

**Implementing and administering the New Poor Law in  
the industrial north: a case study of Preston union in  
regional context, 1837-1861**

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## **Abstract**

This thesis examines Poor Law administration in the urban industrial union of Preston, Lancashire, from the introduction of the Poor Law Amendment Act in the region in 1837 to the eve of the Lancashire Cotton Famine in 1861. For many years historiography has emphasised that, despite the attempt to engender a greater degree of uniformity through unionisation and the creation of a London based central authority, diversity was a defining characteristic of relief administration at local level under the New Poor Law just as it had been under the Old. Local studies are therefore essential to understanding how the Poor Law operated in practice, and this thesis answers repeated calls for more of them. Lancashire has received little empirical attention from welfare historians for the period after 1837, particularly at the level of individual unions, and the study therefore primarily seeks to shed new light on how policy was formed and relief provided at local level in a region that was both the most industrialised in the country and located within the heartland of the anti-Poor Law movement. It is argued that policy and practice in Preston union, like any union, was shaped by a number of broad interconnected variables, the nature and relative importance of which were each determined by local circumstances.

Isolated local studies, however, can only tell us so much. Thus, the thesis seeks to draw wider and more significant conclusions by setting Preston union within a broader regional and sub-regional framework. The approach reflects recent historiography which has argued that, in spite of local differences, Poor Law administration varied considerably by region, with a particularly marked distinction having been drawn between an inclusive, perhaps generous, south and east and a less inclusive, perhaps harsh, north and west. Most research in this area has focussed on the Old Poor Law, and this study questions whether, and the extent to which, such distinctions endured into the New. The thesis challenges the notion that spatial patterns of relief at regional level indicate relative levels of generosity. It argues, instead, that socio-economic conditions were chiefly responsible for observable differences at the regional and sub-regional levels, with the durability of the makeshift economy important in the case of the former. Further, it argues that variation at all levels occurred within rather narrow parameters, and that the Poor Law fundamentally served much the same purpose across the country.

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## **Abbreviations**

Harris Reference Library - H.R.O.  
Lancashire Archives – L.A.  
Parliamentary Papers - P.P. Poor  
Law Commissioners - PLC  
Poor Law Board - PLB  
Preston Chronicle - P.C.  
Preston Pilot - Pr.P.  
The National Archives - T.N.A.

# Introduction

The Poor Law Amendment Act of 1834 has been described as the 'single most important piece of social legislation ever enacted.'<sup>1</sup> Certainly, one struggles to think of another nineteenth century act which had such profound short and long term implications on society. Not only did it revolutionise the administrative framework within which local and central government operated, but redefined ideas regarding entitlement to communal support through an ideology which continues to influence welfare debates to this day.<sup>2</sup> Its importance has not only been recognised by historians writing in hindsight. For the Act of 1834 marked the most radical change to the principles of social welfare since the Poor Law was formed in 1601, and contemporaries understood it in these terms. It was, after all, not a mere 'Amendment' but an entirely 'New' Poor Law, and it was being referred to as such even before passing through Parliament. Part of its significance came from its contentiousness. Indeed, to Englander's 'most important' claim we might also add 'most controversial'. Thus, while the view of one historian that the Act came 'nearer than any other...in the nineteenth century to provoke civil war in Britain' is surely something of an exaggeration, the statement itself is certainly indicative of the strength of opposition it faced in parts of England and Wales during the 1830s (for Scotland had its own system), and for much longer in the industrial north of England where the anti-Poor Law movement was most prominent.<sup>3</sup>

It is worth at this stage briefly sketching out the background to the Act, what it did and what it sought to do, in order to inform and frame our discussion. The New Poor Law followed hot on the heels of the infamous Royal Commission *Report* on the Poor Laws (1832-34) which found, in short,

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<sup>1</sup> D. Englander, *Poverty and Poor Law reform in 19<sup>th</sup> Century Britain, 1834-1914: from Chadwick to Booth* (1998), p.1.

<sup>2</sup> A number of studies of social policy have shown that the principles behind the Act of 1834 continue to endure in welfare debates, particularly the principle of 'less eligibility': A. Cochrane, 'What sort of safety-net? Social security, income maintenance and the benefits system', in G. Hughes and G. Lewis (eds.) *Unsettling welfare: the reconstruction of social policy* (1998), p.306; J. Dixon and D. Macarov, *Poverty: a persistent global reality* (1998), p.219; P. Spicker, *Social policy: theory and practice* (2014), p.192. Most recently, an article by George Monbiot in *The Guardian* explored the prevalence in modern government and media rhetoric of the eighteenth century Malthusian view (which influenced the framers of the New Poor Law) that welfare causes poverty by creating a cycle of dependency: G. Monbiot, 'Skivers and shirkers: this 200-year old myth won't die', in *The Guardian*, 25<sup>th</sup> June 2015.

