>93</sup> Appendix A.6, 'Letter Accompanying General Medical Order', Eighth Annual Report of the Poor Law Commissioners (London, 1842), p. 138.

<sup>94</sup> 21 February 1839.

<sup>95</sup> Appendix B. 6. 'Commissioners' Circular to Assistant Commissioners, calling for Reports', E. Chadwick (PLC) to Assistant Poor Law Commissioners, 21 February 1839; Report on the Further Amendment of the Poor Laws (London, 1839), p. 157.

<sup>96</sup> 'Quarterly Summary of Unions visited, &c. during the Quarter ended 30<sup>th</sup> day of December 1838', TNA MH32/6; the visit was on the 16 November 1838. My emphasis. In another quarterly report 30 July 1839 he notes that Bridgwater is 'still far from what is desirable', TNA MH32/6. For details about his district, see Adey to PLC, 4 October 1838, TNA MH32/6; Appendix A.6, 'Medical Relief: -Reports of the Arrangements of affording Medical Relief', 'Reports of Assistant Commissioners', 'D.G. Adey, Esq. - Counties of Somerset, Gloucester, Wilts, Dorset', Report in the Further Amendment of the Poor Laws, p. 158.



his superintendence. In 10 of Adey's unions, medical officers were unhappy with the size of their medical districts and the medical men of 14 unions were dissatisfied with their salaries. In addition, the Guardians of three unions and the poor of two were not satisfied with the attendance or efficiency of the medical officers.<sup>97</sup>

Before a deputation of men from the BMA had met with the Commission, similar reports were being drafted by the other Assistant Commissioners across England and Wales. The Commissioners gave the men a copy of the survey recently issued to their Assistant Commissioners and asked them for any further thoughts they had on medical relief beyond those discovered in the 'Medical Inquiry'.<sup>98</sup> The following month, another deputation of the Association met with the Commissioners, this time to specifically complain that the system of tendering had continued. The Commission decided not to issue any immediate policies.<sup>99</sup> A couple of days later the BMA president, Webster, presented a comprehensive 'Report and Plans for an Amended System of Parochial Medical Relief', which was soon to be discussed between the deputation, the Commissioners and the Home Secretary.<sup>100</sup> The recent medical relief problems, however, could not be forgotten by the Commission. During their meeting, the BMA drew on examples of bad practice from all over England and Wales to argue their points. Bridgwater featured at least twice. In relation to the objectionable practice of tendering and how, specifically, the lowest tender was taken in opposition to 'character, personal qualification, and residence' they referred to cases of maladministration at 'Aylesbury, Wallingford, Eastry, Hambledon, Ongar, Penshurst, Wheatenhurst, Leighton Buzzard, the Bridgewater [sic] and other Unions'.<sup>101</sup> In relation to the inadequate skills possessed by men appointed by the Boards of Guardians, the deputation made reference to the cases in the

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<sup>97</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 159.

<sup>98</sup> Article about the 'British Medical Association', *The Lancet*, 9 March 1839, p. 886.

<sup>99</sup> Article about the 'British Medical Association', 'Half-Yearly Meeting', *The Lancet*, April 1839, pp. 90-91.

<sup>100</sup> Article about the 'British Medical Association, Tuesday April 9<sup>th</sup> 1839 Meeting of Council', *The Lancet*, 6 April 1839, pp. 120-121.

<sup>101</sup> Question 14,891; Appendix B. 6, 'Communications from a Deputation from the Council of the British Medical Association' Letter British Medical Association (Dulwich) to Poor Law Commission, 1 April 1839, Report on the Further Amendment of the Poor Laws (London, 1839), p. 281.

‘Bridgwater and Kingston Union[s], as evinced by actions at law and verdicts of juries.’<sup>102</sup>

Notwithstanding that summaries of the Assistant’s reports were published at the end of 1839 in the Commission’s *Report on the Further Amendment on the Poor Laws*, it took another two years for any policy stipulations to be enforced.<sup>103</sup> This delay was not in any way related to being unable to make policies, but rather an anxiety of the Commission not to dictate over the localities. In March 1840, the Commission issued a circular letter to Guardians calling for ‘their suggestions in this Report [...on the Further Amendment...]’ to be considered.<sup>104</sup> The Commission, in their Seventh Annual Report, pessimistically admitted that ‘no extensive change in the existing [medical relief] arrangements were likely to originate with the Boards of Guardians.’<sup>105</sup> Much ‘dissatisfaction continued to prevail amongst many members of the medical profession’ and pressure on the Commission for reforms continued to be exerted.<sup>106</sup>

The Commission finally released compulsory and legally-binding policies on 12 March 1842. Known as the General Medical Order, it took effect from March 1843 (Appendix 8). There were seven main sections to the Order, each on different aspects of medical administration. The first addressed the problems of setting salaries but made it unlawful for Boards of Guardians to invite tenders. Rather, if a vacancy arose for a medical officer in a union, the Board had to specify the salary he would receive alongside a list of the places he would have to visit. Any salary given to an officer in an alternative manner would be disallowed

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<sup>102</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 283

<sup>103</sup> Report on the Further Amendment of the Poor Laws (London, 1839).

<sup>104</sup> Appendix A.6, ‘Letter Accompanying General Medical Order’, Eighth Annual Report of the Poor Law Commissioners (London, 1842), p. 138; circular letter dated 6 March 1841.

<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 139; Details of these responses can be found in ‘Seventh Annual Report to the Most Noble Marquess of Normandy, Her Majesty’s Principal Secretary of State for the Home Department’, J.G. Shaw Lefevre, G. Nicholls and G. Cornewall Lewis, 1 May 1841, Seventh Annual Report of the Poor Law Commissioners (London, 1841), pp. 8-14.

<sup>106</sup> Appendix A. 6, ‘Letter Accompanying General Medical Order’, Poor Law Commission to Clerk of the Guardians of Unions, 12 March 1842, Eighth Annual Report of the Poor Law Commissioners (London, 1842), p. 139; ‘Parochial Medical Relief’, *Provincial Medical and Surgical Journal*, Volume 1, issue 22, 27 February 1841, p. 361. Also an association sent another petition to the government and details of medical relief sagas, including the Bridgwater Scandal, were published in the PMSA Journal, see ‘Report of the Poor-Law Committee, 1840’ in Volume 1, issue 10, 5 December 1840, pp. 166-168; Volume 1, issue 11, 12 December 1840, pp. 184-187; Volume 1, issue 12, 19 December 1841, pp. 197-199; Volume 1, issue 13, 26 December 1841, pp. 209-213; Volume 1, issue 14, 2 January 1841, pp. 228-230.

in the union accounts and the Guardians would personally become responsible for the cost.<sup>107</sup> The Order also stipulated that the medical officers should have both medical and surgical qualifications.<sup>108</sup> By Lady Day 1843, medical officers were not permitted to attend districts larger than 15,000 acres in size or containing populations of more than 15,000.<sup>109</sup> A fourth theme in the Order sets out a list of payments per case, but only for particular procedures. The medical officer could claim £5, in addition to their normal salary, for several types of operation, such as amputations. The medical officer would also receive an extra £3 per case for the treatment of simple fractures of the thigh or leg and just £1 for a fracture of the arm. For each case of midwifery the medical officer was to receive between 10 and 20 shillings, and £2 for difficult deliveries.<sup>110</sup>

The next section of the General Medical Order ensured that a union could check whether a patient had been visited and also that someone was always present to attend the sick within each district. Every officer was instructed to keep a weekly return which should include the date of a visit to a pauper and their name. In addition, within 21 days of a new officer's appointment, he should provide the Guardians with the name of a substitute who would act on his behalf during absence or illness.<sup>111</sup> Guardians were instructed to create a list of 'permanent paupers' every six months, including 'all such aged and infirm persons, and persons permanently sick or disabled, as may be actually receiving [outdoor] relief'. With a ticket, these poor were allowed to see a medical officer without gaining the prior permission of a relieving officer.<sup>112</sup> The final theme of the Order relates to the continuance of medical officers, indicating that they should only lose their duties if they resigned, became disqualified by the Commission or died.<sup>113</sup>

As Hodgkinson suggests, the policies closely follow the ideas of the medical men, and in particular Webster's report presented to the Commission in

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<sup>107</sup> Articles 1 and 2.

<sup>108</sup> Articles 3 and 4.

<sup>109</sup> Articles 6 and 7.

<sup>110</sup> Articles 10-13.

<sup>111</sup> Articles 14 and 15.

<sup>112</sup> Quote from article 16; rules of articles 16 and 17.

<sup>113</sup> Article 20.

1839.<sup>114</sup> The policies were inspired by and developed out of the medical relief problems experienced at the local level, including the events which culminated in the Bridgwater Scandal. These stipulations were evidently important in the development of medical relief during the New Poor Law, but adherence to the Order was another matter.

#### **7.1.4 The implementation of the General Medical Order**

The fact that the Orders had been issued did not mean that the practices altered instantaneously. Issued on March 12 1842, the Order was supposed to take effect by Lady Day in the following year, the Commission factoring in ample time to advise Boards of Guardians about its contents.<sup>115</sup> The Commissioners used the Boards' 1842 sanction requests to warn the Guardians of the new policies. For instance, in 1841, the Dulverton (Somerset) Guardians had only divided their union into two medical districts. In the following year the union was re-divided into three districts, but although these districts had very small populations they had far exceeded the maximum acreage stipulated in the Order.<sup>116</sup> The Commission therefore requested that the Guardians again redivide their union.<sup>117</sup> Whilst all unions had already received the documents containing the Order itself in 1842, the Commission was making sure that the stipulations of the Order had been read.

Although plenty of time had been allowed for the unions to adjust their practices, the General Medical Order had been applied with great difficulty and 'Guardians from all over the country demanded its suspension for their own Unions on one or several grounds.'<sup>118</sup> According to Hodgkinson, between 20 and 30 unions obtained a suspension within the first year of the Order's implementation. Hodgkinson, drawing upon the case of several northern towns and cities, thought that limiting the areas or population for the attendance of each

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<sup>114</sup> Hodgkinson, *The Origins of the National Health Service*, p. 14.

<sup>115</sup> The appointment of medical officers had to be sanctioned annually by the Commission, usually after each Lady Day.

<sup>116</sup> The districts were of 29,982 and 21,746 acres with populations of 2805 and 2222 respectively; Warren, Clerk (Dulverton Union) to PLC, 9 May 1842, TNA MH12/10346.

<sup>117</sup> PLC to Warren, Clerk (Dulverton), 3 June 1842, TNA MH12/10346.

<sup>118</sup> Hodgkinson, *The Origins of the National Health Service*, p. 15.

medical officer was problematic as there was ample charitable provision, including voluntary hospitals and dispensaries, to meet the needs of the poor.<sup>119</sup> In addition, in such urban areas there was no point in limiting the population allocated to each officer because they 'resided so close to the poor.' The system of extras for surgical or midwifery cases was ignored. Hodgkinson believed that the Guardians thought it had given medical relief recipients an unfair advantage over the independent labourer, deterring them from obtaining their own surgery and midwifery attendance. Sometimes there was simply a lack of resident medical officers, making the reduction of districts impossible. The ticket system did not work either. Referring to the Stepney Union, Hodgkinson argued that some unions did not adopt the practice because there were simply 'numerous claims constantly being made for urgent and pressing cases.' In addition, ticket distribution gave individuals an entitlement to medical relief which apparently encouraged applications for help.<sup>120</sup>

There appear to have been three main problems with implementing the Order in rural unions. Firstly, many unions had a low population density, meaning that the restriction of each medical district to 15,000 acres was problematic. The result would be a great number of medical officers, each one with a small wage, which was both unpopular with the medical men and inefficient for a union to administer. Some unions also contained vast expanses of unpopulated land, including woodlands and forests. The Wimborne and Cranborne Union (Dorset), for example, contained a segment of Cranborne Chase. The total acreage of the union was 78,358 with a population of 15,793. Although the union was divided into four districts, each one exceeded the maximum acreage stipulated in the General Order. So eager were the Guardians to conform to the Order that they corresponded with their eastwardly neighbouring unions, Ringwood and Fordingbridge, asking whether they could take charge of medical attendance on the Chase.<sup>121</sup>

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<sup>119</sup> Derby, Sheffield, Leeds, Manchester and Liverpool, Hodgkinson, *The Origins of the National Health Service*, p. 14.

<sup>120</sup> Hodgkinson, *The Origins of the National Health Service*, pp. 15 and 27.

<sup>121</sup> Parker, Clerk (Wimborne and Cranborne Union) to PLC, 26 July 1843, TNA MH12/2913.

As Hodgkinson suggests, there was an increase in the number of medical officers 'by a few hundred every year' after 1843 which indicated 'the desired effect of diminishing the size of medical districts'.<sup>122</sup> Yet a lack of medical men in rural locations meant that large medical districts *had* to be accepted. One medical district in the Mere Union (consisting of parishes from Wiltshire, Dorset and Somerset), which had covered parts of the Wiltshire Downs, was large simply because there were no other resident medical men.<sup>123</sup> The Commission had to simply accept that even if the district was divided in two, no one could fill the vacancy.<sup>124</sup> Even if medical men were in residence, they were sometimes deemed unsuitable to perform the role of a medical officer. In 1844 the Commission heard how one medical officer, appointed by the South Stoneham Union, had practised as a medical officer for three years with just one of the two required qualifications.<sup>125</sup> Thirdly, the 'ticket' system did not always work because rather than there being a plethora of cases to attend, there were too few. For instance, the Kingsclere Guardians (Hampshire) reported that as 'all the paupers here were known to the medical officers' so the provision of tickets was futile.<sup>126</sup>

Although the Commission wanted all unions to follow the stipulations of the Order, they used their discretionary powers to sanction deviations where implementing the stipulations proved difficult. Whether these deviations were detrimental to the health of the medical claimants within these unions is, however, open to question. Nevertheless, for the first time in poor law history, medical relief standards had been set.

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<sup>122</sup> Hodgkinson, *The Origins of the National Health Service*, p. 15.

<sup>123</sup> Snook, Clerk (Mere Union) to PLC, 15 February 1844, TNA MH12/13820.

<sup>124</sup> PLC to Snook, Clerk (Mere Union) to PLC, 19 February 1844, TNA MH12/13820.

<sup>125</sup> Stephen Stranger only had a Royal College of Surgeons qualification, Patterson, Clerk (South Stoneham Union) to PLC, 3 May 1844, TNA MH12/11037. The union had obviously trusted him in his duties, but they realised he only had one of qualifications the Commission desired. The position was re-advertised in local newspapers.

<sup>126</sup> Holding, Clerk (Kingsclere Union) to PLC, 4 February 1845, TNA MH12/10854; although the Commission stipulated that tickets must be issued, PLC to Holding, Clerk (Kingsclere Union), 12 February 1845, TNA MH12/10854.

## 7.2 Workhouse employment policy and the Andover Scandal

### 7.2.1 Workhouse employment and bone-crushing practice

A key component of the deterrent workhouse system was setting the poor to work. Initially though, the Commission spent more of their time considering how unions should employ the poor *outside* of the workhouse, rather than inside. Indeed, in 1835 they issued a circular letter to all unions containing ‘Suggestions as to the most eligible Modes of providing Out-door Employment for Able-bodied Paupers..’.<sup>127</sup> Such advice was needed for several reasons. Some unions, especially in Wales and the north of England, resisted building or expanding their workhouses on ideological or financial grounds.<sup>128</sup> The workhouse system did not suit, it was argued, the cyclical unemployment experienced in the industrial towns and cities.<sup>129</sup> Southern unions also lacked workhouses, but in unions such as Dulverton (Somerset) this was due to the low population rather than resistance to the New Poor Law. The Commission desired all unions to provide task work which should have ‘discourage[d] applications’ and to be devoid of corruption by local landowners and farmers.<sup>130</sup> Even in unions where the poor were accommodated within workhouses, the Guardians refused to employ the poor indoors. For instance, in the Huddersfield Union in 1843, the poor continued to work in stone quarries and on parish roads. According to Driver, this reflected the ‘localism’ maintained by the Guardians, so the poor’s labour would benefit the parish rather than the union as a whole.<sup>131</sup>

Gradually, unions with fully functioning workhouses were issued with ‘Special Orders’ prohibiting the provision of outdoor relief, and in 1844 the

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<sup>127</sup> Appendix A.1, ‘Suggestions as to the most eligible Modes of providing Out-door Employment for Able-bodied Paupers, in Cases where there is not an efficient Workhouse, and preparatory to the Establishment of the Workhouse System’, 21 September 1835, Second Annual Report of the Poor Law Commissioners (London, 1836), pp. 45-48.

<sup>128</sup> A. Brundage, *The English Poor Laws, 1700-1930* (Basingstoke, 2002), p. 79. Brundage recommends examples including N. Edsall, *The Anti-Poor Law Movement, 1834-44* (Manchester, 1971); G. Hagen, ‘Women and Poverty in South-West Wales, 1834-1914’, *Llafur. Journal of Welsh Labour History*, 7 (1998-9), 21-33.

<sup>129</sup> G. Boyer, *An Economic History of the Poor Law, 1750-1850* (Cambridge, 1990), p. 261.

<sup>130</sup> Appendix A.1, ‘Circular of Suggestions respecting the Employment of Able-bodied Paupers’, Second Annual Report of the Poor Law Commissioners (London, 1836) p. 45.

<sup>131</sup> F. Driver, *Power and Pauperism: The Workhouse System 1834-1884* (Cambridge, 1993), p. 141.

General Outdoor Relief Prohibitory Order was released. Yet, important clauses or 'loopholes' remained to permit outdoor relief 'in cases of sudden and urgent necessity'.<sup>132</sup> Outdoor relief could legitimately continue under the authorisation of the Commission, and did so when many more people required relief than the union workhouse itself could accommodate. The slump in the stocking trade over the winter of 1837-38, for instance, forced the Commission to sanction outdoor relief in return for task-work on the roads in the Nottingham Union.<sup>133</sup> Destitution could also be caused by severe weather. In the February of 1840, for instance, wet weather had flooded land in the parish of Tadley (Hampshire), leaving several families destitute.<sup>134</sup> A decade later, such exemptions led to the development of another order, the Outdoor Labour Test Order (1851), which formalised the process by which many unions had been providing outdoor relief alongside task work. According to Brundage, it symbolised the Poor Law Board's belief that 'the 'less eligibility' principle could be honoured without compelling' the labouring poor 'to enter the workhouse'.<sup>135</sup>

The Commission spent less time agonising over work provided within the workhouse, notwithstanding that an elemental part of the workhouse regime was, as Brundage has asserted, the provision of 'monotonous and irksome tasks'.<sup>136</sup> This is not to say that the Commission did not promote the employment of inmates. In their 'Workhouse Rules', published in the First Annual Report, the Commission stipulated that work should benefit the union purse as a whole, that no inmate works 'on his own account', that work would be undertaken at particular times of the day, that no work 'except the usual household work and cooking' shall be undertaken on a Sunday and those who refused to work could be punished.<sup>137</sup> Although the domestic duties involved in running a workhouse were supposed to be 'performed by the female paupers', the Commission did not specify the other sorts of work the poor should undertake.<sup>138</sup> As Nicholls recalled,

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<sup>132</sup> K. Williams, *From Pauperism to Poverty* (London, 1981), p. 64.

<sup>133</sup> G. Nicholls, *History of the English Poor Law*, Volume 2: 1714-1853 (London, 1898), p. 329.

<sup>134</sup> Holding, Clerk (Kingsclere Union) to A'Court, 4 February 1840, TNA MH12/10853.

<sup>135</sup> Brundage, *The English Poor Laws*, p. 91.

<sup>136</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 80.

<sup>137</sup> Appendix A.9, 'Orders and Regulations to be observed in the Workhouse of the – Union.', First Annual Report of the Poor Law Commissioners, (London, 1835), pp. 96-110.

<sup>138</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 103-104, section XXIV, which outlines the duties of workhouse matrons.



the '[t]he kind of labour on which the inmates of the several workhouses should be employed, rested entirely with the boards of guardians'.<sup>139</sup> In consequence, the poor undertook a variety of tasks including stone-breaking alongside the lighter, but equally mundane, work of oakum-picking. A few Boards of Guardians encouraged 'local industries' in the workhouse; straw was plaited in Buckinghamshire, and fruit punnets were made in Kent.<sup>140</sup> The Commission was ambivalent though about the actual purpose of work in the workhouse. Whilst pauper labour could 'provide necessary articles for the workhouse', it was not supposed 'to be considered a punishment'.<sup>141</sup>

As chapter six revealed, the Assistant Commissioners of the south of England recommended bone-crushing to Boards of Guardians. Bone-crushing was portrayed to these unions as 'best practice' in a number of ways. Firstly, they believed it would deter individuals from entering the workhouse. As A'Court, writing to Somerset House regarding the recent increase in admissions in the Fareham Union workhouse, proclaimed:

I am very sorry to hear...that the dread of the Workhouse House is wearing off! - I have suggested the immediate introduction of such irksome work as may make it a less desirable abode for such as ought to earn their maintenance elsewhere. We must have a mill - bone crushers &c. &c.<sup>142</sup>

Boards of Guardians embraced this understanding too, claiming that the employment made the 'workhouse test' effective.<sup>143</sup> For instance, the Dorchester Union believed the employment deterred many vagrants who passed the workhouse while tramping on the adjacent 'high roads of communication'.<sup>144</sup> Secondly, bone-crushing did not, according to Tufnell, interfere with 'independent labourers' work' unlike '[s]tone breaking, faggot-making, and many

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<sup>139</sup> Nicholls, *A History of the English Poor Law*, p. 368.

<sup>140</sup> M.A. Crowther, *The Workhouse System 1834-1929* (Georgia, 1981), p. 198.

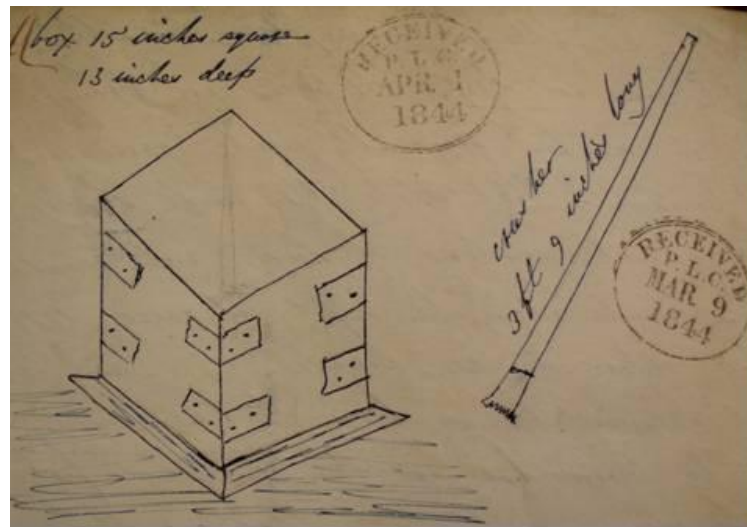
<sup>141</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 197.

<sup>142</sup> A'Court (Soton) to the PLC (Sir), 17 January 1837, TNA MH32/4.