<sup>3</sup> Quotation by Pollard taken from Englander, *Poverty and Poor Law reform*, p.43. For the anti-Poor Law movement and local agitation, see: N. C. Edsall, *The anti-Poor Law movement, 1834-1844* (1971); C. J. Griffin, 'Swing, Swing redivivus, or something after Swing? On the death throes of a protest movement, December 1830-December 1833', *International Review of Social History*, 54 (2009), p.497; J. Knott, *Popular opposition to the 1834 Poor Law* (1986); D. Green, *Pauper Capital: London and the Poor Law, 1790-1870* (2010), p.110; R. Wells, 'Resistance to the New Poor Law in the rural south', in *Crime, protest and popular politics in southern England, 1740-1850* (1997), pp.91-126.

a ramshackle system of relief administration through which the liberal provision of outdoor relief was driving down wages, promoting population growth and creating a welfare dependent and consequently demoralised working-class.<sup>4</sup> Particular criticism was aimed at the 'evils' of the 'Speenhamland' or 'allowance' systems of wage subsidies, which were reputedly pervasive in the agricultural south and east.<sup>5</sup> The legitimacy of the report's findings has since been undermined by Blaug, who convincingly argued that the Commission's conclusions were preconceived and that they used carefully selected evidence to support them.<sup>6</sup> But against the backdrop of rising welfare expenditure, the Swing riots, the pervasive work of Malthus and the increasingly influential science of political economy, their conclusions were very convincing in 1834.<sup>7</sup> The Commission's 'remedial measures' were twofold.<sup>8</sup> The first was for a greater degree of uniformity and administrative efficiency. Thus, it recommended that the 15,000 or so independent parishes and townships be combined into a smaller and more manageable number of unions, each of which was to be run by elected local Boards of Guardians who would be answerable to a London based central authority - the Poor Law Commission (PLC) - charged with issuing mandatory regulations for implementation at local level. This centralising principle, novel in 1834, marked the beginning of the nineteenth century 'revolution in government' which saw an increasing role for the state in local affairs.<sup>9</sup> In the long term it became an accepted form of government, but it was not welcomed initially in the localities.<sup>10</sup> The second remedial measure was the crucial and enduring principle of 'less eligibility', which stipulated that the condition of the pauper should never be as eligible as that of the lowest independent labourer.<sup>11</sup> To the Commission, less eligibility could only be achieved through a

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<sup>4</sup> Parliamentary Papers (P.P.) 1834 (44) *Report from his Majesty's commissioners for inquiring into the administration and practical operation of the Poor Laws*, pp. 36-54. Historians have since 'tested' the validity of these theories through econometric models, and with interesting if contradictory results: G. R. Boyer, 'Malthus was right after all: poor relief and birth rates in southeastern England', *Journal of Political Economy*, 97 (1989), pp.93-114; J. P. Huzel, 'The demographic impact of the Old Poor Law: more reflections on Malthus', *Economic History Review*, 33 (1980), pp.367-381; J. P. Huzel, 'Malthus, the Poor Law and population in early nineteenth century England', *Economic History Review*, 22 (1969), pp.430-452; D. McClosky, 'New perspectives on the Old Poor Law', *Explorations in Economic History*, 10 (1973), pp.419-436.

<sup>5</sup> P.P. 1834 (44) *Report from his Majesty's commissioners*, pp. 13-19 and 131.

<sup>6</sup> M. Blaug, 'The Myth of the Old Poor Law and the making of the New', *Journal of Economic History*, 23 (1963), pp.151-84.

<sup>7</sup> The protracted welfare debate which directly influenced the shaping of the Poor Law Amendment Act has been discussed extensively in numerous texts. See: Blaug, 'The myth of the Old Poor Law', pp.151-184; A. Kidd, *State, society and the poor in nineteenth century England* (1999); J. R. Poynter, *Society and pauperism: English ideas on poor relief, 1795-1834*, (1969).

<sup>8</sup> P.P. 1834 (44) *Report from his Majesty's commissioners*, pp. 127-192.

<sup>9</sup> F. Driver, *Power and pauperism: the workhouse system, 1834-1884* (1993), p.28.

<sup>10</sup> D. Ashforth, *The Poor Law in Bradford, c.1834-71* (1980), PhD thesis, pp.49-51; R. Boyson, *The history of Poor Law administration in north-east Lancashire, 1837-1871* (1960), M.A. thesis; G. Claeys, *Citizens and saints: politics and anti-politics in early British socialism* (1989), pp.309-311; E. C. Midwinter, *Social administration in Lancashire, 1830-1860: Poor Law, public health, police* (1969), pp.44-45; K. D. M. Snell, *Parish and belonging: community, identity and welfare in England and Wales* (2006), p.5.