<sup>143</sup> BPP 1846 (75) House of Commons Papers; Accounts and Papers. Poor law. Copy of any letter and general rule issued by the Poor Law Commissioners, relative to the employment of paupers in pounding, grinding, and otherwise breaking bones; &c. [herein BPP 1846 (75) House of Commons Papers], for instance, Copy of Stroud Union Minute, 8 November 1845, p. 45.

<sup>144</sup> BPP 1846 (75) House of Commons Papers, Copy of Dorchester Union Minute, 24 December 1845, p. 39.

Figure 7.2: Tufnell's sketch of a box and rod



Source: Tufnell to PLC, 21 February 1844, TNA MH 32/71.

other workhouse occupations'.<sup>145</sup> Later, this proved to be untrue, Chadwick reporting that 'bone-dust is a regular article of manufacture and private commerce'.<sup>146</sup> Thirdly, the Assistants demonstrated that a profit could be made from bone-crushing. Using the example of Beaminster, Tufnell claimed that this could be up to 15 per cent over the cost of the raw materials.<sup>147</sup> Unions were clearly receptive to the economically-minded arguments of the Assistants.

Bone-crushing was practised in several different ways. By far the most popular method was the iron rod and box, also referred to as a 'pestle and mortar' (Figure 7.2). The box was made of wood held together with iron brackets. The rod was either solid metal or had a metal end cast on a wooden handle.<sup>148</sup> One rod and box would be used by one inmate at a time. The number of boxes and rods purchased by Guardians therefore varied greatly from union to union. In some

<sup>145</sup> Tufnell to PLC, 21 February 1844, TNA MH 32/71. A copy can also be found in the Select Committee Minutes of Evidence of the Andover Union Inquiry.

<sup>146</sup> BPP 1846 (432) House of Commons Papers; Accounts and Papers. Bone-pounding. Copy of minute of the dissent of one of the Poor-Law Commissioners, on the subject of bone-crushing by paupers in workhouses; &c., 'Report of the Secretary of the Poor-Law Commissioners on Bone-Crushing' [herein BPP 1846 (432) House of Commons Papers], p. 10.

<sup>147</sup> Tufnell to PLC, 21 February 1844, TNA MH 32/71.

<sup>148</sup> Tufnell to PLC, 21 Feb. 1844, TNA MH 32/71. The rod was also called a 'bar', 'crusher', 'stamper', 'champer', 'rammer', 'hammer', 'pounder' and 'bruiser'.

unions just a hammer was beaten against a 'block', an 'iron plate' or even on bare ground.<sup>149</sup> Bone mills were also procured.<sup>150</sup> Groups of ten men would work the mill for twenty minutes at a time, while two employed men would embark on the dangerous task of supplying the mill with bones.<sup>151</sup> There were problems though. Erecting a mill came at a 'very considerable expense', whilst the fact that several men had to turn the wheel troubled Tufnell because it was tricky to 'apportion' work to each individual.<sup>152</sup>

The work was reserved for able-bodied men, male vagrants and the 'refractory'. Only the Andover Union is known to have also allocated the task to young boys.<sup>153</sup> Inmates so engaged were directed to crush a certain weight of bones per day. Due to the range of abilities within the category 'able-bodied', men of differing ability were not expected to crush the same weight of bones.<sup>154</sup> In 1843 the Warminster Guardians divided the men into two classes, each grinding a

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<sup>149</sup> Block at Eastborne, Lewes, Newhaven and Petworth; iron plate at Thakeham and Uckfield; bare ground at Chipping Norton, Stafford, West Firle and St. Albans.

<sup>150</sup> In Alton, Chertsey, Droxford, Guildford, Westhampnett. **Alton:** Alton Union, Minute Book, (minutes about getting the bone mill repaired) 2 September 1842 and 5 July 1844, HRO PL3/2/1, 31 October 1845, HRO PL3/2/2; (minute acknowledging the Commission's request for returns) 9 August 1844, HRO PL3/2/1; (minutes mentioning the sale of the bone mill) 3 and 6 April 1846, HRO PL3/2/2; copy of a letter, Bennett, Clerk (Mealbrook House, Alton) to PLC, 30 December 1845, BPP 1846 (75) House of Commons Papers, p. 19; **Chertsey:** Copy of letter, Smith, medical officer (Chertsey Union) to Guardians of Chertsey Union, 16 January 1846, BPP 1846 (75) House of Commons Papers, p. 28; **Droxford:** Droxford Union, Minute Book, (minutes about obtaining a bone mill) 23 and 30 January 1838, (minute about building a house for the bone mill) 20 March 1838, HRO PL3/7/2; (minute about purchasing 4 new plates for the bone mill) 3 March 1840, HRO PL3/7/3; **Guildford:** Copy of a letter, Grenville Pigott (3 Upper Brook Street) to PLC, BPP 1846 (75) House of Commons Papers, p. 19. **Westhampnett:** BPP 1846 (75) House of Commons Papers, Copy of a letter, Raper, Clerk (Westhampnett Union, Chichester) to PLC, 22 December 1845, p. 9.

<sup>151</sup> Copy of a letter, Grenville Pigott (3 Upper Brook Street) to PLC, BPP 1846 (75) House of Commons Papers, p. 45. The Chertsey Union operated their mill in a similar way, with two men whose official duty it was to both 'feed the hopper of the mill, and to sift the ground bones'; Copy of letter, Smith, medical officer (Chertsey Union) to Guardians of Chertsey Union, 16 January 1846, BPP 1846 (75) House of Commons Papers, p. 28.

<sup>152</sup> BPP 1846 (75) House of Commons Papers, Copy of a letter, Raper, Clerk (Westhampnett Union, Chichester) to PLC, 22 December 1845, p. 9. Examples include Fareham and Kingsclere: Fareham Union Minutes, 3 February 1837, HRO PL3/8/1; 10 and 24 August 1838, 7 and 21 September and 5 October 1838 HRO PL3/8/1a; Kingsclere Union Minutes, 21 November and 5 December 1837 and 2 January 1837, HRO PL3/11/2; Tufnell to PLC, 21 February 1844, MH32/71.

<sup>153</sup> I. Anstruther, *The Scandal of the Andover Workhouse*, second edition (Gloucester, 1984), p. 119.

<sup>154</sup> At the Hartley Wintney Union 'the labour is adapted according to age, strength, and constitution of the persons employed, it will be more beneficial than otherwise'; Copy of letter, Howard, medical officer (Hartley Wintney Union) to Guardians of Hartley Wintney Union, 12 January 1846, BPP 1846 (75) House of Commons Papers, p. 26.

different weight of bones. By the following year, three classes were created.<sup>155</sup> The weight of dust to be crushed also depended on the size of the sieve holes.<sup>156</sup>

Boards of Guardians believed that bone-crushing offered a useful way of controlling and – in direct opposition to the wishes of the Commission – punishing inmates. The Hartley Wintney Board believed that bone-crushing was a means ‘of keeping the idle and disorderly paupers in order’.<sup>157</sup> The Epping Board thought bone-crushing was a useful task for the refractory inmates who were very ‘difficult to deal with in the ordinary way’.<sup>158</sup>

### **7.2.2 Bone-Crushing controversy**

Regardless of the supposed benefits of this employment, bone-crushing was a contentious practice from the start of the New Poor Law (for a timeline of events, see Figure 7.3). Bone-crushing had been condemned at the national-level from the passage of the Amendment Act. In the House of Commons, anti-poor law speakers openly denounced this form of employment. Mr. Wakley MP, a fierce opponent of the New Poor Law, was keen to expose ‘a series of outrages’.<sup>159</sup> He always spoke passionately in the House of Commons against the New Poor Law. In a debate in 1841 Wakley stated:

[t]he law had originated with a set of Utilitarians...For them they would have gone on and ground the bones of the poor, and used them for manure if they thought it would enrich’ the soil.<sup>160</sup>

Whilst his words irritated pro-New Poor Law members sitting in that session, Wakley had described the workhouse system in a way which was hard to forget. This picture had also been painted in the media, albeit several years later. When

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<sup>155</sup> In 1843 the First Class would grind 84 pounds daily and the Second Class 70 pounds daily. The criteria for each class were to be decided by the Visiting Committee. This was only going to occur if the Visiting Committee gave the policy its sanction. The First Class was to grind 100 pounds of bone, the Second Class 84 pounds and Third 70 pounds daily, Warminster Union, Minute Book, 3 June 1844, WRO H15/110/7.

<sup>156</sup> In the Beaminster union, each man broke between 80 to 96 pounds daily in order for it to pass through a half-inch sieve, or between 40 to 50 pounds per day daily for a quarter-inch sieve; Tufnell to PLC, 21 February 1844, TNA MH32/71.

<sup>157</sup> Monk, Chairman (Hartley Wintney Union) to PLC, 3 January 1846, BPP 1846 (75) House of Commons Papers’, p. 25.

<sup>158</sup> Windus, Clerk (Epping Union) to PLC, 21 November 1845, BPP 1846 (75) House of Commons Papers, p. 56.

<sup>159</sup> *The Times*, Article on bone-crushing, 3 October 1845.

<sup>160</sup> T. Wakley, House of Commons, 28 September 1841, *Hansard*, volume 59, cc 978.

Figure 7.3: Workhouse employment policy and the Andover Scandal timeline

<i>Local</i>		<i>National</i>
Inmates resist bone-crushing employment (e.g. South Stoneham and Beaminster Unions)	1842	Bone-crushing condemned in <i>The Times</i>
Brooker publishes a pamphlet which includes the case of William Smith who became unwell whilst crushing bones in the Eastbourne Union workhouse		Pechell mentions Brooker and Smith in the Commons Debate with the Secretary of State, Sir James Graham, about the employment commences
Halifax Union ragmill discontinued	1843	Pechell brings the case of the Halifax ragmill to the Commons
	1844	Pechell moves for Returns on bone-crushing in workhouses
	1845	Pechell requests publication of the Returns  Returns on bone-crushing published
Returns revealed at least 105 unions were employing inmates in bone-crushing		
Mansfield Union treadmill discontinued		Duncombe brings the petition about the Mansfield treadwheel and Wakley brings the case of the Andover Union to the Commons and Sir James Graham initiates an inquiry Commission informs Parker to start inquiry
Parker investigates events at Andover Master and matron of the Andover Union resign		
At least 33 Boards of Guardians complain against the Order to the Commission		Commission release the General Order prohibiting the employment of inmates in workhouses of bone-crushing
13 unions officially permitted a suspension of the Order (Wincanton, Petworth, Westhampnett, West Firle, South Molton, Melksham, Alton, Guildford, Midhurst, Droxford, Hartley Wintney, Chertsey and Tisbury)		Sir James Graham permits 13 unions to continue bone-crushing until 1 April 1846
Most unions cease bone-crushing employment	1846	Etwall calls for a Select Committee inquiry into the operation of the Andover Union
Final 13 unions discontinue bone-crushing employment		

commenting on Lord John Russell's views that inmates who died within the workhouse could be buried on union land, *The Times* wrote:

their bones might have been made as available as horse bones at Andover, thus completing the process of transmigration by an inexhaustible series of production, decomposition, and reproduction eternally revolving in the same circle.<sup>161</sup>

Evidently, bone-crushing was thought to have been an arduous task, and those who condemned it used it to symbolise the corrosive nature of the welfare system on the lives of workhouse inmates more generally.

Whilst bone-crushing had been linked to oppression by anti-poor law figures and anti-poor law media, those who undertook the work were also discontented. Four male paupers in the South Stoneham Union 'positively refused to do their appointed task of Bone crushing'. The Guardians decided to obtain a warrant against the men from the magistrate for 'disobedience of Orders.'<sup>162</sup> In the following month another man who had refused to crush bones was also issued a warrant.<sup>163</sup> In the Beaminster Union, the workhouse punishment book reveals a number of similar cases. Many men refused to work, swore at work and annoyed their fellow inmates while at work.<sup>164</sup> The most violent act of protest recorded came from James Spacklin who, whilst working in the workhouse yard, picked up one of the bones and threw it at the infirmary window.<sup>165</sup>

Whilst the poor resisted bone-crushing and their complaints were contained within the union punishment system, one pauper's views made it to the national stage. In the February of 1842, Charles Brooker, a Chartist parliamentary candidate for Brighton in 1841, wrote an important pamphlet.<sup>166</sup> He was fiercely opposed to the New Poor Law, and expressed these views both in other

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<sup>161</sup> *The Times*, Article on bone-crushing, 8 October 1845.

<sup>162</sup> South Stoneham, Union Minute Book, 22 January 1840, SCRO D/AGF 1 1/1.

<sup>163</sup> South Stoneham, Union Minute Book, 18 March 1840, SCRO D/AGF 1 1/1.

<sup>164</sup> Between 31 May 1842 (the start of a surviving punishment book) and the end of 1845 (the commencement of the bone grinding ban) there were 18 recorded cases of paupers refusing to complete their 'task' or being disorderly at work, Beaminster Union, Pauper Offence Book, 31 May 1842 - 2 March 1869, DHC BG/BE B3/2.

<sup>165</sup> Beaminster Pauper Offence Book, 24 June 1843, DHC BG/BE B3/2.

<sup>166</sup> C. Brooker, 'The Murder Den, and its means of Destruction; or, Some account of the Working of the New Poor Law in the Eastbourne Union, Sussex, etc.' (Brighton and London, 1842). Brooker lived in Alfriston.

pamphlets and the radical newspaper, *The Brighton Patriot*. As Wells notes, these views had led to ‘illegal chicanery...to keep him off the Board of Guardians’ in Eastbourne.<sup>167</sup> He believed very firmly that the working classes ‘have now become slave classes...British liberty has now taken flight.’<sup>168</sup> The pamphlet contained an interview with William Smith who belonged to the parish of Wilmington which was in the Eastbourne Union (Appendix 9). Smith entered the workhouse in May 1840 because, according to Brooker, he lost work for holding a Methodist prayer meeting at his cottage.<sup>169</sup> Before he left the workhouse a year later he became very unwell and was hospitalised for one week. His illness, both Smith and Brooker contended, was linked to his employment in crushing bones in the workhouse. As detailed in the interview, many of the bones procured by the Guardians still had flesh on them and when crushed emitted a nauseous effluvium. Brooker argued:

[c]an any punishment; irrespective of any bodily pain or disease be contemplated as more dreadful; - and this as to other able-bodied workmen inmates – more horrible, than death by such a process as this?<sup>170</sup>

In April 1842, the MP Captain George Pechell, who had represented Borough of Brighton since 1835, brought Brooker’s publication to the attention of the House of Commons. Pechell took direct quotations from the pamphlet, including from Smith’s interview: ‘[i]f I had stopped longer in the bone-house I should not have come out alive’.<sup>171</sup> His statement though was initially ignored. Sir James Graham suggested that this was simply an ‘unfortunate quarrel’ besides the Bill for continuing the Poor Law Commission would contain certain ‘improvements’.<sup>172</sup> Nevertheless, it was from this individual’s story that Pechell

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<sup>167</sup> R. Wells, ‘Resistance to the New Poor Law in the Rural South’ in J. Rule and R. Wells (eds.), *Crime, Protest and Popular Politics in Southern England, 1740-1850* (London, 1997), p. 113. Also see D. Jones, *Chartism and the Chartists* (Harmondsworth, 1975), p. 91; R. Wells, ‘Popular Protest and Social Crime: Criminal Gangs in Southern England, 1790-1860’, *Southern History*, 13 (1991) 32-81; *idem.*, ‘Southern Chartism’ in Rule and Wells, *Crime and Protest*, pp. 127-151.

<sup>168</sup> Brooker, ‘The Murder Den’, p. 8.

<sup>169</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 22.

<sup>170</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 21.

<sup>171</sup> Captain Pechell, House of Commons, *Hansard*, 14 April 1842, volume 62, cc 494. This quote was taken directly from the interview, Brooker, ‘The Murder Den’, p. 20.

<sup>172</sup> Sir James Graham, House of Commons, *Hansard*, 14 April 1842, volume 62, cc 496.

had found a personal mission: to create pressure for further investigation into the mode of employing the poor within workhouses.

Pechell reminded the House of Commons about the prevalence of bone-crushing in workhouses at every available opportunity. His next chance to mention bone-crushing was in 1843, after a motion made by William Ferrand for a copy of the minutes of a recent meeting of the Halifax Guardians.<sup>173</sup> Sir James Graham was not obliging, leaving Ferrand wondering whether ‘there was something behind the scenes’ he ‘wished to conceal from the public’. Sir Robert Peel intervened, expressing that the government had nothing to hide, and that they would get the papers from that day and ‘also a copy of any resolution for the erection of a *rag-mill* made on that or any other day.’<sup>174</sup> Peel had been briefed before the session accordingly, as had Sir James Graham who told the House he had already ‘expressed a strong opinion to the Poor-law Commissioners against its use’. In consequence, the Commission was able to communicate his opinion ‘to all the unions, and such mills would not be used again.’<sup>175</sup> Pechell chipped in, stating how he trusted that a similar course would be pursued to put an end to bone-crushing.<sup>176</sup> But Pechell was again ignored, and Ferrand’s request for papers was defeated.<sup>177</sup>

It was not until the following year that Pechell mentioned bone-crushing again, during a debate concerning the 1844 Poor Law Amendment Bill. Pechell reminded the House of the ‘objection that was felt by paupers generally to be employed in grinding bones in workhouses.’<sup>178</sup> Sir James Graham then confirmed his dislike of bone-crushing as a workhouse employment and conversation quickly returned to the intricacies of the Bill.<sup>179</sup> In the meantime, the Commission had instigated their own inquiries into whether the employment of crushing bones was unsuitable for the inmates of workhouses. In April every Board of Guardians was ordered to ask one of their medical officers, that which

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<sup>173</sup> 1 March 1843.

<sup>174</sup> Sir R. Peel, House of Commons, 15 March 1843, *Hansard*, volume 67, cc 1070. These mills ground down rags into fibres which were either respun or used to make paper.

<sup>175</sup> Sir James Graham, House of Commons, 15 March 1843, *Hansard*, volume 67, cc 1071.

<sup>176</sup> Captain Pechell, House of Commons, 15 March 1843, *Hansard*, volume 67, cc 1071.

<sup>177</sup> 11 Ayes and 53 Noes, House of Commons, 15 March 1843, *Hansard*, volume 67, cc 1072.

<sup>178</sup> Captain Pechell, House of Commons, 18 July 1844, *Hansard*, volume 76, cc 1050.

<sup>179</sup> Sir James Graham, House of Commons, 18 July 1844, *Hansard*, volume 76, cc 1051.



superintended the workhouse, whether the employment was injurious to the inmates' health. The reactions varied - but not greatly. At Beaminster the medical officer claimed 'no case of disease has come under my observation, caused by the employment of crushing bones'.<sup>180</sup> The Warminster officer noted some inmates had 'inflamed hand or fingers' but generally there was no 'risk to their health'.<sup>181</sup> The effluvia, reported many, had little adverse effect upon the health of the inmates or those within the workhouse grounds. The Commission seemingly had no cause for concern.

### 7.2.3 Inquiries and impacts

In July 1844, a frustrated Pechell moved for a return for information from all unions in England and Wales who had been using bone-crushing as a workhouse employment, including the date when crushing had commenced, the sums paid for bones and received for the bone-dust.<sup>182</sup> By the February of the following year, Pechell complained that the Returns had not been laid on the table of the House. The Commission, it was reported, had been engaged with other business including assisting the Commons Select Committee on Gilbert's Act. Pechell and Graham locked horns once again. The Commission was, Graham believed, unable to impose a ban: 'if the Commissioners had had the power, they would have put an end to it instantly.' This was said regardless of the fact that, as the case of Halifax demonstrated, local practices could be amended and stopped altogether, and regardless of the explicit encouragement from the Assistant Commissioners to adopt bone-crushing (see chapter six). Graham stressed that the practice was 'persevered in by the local authorities'.<sup>183</sup> He contended that local adoption meant that only local-level powers could instigate change in policy, or national powers needed strengthening to overrule local autonomy. This provoked a sarcastic

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<sup>180</sup> Cox, Clerk (Beaminster Union) to PLC, 22 April 1844, TNA MH12/2707.

<sup>181</sup> Boor, Clerk (Warminster Union) to PLC, 23 April 1844, TNA MH12/13866.

<sup>182</sup> The Returns asked for '...the date of such erection of mills or other machinery, and the names of the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Board of Guardians of every such Union at the period; also the cost of the said bones, including all expenses of carriage and other incidental expenses, and the amount which the same have produced in their manufactured state, and whether the same have been sold by tender, or fixed price, or otherwise, House of Commons, 11 February 1845, *Hansard*, volume 77, cc 304.

<sup>183</sup> Sir James Graham, House of Commons, 11 February 1845, *Hansard*, volume 77, cc 307.

comment from Wakley, that 'local interests are much stronger than I was at first inclined to believe.'<sup>184</sup>

The Commission finally provided the House with the Returns in February 1845.<sup>185</sup> Not only did these provide a picture of how widespread the practice had become in the south, but it was now general knowledge that bone-crushing had not been profitable. In the meantime, however, the localities were certainly proving their independence. The Bolton Guardians declined to comply with the Order for information from the House, an issue which allowed Pechell to keep bone-crushing on the agenda throughout the spring.<sup>186</sup> Sir James Graham repeated himself. The powers of the Commission were set by the Amendment Act and 'if any increase of them were desired, there must be an alteration of the law'.<sup>187</sup>

Soon, another disagreeable employment practice had come to light in the Commons. On 1 August, Thomas Slingsby Duncombe, the radical MP for Finsbury, presented a petition from residents of Mansfield.<sup>188</sup> Here the vagrants of the union workhouse worked on a treadwheel which produced nothing.<sup>189</sup> When Duncombe asked Sir James Graham whether such an employment was suitable, his response indicated that the Commission knew about the activity in March and they had sent out a 'peremptory order...for its immediate discontinuance'.<sup>190</sup> Evidently, the government and Commission had a small amount of control over how Boards of Guardians were employing workhouse inmates. Straight after this discussion, another commenced on the topic of bone-

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<sup>184</sup> Captain Pechell, House of Commons, 11 February 1845, *Hansard*, volume 77, cc 309.

<sup>185</sup> These were published on 18 February, BPP 1845 (41) Union workhouses. A return of all union workhouses under the Poor Law Amendment Act, in which the pauper inmates thereof are or have been employed in grinding or crushing bones.

<sup>186</sup> Captain Pechell, House of Commons, 20 February 1845, *Hansard*, volume 77, c 827; House of Commons, 27 February 1845, *Hansard*, volume 78, cc 118-119; House of Commons, 27 February 1845, *Hansard*, volume 78, cc 118-119; see also copy of letter, Calthorpe, Clerk (Boston) to PLC, 18 January 1845, BPP 1846 (75) House of Commons Papers, p. 5.

<sup>187</sup> Sir James Graham, House of Commons, 27 February 1845, *Hansard*, volume 78, cc 118-119.

<sup>188</sup> He supported Chartism and opposed the New Poor Law, see M. Lee, 'Duncombe, Thomas Slingsby (1796-1861)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, (Oxford, 2004). Online. Available: <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/8239> [last accessed 27 Aug 2009].