<sup>11</sup> P.P. (44) *Report from his Majesty's commissioners*, p.127.

deterrent union workhouse, and their focus on able-bodied pauperism led them to insist on the abolition of outdoor relief to this group. Only by subjecting able-bodied applicants to a workhouse 'test', according to the Commission's assessment, would they be induced to forego communal support.<sup>12</sup>

Such were the main intentions of the Commission. However, while the 1830s saw the rapid amalgamation of English and Welsh parishes into around 600 unions and the establishment of central authority, the implementation of the Commission's guiding principles, less-eligibility and the workhouse test, was for reasons which shall be explained later less successful. The PLC enforced these principles through formal relief orders (discussed below), but they were not applied evenly across time or space, and in some unions Guardians retained discretionary power over the provision of relief to the able-bodied for many years after 1834. Moreover, the narrow focus of these orders, restricted as they were to adults who could work, meant relief administration remained a genuinely local affair as most paupers fell into other categories; the young, the old, the sick, the widowed and the disabled. These could be treated autonomously by Guardians after 1834 just as they had been by overseers before them. How poor relief was administered at local level could therefore vary considerably, and depended on a range of interconnected variables specific to each locality which included the spatial distribution of official orders regulating relief, a union's socio-economic base, the influence of local figures, local politics as well as customary notions of entitlement to relief and established local practices.<sup>13</sup> All this shall be discussed further in due course, but it is crucial to recognise at this stage that it meant diversity remained a defining characteristic of Poor Law administration after 1834.<sup>14</sup>

This brings us to the first main purpose of this thesis; to answer repeated calls for more studies of the Poor Law at local level.<sup>15</sup> At its core this is a local study of a single Poor Law union, Preston in Lancashire, during the formative decades of the New Poor Law, the years 1837-1861; a period

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<sup>12</sup> M.A. Crowther, *The workhouse system, 1834-1929: the history of an English social institution* (1981), pp.40-41.

<sup>13</sup> D. Ashforth, 'The urban Poor Law', in D. Fraser (ed.) *The New Poor Law in the nineteenth century* (1976), p.97; L. Darwen, 'Workhouse populations of the Preston union, 1841-1861', *Local Population Studies*, 93 (2104), pp.33-53; Edsall, *The anti-Poor Law movement*; D. Fraser, 'The Poor Law as political institution', in D. Fraser (ed.) *The New Poor Law in the nineteenth century* (1976), pp.111-127.

<sup>14</sup> For discussions of local and regional variation in Poor Law policy and practice, see: Driver, *Power and pauperism*; S. Hindle, *One the parish? The micro-politics of poor relief in rural England, 150-1750*; S. King, *Poverty and welfare in England: a regional perspective, 1700-1850* (2000); S. King and A. Tomkins (eds.), *The poor in England, 1700-1850: an economy of makeshifts* (2003); Snell, *Parish and belonging*, pp.223-225.

<sup>15</sup> D. Fraser, 'Introduction', *The New Poor Law in the nineteenth century* (1976), p.17; A. J. Gritt, and P. Park, 'The workhouse populations of Lancashire in 1881', *Local Population Studies*, 86 (2011), p.65; King, *Poverty and welfare*; G. W. Oxley, *Poor relief in England and Wales, 1600-1834* (1974), pp.10-11.

defined by Wood as one of 'teething troubles and growing pains.'<sup>16</sup> It seeks to answer two main questions, presented here in a preliminary form which shall be fleshed out by the end of this chapter:

1. How did the 'interconnected variables' identified above shape local policy in Preston union?
2. How was poor relief administered in practice?

These questions can only be sufficiently answered through detailed local research. However, a purely local study does have certain limitations as a number of historians have argued. Driver, while recognising the value of local research, laments that many such studies have been completely 'divorced from any attempt to consider broader patterns.'<sup>17</sup> Kidd offers a variant of the same criticism, regretting the tendency of welfare historians to 'generalise from local studies.'<sup>18</sup> These are legitimate complaints, and they lead to an obvious point but one which is worth making. If one argues, as some historians have, that we can only truly understand the workings of the Poor Law through painstaking local research, we are going to be waiting a long time before a national picture emerges. Indeed, it is unlikely that so many studies, each asking different questions and applying different methodologies, would even be desirable. What is needed, then, are studies which contextualise local research firmly within a regional and national framework, and this brings us to the second main purpose of this thesis. It seeks to explore not only the internal local dynamics which influenced the development of Poor Law policy and practice in Preston union, but also how the experience of Preston union compared to that of other unions in Lancashire, and how Lancashire compared to the rest of the country. It adopts, then, a tripartite approach to the study of the Poor Law, assessing the local (Preston union), county (Lancashire) and regional (English counties) levels. The significance of this approach, and the methodology which lays behind it, is discussed in the final part of this chapter. First, we must establish a clear research agenda by examining Poor Law historiography, and we must introduce the broader (Lancashire) and main (Preston union) study areas. We begin with a brief historiographical overview, before looking at historiography specific to this thesis.

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<sup>16</sup> P. Wood, *Poverty and the Victorian workhouse* (1991), pp.75-121.

<sup>17</sup> Driver, *Power and pauperism*, p.74.

<sup>18</sup> Kidd, *State, society and the poor*, p.30.

## **(i) Poor Law historiography**

### Overview

The New Poor Law marked a watershed in the history of welfare provision in England and Wales, and this in turn has shaped the character of Poor Law historiography. For studies of the Poor Law typically begin or end in 1834, or at least rarely cross this threshold, and specific work on the Old and New systems is markedly different in a number of ways. First, the research interests of welfare historians have, naturally enough, often followed the issues which courted controversy in their day. Thus, studies of the Old Poor Law have tended to focus disproportionately on its later decades: on the allowance system, its incidence and its various (demographic, economic and social) implications, in the agricultural south and east during the period c.1780-1834.<sup>19</sup> Very little research has been conducted at all on the experience of northern townships, where the allowance system was largely absent, leaving a lopsided historiography.<sup>20</sup> The historiography of the New Poor Law, on the other hand, has mainly been concerned with examining the consequences of the Act during the decades immediately following its introduction, often within a legalistic and regulatory framework.<sup>21</sup> They have focused, for the most part, on opposition to the New Poor Law and the

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<sup>19</sup> These include, but are by no means limited to: D. A. Baugh, 'The cost of poor relief in south east-England, 1790-1834', *Economic History Review*, 28 (1975), pp.50-68; Blaug, 'The myth of the Old Poor Law'; Boyer, *An economic history*; Boyer, 'Malthus was right after all'; Huzel, 'The demographic impact of the Old Poor Law'; Huzel, 'Malthus, the Poor Law and population in early nineteenth century England'; J. D. Marshall, *The Old Poor Law, 1795-1834* (1968); McCloskly, 'New perspectives on the Old Poor Law'; Poynter, *Society and pauperism*; K. D. M. Snell, *Annals of the labouring poor: social change and agrarian England* (1985); B. K. Song, 'Landed interest, local government and the labour market in England, 1750-1850', *Economic History Review*, 3 (1998), pp.465-488; S. Williams, *Poverty, gender and life-cycle under the English Poor Law, 1760-1834* (2013). The allowance system also features prominently in general social studies of the nineteenth century. For two important studies of the earlier years of the Old Poor Law, see: Hindle, *On the parish?*; P. Slack, *Poverty and policy in Tudor and Stuart England* (1999).

<sup>20</sup> The few exceptions include: L. Darwen, *The Old Poor Law in rural south-west Lancashire: a case study of Aughton during the early nineteenth century* (2011), unpublished undergraduate dissertation; C. S. Hallas, 'Poverty and pragmatism in the northern uplands of England: the North Yorkshire Pennines, 1700-1900', *Social History*, 25 (2000), pp.67-84; King, *Poverty and welfare*, pp.181-226; S. King, 'Reconstructing lives: the poor, the poor law and welfare in Calverley, 1650-1820', *Social History*, 22 (1997), pp.318-338; G. W. Oxley, 'The permanently poor in south-west Lancashire under the Old Poor Law', in J. Harris (ed.), *Liverpool and Merseyside: essays on the social history of the port and its hinterlands* (1969), pp.16-49; M. Ramsbottom, *Christopher Waddington's peers: a study of the workings of the Poor Law in townships of the Fylde of Lancashire, 1803 to 1865* (2011), PhD thesis.

<sup>21</sup> W. Apfel and P. Dunkley, 'English rural society and the New Poor Law: Bedfordshire, 1837-47', *Social History*, 10 (1985), pp.37-68; D. Ashforth, *The Poor Law in Bradford, c.1834-71* (1980), PhD thesis; R. Boyson, 'The New Poor Law in north-east Lancashire, 1834-71', *Transactions of the Lancashire and Cheshire Antiquarian Society*, 70 (1960), pp.35-56; A. Digby, 'The labour market and the continuation of social policy after 1834: the case of the eastern counties', *Economic History Review*, 28 (1975), pp.69-83; A. Digby, 'The rural Poor Law', in D. Fraser (ed.) *The New Poor Law in the nineteenth century* (1976), pp.149-170; P. Dunkley, 'The 'hungry forties' and the New Poor Law: a case study', *The Historical Journal*, 17 (1974), pp.329-346; Edsall, *The anti-Poor Law movement*; Knott, *Popular opposition*; U. Henriques, 'How cruel was the Victorian Poor Law?', *The Historical Journal*, 11 (1968), pp.365-371; Midwinter, *Social administration*; D. Roberts, 'How cruel was the Victorian Poor Law?', *The Historical Journal* (1963), pp.97-107; M. E. Rose, 'The allowance system under the New Poor Law', *Economic History Review*, 19 (1966), pp.607-620; K. Thompson, *The*

question of how much actually changed in practice after 1834. Unfortunately, as Gritt and Park have pointed out, such studies have tended to lack the empirical quantitative analysis inherent in much of the work on the Old Poor Law, a criticism which was also made by Williams many years ago.<sup>22</sup> Only quite recently have historians begun to rectify this imbalance, chiefly through a series of studies on workhouse populations in different parts of the country using census enumerator's books (CEBs), and this thesis contributes to this literature in Chapter 4.<sup>23</sup>