<sup>189</sup> The petition was 'from Mansfield, for Removal of Treadwheel in Mansfield Union', House of Commons, 8 July 1845, *Hansard*, volume 82, cc 136.

<sup>190</sup> Sir James Graham, House of Commons, 1 August 1845, *Hansard*, volume 82, cc 1320.

crushing. Wakley stood to ask Graham whether he had heard from the Poor Law Commission of the ‘...practice which he understood to prevail in the Union of Andover’. Here the poor had been ‘quarrelling with each other about the bones’ from which they foraged meat to eat.<sup>191</sup> Sir James Graham said ‘I will institute an inquiry this very night’.<sup>192</sup>

On Monday, 4 August, the Assistant Poor Law Commissioner for Andover, Henry Parker, ventured to the Andover Union to commence his investigations.<sup>193</sup> After interviewing several of the inmates he confirmed that inmates were eating bones. Parker wrote ‘it certainly appears to have been a practice with the inmates to pick out such bones and eat the marrow from them’. Parker also noticed that the food was also ‘unexceptional in quality’ and that perhaps bread could be added to some of the meat and potato based dinners.<sup>194</sup> By mid-August, the Commission directed Parker to make further enquiries, whilst also causing as ‘little delay as possible’. As Longmate details, Parker was in an awkward situation: ‘[w]hen he tried to exclude irrelevant evidence, he was attacked in the press for planning to hush up injustice; when he granted a brief adjournment to allow more witnesses to be assembled, the Commissioners accused him of wasting time.’<sup>195</sup> Colin and Mary Ann McDougal, the workhouse master and matron, resigned their situations in September, not least because of the continuing inquiry and the threat of prosecution.<sup>196</sup> Parker then made the mistake of recommending to the union a new master, a man who had managed the Oxford workhouse, only to discover that this person had been dismissed from a previous situation for misconduct.<sup>197</sup> Parker then suggested that the Commission should go ahead with the prosecution of the workhouse staff at Andover, but no legal action was decided upon.<sup>198</sup>

Media attention surrounding the events at Andover and in Somerset House escalated throughout the autumn of 1845. The Commission needed to

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<sup>191</sup> Mr. T. Wakley, House of Commons, 1 August 1845, *Hansard*, volume 82, cc 1320-1321.

<sup>192</sup> Sir J. Graham, House of Commons, 1 August 1845, *Hansard*, volume 82, cc 1321.

<sup>193</sup> N. Longmate, *The Workhouse: A Social History* (1974, London, 2003).

<sup>194</sup> Parker (Andover) to PLC, 5 August 1845, TNA HO45/1031.

<sup>195</sup> Longmate, *The Workhouse*, p. 126.

<sup>196</sup> Anstruther, *The Scandal of Andover Workhouse*, pp. 147-148.

<sup>197</sup> Longmate, *The Workhouse*, p. 126; Anstruther, *The Scandal of Andover Workhouse*, p. 148.

<sup>198</sup> Longmate, *The Workhouse*, p. 126.

demonstrate to the public and the government, therefore, that they acknowledged that the conditions in the Andover workhouse were abominable and that they were in control of the situation. These circumstances forced the resignation of Parker. Historians have been sympathetic towards Parker because his departure from the Commission was not entirely justified. Brundage, for instance, argues that although he could have noticed the problems at Andover before they had reached the Commons, ‘the corps of assistants had been pared back from a high 21 to a mere 9, making meaningful inspections impossible.’<sup>199</sup> He was, therefore, publicly named and shamed, not for own deficiencies, but for the failings of the Commission. Parker did not remain silent though. He released a ‘torrent of abuse’ upon the Commission in a pamphlet where he outlined the trials he had encountered.<sup>200</sup> It gained support from the usual anti-New Poor Law crowd and coverage in newspapers. At the same time, William Day, another Assistant, had been asked to resign because of an illness, although the real reason stemmed from the resistance Day faced when trying to implement the New Poor Law in Wales.<sup>201</sup>

It was in this context that a ban on bone-crushing was issued. On the 8 November a General Order was released banning ‘the employment of Pauper Inmates of Union Workhouses in Pounding, Grinding, or otherwise Breaking Bones, or in preparing Bone Dust’.<sup>202</sup> The Commission did not, however, release the ban on its own accord, not least because one of the three Commissioners, George Nicholls (who had introduced bone-crushing in the Southwell workhouse prior to 1834) believed that there was no evidence to suggest that the work was improper.<sup>203</sup> The government clearly had a direct influence on Somerset House, an influence to which Andover proved to be a catalyst. Graham recalled that, it was ‘owing to *that* case’ he decided to direct ‘his attention more earnestly and particularly to that subject’. After some ‘investigation’ he found that the Commissioners could issue a General Order and ‘*pressed* upon the

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<sup>199</sup> Brundage, *The English Poor Laws*, p. 88.

<sup>200</sup> Driver, *Power and Pauperism*, p. 35.

<sup>201</sup> Longmate, *The Workhouse*, p. 127.

<sup>202</sup> A copy is in BPP 1846 (432) House of Commons Papers, pp. 1-5.

<sup>203</sup> ‘Minute recording the Dissent of one of the Poor Law Commissioners to the issue of the above Order of the Commissioners’, BPP 1846 (432) House of Commons Papers, p. 77. It was written by George Nicholls, 8 November 1845.

Commissioners the expediency of issuing such an order'.<sup>204</sup> In the official report about the dangers of bone-crushing, written to justify the release of the Order, Chadwick focused on the offensive effluvia which arose from bone-crushing which was 'injurious' to the workers and other 'susceptible classes of inmates', not the events at Andover.<sup>205</sup>

Nicholls argued that it was 'under the excitement of the moment, bone-breaking was denounced as being an improper employment for the inmates of the workhouse'.<sup>206</sup> On one hand, he was correct - the Order was simply produced to show that the Commissioners were addressing 'the attacks made on bone crushing'.<sup>207</sup> On the other hand, Nicholls' claim was short-sighted. The employment had long been denounced as being an improper form of employment, and the Andover Scandal had only tipped the balance leading to a change in policy.

#### **7.2.4 The implementation of the General Order Prohibiting Bone-Crushing**

Notice of the bone-crushing ban was made on Saturday 8 November 1845 and was to take effect by 1 January the following year.<sup>208</sup> This had an immediate effect. A total of 33 different Boards wrote to the Commission remonstrating with the ban on several grounds.<sup>209</sup> Firstly, the Guardians could not understand why the ban had applied to them, rather than the Andover Union alone. The Maidstone Guardians expressed their regret that the Commission did not make inquiry into the employment in their workhouse, implying that it was completely sound compared to that at Andover.<sup>210</sup> Clearly, they were aware of the

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<sup>204</sup> Sir J. Graham, House of Commons, 4 February 1846, *Hansard*, volume 83, cc 457. My emphasis.

<sup>205</sup> 'Report of the Secretary of the Poor-Law Commissioners on Bone-Crushing', BPP 1846 (432) House of Commons Papers, p. 7.

<sup>206</sup> Nicholls, *A History of the English Poor Law*, p. 369.

<sup>207</sup> Longmate, *The Workhouse*, p. 127.

<sup>208</sup> 5 & 6 Vict. c.57, XVI states that General Orders could only take effect after a minimum of period of forty days had passed.

<sup>209</sup> BPP 1846 (75) House of Commons Papers. 32 of these unions were employing the inmates in bone-crushing and 1 was just about to commence.

<sup>210</sup> Extract of minute book, Maidstone Union Minute book, 27 November 1845, BPP 1846 (75) House of Commons Papers, p. 35. The Cranbrook Guardians stated that the 'circumstances that took place at the Andover Union' should not have influenced their

circumstances surrounding the ban. The Wareham and Purbeck Guardians expressed ‘much regret that the public indignation, so naturally excited by the horrid details and gross mismanagement in the Andover Union, should have led to a sweeping order’.<sup>211</sup> Guardians associated the ban with this singular malpractice rather than the objectionable nature of the employment as a whole. Secondly, the Order was issued in the winter, a time of year when most workhouse populations increased. Without a deterrent, there were fears that workhouses would become overcrowded. Thirdly, many Boards of Guardians had significant stocks of bones and had invested in crushing equipment.<sup>212</sup>

As a consequence of these complaints, 13 unions were granted a suspension of the Order until 1 April 1846 (Appendix 10). The Commission and Graham were unwilling to issue suspensions to many unions, prioritising those most in ‘need’.<sup>213</sup> When the first suspension was issued, to the Wincanton Union, the Commissioners said they had been ‘influenced by the special circumstances connected with the existing arrangements of the Board of Guardians for setting the Poor to work’ in that union.<sup>214</sup> The Commission acquired the views of their Assistants as to need for the suspensions. Tufnell, in response to the Commission’s motion that the Melksham Union should be suspended from the Order, highlighted the great stock of bones in the union and the pressure of able-bodied paupers in the winter, claiming ‘[y]ou will observe that throughout the whole of the South of England, the first fortnight in February is the most pauperized part of the year’. As the Commission states, ‘looking to the special

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General Order, Copy of Letter, Wilson, Clerk (Cranbrook) to PLC, 28 January 1846, BPP 1846 (75) House of Commons Papers, p. 34. The Stroud Guardians stressed that there had been no fault in the operation of bone grinding in their Union – just some ‘alleged abuse by others’, Copy of Letter, Crowdy, Clerk (Stroud) to PLC, n.d. [before 17 January 1846, date of subsequent letter], BPP 1846 (75) House of Commons Papers, p. 71. The Bedford Guardians felt the same as suggested in Extract of minute book in Whig, Clerk (Bedford Union), 29 November 1845, BPP 1846 (75) House of Commons Papers, p. 36.

<sup>211</sup> Copy of Letter Bartlett and Filliter, Clerks (Wareham and Purbeck Union) to PLC, 1 December 1845 (meeting and minute made 29 November 1845), BPP 1846 (75) House of Commons Papers, p. 35.

<sup>212</sup> See various correspondence in BPP 1846 (75) House of Commons Papers.

<sup>213</sup> 5 & 6 Vict. c.57, XVI. According to the Amendment Act, the Secretary of State had to be notified of any deviation from a General Order.

<sup>214</sup> Chadwick (PLC) to the under-secretary of the Home Secretary S. M. Phillips Esq. (Whitehall), 3 January 1846, TNA HO45/1031.

circumstances and upon the advice of the Assistant Commissioner, the Commissioners were prepared' to suspend the Order.<sup>215</sup>

Whilst it appears, as Graham stated, that each application was carefully considered before a suspension was issued, he and the Commission may have issued the suspensions with ulterior motives. Pechell, who was unable to let the suspensions go unnoticed, pointed out that unions granted a suspension 'had a large stock of bones'.<sup>216</sup> This observation was, according to the correspondence received by the Commission, largely true. The Commission and Secretary of State were, however, anxious that where bone-crushing did continue it was being undertaken in the safest possible mode. The Commission asked the union medical officers whether the employment was undertaken in a safe manner. The Guildford Union was allowed a suspension based 'on the understanding that the persons who are employed to feed the mill shall not be paupers, but paid servants of the workhouse'.<sup>217</sup> Such actions would safeguard the Commission should another problem arise. Nevertheless, Pechell wanted Graham 'to suspend the suspending order'.<sup>218</sup> These suspensions also caused tension between the Commission and some Boards of Guardians, but on the basis that there were not enough suspensions rather than their existence in the first instance. The Frome Board (Somerset), for instance, wished the Commission had 'give[n] the same weight to the representations of this Board which they have given to the statements of other unions on the subject'.<sup>219</sup> The Commission hit back, reiterating that the suspensions were issued to unions in 'special' circumstances.<sup>220</sup> Regardless of the contentions, bone-crushing was illegal in *all* unions from 1 April 1846.

Whilst the General Medical Order was impractical, it had not disrupted the operation of workhouses like the bone-crushing ban. All Boards were forced

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<sup>215</sup> Extract of Tufnell's report in letter from Chadwick (PLC) to the under-secretary of the Home Secretary S. M. Phillips Esq. (Whitehall), 10 January 1846, TNA HO45/1031.

<sup>216</sup> Captain Pechell, House of Commons, 4 February 1846, *Hansard*, volume 83, cc 454. Pechell also believed that large stocks of bones had been accumulated when a 'Tariff had been [ass]ed, under which a reduction of the duty on bones had been made', cc 458.

<sup>217</sup> Copy of letter, E. Chadwick (PLC) to Smallpiece Clerk (Guilford Union), 24 January 1846, BPP 1846 (75) House of Commons Papers, p. 20.

<sup>218</sup> Captain Pechell, House of Commons, 4 February 1846, *Hansard*, volume 83, cc 456.

<sup>219</sup> Copy of minute, Frome Board of Guardians, 3 February 1846, BPP 1846 (75) House of Commons Papers, p. 42.

<sup>220</sup> Copy of letter, E. Chadwick (PLC) to Hayley, Clerk (Frome Union), BPP 1846 (75) House of Commons Papers, p. 42.

to find an alternative employment for their male residents, a task many Boards of Guardians thought was nigh on impossible to complete. The Beaminster Board stated that they could ‘find no means of labour’ for their poor.<sup>221</sup> The Commission started to recommend various employments, including stone-breaking, oakum picking, and a hand corn-mill.<sup>222</sup> This had angered some Guardians such as those at Cranbrook (Kent) who outlined why each of these employments was not applicable within their locality and within the pre-existing infrastructure of their workhouse. Stone for stone-breaking would have to be procured from Coxheath (12 miles away) and, they contended, there was no space for a hand corn-mill.<sup>223</sup> Of course, Somerset House could not rescind the Order, and had no desire to do so, not least because the Andover Scandal and its consequences had ‘grown to be one of more than ordinary interest.’<sup>224</sup>

In the months, and years, that passed after the ban, the Guardians still struggled to find alternative employment. 16 months after the ban, the Assistant Commissioner John Graves saw the men in the Cricklade and Wootton Bassett Union workhouse without work. The lack of employment, according to Graves, allowed the poor to enter and leave the workhouse as they pleased without working for the union in return. Graves recommended that the Guardians organised the poor to break stones and pick oakum.<sup>225</sup> Similarly, in late 1847, Edward Gulson, another Assistant Commissioner, noted that the Beaminster Union Guardians had established ‘no work at which to employ this class of inmates’.<sup>226</sup> So bad was this problem in this union that parish officers evidently thought they could take matters into their own hands. The churchwardens of Netherbury, for instance, wanted to rent between 15 and 25 acres of land to employ their parishioners, an employment scheme which harked back to those

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<sup>221</sup> Copy of letter and minute, Cox, Clerk (Beaminster) to PLC, 2 January 1846, BPP 1846 (75) House of Commons Papers, p. 43.

<sup>222</sup> For example, PLC to Cranbrook Union Guardians, 13 January 1846, BPP 1846 (75) House of Commons Papers, p. 33.

<sup>223</sup> Copy of letter, Wilson, Clerk (Cranbrook) to PLC, 28 January 1846, BPP 1846 (75) House of Commons Papers, p. 33.

<sup>224</sup> Nicholls, *A History of the English Poor Law*, p. 370.

<sup>225</sup> Graves to PLC, 16 April 1847 (Report made on first visit, probably 16 April 1847), TNA MH12/13722.

<sup>226</sup> Gulson to PLC, 10 November 1847 (Report made on visit of 28 October 1847), TNA MH12/2708.



implemented under the old poor laws.<sup>227</sup> Whilst this was not permitted by the Commissioners, as it was no longer supported by the poor laws, the Guardians were allowed to employ the poor on union land.<sup>228</sup> By the end of 1847, therefore, two and a half acres of union land opposite the house had been reserved for the employment of the poor by the Guardians. In addition, the erection of a flour mill had been discussed, but not acted upon.<sup>229</sup> Boards of Guardians continued to drift along in this manner without a definite form of employment for their poor for many years.

The Andover Scandal had long lasting repercussions for the Poor Law Commission at large, as well as the employment practices of their unions. A Select Committee investigation into the events at Andover was called for in the January of 1846 by the MP for Andover, Mr. Etwall, and it was finally appointed in March. Fifteen members, including several anti-New Poor Law MPs, such as Wakley, commenced their investigations a fortnight later.<sup>230</sup> Gradually the full extent of the abuses at Andover unfolded, each day of questioning chronicled in *The Times*. Whilst the details from the Select Committee inquiry have been detailed at length elsewhere, it is worth noting that the master and matron had clearly behaved inappropriately in the performance of their duties.<sup>231</sup> They had siphoned off food from the prescribed dietaries, leaving the inmates hungry, and abused the poor physically and psychologically. As Wells concisely puts it, the Andover workhouse housed an eight year-long ‘regime of terror.’<sup>232</sup> Over the course of three and a half months the Committee held a plethora of interviews with a range of interviewees.<sup>233</sup> This inquiry became ‘a trial of the central authorities rather than of the Guardians at Andover’.<sup>234</sup> It was revealed, for instance, that the Commission had accidentally sanctioned an insufficient dietary

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<sup>227</sup> John Udall (Bowood, Beaminster) to PLC, 8 May 1847, TNA MH12/2708.

<sup>228</sup> This system, harking back to the parish employment schemes of the old poor laws, was not permitted by the Commissioners as it was no longer supported in law, see PLC to Udall (Bowood, Beaminster), 10 May 1847, TNA MH12/2708.

<sup>229</sup> Gulson to PLC, 10 November 1847 (Report made on visit of 28 October 1847), TNA MH12/2708.

<sup>230</sup> Longmate, *The Workhouse*, p. 127; Brundage, *The English Poor Laws*, p. 88.

<sup>231</sup> Anstruther, *The Scandal of Andover Workhouse*; Longmate, *The Workhouse*, pp. 127-134.

<sup>232</sup> R. Wells, ‘Andover Antecedents? Hampshire New Poor-Law Scandals, 1834-1842’, *Southern History*, 24 (2002), p. 91.

<sup>233</sup> Longmate, *The Workhouse*, p. 127.

<sup>234</sup> Driver, *Power and Pauperism*, p. 35.

table for use in the Andover workhouse. The Select Committee also showcased the disharmony amongst the Commissioners and between the Commissioners and their secretary, Chadwick, the inability of the Commission to recognise deplorable employments within workhouses and their harsh treatment of Parker.<sup>235</sup>

The Commission, which granted a five-year extension in 1842, was left to expire in 1847. Commentators at the time, as well as historians, agree that the Select Committee's findings had a large part to play in this. Yet, the New Poor Law itself was not scrapped. A Liberal government passed a reorganisation bill in 1847 which effectively removed some of the autonomy of the Commission by placing it within the responsibilities of four senior ministers, namely the Home Secretary, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, the Lord President and the Lord Privy Seal.<sup>236</sup> The authority was renamed the Poor Law Board and its day-to-day management was headed by one president and two secretaries. The president and one of the secretaries were to sit in Parliament. The whole organisation was removed from Somerset House and placed in Whitehall. This, as well as the reform in the management system, meant that the central welfare authority was under closer scrutiny from government. And the individual Boards of Guardians and union workhouses would come under closer scrutiny as well. The appointment of 'Inspectors' in lieu of Assistants reflected their primary responsibilities of thoroughly and more frequently superintending the implementation of the New Poor Law within the localities.<sup>237</sup>

### 7.3 Conclusion

As Butler and Drakeford suggest, welfare scandals have all the makings of a novel: 'all contain stock heroes and villains and many descend...to little more

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<sup>235</sup> Longmate, *The Workhouse*, pp. 133-135; Brundage, *The English Poor Laws*, p. 88.

<sup>236</sup> Reports and letters produced in 1846 about the methods of carrying on the Commission, reflecting on the operation of the Poor Law Commission between 1834 and 1846 can be found in TNA HO45/1682.

<sup>237</sup> Brundage, *The English Poor Laws*, pp. 88-99; S. Webb and B. Webb, *English Poor Law History, Part 2: The Last Hundred Years* (1929, London, 1963), pp. 185-188.

than morality plays.’<sup>238</sup> In the construction of these scandals, the Commission and Boards of Guardians remained remarkably silent. Indeed, why would welfare authorities draw attention to cases of cruelty and neglect, when it was not within their best interests to do so? Rather, there was another level – neither confined to the local or centre – of key actors and stakeholders who brought events to wider public attention. Without John Bowen’s investigative reporting, news of Bridgwater’s inept Board of Guardians would not have reached the press or received the attention of the House of Lords. Key actors were also important in the genesis of the bone-crushing ban. The hype surrounding the condemnation of bone-crushing employment was first stirred up by a number of individuals including Brooker. William Smith’s case alone did not result in public inquiry but it had provided the Commons with a tangible story of why bone-crushing should be investigated and banned. Therefore, it had helped to create the area of ‘policy strain’, i.e. one of contentious workhouse employments. Without the endeavours of these key actors, working between the Boards of Guardians and the governmental levels of administration, events occurring at the local level may not have reached the wider attention of the nation.

Key actors working at the national level had more power than those working within the middle strata. It was the decision of Lords and MPs as to instigate an inquiry into these local events or not. Indeed, John Bowen’s views on the problems at Bridgwater had caught the eye of Lord Wharncliffe. He wanted the government to ask: ‘[w]ere those stories of neglect true, or false?’<sup>239</sup> Pechell brought Brooker’s pamphlet to the House of Commons and asked Sir James Graham whether something ought to be done about bone-crushing employment within the unions. Although Pechell constantly reminded Graham of the existence of the employment, Graham claimed that was not willing to interfere with ‘local practices’, although, as detailed above, several other deplorable employments had been reported to the House and stopped. This matches Butler and Drakeford’s observations that the exposure of one phenomenon ‘produces further revelation in the same field.’<sup>240</sup> Pechell was able to stretch his powers further, by moving for returns, which had added further ‘strain’ to the policy area before the news of

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<sup>238</sup> Butler and Drakeford, *Scandal*, p. 4.

<sup>239</sup> Lord Wharncliffe, House of Lords, 26 March 1838, *Hansard*, volume 41, cc 1224.

<sup>240</sup> Butler and Drakeford, *Scandal*, p. 225.

Andover had broken. After the news, Graham then ‘pressed’ the Poor Law Commission for a ban. Evidently he could, one way or another, impose policy-making upon the Poor Law Commissioners.

Social policy analysts have commonly viewed the policy-making process ‘as an inescapably *political* activity into which the perceptions and interests of individual actors enter all stages.’<sup>241</sup> Stakeholders were also part of this political activity - united together to represent their own shared ‘perceptions and interests’. This has been illustrated in the events which culminated after the neglect of medical relief claimants at Bridgwater. The Bridgwater Medical Association produced a pamphlet which subsequently became published in *The Times*, evidence which Lord Wharncliffe used to call for an investigation. The House of Commons, aware of the trials of the local association, then interviewed their chairman to obtain an idea of what they thought were the deficiencies of medical relief policy. Thereafter the BMA and PMSA were in constant contact with the Poor Law Commission, which allowed them to showcase their policy ideas and exert pressure for change. Yet, by inviting a representation of medical men to Somerset House and corresponding with the national associations in a cordial manner, the Commission showed their ability to negotiate with stakeholders.