A second important disparity between Old and New Poor Law historiography exists because the administrative 'revolution' of 1834 has had the effect of limiting the scope for researchers to undertake detailed micro historical studies of pauperism on the ground. Centralisation engendered a deeply bureaucratic administrative system which resulted in a proliferation of bookkeeping at local level, and as a result source material for the period after 1834 survives on a scale that must daunt even the most enthusiastic researcher. However, what we have gained in one place we have lost in another. The move away from the parish system (even though the parish continued to relieve its own poor long after 1834) has meant the detailed local records necessary to undertake community and life-cycle reconstruction through the process of nominal records linkage are either often no longer extant or were not created after 1834.<sup>24</sup> Thus, the sorts of information pertaining to individual paupers found in pre-1834 overseer's accounts are few and far between thereafter, and the survival rate of settlement and removal sources and pauper examinations which facilitate life-cycle reconstruction is also greatly reduced. In Lancashire, such evidence hardly survives at all

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*Leicester Poor Law Union* (1989), PhD thesis; Wells, 'Resistance to the New Poor Law'; Wood, *Poverty and the Victorian workhouse*.

<sup>22</sup> Gritt and Park, 'Workhouse populations of Lancashire', p.38; Williams, *From pauperism to poverty*, p.59.

<sup>23</sup> N. Goose, 'Workhouse Populations in the Mid-Nineteenth Century: the case of Hertfordshire' *Local Population Studies*, 62 (1999), pp.52-69; Gritt and Park, 'The Workhouse Populations of Lancashire in 1881', *Local Population Studies*, 86 (2011), pp.37-65; A. Hinde and F. Turnbull, 'The Populations of Two Hampshire Workhouses, 1851-1861' *Local Population Studies*, 61 (1998), pp.38-53; D. G. Jackson, 'Kent Workhouse Populations in 1881: a study based on the census enumerators' books', *Local Population Studies*, 69 (2002), pp.51-66; D. G. Jackson, 'The Medway Union Workhouse, 1876-1881: a study based on the administration and discharge registers and the census enumerators' books', *Local Population Studies*, 75 (2005), pp.11-32; S. Page, 'Pauperism and the Leicester Workhouse in 1881', *Transactions of the Leicestershire Architectural and Archaeological Society*, 63 (1989), pp.85-95. C. Seal, 'Workhouse populations in the Cheltenham and Belper unions: a study based on the census enumerators' books, 1851-1911', *Family and Community History*, 13 (2010), pp.83-100.

<sup>24</sup> For studies adopting family reconstruction techniques or other micro-historical analysis for the study of poverty see: W. Newmann-Brown, 'The receipt of poor relief and family situation: Aldenham, Hertfordshire, 1630-90', in R. M. Smith, *Land, kinship and life-cycle* (1985), pp.405-422; Hindle, *On the parish?*; King, 'Reconstructing lives'; B. Stapleton, 'Inherited poverty and life-cycle poverty: Odiham, Hampshire, 1650-1850', *Social History*, 18 (1993), pp.339-355; S. Williams, 'Poor relief, labourers' households and living standards in rural England c1770-1834: a Bedfordshire case study', *Economic History Review*, 58 (2005), pp.485-519; Williams, *Poverty, gender and life cycle*. The general southern bias in Old Poor Law historiography is mirrored in these studies.



for the period after 1834. As such, we know much more about the extent of poverty, and of the nature of life-cycle and inherited poverty, for seventeenth and eighteenth century communities than we do for nineteenth.

The recent interest in life-cycle poverty has formed part of a broader and growing interest in the poor themselves, of their coping strategies and of their experiences within the Poor Law system, although again most of it has been conducted on the years before 1834. Work by Steve King has emphasised the importance of *place* in our understanding of the Poor Law, arguing for the existence of distinctly regional approaches to the relief of poverty across England.<sup>25</sup> Notably, he contrasts a 'generous' south east against a 'parsimonious' north and west, and while this claim is open to dispute his overarching theory marks one of the most important and influential developments in Poor Law historiography during the last two decades. A second important development has been the attention given to the 'economy of makeshifts', a term first devised by Olwen Hufton in her 1970s study of the poor in France but until recently generally overlooked in English and Welsh historiography.<sup>26</sup> This useful phrase neatly encapsulates the varied resources people had to draw upon to survive, and has provided a conceptual framework to examine the role of the Poor Law in the lives of the poor. Elsewhere, historians have turned their attention to pauper letters as a prism through which to assess the complex relationship which existed between the pauper, the Poor Law and the community, with a particular focus on how the pauper understood their own legal rights to relief and the language they used to assert their entitlement and deservingness.<sup>27</sup> Keith Snell has extended this line to analysis in his wider study of parish 'belonging', arguing that the legal right to receive relief in one's own parish helped foster strong and enduring feelings of parochial attachment.<sup>28</sup> Finally, Green's work on the institutionalised poor in the workhouses of London has shown that many inmates not only recognised their entitlement to support from the community, but were unwilling to submit to the strict discipline of the institution. 'Far from being a

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<sup>25</sup> King, *Poverty and welfare*.

<sup>26</sup> J. Innes, 'The "mixed economy of welfare" in Early Modern England: assessments of the options from Hale to Malthus, c.1683-1803', in M. Daunton (ed.) *Charity, self-interest and welfare in the English past* (1996), pp.104-134; Kidd, *State, society and the poor*; King and Tomkins, 'Introduction', in King and Tomkins (ed.), *The Poor in England*, p.1; S. Williams, 'Earnings, poor relief and the economy of makeshifts: Bedfordshire in the early years of the New Poor Law', *Rural History*, 16 (2005), pp.21-52.

<sup>27</sup> S. King, 'Negotiating the law of poor relief in England, 1800-1840', *History*, 96 (2011), pp.410-435; S. King, 'The English protoindustrial family: old and new perspectives', *The history of the family*, 8 (2003), pp.21-43; 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* (2006), pp.91-112; T. Sokoll (ed.), *Essex pauper letters, 1731-1837* (2006).

<sup>28</sup> Snell, *Parish and belonging*.

downtrodden and submissive mass', concludes Green, 'paupers thought of themselves and acted as individuals with rights and a concept of self-worth.'<sup>29</sup>

Poor Law historiography, then, is vast, and varied in terms of issues and approaches. What we must do now is narrow the focus to work specific to this thesis. This shall be done by looking at three key themes. First, the importance of *period* in studies of the Poor Law; second, the nature and extent of local and regional variation; third, how the makeshift economy functioned, and what it tells us about the role of the Poor Law at local level.

### The importance of period

The Poor Law was not, as Gritt and Park point out, a 'static' welfare system.<sup>30</sup> Over its long history its form and function evolved through local initiatives and national legislation, but far from following a Whiggish path of unremitting progress towards an inevitable endgame - the welfare state of the mid-twentieth century – the process was complex, with intermittent attempts to restrict the provision of relief defining policy development in the nineteenth century. The Act of 1834 was one such attempt, but the still under researched 'Crusade' against outdoor relief (c.1870-1890), which represented a 'fundamental disjuncture in nineteenth-century poor law history', was another.<sup>31</sup> The Crusade was a deeply repressive campaign which sought to abolish outdoor relief to *all* categories of pauper, rather than just the able-bodied which had been the intention of the PLC in 1834, and the result was a dramatic reduction in outdoor pauperism nationally.<sup>32</sup> The Crusading years are a useful point of reference for our period, for they demonstrate that the early decades of the New Poor Law did not mark the zenith of repressive measures against the poor; the screw could turn further still, and we return to this theme in Chapter 2. The comparison also serves to show the importance of *period* in studies of the Poor Law, and this must involve not only setting the present work within the specific historical context of the years under analysis, but also the years that immediately preceded them. Indeed, this is crucial, for the introduction of the New Poor Law did not mark a year zero in which customary local practices were suddenly terminated. As explained above, the narrowness of the restrictive regulations issued by the central authority allowed Boards

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<sup>29</sup> D. R. Green, 'Pauper protests: power and resistance in early nineteenth century London workhouses', *Social History*, 31 (2006), p.159.

<sup>30</sup> Gritt and Park, 'Workhouse populations', p.37.

<sup>31</sup> E. T. Hurren, *Poverty, politics and poor relief in late-Victorian England, 1870-1900* (2007), pp.250-251.

<sup>32</sup> More work needs to be done on the Crusade, but important studies include: Hurren, *Protesting about pauperism*; M. MacKinnon, 'English Poor Law policy and the Crusade against outdoor relief', *Journal of Economic History*, 3 (1987), 603-25; J. Pratt, *Paternalistic, Parsimonious Pragmatists: The Wigan Board of Guardians and the Administration of the English Poor Laws, 1880-1900* (2011), PhD thesis, pp.188-194; Snell, *Parish and belonging*, p.262; Williams, *From pauperism to poverty*.

of Guardians a considerable degree of autonomy. Thus, an understanding of what was happening during the years before 1834 is required to appreciate what was happening thereafter.