Although these cases highlight the processes through which policies were generated and were issued during the early years of the New Poor Law, they also demonstrate the different ways in which scandals impacted on this process. The Bridgwater scandal fed into a wider understanding that medical relief policies were inadequate. The Andover scandal had simply ‘tipped’ the bone-crushing ban into force. Indeed, bone-crushing had been a controversial form of work within the workhouse for a long time prior to the news from Hampshire. This illustrates two very different types of ‘policy strain’ within medical relief and employment policy at the time. Medical relief policies were undeveloped in the Amendment Act, and as a consequence individuals and stakeholders demanded and set minimum standards. Employment policies were also undeveloped within the Amendment Act, but rather than there being a need to regulate employment *per*

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<sup>241</sup> I. Gordon, J. Lewis and K. Young, ‘Perspectives on policy analysis’ in M. Hill (ed.), *The Policy Process: A Reader* (Hemel Hempstead, 1993), p. 7.

se, individuals and stakeholders wanted a ban on obnoxious employments. 'Policy strain' is, therefore, a catch-all term which can be used to encapsulate policy areas at a time before they are reviewed and changed.

Both of the policies which had developed after scandals were not easy to implement. The General Medical Order was released a year before it was to come into force, giving Boards of Guardians across England and Wales notice that they should adhere to its stipulations the next time the medical officers' contracts were set. The bone-crushing ban was released less than three months before it was to be adhered to, and many Boards of Guardians were ill-prepared to provide alternative employment of their able-bodied, male inmates. In the long-term, bone-crushing came to an end and the General Medical Order was implemented piecemeal. Such policies may have abolished a tough, unhealthy, employment and established minimum medical relief standards, but there is no way of knowing how far these policies left a positive impact on the lives of relief claimants. For instance, alternative employments to bone-crushing, such as stone-pounding, may have been equally as hazardous to inmates, whilst the General Medical Order simply reinforced district rather than parish-based medical relief provision, a system which may have better served the needs of medical claimants.

## Chapter 8: Poor Law Reform and Policy Innovation in Rural Southern England

By applying a policy process understanding of policy to the current literature on the poor laws, it became clear that many aspects of poor law administration had yet to receive systematic examination. Thereafter, the adoption of a policy process approach enabled me to undertake a detailed examination of the different stages associated with the development, adoption and implementation of welfare policies under both the old and New poor laws. This was achieved by examining the adoption and implementation of two permissive Acts under the old poor laws, the nature and role of policy transfer under both the old and New poor laws and the role of welfare scandals in shaping the continuing evolution of poor law policy after 1834. Enabling legislation was adopted and dropped at different times and implemented in diverse ways, policy transfer was important in the dissemination of best practice and early welfare scandals which arose in areas of policy strain had influenced the development of the New Poor Laws.

The wider implications of this nuanced picture of reform and innovation under the poor laws will be unpicked in three main sections in this final chapter. The first section outlines the implications of this research according to several different themes: local ideas and policy transfer, national legislation and finally, policy-making. The second section provides an overview of the influences on the policy process under the poor laws and the final section makes some suggestions of areas for further study.

### **8.1 The implications of a policy process approach**

#### **8.1.1 Local ideas and policy transfer**

Marshall's observation on eighteenth century legislation, 'that nothing was made legal by the authority of Parliament until it had become an established practice' was certainly true in the early nineteenth century, when it is evident that many *de*

*facto* assistant overseers were engaged and Select Vestries in operation long before the passage of Sturges Bourne's Act.<sup>1</sup> The Poor Law Amendment Act was itself also influenced by local practices, not least the Nottinghamshire reforms led by George Nicholls. In chapter two, however, I argued that whilst we have a good understanding of how policies were made from the mid-eighteenth century to the passage of the Amendment Act of 1834, we have little idea of how policies spread. In chapter six, I demonstrated that local innovations were not only important in the policy-making segment of the policy process, but they were also shared between welfare officials who assisted in the implementation of the poor laws.

The first half of the chapter, through the analysis of local administrative records, demonstrated that officials under the old poor laws shared information through correspondence, visits, publications, and third parties, including contractors, estate stewards, and the time and money rich. The modes of disseminating information demonstrated that innovations not only influenced national policy-making on one hand, or remained confined within the parish boundaries, but spread far and wide. As such, it was not just legislation, such as Gilbert's Act, which had breached the Elizabethan poor law 'central principle of "local problem – local treatment"'.<sup>2</sup> Local problems had stimulated local solutions, which, in turn, were shared between and adopted beyond, individual parishes on an everyday basis.

These findings have two main implications for our current understandings of relief administration during the final decades of the old poor laws. First, there were common relief practices between neighbouring parishes, and between parishes often at some considerable distance from one another. Utilising social connections and networks, people informed each other about their policies and achievements, and visited each others' workhouses. The publication of pamphlets and edited collections, such as the SBCP's volumes, aided long-distance policy transfer, as did surveys, such as Eden's which spread the word about successful reforms. It is these long-distance policy transfers which complicate the 'regional'

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<sup>1</sup> D. Marshall, *The English Poor in the Eighteenth Century: a study in social administrative history* (London, 1926), p. 128.

<sup>2</sup> S. King, *Poverty and Welfare in England 1700-1850: A Regional Perspective* (Manchester, 2000), p. 25.

analysis which King advocates.<sup>3</sup> There was no overall regional picture of poor relief provision, just as there was never an overall national picture of poor relief in England. There were, conversely, islands of parishes dotted throughout England that were providing relief in similar ways. Furthermore, a more general point can be made about the topics of their dissemination. The age of ‘debates, experiments and reforms’ has traditionally been perceived by historians as a time when Speenhamland-style scales and employment-linked relief schemes became popular, especially in the south and east of England.<sup>4</sup> Rather than exchanging information about outdoor relief schemes, however, they exchanged information about the management of workhouses. This suggests that, in the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries, the parish officials placed some of their efforts into providing indoor relief rather than, as our current understandings suggest, exclusively outdoor relief. Accordingly, parish officials were not simply concerned with assisting able-bodied males and labouring class families through periods of depression, but they were also concerned with supporting those who required parish accommodation, typically children, the elderly and the infirm.

Such communications continued under the New Poor Law when Boards of Guardians exchanged information and even cooperated with each other in their attempts to implement the New Poor Law. For instance, Guardians agreed to train each others’ workhouse staff. There were, however, two general differences between the ways information was transferred under the old and New Poor Laws. Prior to 1834, policies and practices predominantly flowed between individuals vested with powers within the parochial welfare system, i.e. parish officials, the upper classes and the clergy. The creation of Boards of Guardians under the Amendment Act meant that local ideas were shared between groups of administrators, Guardians and ex officio members. Policy transfer, therefore, became a more formalised process, whereby individual unions rather than individual reformers were the source of information. There also appears to have been a shift in the types of places obtaining and providing information. Prior to 1834, policy transfer predominantly occurred between those individuals who had reformed or established a new workhouse or wanted to reform their local

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<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>4</sup> A. Brundage, *The English Poor Laws, 1700-1930* (Basingstoke, 2002), title of chapter three, pp. 37-60.



workhouse. After the creation of New Poor Law Unions, Boards of Guardians in places that had not previously managed large workhouses started to communicate. Evidently, the lack of experience in establishing and managing a workhouse in parts of the southern countryside, particularly in Dorset, Somerset and Wiltshire, meant that the welfare officials here were in greater need of advice than those Guardians who had run large institutions, notably welfare officials in the south of Hampshire, in previous years. The fact that many of the enquiries from Boards of Guardians in Wessex focused on the minutiae of furnishing and running the workhouse, such as what bed frames, cooking apparatus, clothing, shoes, medical supplies and food to buy for the workhouse, exposes these officials' lack of experience in running an institution.

This 'horizontal' flow of knowledge between Boards of Guardians was encouraged by the Poor Law Commission. The spread of bone-crushing employment within New Poor Law Union workhouses was a case in point. The Assistants played an active role in the uptake of bone-crushing by informing Boards of Guardians about the employment. They also suggested that those Boards considering bone-crushing should contact those Boards of Guardians who had already implemented it, thereby encouraging the transfer of practices. The Commission's regular publications then placed the ideas and endeavours of Boards of Guardians on a national stage. The extent to which the Guardians followed the advice contained in these publications is yet to be examined in detail. However, my analysis here suggests that the implementation of the New Poor Law was not simply a top-down process, but a process informed by local innovations.

The Poor Law Commission showed an active interest in disseminating advice based on successful local precedents. This understanding adds further layers to our appreciation of the relationship between the role of the central welfare authorities and the localities. The Webbs thought the Commission was a centralised dictatorship whereby the 'Three Kings of Somerset House' had ended local autonomy over poor relief policy.<sup>5</sup> In contrast, a later generation of historians highlighted the extent to which relief practices survived the

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<sup>5</sup> S. Webb and B. Webb, *English Poor Law History, Part 2: The Last Hundred Years* (1929, London, 1963), p. xi.

implementation of the Amendment Act. In particular, the Commissioners could not control local landowners' interests enough, they argued, to permit the successful implementation of the New Poor Law.<sup>6</sup> Since then, more recent research has examined the relationship between the central and local authorities. The work of historians, such as Dunkley, has demonstrated that the Commission played a supervisory role in the implementation of the Amendment Act and even made suggestions for the alleviation of poverty during crises.<sup>7</sup> In addition, Harling argued that the assistant commissioners, rather than the Commission itself, 'manage[d] to mark out a circumscribed sphere of influence' over the localities.<sup>8</sup> This research continued this trend by illuminating moments of cooperation and compliance between the centre and local authorities. The Commission was not a dictatorship, nor was it powerless. Rather, it responded to the Guardians' queries and published Official Circulars, facilitating local authorities to decide how they were going to adhere to legislation. The Commission was attentive to the needs of each union and was diligent in recording ideas of best practice and disseminating them.

### **8.1.2 National legislation**

My analyses of the archives of the Wessex region have revealed many adoptions of Gilbert's Act which had hitherto not been known. This work agrees with the perspective of other welfare historians, such as King, that there is a need for us to actually read legislation. This is because relief administration and relief practices were grounded and shaped through legislation.<sup>9</sup> The fact that Gilbert's Act permitted parishes to combine into unions or act alone to implement its provisions meant that Driver's distinction between 'Gilbert's Unions' and 'Gilbert's Parishes' has been very helpful in identifying adoptions here.<sup>10</sup> If

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<sup>6</sup> For instance A. Digby, *Pauper Palaces* (London, 1978).

<sup>7</sup> P. Dunkley, 'The 'Hungry Forties' and the New Poor Law: A Case Study', *Historical Journal*, 17 (1974), 329-346.

<sup>8</sup> P. Harling, 'The Power of Persuasion: Central Authority, Local Bureaucracy and the New Poor Law', *English Historical Review*, 107 (1992), p. 53.

<sup>9</sup> For instance King, *Poverty and Welfare*, p. 24.

<sup>10</sup> F. Driver, *Power and Pauperism: The Workhouse System 1834-1884* (Cambridge, 1993), p. 45.

Wessex could stand as a test case for the south of England as a whole, the number of Gilbert's Act adoptions, both Parishes and Unions, has been seriously underestimated by historians.

The fact that adoptions were sporadic throughout the region is not surprising, not least as we have known for a long time that the adoption of Gilbert's Act throughout England and Wales was geographically uneven. As detailed in chapter four, the Webbs found that Act was adhered to in places 'practically all rural in character; the great majority in south-eastern England, East Anglia and the Midlands, with a few in Westmoreland and Yorkshire; none at all in Wales, in the west or south-west of England, or north of the Tees'.<sup>11</sup> Conversely, Mandler stated that the Act 'was taken up almost exclusively in urban and industrial areas, apart from a unique cluster in East Anglia'.<sup>12</sup> My findings have, however, show that these perspectives are wrong in two ways. Gilbert's Act appeared in the relief schemes in the south-central and south-western parishes of England. Secondly, the Act was adopted in both urban and rural settings. Large market towns, such as Poole, Bradford-on-Avon and Gosport (in the parish of Alverstoke) all implemented the Act in Wessex, but so too did a large number of agricultural parishes across the Hampshire countryside and along the south coast. Rural adoptions of Gilbert's Act had, therefore, certainly existed outside of East Anglia.

Whilst national figures on the adoption of Sturges Bourne's Act have been specified at particular years, and the decline in Select Vestries before 1830 has been noted, no one had examined the variations in adoption over time and within one region. My research demonstrates that although the south of England did generally reflect the national trends in the adoption of Select Vestries and assistant overseers, the two tools for reducing poor relief costs were more popular in some counties – such as Hampshire, Somerset and Sussex – than others – such as Dorset and Wiltshire. The spatial and temporal fluctuations in the adoption of enabling legislation are also interesting. In some instances, enabling legislation was simply suitable for a local context – a new workhouse regime was

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<sup>11</sup> S. Webb and B. Webb, *English Poor Law History, Part 1: The Old Poor Law* (1927, London, 1963), p. 275.

<sup>12</sup> P. Mandler, 'The making of the New Poor Law redivivus', *Past and Present*, 117 (1987), p. 133.

needed or an assistant overseer was desirable to collect rates and distribute relief in large parishes. Overwhelmingly, however, the adoption of enabling legislation came with an economic rationale. The large number of adoptees of Gilbert's Act in the 1790s, and the increasing number of parishes appointing Select Vestries and assistant overseers during years of acute economic strain, suggest that enabling legislation was used in the same way as other parish relief strategies under the old poor laws. This raises questions about peoples' intentions, including, what did parish officials hope to gain from adopting enabling legislation? In the case of Sturges Bourne's measures, the hope to reduce poor relief costs was key, as the legislation permitted parishes to implement measures that would restrict poor relief. And yet, the discourse of economy had also permeated the reasoning of vestrymen in adopting Gilbert's Act. Further questions need to be asked in future research about peoples' rationales for adopting enabling legislation, whether these changed over time, and how this impacted upon the ways in which enabling legislation was implemented. In-depth examinations of singular parishes (or unions), similar to Wells' microstudies, could be profitably applied with these questions in mind.<sup>13</sup>

Whilst the adoption of enabling legislation drove the research presented in chapters four and five, the abandonment of enabling legislation is also worthy of examination. Unlike Gilbert's Act, Sturges Bourne's Act required an annual vote of approval. As such, the archive better lends itself to an exploration of the abandonment of this legislation rather than Gilbert's. From the evidence analysed, it appears that legislation was not necessarily dropped due to an improving economic situation or a reduction in the rates. Enabling legislation proved to be difficult to implement in some localities. Sometimes this was the fault of the vestrymen themselves as they failed to attend Select Vestry meetings. This demonstrates the fragility of people's commitments to the stipulations of legislation – even when it was officially adopted. On other occasions, the legislation could not be adopted in the first instance. Indeed, Sturges Bourne's Act had proven to be controversial amongst some members of the magistracy.

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<sup>13</sup> R. Wells, 'Poor-Law Reform in the Rural South-east; the Impact of the 'Sturges Bourne Acts' during the Agricultural Depression, 1815-1835', *Southern History*, 23 (2001), 52-115.

This all points to the multifarious reasons why there was such temporal and spatial variation in the adoption of enabling legislation.

Enabling legislation could also be implemented in a variety of ways. The inmates of different Gilbert's Act workhouses were treated differently depending on which workhouse they were accommodated within. For instance, children received structured schooling and training in some institutions and were put to work in others. Indeed, the most striking aspect of the implementation of Gilbert's Act was the importance of the role of work within the workhouse. Gilbert had indeed mentioned work in his plans, specifically how those who could work should do so for the benefit of the workhouse population as a whole. Yet, the eagerness of the Gilbert's Act committee members to obtain profits from the inmates' labour could have been to the detriment of those individuals whom the workhouse was supposed to shelter. Not only were there particular employments organised in the house, but contractors with specialist knowledge in profitable employments were hired. In addition, the widespread practice of admitting the able-bodied into the workhouse and setting them to work for local farmers militated against the stipulations of Gilbert's Act.

How parishes reduced relief provision under Sturges Bourne's legislation was not standardised. Outdoor relief list creation and review was common, but other parishes contacted employers for information about individuals' wages, restricted extras, established rules for keeping animals and created parish employment schemes. In a few parishes there was also a renewed interest in the provision of indoor relief. Inspecting the poor took different forms in different places. Some parishes instructed their assistant overseers to make enquiries into their resident and non-resident parishioners, whilst others made decisions based on local intelligence. Inquiring into the 'Character and conduct' of the poor, as Sturges Bourne's Act directed, was open to interpretation. Many parish officers in the post-Sturges Bourne period had, however, returned to assess the 'deservingness' for relief based on similar criteria to those used by parish officers during the Elizabethan era. As Hindle argues, these included church attendance,

industriousness, sobriety and deference.<sup>14</sup> Many parish vestries may have seen this as their chance to reform relief claimants' morals, as well as reduce relief bills. Clearly, many aspects of relief claimants' lives came under closer scrutiny after the passage of Sturges Bourne's Act. All such measures, regardless of variety, can only reinforce Wells' view that 'the rural poor bore the brunt of the discriminatory and punitive spirit of Sturges Bourne'.<sup>15</sup>

The various ways in which the enabling acts were implemented is revealing in other ways. On one hand, their implementation confirms the view that the old poor laws offered a remarkably diverse set of ways of administering relief. Broad has argued that relief was provided flexibly under the old poor laws, through both charity and other parish based funds, depending on what sorts of assistance could be funded by each one.<sup>16</sup> I have argued elsewhere that parishes adopted various different policies and provided different types of relief depending on the need and character of each relief claimant.<sup>17</sup> This research adds evidence to the 'flexible old poor laws' perspective by demonstrating that non-compulsory legislation was adopted and implemented to suit local circumstances. One parish in Fareham noted that they should soon decide 'whether any and what of the plan' in Gilbert's Act would be adopted.<sup>18</sup> Enabling acts were perceived as a strategy, with parishes considering adherence to only some of their provisions. On the other hand, the implementation of enabling acts in such a diverse manner allows us to question the extent to which parishes were implementing relief under legislation in a different way to that intended by its makers. The timing of the adoptions of Gilbert's Act and the importance of work within Gilbert's Act workhouses suggests that economy may have been a more prominent motive for implementing the legislation than Thomas Gilbert himself had intended. The nuances in the ways in which enabling legislation was implemented therefore serve to act as a check to our own generalisations of relief provision under

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<sup>14</sup> S. Hindle, 'Civility, Honesty and the Identification of the Deserving Poor in Seventeenth-Century England' in H. French and J. Barry (eds.), *Identity and Agency in England, 1500-1800* (Basingstoke, 2004), pp. 38-59

<sup>15</sup> Wells, 'Poor-Law Reform in the Rural South-east', p. 91.

<sup>16</sup> J. Broad, 'Parish Economies of Welfare, 1650-1834', *The Historical Journal*, 42 (1999), 985-1006.

<sup>17</sup> S.A. Shave, 'The Dependent Poor? (Re)constructing the Lives of Individuals 'on the parish' in rural Dorset', 1800-1832, *Rural History*, 20 (2009), 67-97.

<sup>18</sup> St. Peter and St. Paul Fareham, Vestry Minute Book, 17 April 1793, PCRO CHU43/2B/1.

enabling acts. For example, King's description of the Gilbert's Act workhouse being 'a source of care, not deterrence' is far too simplistic.<sup>19</sup>

The ways in which knowledge was exchanged throughout this period, as examined in chapter six, also has repercussions for our understandings of national legislation. The fact that those who had established workhouses under Gilbert's Act were sharing and comparing their policies and practices with those who had established workhouses under Local Acts, presents us with some interesting insights into the importance of legislation. The cross-fertilisation of knowledge between those managing institutions founded on different legislation suggests that, at least by the late-eighteenth century, the Acts themselves were of a secondary concern. The Alverstoke Guardians did not ask the welfare officials managing workhouses which Act they were founded upon before obtaining information from them. Neither was this information recorded in their minute books. This is further demonstrated in the exchange of information via pamphlets. The pamphlet produced by Gilpin *et al.* about the reforms at Boldre had served as an inspiration for the reforms planned at Fletching. Yet, although Boldre was under Gilbert's Act, it was not mentioned in the pamphlet, SBCP's publication or Fletching's poster. Rutter, in his desire to urge the parishioners of Shaftesbury to build a new workhouse, also drew upon workhouse reforms in places without mention of whether such institutions were established under particular pieces of legislation or not. Clearly, it was the building, management and running of workhouses which was of primary interest to the reformers and officials, regardless of the underlying acts upon which the institutions were founded.

The lack of attention paid by those exchanging information to the original acts has important implications, especially for our understandings of the adoption of enabling legislation. Boldre's reforms spread far and wide, helped by the SBCP's publication of Gilpin *et al.*'s pamphlet. In consequence, parishes, akin to Fletching, throughout the country may have followed the principles and practices of Gilbert's Act workhouses without formally adopting the legislation. Many more relief claimants may have experienced Gilbert's Act, or versions of it, than have hitherto been thought. It is worth mentioning here that other parishes

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<sup>19</sup> King, *Poverty and Welfare*, p. 25.

in the south of England were influenced by Gilbert's reforms in a similar manner. An Assistant Commissioner informed the Royal Commission that Highworth (Wiltshire) acquired a Local Act in 1789, reporting that it was 'a modification of Gilbert's Act', altered only by the fact there was no stipulation for an annual return to be made to the magistrates.<sup>20</sup> There is also evidence that Gilbert's Act had partially permeated into the Local Acts produced in Sussex. In 1812 three rural parishes in East Sussex, Westfirdle, Beddingham and Glynde, passed their own Local Act entitled, in Gilbert-style language, 'An Act for the better Employment and Support of the Poor'.<sup>21</sup> The Act contained statutes which we would associate with Local Acts (such as the election of 'Directors' rather than Guardians) and the *practices* of Gilbert's Act workhouses.<sup>22</sup> The Act permitted the union to provide one workhouse, within which any poor could enter as the parish officers wished to nominate. The Directors were able to employ the able-bodied and infirm inmates 'in such Manner as Churchwardens and Overseers of the Poor are empowered to do by any Law now being relating to the Poor, or in such other Manner...[they] shall think proper'.<sup>23</sup> Such a policy ensured that the officers had complete flexibility over the employment of the poor, as practised in Sussex and Hampshire Gilbert's Parishes and Unions. The way in which the principles of Gilbert's Act, and the practices developed under Gilbert's Act, influenced parish relief systems evidently requires further research.<sup>24</sup>

### 8.1.3 Policy-making after 1834

The two Wessex studies presented in chapter seven reveal that scandals in the early years of the New Poor Laws profoundly impacted upon policy-making.

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<sup>20</sup> BPP 1834 (44) XXVIII, Report from His Majesty's Commissioners for Inquiring into the Administration and Practical Operation of the Poor Laws. Appendix A. Reports from Assistant Commissioners. Part 1. Report 2. D.O.P. Okeden, Esq. (Second Report), p. 8.

<sup>21</sup> 52 Geo. III c.12; R. Wells, 'The Poor Law 1700-1900' in K.C. Leslie and B. Short (eds.), *A Historical Atlas of Sussex* (Chichester, 1999), p. 71.