Most historians agree that by the middle of the eighteenth century the Poor Law had developed into a *relatively* generous and inclusive system.<sup>33</sup> Snell writes of being 'struck by the wide terms of relief...intruding as it did into most aspects of parish life, in a manner never since replicated on a comparable scale.'<sup>34</sup> But there is also a broad consensus that from around the last two decades of the eighteenth century, and during the early decades of the nineteenth, the generosity of relief was squeezed as a result of population growth and an oversupply of labour which brought many male headed able-bodied families onto the relief rolls.<sup>35</sup> This interpretation, however, is based on the experience of southern and eastern agricultural regions which have dominated Old Poor Law historiography as explained above, and there are problems with this imbalance as we shall see in the next section. Yet, it does bring to the fore an important question: how much changed during the years immediately following the introduction of the New Poor Law? There are two competing judgements here. On the one side is what we might term the 'continuation' theory, which argues that the 1834 Act changed very little in practice at local level. A number of historians advanced this view in the 1960s and 1970s, when interest in the New Poor Law was revived after a long period of inactivity following the monumental work of the Webbs.<sup>36</sup> The crux of the argument centres upon the notion that Guardians, objecting to the 'principles of 1834', stubbornly refused to curtail outdoor relief to the able-bodied through a workhouse test. Thus, Digby argues in her study of six south-eastern counties that outdoor allowances, despite being prohibited by the PLC's formal orders, continued in response to enduring 'underemployment in the rural labour market'.<sup>37</sup> She claims that Guardians persisted in the practice by disguising relief as being due to sickness, an exemption clause in the regulations.<sup>38</sup> Ashforth offered a variant of the same argument in his study

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<sup>33</sup> See, for example: King, *Poverty and welfare*, pp.141-180; Snell, *Annals of the labouring poor*, p.104; Williams, *Poverty, gender and life-cycle*, pp.65-66.

<sup>34</sup> Snell, *Annals of the labouring poor*, p.104.

<sup>35</sup> J. Broad, 'Parish economies of welfare, 1650-1834', *The History Journal* (1999), p.985; Lees, *The solidarities of strangers: the English Poor Laws and the people, 1700-1948* (1998), pp.37-39; R. M. Smith, 'Reflections from demographic and family history', in M. Daunton (ed.), *Charity, self-interest and welfare in the English past* (1966), pp.39-40; Snell, *Annals of the labouring poor*, p.107; A. Tomkins, *The experience of urban poverty, 1723-82* (2006), p.7; D. Valenze, 'Charity, custom and humanity: changing attitudes towards the poor in eighteenth-century England', in J. Garnett and C. Matthews (eds.), *Revival and religion since 1700* (1993), pp.61-62; Williams, *Poverty, gender and life-cycle*, pp.66-68.

<sup>36</sup> For continuation theorists see: Ashforth, 'The urban Poor Law'; Boyer, *An economic history*, pp.193-231; Digby, 'The labour market'; Digby, 'The rural Poor Law'; Midwinter, *Social administration*; Rose, 'The allowance system'. For the Webb's work on the New Poor Law see: S. and B. Webb, *English Poor Law history part II: the last hundred years* (1963 edition), Vols. 1+2.

<sup>37</sup> Digby, 'The labour market', p.69.

<sup>38</sup> Digby, 'The labour market', p.72.

of the industrial north of England, where the regulations which prohibited outdoor relief to the able-bodied were not issued. He argues that Guardians rejected the workhouse test because they considered that, when strictly applied, it would be harsh and impractical as the region was prone to sudden and severe economic depression. To Ashforth, the refusal of Guardians to build union workhouses marked the most conspicuous example of such hostility.<sup>39</sup>

The other interpretation of the New Poor Law arrives at a quite different conclusion, arguing that the Act of 1834 fundamentally shifted the parameters of entitlement to communal support and saw a further tightening in the generosity of relief. Samantha Williams found in her study of two Bedfordshire parishes that relief was 'cut drastically' after 1834 despite a general downscaling from around 1780, and concludes that it is 'beyond dispute that the situation under the New Poor Law contrasted sharply with that prevailing under the Old.'<sup>40</sup> Apfel and Duckley reached the same conclusion, claiming that Bedfordshire's 'poor law officials, ratepayers and common folk would have been astonished' at the idea that very little changed.<sup>41</sup> Moreover, looking at the south more broadly, Snell argues that the New Poor Law was applied with such vigour that it had 'the most harmful and socially damaging effect on rural class relations...of any nineteenth century legislation.'<sup>42</sup> The most severe critic of the continuation theory has been Karel Williams, who forcefully argued that the conclusions of Digby, Ashforth and others reflect a misreading of the intentions of the 1834 Act.<sup>43</sup> Williams' main contention is that the framers of the New Poor Law were exclusively concerned with prohibiting outdoor relief to able-bodied *men*, rather than able-bodied *persons* with whom the continuation theorists have been concerned, and that in this regard the PLC were singularly successful. Indeed, he argues that a 'line of exclusion' had been drawn against able-bodied men by 1850, marking the 'brilliant triumph of official strategy.'<sup>44</sup>

Williams' conclusion is generally convincing. His quantitative analysis of the annually published pauperism statistics demonstrates very clearly that able-bodied men were numerically insignificant at the aggregate level after mid-century. Moreover, against the backdrop of dramatically reduced national Poor Law expenditure after 1834, it is hardly possible to argue other than that the New Poor Law had the effect of restricting the supply of outdoor relief.<sup>45</sup> This supports the findings of

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<sup>39</sup> Ashforth, 'The urban Poor Law', p.133. For similar interpretations see also: Lees, *The solidarities of strangers*, p.149; Midwinter, *Social administration*, p.57; Rose, 'The allowance system', pp.61-62.