<sup>22</sup> 52 Geo. III c.12, II.

<sup>23</sup> 52 Geo. III c.12, XLVIII.

<sup>24</sup> Digby also found that the Buxton Incorporation (Norfolk) had started as a Gilbert's Union in 1801 before enlarging and uniting again under a Local Act in 1806. 'Its indeterminate character', Digby notes, 'means that it is equally valid to describe it as a Gilbert Union under local act or as a local incorporation under Gilbert's Act', Digby, *Pauper Palaces*, p. 47.



Previous studies, such as Hodgkinson's history of medical relief, failed to take into account the significance of local events on the development of policies in the new centralised welfare regime.<sup>25</sup> The policy outcomes of scandals do not simply derive from thin air. As Butler and Drakeford suggested, '[t]o have an impact an individual scandal needs to take place at a time of policy strain'.<sup>26</sup> The Bridgwater Scandal occurred when medical relief arrangements were in dispute and the Andover Scandal was revealed when bone-crushing employments were already controversial. In the latter case, our common-held view that the bone-crushing ban was a scapegoat measure introduced during a crisis in confidence of the Commission's abilities has been challenged. Tragic events occurred in Bridgwater and Andover at times of policy strain, enabling them to become constructed into scandals and subsequently impact on policy-making.

Each scandal impacted upon the policy-making process in a different way. The Bridgwater Scandal was investigated in a Select Committee initiated by the House of Lords, and then the chairman of the Bridgwater Medical Association attended the House of Commons 'Medical Inquiry'. The events at Bridgwater reached a national audience, but it was some years before a medical policy was released. Indeed, policy-making was a matter of negotiation between the Commission, national medical practitioners' associations and Boards of Guardians. The news of the events at Andover caused immediate change at a time when bone-crushing was already a topic of discussion in the Houses and, therefore, controversial. It took the Home Secretary though to persuade the Commission that they needed to ban the practice. This builds upon Butler and Drakeford's work by demonstrating that although a scandal must occur during a time of policy strain to penetrate into policy-making and thereby influence policy outcomes, each scandal impacted upon the policy-making process at different times and with different results.

These two cases also illustrate how the actual 'facts' of neglect and abuse cases can become exaggerated and lost in the very policy-making process they influence. For instance, Charlotte Allen's illness was exaggerated in the

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<sup>25</sup> R. Hodgkinson, *The Origins of the National Health Service: The Medical Services of the New Poor Law, 1834-1871* (London, 1967).

<sup>26</sup> I. Butler and M. Drakeford, *Scandal, Social Policy and Social Welfare*, revised edition (Bristol, 2005), p. 238.

Bridgwater Medical Association's pamphlet. Clearly, different key actors and stakeholders would use and twist the 'facts' of the abuses to support their own ends. This perspective has some currency, what is called 'claims-making' by social constructionists.<sup>27</sup> The medical associations wanted regulations which provided medical claimants with a minimum standard of assistance, but, at the same time, these regulations also confined the duties of and created fair wages for medical men. The 'facts' of cases can also become watered down. Events would be referred to in correspondence and administrative paperwork very generally, without mentioning any details of the abuses which could potentially invoke a sense of shame. For example, Boards of Guardians, in their correspondence to the Commission, wrote that the bone-crushing ban was unfair as it was only a reactionary measure brought in after the events which occurred in 'another union' or the 'Andover Union'.

The fact that many of the stories which reached the newspapers during this period were false or half-truths, as illustrated by Roberts, is hardly surprising.<sup>28</sup> But rather than wanting to secure policy outcomes, most people who brought cases of neglect and abuse to national attention did so in order to expose the deficiencies of the New Poor Law. Their efforts had been achieved to some extent in the Commission's replacement by the Poor Law Board in 1847, as explained in chapter seven. Yet, the very existence of a central welfare authority meant that local abuses could receive national attention, as the Commission and later the Board, became accountable for maladministration and maltreatments in the relief system across England and Wales. This perspective offers a significant advance on those offered in the Roberts-Henriques debate. Roberts argued that the abuses symbolised peoples' hatred of the Amendment Act and Henriques suggested that it was the Amendment Act itself which created 'a climate of opinion in which abuses were more likely to occur'.<sup>29</sup> I would argue that the anti-New Poor Law feeling and the existence of the central welfare authority made abuses more likely to reach a national audience and therefore obtain redress.

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<sup>27</sup> Butler and Drakeford, *Scandal*, p. 226.

<sup>28</sup> D. Roberts, 'How Cruel was the Victorian Poor Law?', *Historical Journal*, 6 (1963), 97-107.

<sup>29</sup> Reading of Henriques by Bernard Harris, *Origins of the British Welfare State*, p. 50; U. Henriques, 'How Cruel was the Victorian Poor Law?' *Historical Journal*, 11 (1968), 365-371; Roberts, 'How Cruel was the Victorian Poor Law'.

Although there is no way of knowing how many abuses happened under the old compared to the New Poor Law, stronger accountability created by the Amendment Act enabled cases of maladministration to reach the ears of national policy-makers.

Both of these scandals have revealed that the Commission only had a partial knowledge of how the Amendment Act was being implemented, and often lacked adequate powers to enforce change. What those against the passage of the Amendment Act failed to realise was, however, that their endeavours had actually assisted the central welfare authorities in identifying areas of policy strain. This allowed the central welfare authorities to implement new policy interventions in areas where only modest rules had previously been put in place, namely workhouse employment and medical relief. These policies had ultimately extended the power of the central welfare authorities over the localities, and the scope of relief offered by local welfare authorities. Scandals, overall, acted as an important feedback mechanism, between policy implementation and policy-making, during the early years of the New Poor Law.

Scandals are followed by examinations of how welfare authorities implement policies, but these examinations arise suddenly and randomly. How did the central welfare authorities evaluate their own progress in implementing the New Poor Law? Did they set targets? When these were not met, did they alter or release new policies? Although the Commission's resources may have 'always been too small for the task in hand', by scratching the surface of the paperwork created by the authorities, there is evidence that the Commission was monitoring and evaluating the progress in the implementation of the New Poor Law.<sup>30</sup> The Annual Reports contained regular surveys of the numbers of unions formed in each county, the numbers of unions with adequate workhouses (built, purchased and enlarged), tables of old parish properties sold and figures of poor relief expenditure. Other, less frequently published, returns included the numbers of people who emigrated, and the sums which the Commissioners raised or borrowed for this. Accounting practices under the poor laws, Walker argues, had

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<sup>30</sup> King, *Poverty and Welfare in England*, p. 228

‘functioned as a tool of social management as well as financial control.’<sup>31</sup> Yet how were these figures monitored and in what ways were these used as cues for policy developments?

## **8.2 Influences on the policy process under the poor laws**

This thesis has exposed the roles individuals and groups played in the process of policy-making, adoption, transfer and implementation. The influence of stakeholders and key actors - introduced in chapter two - in the ‘welfare process’ was striking. This suggests that the administration of the poor laws was more ‘pluralist’ than has hitherto been acknowledged. ‘The central feature of pluralist theory’, according to Bochel and Bochel, ‘is its contention that, in western industrialised societies...power is widely distributed among different groups.’ The distribution of power amongst groups creates a ‘multiplicity of channels of influence’ whereby ‘no one group is dominant in the decision-making process’.<sup>32</sup> Although the power in the administration of the poor laws was far from even, it is worth considering the contribution these ‘channels of influence’ had upon the policy process.

Under the old poor laws there were a wide variety of different stakeholders and key actors, each with different roles in the policy process. Vestrymen and local landowners were integral to the adoption, implementation and transfer of policy. There appears to have been a strong correlation between places adopting Gilbert’s Act and the presence of large landowners. It is little surprise then that the most detailed set of records I found detailing the adoption and implementation of this enabling Act were in Lord Egremont’s collection. Great landowners’ influence persisted in the policy process under the New Poor

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<sup>31</sup> S. Walker, ‘Expense, social and moral control. Accounting and the administration of the old poor law in England and Wales’, *Journal of Accounting and Public Policy*, 23 (2004) p. 123. For a similar analysis of the New Poor Law accounting practices see S. Walker, ‘Accounting, paper shadows and the stigmatised poor’, *Accounting, Organizations and Society*, 33 (2008), 453-487.

<sup>32</sup> C. Bochel and H. Bochel, *The UK Social Policy Process* (Basingstoke, 2004), p. 50.

Law, as others including Driver and Song have already identified.<sup>33</sup> Under the old poor laws, however, there appears to have been a multitude of other individuals involved in the policy process. Contractors could change the management of workhouses and also dictate the size of Gilbert's Unions. The gentry and nobility suggested changes to relief provision. Parish vestries were, however, only semi-autonomous authorities and had to adhere to magistrates' stipulations as guardians of the law. In addition, magistrates also recommended reforms for particular parishes. Yet, as revealed in chapter five, just as Sturges Bourne's Act reforms were supported by some magistrates, others refused to sanction the policy or undermined it once it was in operation. Magistrates were, therefore, not always supportive of parish policy reform.

The clergy could also impact on the policy process, especially in transferring information to parish officials seeking reform. Their influence was itself helped along by groups which sought to place the interests of the poor at the forefront of society's concerns, such as the Society for Bettering the Condition and Increasing the Comforts of the Poor (SBCP). The Bishop of Salisbury had the power to select reforms such as those at Boldre for the SBCP publications, however. The fact that the Bishop knew Gilpin indicates that social connections had also played a part in the policy process. This organisation and others also impacted on other types of relief policies being adopted in parishes. For instance, the SBCP, Labourer's Friend Society and the Agricultural Employment Institution influenced the uptake of allotment policies before 1834.<sup>34</sup>

Although landowners' influence remained under the New Poor Law, some of the stakeholders and key actors had changed. No longer was the vestry or the magistrate of such importance to the policy process as powers to administer relief became vested with individual Boards of Guardians and the Commissioners at Somerset House. The cases used in chapters six and seven showed that Boards of Guardians in the south were not always willing to comply with the stipulations

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<sup>33</sup> Digby, *Pauper Palaces*; B.K. Song, 'Continuity and Change in English Rural Society: the Formation of Poor Law Unions in Oxfordshire', *English Historical Review*, 114 (1999), 314-389.

<sup>34</sup> R. Wells, 'Historical Trajectories: English Social Welfare Systems, Rural Riots, Popular Politics, Agrarian Trade Unions, and Allotment Provision, 1793-1896', *Southern History*, 25 (2003), pp. 100-105; J. Burchardt, *The Allotment Movement in England: 1793-1873* (Woodbridge, 2002), pp. 9-97.

and views of the Commission. Boards informed the Commission when they released policies which they regarded as inappropriate. These communications were effectual - the Commission changed or compromised their policies in consequence. This was best illustrated when the Commission allowed women with illegitimate children to leave the workhouse to attend local churches and chapels and secured 13 extensions in the bone-crushing ban. This showed that Guardians too were important stakeholders, playing an active role in the shaping and making of policies.

The policy process was further complicated under the New Poor Law by key actors and stakeholders who had either worked *between* the local and national welfare authorities or represented the interests of individuals at a national stage, as demonstrated in chapter seven. In the first instance, Assistant Commissioners superintended the implementation of the New Poor Law. Their role was similar to that of magistrates under the old poor laws, not least because they oversaw the implementation of national legislation, recommended and discouraged the adoption and implementation of specific policies and practices. Assistant Commissioners, however, were civil servants whose investigations, reports and opinions about local phenomena fed back to the Commission. Ultimately, power was vested with the Commission alongside the Home Secretary who intervened to insist on the release of national policies. As such, stakeholders and key actors who represented individuals' interests at a national stage were used to exert their influence in the policy process at the national-level. MPs, representing their constituents, and Lords had brought cases of neglect and abuse to the Houses of Parliament. New pressure groups, such as the PMSA and BMA, brought the demands of medical officers to the Commissioners and Parliament.

Poor law historians have tended to criticise the focus on an administrative history of the poor laws at the expense of efforts to (re)construct the lived experience of welfare claimants. I argued that this was a false dichotomy, not least because their perspective fails to take into account, amongst other things, the ways in which relief recipients themselves could influence administration. The medical relief claimants of Bridgwater, William Smith's grievances in Sussex, and the hunger-induced bone scavenging at Andover attest to this importance. It must be noted though, that in order to have any influence on the subsequent

reforms developed by the Commission, their experiences were carried to policy-makers at the national level by stakeholders and key actors. Had I investigated the treatment of claimants under the old poor laws, it is quite possible that a similar series of events would have been revealed, albeit apparent to a localised, smaller audience. Individuals' cases of neglect and abuse would have been championed by the local press, clergy and magistrates before impacting upon local relief regimes. My research here has been assisted by the new accountability of both local authorities to a centralised welfare authority and the central welfare authority's accountability to the state, both of which resulted in a substantial amount of formal paperwork being produced. More archival evidence and the linkage of more disparate data from locally-created documents would be needed to bring the voices of the poor into the policy process under the old poor laws.

### **8.3 Further research**

This thesis has exposed how a policy process approach to understanding the poor laws can advance our knowledge of poor law reform and policy innovation over a large segment of the south of England. Would the influences upon the policy process be similar elsewhere, considering that here I have focused upon an area of England which suffered severely from the post-1815 economic depression? A similar approach could be deployed to examine the administration of the poor laws in other parts of England, such as the far south-western counties of Devon and Cornwall, counties which also often get left out in analyses of the south of England. Whilst this thesis is focused on rural areas of the south, administration in the rapidly urbanising areas is also deserving of attention, including the towns of Bath and Weymouth, and cities such as Southampton and Portsmouth. Did the policy process work in similar ways here as it did in the rapidly industrialising areas of the Midlands and the north of England? How did, for instance, scandals in the Midlands and north of England impact upon policy? How were the 'facts' of southern scandals used in policy debates in the Midlands and north of England? Comparative research using a policy process approach for different parts of

England would reveal whether parallel mechanisms and influences had produced poor law reforms and policy innovations.

Wales is of particular interest, especially after the passage of the Amendment Act because the Commission sometimes issued the country with different stipulations compared to neighbouring English counties. For instance, Wales did not have to comply with the rule that each medical district under the superintendence of one medical officer should be no larger than 15,000 acres in the General Medical Order of 1842. Instead, the medical men of the Welsh unions had to reside within seven miles of 'any part of any parish' within their district, unless the Commissioners sanctioned otherwise.<sup>35</sup> What impact did this have on the ways in which the Order was implemented? Were there subsequent attempts by groups of medical men here to enforce a change in policy? How other policies were adapted for, and subsequently implemented within, Wales would make an interesting topic of further study.

The policy process approach can also be applied to understand reform and innovation in wider public policy. The early-nineteenth century witnessed greater state intervention in many areas of people's everyday lives, including education, employment and health. Alongside new legislation came central government agencies, including the Privy Council Committee on Education and the General Board of Health, who, parallel to the Poor Law Commission, were responsible for the implementation and the development of new policies.<sup>36</sup> The reforms in the poor laws in the nineteenth century, and the reforms in education, factories, public health, vaccination, lunacy, emigration, charities, prisons, juvenile reformatories and various employments all permitted the government to appoint inspectors, leading to an increasing inspectorate.<sup>37</sup> The century was what Rhys Jones has called the 'age of the inspector'.<sup>38</sup> Although Innes has already examined the extent of public participation in the making of the early factory acts a policy

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<sup>35</sup> Appendix A.5, 'General Medical Order', Eighth Annual Report of the Poor Law Commissioners (1842), pp. 129-135, article 9, copy in Appendix 8 of this thesis.

<sup>36</sup> B. Harris, *The Origins of the British Welfare State: Social Welfare in England and Wales, 1800-1945* (Basingstoke, 2004), p. 36.

<sup>37</sup> P.W.J. Bartrip, 'British Government Inspection, 1832-75: some observations', *Historical Journal*, 25 (1982), p. 607, cited in R. Jones, *People/State/Territories: The Political Geographies of British State Transformation* (Oxford, 2007), p. 122.

<sup>38</sup> Jones, *People/State/Territories*, p. 111. Also see the collection of essays in R. MacLeod (ed.), *Government and Expertise: Specialists, Administrators and Professionals, 1860-1919* (Cambridge, 1988).



process approach would reveal more about how policies were made, implemented, evaluated and changed, and how policies and practices transferred amongst and between local and central authorities.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> J. Innes, 'Legislation and public participation 1760-1830' in D. Lemmings (eds.), *The British and their Laws in the Eighteenth Century* (Woodbridge, 2005), pp. 102-132.

## Appendices

### Appendix 1: Further details of identified Gilbert's Act Parishes and Unions in Table 4.2

#### (a) Earliest archival evidence for identified adoptions

County	Name of Gilbert's Parish or Union	Evidence
<b>Dorset</b>	Cranborne	BPP 1834 (44) XXVIII, Report from His Majesty's Commissioners for Inquiring into the Administration and Practical Operation of the Poor Laws. Appendix A. Reports from Assistant Commissioners. Part 1. Report 3. D.O.P. Okeden, p. 18.
	Poole	Poole St. James Vestry Minutes, Churchwardens Accounts and Vestry Minutes, 20 April 1813, DHC PE/PL/CW1/1/4.
<b>Gloucestershire</b>	Cheltenham	Information from Christine Seal, PhD student at the University of Leicester. My thanks to her for bring this to my attention.
	Westbury-on-Trym	Westbury-on-Trym, Overseers' Accounts and Poorhouse Documents, Agreement to Erect Poorhouse, 6 and 21 August and 5 October 1802, BCRO P/HTW/OP/2(c).
<b>Hampshire</b>	Alverstoke	Alverstoke, Guardians' Minute Book, 9 November 1799, HRO PL2/1/1.
	Bishopstoke	A'Court's correspondence, 'Notes on every Parish in the Winchester Division', 'Bishop Stoke', November 1834, TNA MH32/1.
	Boldre	A'Court's correspondence, Notes on the Parishes in the Lymington Division', 'Boldre', 3 December 1834, TNA MH32/1.
	Farnborough	Farnborough, Workhouse Account Book, 1794-1822, HRO PL2/2/2.
	Froyle	A'Court's correspondence, 'Notes the magisterial division of Alton', 'Froyle', 23 February 1835, TNA MH32/2.
	Headley	Headley account book started in 1795 entitled: An Account of Money expended in the House of Industry belonging to the united parishes of Bramshott, Headley & Kingsley', Headley Account Book 1795-1852, HRO 57M75/PO16.
	Hordle	A'Court's correspondence, Notes on the Parishes in the Lymington Division', 'Hordle', 3 December 1834, TNA MH32/1.
	Hursley	Hursley, Vestry Minute Book, 23 February and 16 March 1829, HRO 39M69/PV1.
	Lymington	Lymington, Vestry Order Book, 13 April 1809 notice (meeting held 28 April), HRO 42M75/PV9.
	Medstead	A'Court's correspondence, 'Notes on the magisterial division of Alton', 'Medstead', 23 February 1835, TNA MH32/1.
	Micheldever & East Stratton	Micheldever, Parish Vestry Minutes, 28 December 1826, HRO 7M80 PV1; and (although containing no exact date) A'Court Correspondence, 'Notes on every Parish in the

		Winchester Division', November 1834, 'East Stratton', TNA MH32/1.
	Milford [on Sea]	Milford, Book of Vestry Resolutions, 6 June 1816, HRO 31M67/PV1.
	[New] Milton	A'Court's correspondence, 'Notes on the Parishes in the Lymington Division', 'Milton', 3 December 1834, TNA MH32/1.
	Otterbourne	A'Court Correspondence, 'Notes on every Parish in the Winchester Division', 'Otterbourne & Boyatt', November 1834, TNA MH32/1.
	Selbourne	A'Court's correspondence, 'Notes on the magisterial division of Alton', 'Selbourne', 23 February 1835, TNA MH32/1.
	South Stoneham	South Stoneham, Disbursements and Parish Treasurer Accounts, 5 March 1792, SCRO PR9/15/10.
	Winchester	BPP 1834 (44) XXXV, Report from His Majesty's Commissioners for Inquiring into the Administration and Practical Operation of the Poor Laws. Appendix B.2. Answers to the Town Queries in Five Parts. Part 2. Question 15. Winchester, St. Thomas & St. Clement (United Parishes).
<b>Hampshire and Surrey borders</b>	Aldershot & Bentley	Bentley, Overseers' Account Book, 26 October 1818, HRO 1M80/PO3; Bentley, Receipted bill of expenses incurred by Thomas Clement for the Guardians of the parishes of Aldershot and Bentley, 1824-1825, HRO 1M80/PO43.
	Ash	From at least 1801 it appears united with Seal, Puttenham and Ash, Long Sutton, Vestry Minute Book, HRO 78M72/PV1, yet the formal agreement to unite was 19 April 1806, see The Workhouse website, compiled by P. Higgenbotham. Online. Available: <a href="http://www.workhouses.org.uk">http://www.workhouses.org.uk</a> [last accessed 28 April 2010].
<b>Surrey</b>	Cranleigh	Agreement to provide relief according to Gilbert's Act; Surrey Quarter Session Bundles, Midsummer Sessions 1793, SHC QS2/6/1793/Mid/31.
	Ewhurst	Agreement to provide relief according to Gilbert's Act and provide a workhouse, Surrey Quarter Session Bundles, Midsummer Sessions 1799, SHC QS2/6/1799/Mid/33.
	Farnham	Advert asking for offers for a builder to contract for building of a workhouse with a capacity to accommodate 200 people, <i>Hampshire Chronicle</i> , 1 February 1790.
	Frensham	Agreement to provide a workhouse and appoint Guardians according to Gilbert's Act, Surrey Quarter Session Bundles, Easter Sessions 1795, SHC QS2/6/1786/Mid/36.
	Frimley	n.d., SHC catalogue.
	Godalming	Agreement to provide a workhouse according to Gilbert's Act, Surrey Quarter Session Bundles, Midsummer 1786, SHC QS2/6/1786/Mid/36.
	Hambledon	The expansion happened in two phases, in 1789 and 1792. An agreement of 1789 stated that the parishes of Bramlet, Chiddingfold, Dunsford, Hambledon and Hascombe had united for the relief and employment of the poor in a 'house..... already.....built for that purpose at.... Wornley Heath'; Surrey Quarter Session Bundles, Midsummer Sessions 1789, SHC QS2/6/1789/Mid/25. In 1792 Haslemere, Elstead, St Martha's and Shalford were added, Surrey Quarter Session Bundles, Midsummer Sessions 1792, SHC QS2/6/1792/Mid/13.
	Reigate	Agreement of the parishes of Borough and Foreign

		parishes of Reigate, with Horley, Nutfield and Headley to provide relief according to Gilbert's Act, Surrey Quarter Session Bundles, Midsummer Session 1795, SHC QS2/6/1795/Mid/9. An agreement of the same five parishes to provide a workhouse at Horley in 1795, Surrey Quarter Session Bundles, Micheltas Session 1795, SHC QS2/6/1795/Mic/36.
<b>West Sussex</b>	Arundel	BPP 1834 (44) XXXVI, Report from His Majesty's Commissioners for Inquiring into the Administration and Practical Operation of the Poor Laws. Appendix B.2. Answers to the Town Queries in Five Parts. Part 4. Question 43. Arundel.
	Easebourne	Seal of the Union stating it was established in 1792 accidentally used on a Sutton contract, Contracts between Mary Bryan and Daniel Bryan of Petworth [to 1803] or Daniel Bryan [1804 on], and the Visitor and Guardians of Sutton United Parishes for the Governorship of the Workhouse, and the care, feeding, clothing etc. of the poor; with bonds, contract of 1803, PHA/6515.
	East Preston	East Preston Union, Treasurer's Book, 1791-1814, WSRO WG2/1; East Preston Union, Treasurer's Book and Guardians' Agreement and Forfeit Book, 1791-1832, WSRO WG2/2.
	Petworth	Date of establishment unknown but existence acknowledged in R. Wells, 'The Poor Law 1700-1900', in K.C. Leslie and B. Short (eds.), <i>A Historical Atlas of Sussex</i> (Chichester, 1999), p. 71.
	Sidlesham	Consists of Sidlesham (where meetings were held), Appledram, Birdham, Itchenor and Selsey, from advert for contracting out the poor, <i>Hampshire Telegraph and Sussex Chronicle</i> 4 February 1833. They particularly wanted a couple to contract the poor to have been involved in Sacking Manufactory.
	Sutton	Sutton Union, Guardians' Minute Book, 21 May 1791, WSRO WG3/1/1.
	Thakeham	Thakeham Union, Guardians' Minute and Account Book, 16 February 1789, WSRO WG4/1.
	Westhampnett	Date of establishment unknown but existence acknowledged by R. Wells, 'The Poor Law 1700-1900', in K.C. Leslie and B. Short (eds.), <i>A Historical Atlas of Sussex</i> (Chichester, 1999), p. 71.
	Yapton	Date of establishment unknown but existence acknowledged by R. Wells, 'The Poor Law 1700-1900', in K.C. Leslie and B. Short (eds.), <i>A Historical Atlas of Sussex</i> (Chichester, 1999), p. 71.
<b>Wiltshire</b>	Devizes	Devizes Union, Proceedings of a meeting held to combine the parishes of St. John's and St. Mary's Devizes, to provide a joint parochial workhouse, 27 June 1796, W&SA H7/110/1.
	Mere	Agreement at a Local meeting, To adopt the provisions of the 1782 Act of Parliament for the better relief of the poor, 10 and 28 April 1814, W&SA 438/38.

(b) Parishes which formed the identified Gilbert's Unions

<b>County</b>	<b>Name of Gilbert's Parish or Union</b>	<b>Eventual number of parishes</b>	<b>Parishes within Gilbert's Union</b>
Hampshire	Farnborough	4	Eversley Farnborough Hartley Wintney Yately
	Headley	3	Bramshott Headley Kingsley
	Micheldever & East Stratton	2	East Stratton Micheldever
	Winchester	2	St. Thomas Winchester St. Clement Winchester
Hampshire and Surrey borders	Aldershot & Bentley	2	Aldershot (Surrey) Bentley (Hampshire)
	Ash	5	Ash (Surrey) Frimley (Surrey) Long Sutton (Hampshire) Seal (Surrey) Puttenham (Surrey)
Surrey	Hambledon	9	Bramley Chiddingfold Dunsfold Elstead Hambledon Hascombe Haslemere St Martha-on-the-Hill [Chilworth] Shalford
	Reigate	5	Headley Horley Nutfield Reigate Borough Reigate Foreign
West Sussex	Easebourne	16	Bpton Chithist Cocking Easbourne Harnhurst Iping Linchmere Lodsworth Lurgashall Selham Stedham Tillington

			Trayford Trotton Woolbedding Woolavington
	East Preston	19	Amberley Angmering Broadwater Burpham Climping Durrington East Preston Ferring Ford Goring by Seas Houghton Lancing Littlehampton Lyminster Poling Rustington Tortington West Tarring Wiggenholt
	Sidelsham	5	Appledram Birdham Itchenor Selsey Sidelsham
	Sutton	17	Barlavington South Berstead Bignor Burton Bury Clapham Coates Coldwaltham Duncton Egdean Fittleworth Greatham Heyshott Patching Slindon Sutton Warningcamp
	Thakeham	6	Ashington Findon Sullington Thakeham Washington Wiston

	Westhampnett	11	Barnham Binderton Boxgrove East Dean Eartham Graffham East Lavant Mid Lavant Singleton West Stoke Westhampnett
	Yapton	3	Felpham Walberton Yapton
Wiltshire	Devizes	2	St. John's Devizes St. Mary's Devizes

## Appendix 2: Proposal for the formation of a Gilbert's Union in East Sussex

*All wording, spelling and grammar are the same as the original.*

'It is proposed that those Parishes which are within a proper Distance of Piltdown or Chelwood Common should join in Building an House of Industry or workhouse on one of those Healthy & convenient Spots - If a sufficient number of Parishes Should agree The Sum to be borrowed by each Parish would not exceed from £150 or £300 the interest of which until it could be gradually paid would amount to a mere trifle -

Single Parishes cannot afford the expence that is requisite to form that kind of establishment which can properly provide for and employ the Poor and the Idle - The Governer should be a respectable Person whose services Cannot be expected for a trifling Salary He should be capable of Conducting such Manufacturers as will employ aged Persons & young Children

His salary however and the other expences of the House would not be felt when divided among several Parishes - In some parts of England Parishes which have joined to form the establishment now proposed do not pay exceeding eight pence or ten pence in the pound while the adjoining Parish which is not associated with them pays 7 shillings [a note C when weekly allowances in money are given to the poor they buy everything at the dearest rate and from the meanest shops but every article is bought by wholesale & at the Cheapest rate by these establishments] not only a great expence which now lies on the Farmer will be saved But what is of still more consequence The aged & infirm would be properly fed And kept warm The Poor & the Idle would be properly managed and employed - Those that would not or Could not maintain Themselves out of the workhouse both Men and women & also Children might be obliged to earn as or nearly as much as would pay the expence of maintaining them Parishes would not be liable to be insulted by the Poor or imposed on relative to them - At present many Parishes pay from 50 to 100 £ yearly for Cottages for the Poor The greatest part of which & also a great expence for firing would be saved - In the House of Industry a fire will serve a great Number The sick Poor would be there carefully attended as proper nurses would necessarily be employed and a surgeon or Apothecary should almost daily visit the House The Impotent or those who really are not able to maintain themselves are often half starved and submit to the extreme of Misery to avoid the wretched workhouses of this Country They would soon find that they might live Comfortable in the House of Industry and that more work would not be exacted from them than they could easily perform even that sys[t]em of work would in many instances nearly pay for their maintenance in the House of Industry. - In a wing of the proposed Building there might be some apartments for the insane in which Persons might be admitted who are rather above the situation of the poor and whose friends may be able to pay for their maintenance. It must be unnecessary to describe the miserable situation of



those a little above the necessity of the Parish assistance not intitled to it when oblig'd to inhabit a very small dwelling and at the Best only separated by a very thin partition from relations in the worse state of insanity The House of Industry might also be regulated so as to answer the purpose of an Infirmary to its Parishes Persons suffering under accidents such as Broken Limbs & the like misfortunes & who require Constant attendance might here Be accommodated at a reasonable expence to the great relief of the Farmers and of the Parishes

Several Parishes adjoin to Piltdown that situation for a House of Industry would be convenient to

Newick

Isfield

Little Horsted

Ringmer

Uckfield

Framfield

Bruxted

Maresfield

Fletching

Chailey

Lindfield

Horsted Keynes

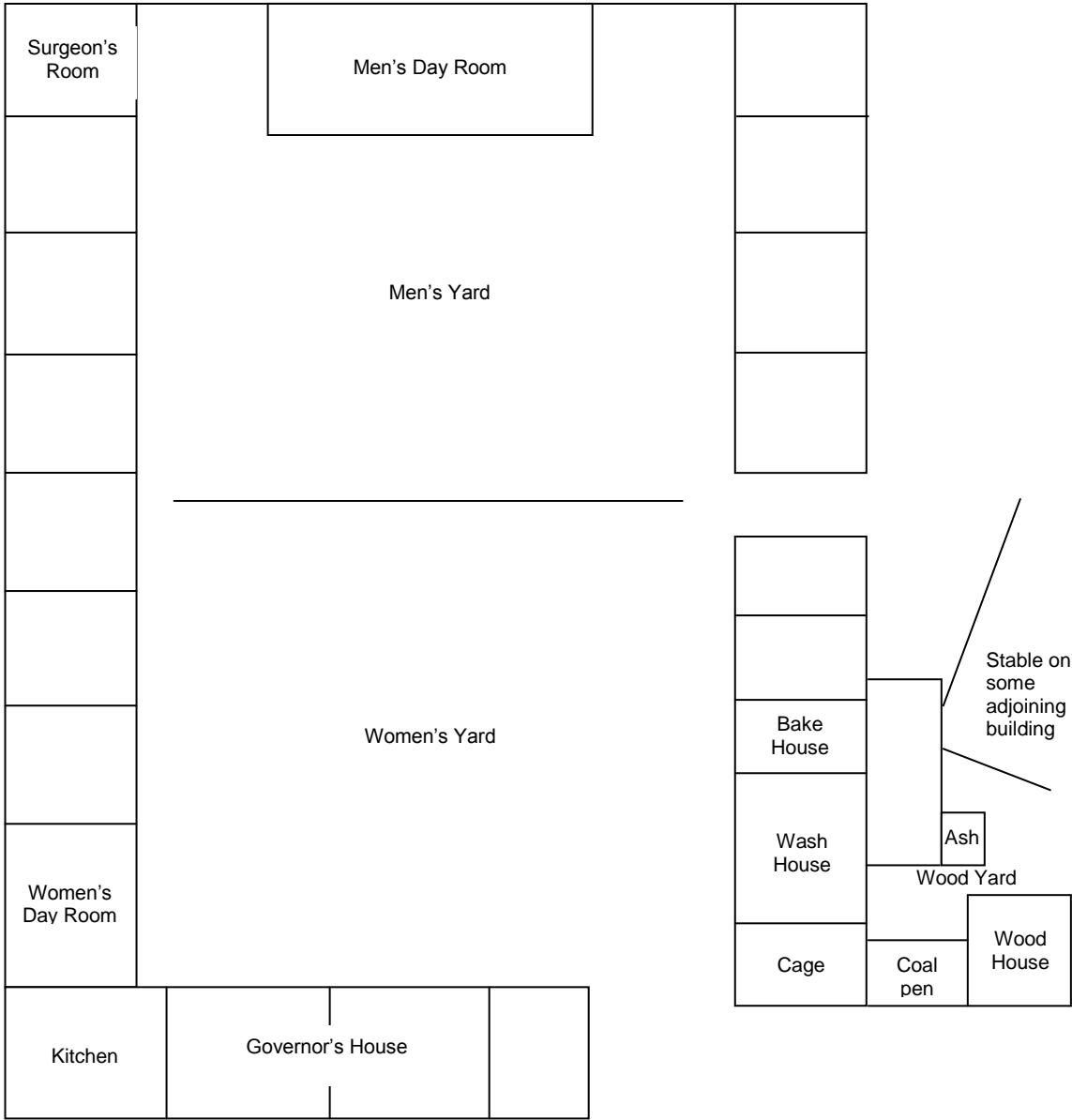
If an House of Industry should be built on Chelwood Common it would be Convenient to most of the above mentioned parishes and also to the Parishes of East Grinstead West Hoadly Worth and Ardingly Twelve parishes or even a smaller number would Be sufficient altho' in some Counties from 20 to 30 are associated Such Parishes as may think the plan worth attention will hold Parochial meetings during the month of November for the Better Consideration of it & may send Deputies to a general meeting which will be held in the month of December & of which Public notice will be given -

at that general meeting the particulars of the several Houses of Industry in the different parts of England will be Produced also their regulations & mode of Contribution and of management with an account of the Several Improvements made in these establishments During the last Thirty years

Those Parishes which shall then agree to the association proposed may select the Plan the regulations & managements that shall appear Best to them & take such steps as may be judged proper to prepare for the necessary Buildings next Summer'

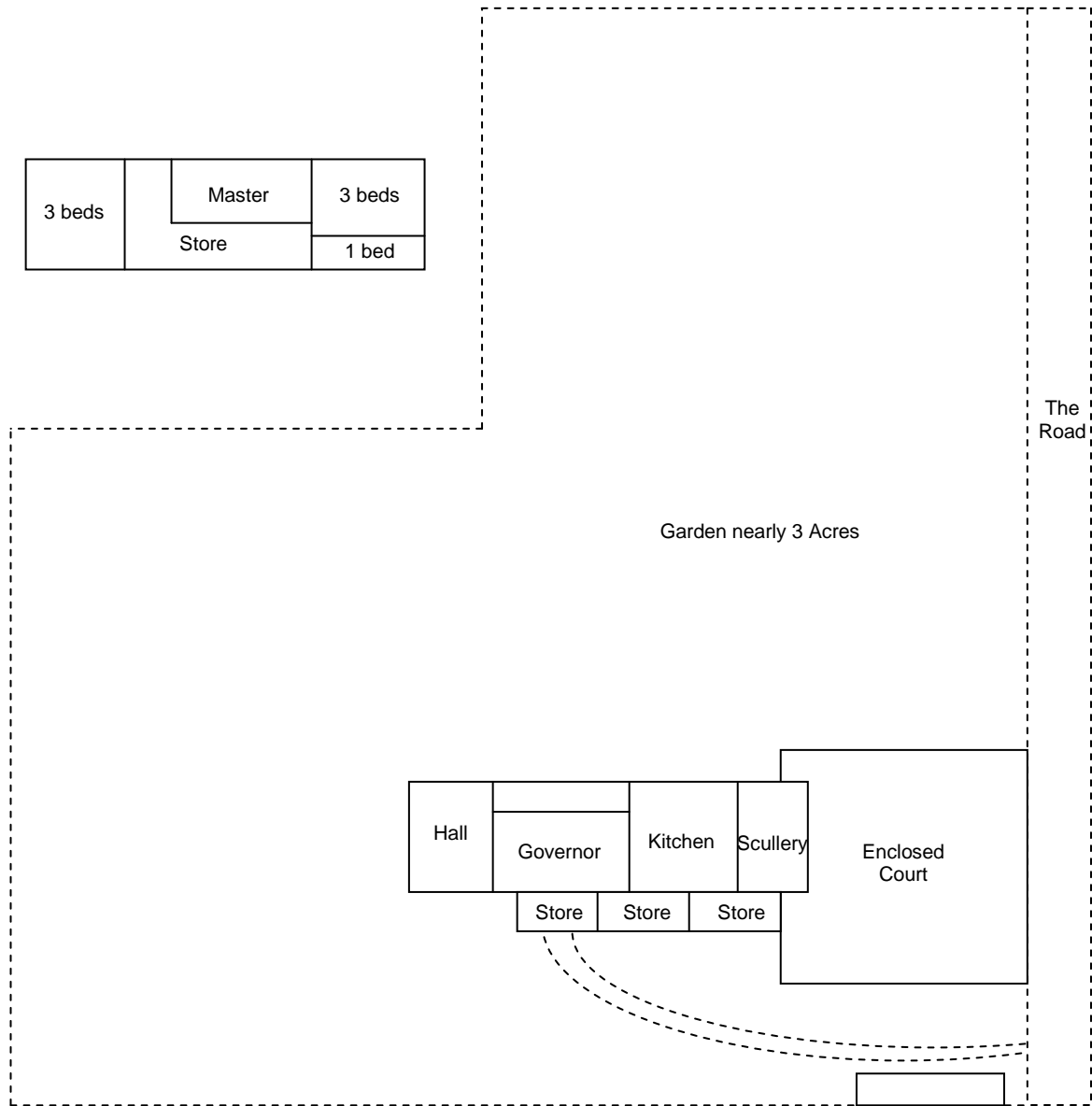
Source: Proposal for the formation of [a Gilbert Union] based on the parish of Fletching to build a Workhouse at Piltdown or Chelwood Common, n.d., ESRO AMS4899/1

Appendix 3: Hursley workhouse



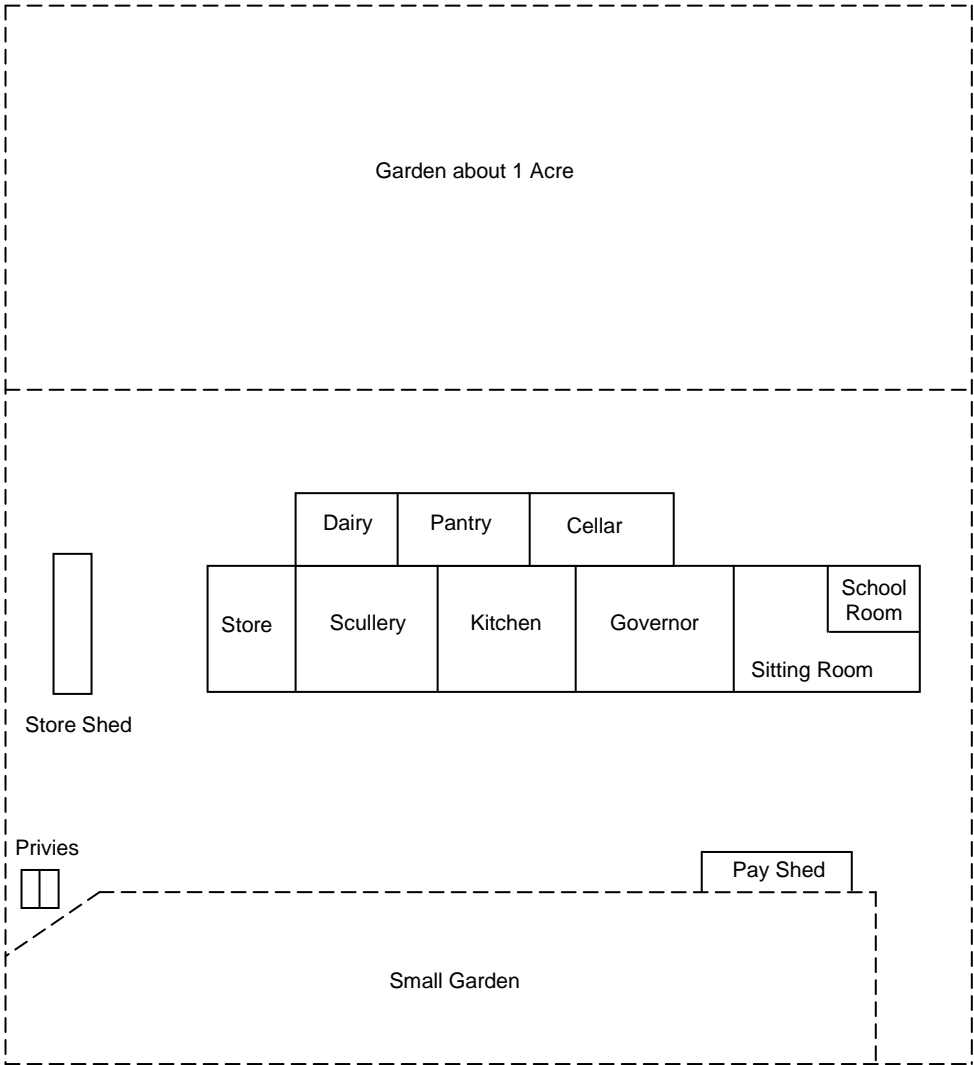
Source: Copied from A'Court's sketch in A'Court's correspondence, 'Notes on every Parish in the Winchester Division', 'Hursley', 1 March 1834, TNA MH32/1.

Appendix 4: Hordle workhouse (ground plan)



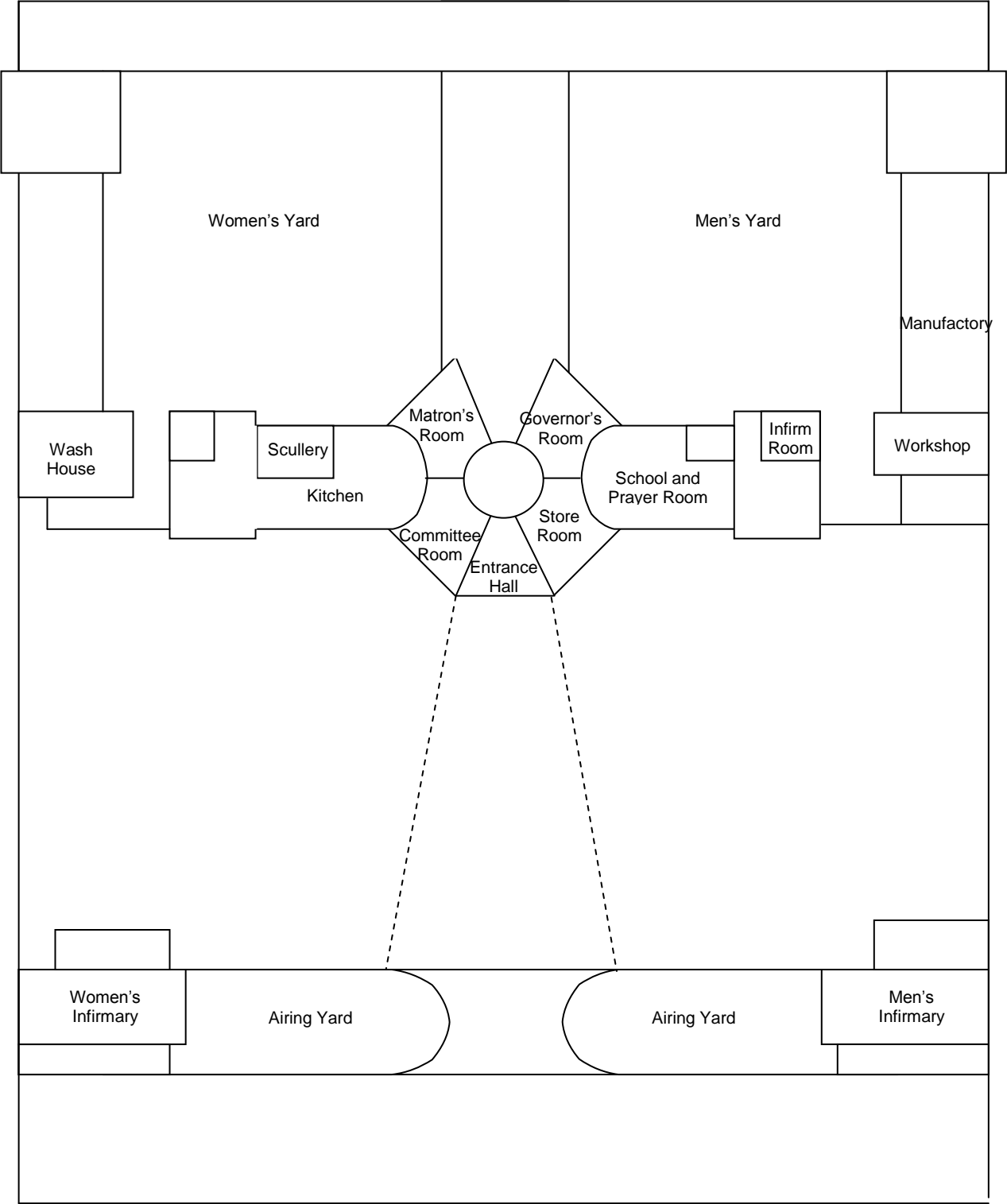
Source: Copied from A'Court's sketch in A'Court's correspondence, 'Notes on the Parishes in the Lymington Division', 'Hordle', 3 December 1834, TNA MH32/1.

Appendix 5: Boldre workhouse (ground plan)



Source: Copied from A'Court's sketch in A'Court's correspondence, 'Notes on the Parishes in the Lymington Division', 'Boldre', 3 December 1834, TNA MH32/1.

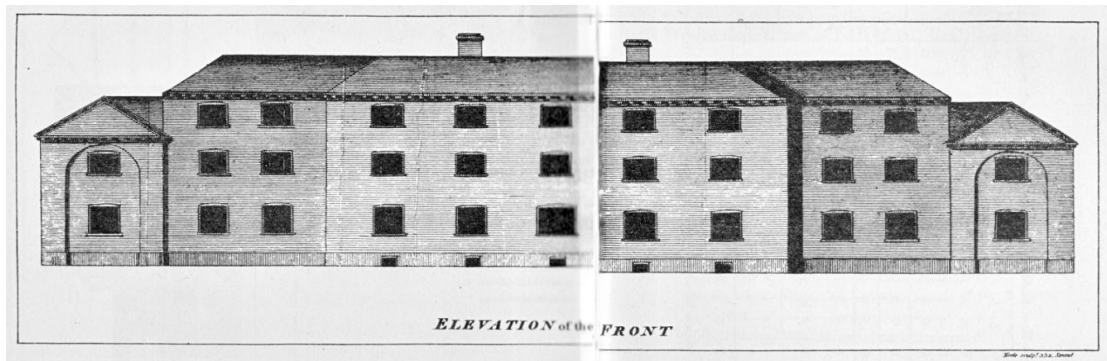
Appendix 6: Alverstoke workhouse



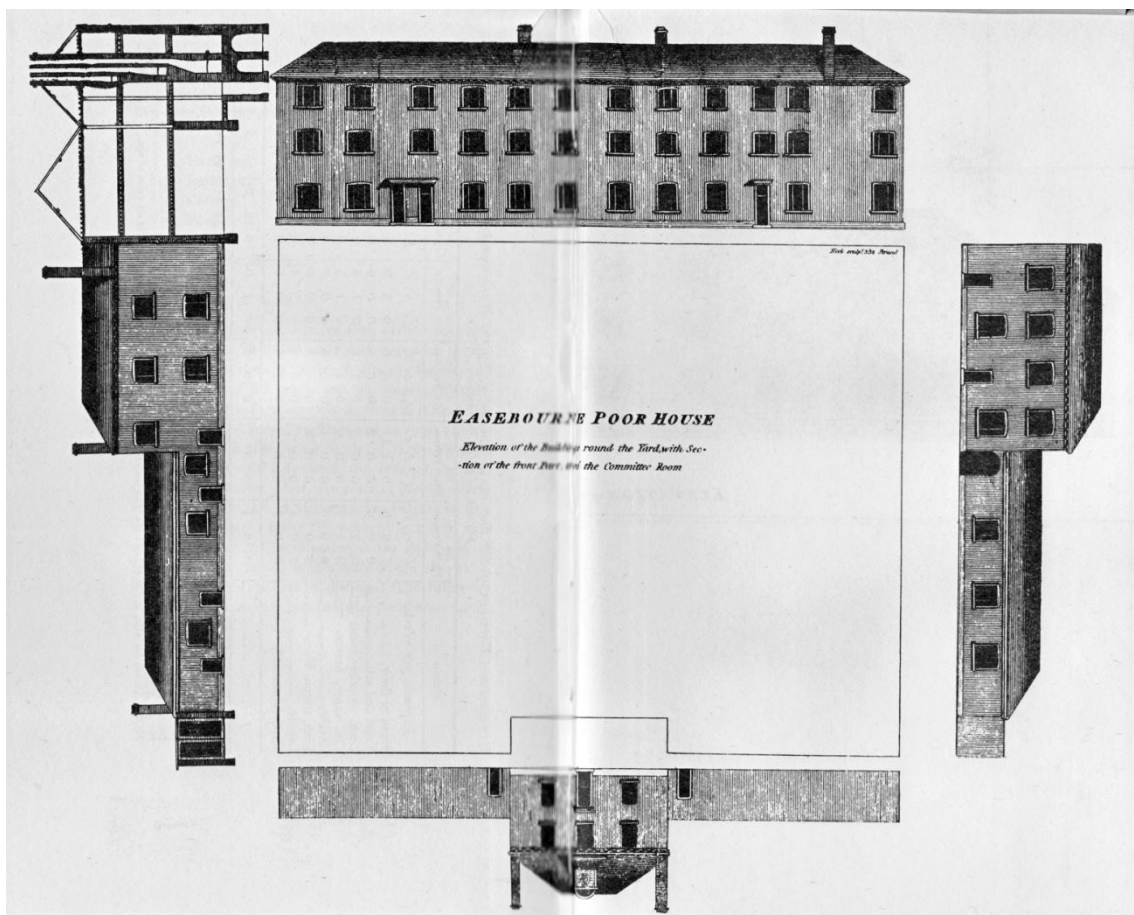
Source: Copied from A'Court's sketch in A'Court correspondence, 'Notes on the parishes in the division of Fareham including Portsmouth', 21 December 1834, 'Alverstoke and Gosport', TNA MH32/1.

## Appendix 7: Easebourne workhouse

(a) Entrance

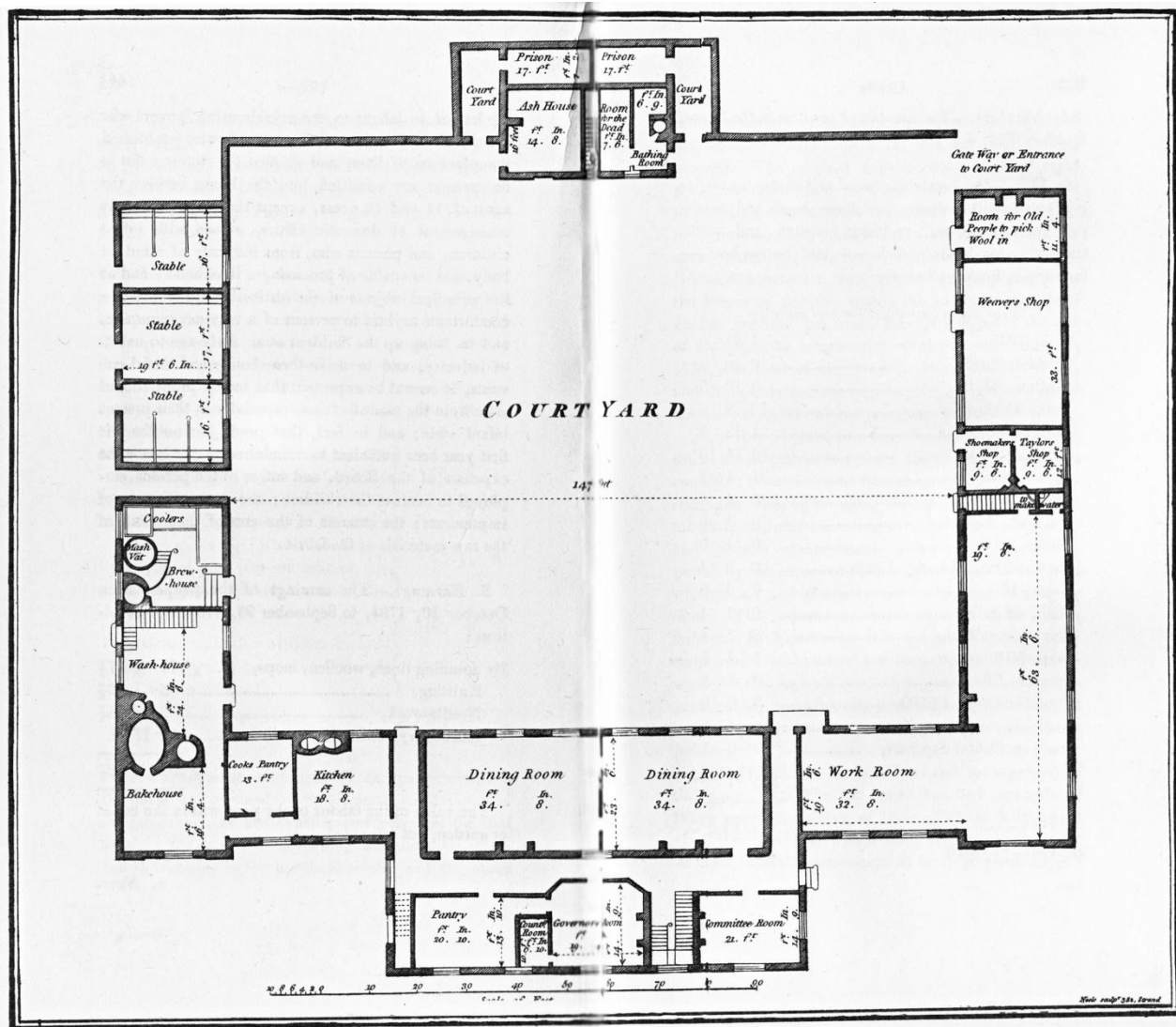


(b) View from inside courtyard



Source of a and b: A. Young, *General View of the Agriculture of the County of Sussex* (London, 1818), between pages 439 and 440.

(c) Ground-floor plan



Source: Young, *General View of the Agriculture of the County of Sussex*, between pages 451 and 452.

## Appendix 8: General Medical Order of 1842

*All wording, spelling and grammar are the same as the original.*

### GENERAL MEDICAL ORDER

To the GUARDIANS OF THE POOR of the several Unions named  
in the Schedule hereunto annexed;

To the Clerk or Clerks to the Justices of the Petty Sessions,  
held for the Division or Divisions in which the Parishes  
and Places comprised within the said Unions are situate;

And to all others whom it may concern,

WE, THE POOR LAW COMMISSIONERS, in pursuance of the authorities vested in Us by an Act passed in the fifth year of the reign of His late Majesty King William the Fourth, intituled, "*An Act for the Amendment and better Administration of the Laws relating to the Poor of England and Wales*," do hereby order, direct, and declare, with respect to each and every Unions named in the Schedule hereinto annexed, as follows: -

#### *Tender.*

Art. 1. It shall not be lawful for the Board of Guardians of any of the said Unions, by advertisement, or other public notice, printed or written, to invite tenders of the supply of medicines, or for the medical attendance on any of the paupers within any such Union, unless such advertisement or notice shall specify the district or place for which such supply of medicines and such attendance is required, together with the amount of salary or other remuneration fixed or approved by the Poor Law Commissioners, as the consideration for such supply of medicines and such attendance, or either of them.

Art. 2. All salaries or other payments to any medical man, fixed by any of the said Boards of Guardians, and every contract made by any of the said Boards of Guardians with any medical man, in pursuance of any advertisement or other notice, inviting medical men to tender their services at a sum or sums not named in such advertisement or notice, shall be deemed to be fixed or made in opposition to the rules and regulations of the Poor Law Commissioners in force in this behalf, and all payments made towards such salary, or in fulfilment of such contract, shall be disallowed in the accounts of the parties authorizing or making the same.

#### *Qualifications.*

Art. 3. It shall not be lawful for any of the said Boards of Guardians to appoint any person to be a medical officer, unless such person, at the time of his appointment, shall possess one of the four following qualifications; that is to say, -



1. A diploma from the Royal College of Surgeons in London, together with a degree in medicine from a university in England legally authorized to grant such degree, or together with a diploma or licence of the Royal College of Physicians of London.
2. A diploma from the Royal College of Surgeons in London, together with a certificate to practise as an apothecary from the Society of Apothecaries of London.
3. A diploma from the Royal College of Surgeons in London, such person having been in actual practice as an apothecary on the 1st day of August 1815.
4. A warrant or commission as a surgeon or assistant-surgeon in Her Majesty's Navy, or as a surgeon or assistant-surgeon, or apothecary in Her Majesty's Army, or as a surgeon or assistant-surgeon in the service of the Honourable East India Company, dated previous to the 1st day of August 1826.

Art. 4. Provided always, that if it shall not be practicable for the Board of Guardians to procure a person residing within or near the district in which he is to act, and duly qualified in one of the four modes recited in Art. 3, to attend on the poor in such district, and so qualified, shall have been dismissed from office under the seal of the Poor Law Commissioners, or shall be judged by the Poor Law Commissioners to be unfit or incompetent to hold the office of medical officer, then and in such case the Board of Guardians shall cause a special minute to be made and entered on the usual record of their proceedings, stating the reasons which in their opinion make it necessary to employ a person not qualified as required by Art. 3, and shall forthwith transmit a copy of such minute to the Poor Law Commissioners for their consideration; and the Poor Law Commissioners may, if they think fit so to do, permit the employment by such Board of Guardians of any person duly licensed to practise as a medical man, although such person shall not be qualified in one of the four modes required by Art. 3.

Art. 5. Provided also, that it shall be lawful for the Board of Guardians, with the consent of the Poor Law Commissioners first had and obtained, to continue in office any medical officer duly licensed to practise as a medical man already employed by any such Board of Guardians, although such medical officer may not be qualified in one of the four modes required by Art. 3.

*Maximum Area and Population of Medical Districts.*

Art. 6. It shall not be lawful for the Board of Guardians to assign to any medical officer, to be by them hereafter appointed, a district which shall exceed in extent the area of 15,000 statute acres, or which shall contain a population exceeding the number of 15,000 persons, according to the then last enumeration of the population published by authority of Parliament.

Art. 7. Provided always, that where any medical officer may, on the day on which this order shall come in force, hold any district exceeding either in area or population the limits fixed in Art. 6, such medical officer may have been appointed to such district for any time not exceeding 12 calendar months, he shall continue to hold his office, if not otherwise removed therefrom, up to the expiration of the time for which he was so appointed, but that where any medical officer shall have been appointed to any district exceeding the said limits in area or population for any space of time longer than 12 calendar months from the day in which this order shall come into force, the continuance of such officer in his office shall cease and determine on the 25<sup>th</sup> day of March, 1843, or whenever the term of such appointment may expire, whichever shall first happen.

Art. 8. Provided also, that if it shall be impracticable for the Board of Guardians to divide any Union into districts containing respectively an area and population less than is specified in Art. 6, then in such case the Board of Guardians shall cause a special minute to be made and entered on the usual record of their proceedings, stating the reasons which, in their opinion, make it necessary to form a district exceeding the said limits, and shall forthwith transmit a copy of such minute to the Poor Law Commissioners for their consideration, and if the Poor Law Commissioners shall signify their approval thereof to such Guardians, then and in such case, but not otherwise, such Guardians may proceed to appoint a medical officer for the said districts.

Art. 9. Provided also, that the limits of 15,000 statute acres prescribed in Art. 6, shall not apply or be in force in respect to medical district, situate wholly or in part within the Principality of Wales; but no medical district situate wholly or in part within that principality shall be assigned or any medical officer residing more than seven miles from any part of any parish included within such district, unless the formation of such district shall have been specially sanctioned by the Poor Law Commissioners in the same manner as is directed in Art. 8.

*Rates of Payment in Surgical and Midwifery Cases.*

Art. 10. No salary of any district medical officer, or contract made by any Board of Guardians with a district medical officer, shall include the remuneration for the operations and services of the following classes performed by such medical officer in that capacity for any out-door pauper, but such operations and services shall be paid for by the Board of Guardians, according to the rules specified in this article.

1. Amputations of leg, arm, foot, or hand	}	£.	s.	d.
2. The operation for strangulated hernia				
3. The operation of trephining for fractured skull				
4. Treatment of compound fractures of the thigh		5	0	0
5. Treatment of compound fractures or compound dislocations of the leg				

6. Treatment of simple fractures or simple dislocations of the thigh or leg	}	3	0	0
7. Treatment of dislocations or fractures of the arm	}	1	0	0

The above rates to include the payment for the supply of all kinds of apparatus and splints.

Provided that in every such case the patient survives the operation not less than thirty-six hours, and that he has required and has received several attendances after the operation by the medical officer who has performed the same.

Provided also that except in cases of sudden accident immediately threatening life, no medical officer shall be entitled to receive such remuneration for any amputation or for the operation of trephining unless he shall, before performing such amputation or operation, have obtained at his own cost the advice of some member of the Royal College of Surgeons of London, or some fellow or licentiate of the Royal College of Physicians of London, and shall produce to the Board of Guardians a certificate from such member of the Royal College of Surgeons, or such fellow or licentiate, stating that it was right and proper that such amputation or operation should be then performed.

Art. 11. All trusses furnished by the medical officer in consequence of any contract with or direction of a Board of Guardians, shall be charged by such medical officer at the cost price, including carriage, and be paid accordingly by such Board of Guardians.

Art. 12. The delivery of any woman in childbirth, and the subsequent medical attendance upon her by any medical officer, in that capacity, whether in or out of the workhouse, shall be paid for by the Board of Guardians in the manner specified in this and the following article: that is to say:-

In cases in which any such medical officer shall be called on by order of any person legally qualified to make such order to attend any woman in or immediately after childbirth, or shall be required under circumstances of difficulty or danger, without any order, to visit any such woman actually receiving relief, or whom the Board of Guardians may subsequently decide to have been in a destitute condition, such medical officer shall be paid for his attendance and medicines by the sum of not less than ten shillings, nor more than twenty shillings, as the Board of Guardians may determine, regard being had to the distance from the residence of such medical officer.

Art. 13. Provided that in any special case in which great difficulty may have occurred in the delivery, or long subsequent attendance may have been requisite, such medical officer shall receive the sum of two pounds; and if any such case any dispute shall arise between the Board of Guardians and such medical officer, such medical officer shall not receive the said sum until the Poor Law Commissioners shall have signified their approval of such payment on a report made by such

medical officer and transmitted to them through the Board of Guardians of the said Union.

*Substitutes for Medical Officers*

Art. 14. Every medical officer appointed, or to be appointed, in pursuance of the rules, orders, and regulations of the Poor Law Commissioners, shall be bound to visit and attend personally the poor persons intrusted to his care, and shall be responsible for such visits and attendances, and shall so keep any weekly return prescribed by the orders of the Poor Law Commissioners as to shown when the visit or attendance made or given to any pauper was made or given by any person other than himself.

Art. 15. Every medical officer to be hereafter appointed shall, if practicable, within twenty-one days of the time of his appointment, name to the Board of Guardians some legally qualified medical practitioner to whom application for medicines and attendance may be made in the case of his absence from home, or other hindrance to his personal attendance, and who will supply the same at the cost of such medical officer, and the name and residence of every medical practitioner so named shall be forwarded by the clerk to the Guardians to each relieving officer, and to the overseers, of every parish in the Union.

*Mode of obtaining Medical Relief by Permanent Paupers.*

Art. 16. The Board of Guardians shall, once in every six months, cause to be prepared a list of all such aged and infirm persons, and persons permanently sick or disabled, as may be actually receiving relief from such Board of Guardians, and residing within the district of each medical officer of the Union, and shall from time to time furnish to each medical officer a copy of the list aforesaid.

Art. 17. Every person whose name shall be inserted in such list shall receive a ticket in the following form, and shall be entitled, on the exhibition of such ticket to the medical officer of his district, to obtain such advice, attendance and medicines as his case may require, without any order from the relieving officer, overseer, or other authority.

FORM OF TICKET

_____ Union.
_____
Date _____
Good until the _____ day of _____ 184_____
Name of Pauper _____
Residence of Pauper _____
Name of Medical Officer _____
Residence _____
Usual hour at which he is at Home _____

Art. 18. Such medical officer shall, on the exhibition to him of the said ticket, and on application made on behalf of the party to whom such ticket was given, be held responsible for affording such advice, attendance, and medicines as he may be bound to supply, in the same manner as if he had received in each case a special order from the Board of Guardians, or from any officer, to afford such advice, attendance, and medicines.

Art. 19. Provided always, that if on complaint of any medical officer it be made to appear to the Board of Guardians that any poor person who may have been furnished with a ticket in the aforesaid form shall have wilfully applied to or sent for the medical officer on frivolous grounds, such poor person shall for the first time be admonished by the Board of Guardians, and on a repetition of such application such poor person shall be deprived of his ticket, and thenceforth until the next half-yearly list be made out shall not be empowered, except in cases of sudden and urgent necessity, to demand advice, attendance, or medicines from such medical officer, without an order of the Board of Guardians, a relieving officer, or an overseer of some parish in the Union.

*Continuance in Office of Medical Officers.*

Art. 20. Every medical officer duly appointed in pursuance of the orders and regulations of the Poor Law Commissioners shall, unless the period for which he is appointed be expressly entered in the minutes of the Guardians at the time of making such appointment, or be expressly inserted in a written contract entered into by such medical officer, and such period have been subsequently approved by the Poor Law Commissioners, continue in office until he may die or resign, or become legally disqualified to hold such office, or be removed therefrom by the Poor Law Commissioners.

*Explanation of Terms.*

Art. 21. Whenever the word "Union" is used in this Order, it shall be taken to include not only an Union of parishes formed under the provisions of the hereinbefore recited Act, but also any Union of parishes incorporated or united for the relief or maintenance of the poor under any local Act of Parliament.

Art. 22. Whenever the word "Guardians" is used in this Order, it shall be taken to include not only Guardians appointed or entitled to act under the provisions of the said hereinbefore Act, but also any Governors, Directors, Managers, or Acting Guardians entitled to act in the ordering of relief to the poor from the poor rates under any local Act of Parliament.

Art. 23. Whenever the words "Boards of Guardians" are used in this Order, they shall be taken to mean not only a Board of Guardians competent to act under the provisions of the said hereinbefore recited Act, but also such Guardians or such

number of any Guardians, as are competent to order relief to the poor from the poor rates under any local Act of Parliament.

Art. 24. Whenever the word “parish” is used in this Order, it shall be taken to signify any parish, township, will, or other place separately maintaining its own poor.

Art. 25. Whenever the word “medicines” is used in this Order, it shall be taken to include all medical and surgical appliances; and whenever the words “medical attendance” are used in this order, they shall be taken to include surgical attendance.

Art. 26. Whenever the words “medical officer” are used in this Order, they shall be taken to include any person duly licensed as a medical man who shall have contracted with any Board of Guardians for the supply of medicines or for medical attendance.

Art. 27. Whenever, in describing any person or party, matter or thing, the word importing the singular number or the masculine gender only is used in this order, the same shall be taken to include, and shall be applied to, several persons or parties as well as one person or party, females as well as males, and several matters or things as well as one matter or thing, respectively, unless there be something in the subject or context repugnant to such construction.

Art. 28. Whenever in this Order any article is referred to by its number, the article of this Order bearing that number shall be taken to be signified thereby.

Source: Appendix A.5, ‘General Medical Order’, Eighth Annual Report of the Poor Law Commissioners (1842), pp. 129-135.

## Appendix 9: Interview of William Smith

*In the original this interview was written as a continuous series of prose. For the purpose of this appendix I have divided up the questions, but all wording, spelling and grammar remain the same.*

### QUESTIONS PUT TO WILLIAM SMITH AND HIS ANSWERS.

As to the Eastbourne workhouse, - At what time do you go to bed?

Something before eight o'clock.

At what time do you rise in the morning?

*I do not see any time*, but I suppose about half past five o'clock in summer and seven in winter.

When you go down stairs, what then takes place?

We go into the kitchen, and one of the men reads *prayers*.

From what Prayer Book?

'Tis a Prayer Book of itself; not prayers I believe from the Common Prayer Book; and while the prayers are reading, the porter stops, and when finished carries the book away into the old men's room, and we soon after go to breakfast.

What takes place after breakfast as to employment?

After breakfast about eight o'clock I have been put in, and locked in the bone-house: in winter when there were many in the workhouse, I took my turn; and from *this spring*, when there was any bones, I have been *constantly* places to work in the bone-house.

How large is the bone-house room?

I should think seven or eight feet wide and about fourteen feet long.

Is there a privy connected with the bone-house?

Yes; and entirely for the bone-house, and it is in the bone-house, having been taken from the room.

Is the bone-house affected by any offensive smell from the privy?

Yes; there is a thin board partition only, that separates; we are locked in from eight o'clock to twelve, and from about one to about four o'clock; and the smell from the urine and soil is very bad, and especially when the privy door is opened to go in.

How many are employed at a time in the bone-house?

Sometimes six in winter: from spring to now; excepting the sixteen or seventeen days when I was in the hospital; just before I came out, I and Simmons, of Seaford, have been constantly in the bone-house when there was any bones.

How many days in the week are there any bones?

Sometimes two days in the week, sometimes four, and sometimes the whole six days of the week.

Was there any smell from the bones?

A dreadful smell; especially when broken: some of the carrion bones had flesh on them when brought into the bone-house; but we were told we need not break them when in such a state, but place them aside.

What was done with these carrion bones then?

The Governor had them boiled in a furnace near the hog pound at the bottom of the garden.

What was done with these carrion bones afterward?

After being boiled, the carrion on them was cut off with a knife, and the bones then brought up to the bone-house to be broke; sometimes they were broken directly; sometimes it was four or five days; and sometimes longer, before they were broken.

How long do you think generally speaking, and as to all the bones that came; it was; the animals had been killed before the bones were broke?

Sometimes, if carrion bones, I suppose a week: I suppose, as to a general time, it might be said two weeks.

Was the marrow in them; and was the oil in some of the joints?

Yes.

And was there a nauseous effluvia or stench, that come from the bones when broken?

Yes; a surprising – terrible stench; I have seen a man vomit and obliged to go out; he could not stand it.

Were the bones mostly carrion bones?

Many of the bones were gathered round the town; (Eastbourne) from the houses, as coming from the butchers; a few were gathered quite dry from the laines; and some were carrion bones: the greater portion came from the houses in Eastbourne and in other places; and the stench from these was very bad indeed: when breaking, the marrow being soft and in a corrupt and sometimes bloody state; was exceedingly stenchy, and flew about, and of course, some on the bone breaker: and frequently in



summer from inside the skull of a sheep's head when broken, nearly a handful of maggots have come out, there was maggots also connected with many of the other bones, and the stench is almost intolerable.

Were human bones ever bought?

I believe there have been human bones brought there, as I had some pointed out to me.

And what was done with those you considered to be human bones?

They were put down the privy hole.

What persons generally brought the bones?

Some were brought by a boy whose name I understood to was Hurst; some in a donkey cart came I believe from Hailsham way, but by far the greater portion of bones were brought in a cart by a man of the name of Ellis.

Was there a second floor to the bone-house?

No; and it was stated.

What lights had the bone-house?

Two windows: the lower part had boarded pannels: the upper parts were wire: and though half each window might, though sliding back, be opened; yet but little relief from the stench that came from the windows; and the old men's yard, tending to keep off the air, was between the windows and the workhouse: indeed such was the stench from some of the bones that were broken, from the corrupt state of the marrow, and stenchy state that many of the bones were in when broken, that I heard one man say who was with me in the bone-house breaking bones, as to the stench that came from the bone he was then breaking, that it was worse than the stench from a putrified human body.

What was the effects of the sun on the slates of the building?

In summer, at times, and with the stench, the heat was almost unbearable.

Did any of the Guardians come to see those who were working in the bone-house?

Yes; nearly every Friday some of them came.

Was you placed more in the bone-house than others?

I believe Henry Page and I was placed oftener there than others.

Do you think the bone-house injured your health?

Yes; I am certain it has, and had I stopped much longer working in the bone-house, I was so ill, it is my opinion I know of others in the workhouse, I should not have come out from the workhouse alive: and I have no doubt my late illness for three weeks; and on account of which I

am for the present out of the workhouse; arose from my being in the bone-house; and though I have been out of the workhouse a week, my appetite still appears to be in a great measure gone.

How long have [you] been in the Eastbourne Union workhouse?

From the 23<sup>rd</sup> May, 1840: excepting about one week; to 31<sup>st</sup> May, 1841.

Have you ever asked for a holiday?

Yes; several times, and lately almost from week to week; till I was told it was no use to ask, as the Guardians had decided I should not have one.

Did you go with others in turn to work in the workhouse garden?

No; nor have I during the twelve months I have been in the workhouse been out of the able-bodied men's yard to work there I believe more than seven or eight days; excepting two days when I went out to Wilmington to remove my furniture when my father sold his house to John Lambe.

Did you refuse to attend public worship at the workhouse?

Yes; and did the Lord's-day after I went to the workhouse I made an application to go to Alfriston chapel, but was refused.

You have not then attended any public religious service for about a year?

No; except service amongst ourselves in the workhouse; I have not; only, one Lord's-day when I came out of the workhouse for about a week, when my wife was confined at Wilmington.

Source: C. Brooker, 'The Murder Den, and its means of Destruction; or, Some account of the Working of the New Poor Law in the Eastbourne Union, Sussex, etc.', (Brighton and London, 1842), pp. 18-21.

Appendix 10: New Poor Law Unions provided with a suspension of the Bone-Crushing Prohibitory Order

Union	Date suspension issued
Wincanton	15 January 1846
Petworth	
Westhampnett	
West Firle	
South Molton	
Melksham	
Alton	
Guildford	22 January 1846
Midhurst	23 January 1846
Droxford	29 January 1846
Hartley Wintney	
Chertsey	
Tisbury	

Source: 'Copy Order issued by the Poor Law Commissioners to the Wincanton Union on the 15<sup>th</sup> January 1846, suspending the operation of the General Order of the 8<sup>th</sup> November 1845, so far as the same related to that Union, until the expiration of the Three Calendar Months from the 1<sup>st</sup> day of January 1846', 1846 (75) House of Commons Papers; Accounts and Papers. Poor law. Copy of any letter and general rule issued by the Poor Law Commissioners, relative to the employment of paupers in pounding, grinding, and otherwise breaking bones; &c, p. 5.

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## Archival Sources

### Bristol City Record Office (BCRO)

Westbury-on-Trym	Overseers' Accounts and Poorhouse Documents, Agreement to Erect Poorhouse	1802	P/HTW/OP/2(c)
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### Dorset History Centre (DHC)

Beaminster	Lists of families with earnings	1820-1836	PE/BE OV9/1
Poole	Churchwardens' Account Book (Vestry Minutes)	1801-1818 (1803-1818)	PE/PL CW1/1/4
Whitechurch Canonicorum	Vestry Minute Book	1796-1834	PE/WCC VE1/3
Wimborne Minster	Vestry Minute Book	1745-1808	PE/WM VE1/1
	Vestry Minute Book	1809-1849	PE/WM VE1/2
	Select Vestry Order book	1818-1822	PE/WM VE2/1
	Select Vestry Order Book	1822-1828	PE/WM VE2/2
	Select Vestry Order Book	1828-1831	PE/WM VE2/3
	Insurance policies for the workhouse 1762, 1815, receipts for insurance 1766-1782 and an undated advertisement for an insurance company	1762-1815	PE/WM OV8/2
	Overseers' Correspondence	1819	PE/WM OV13/4
	Overseers' Correspondence	1821	PE/WM OV13/6
Beaminster Union	Minute Book	1836-1840	BG/BE B3/1
	Pauper Offence Book	1842-1869	BG/BE B3/2
Bridport Union	Minute Book	1839-1843	BG/BT A1/2
Cranborne Union	Minute Book	1835-1836	BG/WM A1/1
Cranborne Union (Wimborne and Cranborne Union)	Minute Book (joint minutes)	1835-1838 (1836-1838)	BG/WM A1/2
Wimborne and Cranborne Union	Minute Book	1839-1842	BG/WM A1/3
Shaftesbury Union	Minute Book	1837-1840	BG/SY A1/2

### East Sussex Record Office (ESRO)

Clerk of the Peace, Precedents,	Notices concerning workhouses and millers	1796	QCP/2/2
Proposal for the formation of [a Gilbert Union] based on the parish of Fletching to build a Workhouse at Piltdown or Chelwood Common		n.d.	AMS4899/1

### Hampshire Record Office (HRO)

Bentley	Overseers' Account and Rate Book	1708-1805	1M80/PO2
	Overseers' Account Book	1805-1827	1M80/PO3
	Receipted bill of expenses incurred by Thomas Clement for the Guardians of the parishes of Aldershot and Bentley	1824-1825	1M80/PO43
Bishop's Waltham	Vestry Minute Book	1803-1830	30M77/PV1
	Vestry Minute Book	1823, 1830- 1867	30M77/PV2
Botley	Vestry Minute Book	1817-1848	40M75/PV1
	Select Vestry Minute Book	1833-1876	40M75/PV2
Broughton	Vestry Minute Book	1821-1828	137M71/PV1
Droxford	Vestry Minute Book	1763-1796	66M76/PV1
	Vestry Minute Book	1785-1788	66M76/PV2
East Woodhay	Vestry Minute Book	1821-1884	27M77/PV1
Eversley	Vestry Minute Book	1818-1859	6M77/PV1
Hambleton	Vestry Minute Book	1824-1866	46M69/PV1
Hartley Wintney	Vestry Minute Book	1830-1855	85M76/PV2
Headley	Workhouse Account Book	1795-1829	57M75/PO16
Hursley	Vestry Minute Book	1824-1944	39M69/PV1
Long Sutton	Vestry Minute Book	1799-1929	78M72/PV1
Lymington	Vestry Minute Book	1817-1827	42M75/PV2
	Vestry Minute Book	1827-1847	42M75/PV3
	Vestry Order Book	1791-1816	42M75/PV9
	Vestry Order Book	1817-1825	42M75/PV10
Milford	Book of Vestry Resolutions	1803-1835	31M67/PV1
Nether Wallop	Vestry Minute Book	1822-1957	93M93/PV1
New Alresford	Vestry Minute Book	1819-1842	45M83/PV1

Titchfield	Vestry Minute Book	1672-1819	37M73/PV1
Yateley	Vestry Minute Book	1818-1839	67M78A/PV1
	Overseers' Account Book	1837-1853	67M78/PO6
Petition 'To the Trustees of the Estate of the Right Honorable The Earl of Portsmouth'		1827	8M62/79
Alverstoke	Guardians' Minute Book	1799-1831	PL2/1/1
	Guardians' Weekly Report Book	1821-1829	PL2/1/3
Farnborough	Workhouse Account Book	1794-1822	PL2/2/2
Alton Union	Minute Book	1842-1844	PL3/2/1
	Minute Book	1844-1847	PL3/2/2
Droxford Union	Minute Book	1835-1837	PL3/7/1
	Minute Book	1837-1839	PL3/7/2
	Minute Book	1840-1844	PL3/7/3
	Minute Book	1844-1846	PL3/7/4
Fareham Union	Minute Book	1835-1837	PL3/8/1
	Minute Book	1837-1841	PL3/8/1a
	Minute Book	1841-1844	PL3/8/2
Kingsclere Union	Minute Book	1835-1837	PL3/11/1
	Minute Book	1837-1841	PL3/11/2
	Minute Book	1841-1845	PL3/11/3
	Minute Book	1845-1847	PL3/11/4

#### **Petworth House Archives (PHA)**

Fletching	Printed poster announcing the near-completion of the Workhouse at Fletching and the detailed regulations to be observed in it	n.d.	PHA/6075
Sutton Union	Contracts of Mary Bryan and Daniel Bryan of Petworth [to 1803] or Daniel Bryan [1804 on], and the Visitor and Guardians of Sutton United Parishes for the Governorship of the Workhouse, and the care, feeding, clothing etc. of the poor; with bonds	1802-1836	PHA/6514-6548
	Correspondence and proposals for farming the poor	1793	PHA/6570
	Miscellaneous accounts and calculations	1792-1817	PHA/6598

Easebourne Union	Copies of the yearly accounts of William Bridger, Treasurer of the Easebourne United Parishes	1797-1827	PHA/7869
	Easebourne Union, Letters of application (some with testimonials) for the management of the poor	1821	PHA/9638
	Easebourne Union, Correspondence and proposals to farm the poor	1818	PHA/10937
	Letters concerning the establishment of a Sunday school	1800	PHA/10940

### Portsmouth City Record Office (PCRO)

St. Peter and St. Paul Fareham	Vestry Minute Book	1728-1801	CHU43/2B/1
	Select Vestry Minute Book	1819-1826	CHU43/2C/1

### Somerset Record Office (SRO)

St. Mary Bridgwater	Vestry Minute Book	1827-1972	D\P\bw.m/9/1
Broomfield	Allowances to the poor	1821-1825	D\P\broo/13/2/2
	Clothing accounts	1810-1836	D\P\can 13/2/10
Bruton	Select Vestry Minute Book for administration of poor	1790-1806	D\P\brut/9/1/1
	Select Vestry Minute Book for administration of poor	1806-1820	D\P\brut/9/1/2
	Special rate for unemployed poor	1830-1835	D\P\brut/13/1/3
Cannington	Overseers' Correspondence	1777-1835	D\P\Can13/13/6
Chew Magna	Vestry Minute Book	1745-1779	D\P\che.m/9/1/1
	Vestry Minute Book	1818-1832	D\P\che.m/9/1/3
Clutton	Vestry Minute Book	1821-1847	D\P\clut/9/1/1
High Littleton with Hallatrow	Vestry Minute Book	1821-1843	D\P\lit.h/9/1
North Petherton	Vestry Minute Book	1820-1835	D\P\pet.n/9/1/2

Pawlett	Vestry Minute Book	1788-1920	D\P\pawl/9/1/1
Pitcombe	Overseers' Account Book	1799-1828	D\P\pitc/13/2/1
Wincanton	Vestry Minute Book Vestry Minute Book	1798-1818 1818-1894	D\PC\winc/1/3/1 D\PC\winc/1/3/2
Winsford	Vestry Minute Book	1833-1863	D\P\wins/9/1/1
Ubley	Vestry Minute Book	1824-1872	D\P\ubl/9/1/1
Bridgwater Union	Minute Book Minute Book	1836-1837 1837-1840	D\G\BW/8a/1 D\G\BW/8a/2
Clutton Union	Minute Book Minute Book Minute Book Minute Book Minute Book Minute Book	1836-1837 1837-1838 1838-1839 1841-1842 1842-1843 1844-1845	D\G\CL/8a/1 D\G\CL/8a/2 D\G\CL/8a/3 D\G\CL/8a/6 D\G\CL/8a/7 D\G\CL/8a/9
Dulverton Union	Minute Book Minute Book	1836-1842 1842-1847	D\G\D/8a/1 D\G\D/8a/2
Wincanton Union	Minute Book Minute Book	1840-1842 1842-1847	D\G\WN/8a/4 D\G\WN/8a/5

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Millbrook	Vestry Minute Book	1816-1847	PR10/8/1
South Stoneham	Vestry Minute Book Disbursements (Parish Treasurer Accounts)	1821-1835 1788-1792 (1792-1879)	PR9/14/2 PR9/15/10
St. Mary's Extra	Vestry Minute Book	1809-1868	PR6/6/1
South Stoneham Union	Minute Book	1839-1841	D/AGF 1 1/1

### **Surrey History Centre (SHC)**

Cranleigh	Vestry Minute Book	1820-1837	P58/1/1
Surrey Quarter Session Bundles		1786-1799	QS2/6/1786/Mid/36 QS2/6/1789/Mid/25



QS2/6/1792/Mid/13  
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### West Sussex Record Office (WSRO)

Angmering	Vestry Minute Book	1820-1848	Par6/12/1
Burpham	Vestry Minute Book	1840-1846	Par31/12/1
Bury	Vestry Minute Book	1813-1839	Par33/12/1
East Preston Union	Treasurers' Book	1791-1814	WG2/1
	Treasurer's Book and Guardians' Agreement and Forfeit Book	1791-1832	WG2/2
	Treasurers' Book	1814-1834	WG2/3
	Treasurer's Book, Receipts and Payments	1834-1853	WG2/5
	Letter Book	1837-1847	WG2/7
Sutton Union	Guardians' Minute Book	1791-1794	WG3/1/1
	Guardians' Minute Book	1794-1798	WG3/1/2
	Guardians' Minute Book	1798-1802	WG3/1/3
	Guardians' Minute Book	1808-1812	WG3/1/6
	Guardians' Minute Book	1815-1819	WG8/1/8
	Guardians' Minute Book	1819-1823	WG3/1/9
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	Guardians' Minute and Account Book	1788-1791	WG4/1

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St. Bartholomew Corsham	Select Vestry Order Book	1824-1830	PR/Corsham: St. Bartholomew/1812/9
Donhead St. Mary Vestry with Charlton St. John	Vestry Minute Book	1819-1843	PR/Donhead St. Mary Vestry with Charlton St. John/980/22
All Saints Whiteparish	Select Vestry Order Book	1832-1837	PR/Whiteparish: All Saints/830/32
Mere Parish Council	Vestry Minute Book	1813-1853	2944/78
	Overseers' Account Book	1812-1836	438/20
	Agreement at a Local meeting, To adopt the provisions of the 1782 Act of Parliament for the better relief of the poor	1814	438/38

Devizes Union	Proceedings of a meeting held to combine the parishes of St. John's and St. Mary's Devizes, to provide a joint parochial workhouse	27 June 1796	H7/110/1
Mere Union	Minute Book	1835-1838	H12/110/1
Warminster Union	Minute Book	1835-1836	H15/110/1

## The National Archives (TNA)

### Poor Law Commission

#### Assistant Poor Law Commissioners' correspondence MH32

A'Court's correspondence	1834	1
	1835	2
	1836	3
	1837-1842	4
Adey's correspondence	1837-1840	6
Hawley's correspondence	1834-1836	38
Tufnell's correspondence	1835-1837	69
	1841-1846	71
Weale's correspondence	1835-1839	85

#### Union correspondence MH12

Beaminster Union	1843-1846	2707
	1847-1849	2708
Bridgwater Union	1834-1837	10243
	1838-1839	10244
Clutton Union	1834-1838	10320
	1835-1842	10346
Kingsclere Union	1838-1842	10853
	1843-1847	10854
Cricklade and Wootton Bassett Union	1838-1842	13720
	1847-1850	13722
Mere Union	1838-1842	13820
South Stoneham Union	1834-1838	11035
	1838-1842	11036
	1843-1847	11037
Warminster Union	1834-1836	13863
	1837-1839	13864
	1843-1845	13866

Wimborne and Cranborne Union	1843-1846	2913
Wincanton Union	1838-1842	13820

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Correspondence between the Home Office and the Poor Law Commission 1835-1840 including copies of reports from Assistant Poor Law Commissioners, Letters and Papers, Medical relief in the Bridgwater Union	1837	HO73/52/62
Registered Papers, (Poor Law): Method of carrying on work of Commission	1846	HO45/1682
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1823 (570) Report from the Select Committee on Poor Rate Returns.

1824 (420) Report from the Select Committee on Poor Rate Returns.

1825 (334) Report from the Select Committee on Poor Rate Returns.

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1826-27 (316) Poor rates. An account of the amount of money levied and expended for the relief of the poor, in each county in England and Wales, in the year ending 25th March 1826.

1828 (124) Poor rates. Abstract of returns of the amount of money levied and expended for the relief of the poor, in each county in England and Wales, in the year ending 25th March 1827.

1829 (78) Poor rates. Abstracts of returns of the amount of money levied and expended for the relief of the poor, in each county in England and Wales, in the year ending 25th March 1828; and also, of the number of removals and appeals during the same period.

1830 (141) Poor rates. Abstract of returns of the amount of money levied and expended for the relief of the poor, in each county in England and Wales, in the year ending 25th March 1829.

1830-31 (219) Poor rates. Abstract of returns of the amount of money levied and expended for the relief of the poor, in each county in England and Wales, in the year ending 25th March 1830.

1831-32 (216) Poor rates. Abstract of returns of the amount of money levied and expended for the relief of the poor, in each county in England and Wales, in the year ending 25th March 1831.

1833 (32) Poor rates. Abstract of returns of the amount of money levied and expended for the relief of the poor, in each county in England and Wales, in the year ending 25th March 1832.

1834 (44) Report from His Majesty's Commissioners for Inquiring into the Administration and Practical Operation of the Poor Laws.

1834 (335) Poor rates. Abstract of returns, showing the amount of money levied and expended for poor's rate and county rate in each county in England and Wales, in the year ending 25 March 1833.

1835 (284) Poor rates. Abstract of returns, showing the amount of money levied and expended for poor's rate and county rate in each county in England and Wales, in the year ending 25 March 1834.

1837-38 (518) Forty-fourth, forty-fifth and forty-sixth reports from Select Committee on the Poor Law Amendment Act; with the minutes of evidence, and appendixes. (Medical inquiry.)

1837-38 (719) Report from the Select Committee of the House of Lords appointed to examine into the several cases alluded to in certain papers respecting the operation of the Poor Law Amendment Act; and to Report thereon. With the minutes of evidence taken before the committee, and an index thereto.

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1845 (41) Union workhouses. A return of all union workhouses under the Poor Law Amendment Act, in which the pauper inmates thereof are or have been employed in grinding or crushing bones.

1846 (75) House of Commons Papers; Accounts and Papers. Poor law. Copy of any letter and general rule issued by the Poor Law Commissioners, relative to the employment of paupers in pounding, grinding, and otherwise breaking bones; &c.

1846 (432) House of Commons Papers; Accounts and Papers. Bone-pounding. Copy of minute of the dissent of one of the Poor-Law Commissioners, on the subject of bone-crushing by paupers in workhouses.

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*Brighton Patriot and Local Free Press*

*Hampshire Chronicle*

*Hampshire Telegraph and Sussex Chronicle*

*Hansard's Parliamentary Debates*

*The Lancet*

*Provincial Medical and Surgical Journal*

*Southampton Herald*

*The Times*

## Pre-1850 publications

### Poor Law Commission

#### Reports

- First Annual Report of the Poor Law Commissioners (London, 1835).
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