<sup>40</sup> Williams, *Poverty, gender and life-cycle*, p.68.

<sup>41</sup> Apfel and Dunkley, 'English rural society and the New Poor Law', p.68.

<sup>42</sup> Snell, *Annals of the labouring poor*, p.137.

<sup>43</sup> Williams, *From pauperism to poverty*, p.59.

<sup>44</sup> Williams, *From pauperism to poverty*, pp.59 and 75.

<sup>45</sup> Kidd, *State, society and the poor*, pp.168-169.

Snell, Samantha Williams and others who have argued for dramatic change. Yet, none of this *necessarily* undermines the continuation theory. The number crunching of aggregate statistics undertaken by Karel Williams, and the geographically restricted scope of other local and regional studies arguing for change after 1834, can only tell us so much. Most problematically, they mask the significant local and regional variations which were an inherent part of Poor Law administration as we shall see. As such, it is possible that historians arguing for and against continuation are all simultaneously correct; conclusions depend on where we look.

Despite these contradictory views, most historians would probably agree on one thing; that the New Poor Law marked a punitive and misguided turn in the development of welfare policy. As King has pointed out, there is a 'strong modern historiographical consensus that in conception the New Poor Law was flawed.'<sup>46</sup> At the centre of this consensus sits the Commissioner's diagnosis of the causes of pauperism – individual failing - and the harsh workhouse based medicine they prescribed to treat it. Here, historians echo the views of many contemporaries who were appalled by the workhouse system as devised by the PLC, particularly during the 1830s and 1840s. To critics such as Preston Guardian Joseph Livesey, who we shall encounter throughout this thesis, it epitomised an 'inhuman, un-English and unchristian' shift in approaches to communal support.<sup>47</sup> Yet, the modern historian and the contemporary do differ in one important way. Whereas the latter, in highlighting the worst aspects of the workhouse system, tended to present a picture of the workhouse where cruelty was an inherent characteristic of the institution, the former recognise certain progressive measures implemented by the PLC. Examples of genuine cruelty such as the Andover scandal of the 1840s are therefore seen by historians as anomalies rather than typical experiences.<sup>48</sup> Indeed, historians have argued that workhouses operating under the PLCs regulations, far from acting callously and inhumanely, would have 'provided better food and accommodation than was available to many of the poor who struggled to survive outside.'<sup>49</sup> Equally, it has been pointed out that standards of workhouse medical care and education began to improve under the PLC, even though many laggardly unions were slow to implement central directives.<sup>50</sup> As

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<sup>46</sup> King, *Poverty and welfare*, p.66.

<sup>47</sup> *Preston Chronicle (P.C.)* 25<sup>th</sup> February, 1837.

<sup>48</sup> I. Anstruther, *The scandal of the Andover workhouse* (1973); Crowther, *The workhouse system*, p.30; A. Digby, *Pauper palaces* (1978), p.ix; N. Longmate, *The workhouse* (2003), pp.102-104; Roberts, 'How cruel'. Charles Dickens's, of course, had a great deal to do with creating the enduring 'myth' of the workhouse. See, R. Richardson, *Dickens and the workhouse: Oliver Twist and the London poor* (2012); L. Smith, S. Thornton, J. Reinartz and A. Williams, "Please sir, I want some more", *British medical journal*, 337 (2008), a2722.

<sup>49</sup> Wood, *Poverty and the Victorian workhouse*, p.100.

<sup>50</sup> Crowther, *The workhouse system*, p.53; Kidd, *State, society and the poor*, p.42; T. May, *The Victorian workhouse* (1997), pp.15-16; Henriques, 'How cruel', p.366.

such, Crowther argues that 'on major questions...the Commissioners were more progressive than many guardians.'<sup>51</sup> However, despite this the PLC is far from rehabilitated historiographically. Though it is accepted that they did not advocate cruelty, historians have argued that the Commissioners did encourage the psychological harshness associated with regimented institutional life; indeed, that this was how less eligibility was to be achieved.<sup>52</sup> The utility of the orthodox workhouse system was, unsurprisingly, the most important issue of our period.

### *The nature and extent of regional and local variation*

As mentioned above, one of the most significant developments in recent Poor Law historiography has been the emphasis placed on regional variation by Steve King. While historians have long recognised that the Poor Law operated in different ways in different places, King approached the subject in a new light. His pioneering *Poverty and welfare in England* used the records of some sixty parishes and townships across the country to assess relief practices and the role of communal welfare at local level, concluding that there was a distinct 'spatial flavour to the character and role of the old and new poor laws'.<sup>53</sup> Significantly, he claimed that it took the form of two distinct regions: the 'south and east', which 'granted more substantial nominal allowances to more people' than communities in the 'north and west', which 'had a narrower definition of entitlement and devoted fewer resources to the communal welfare framework'.<sup>54</sup> In sum, in the south and east the Poor Law was relatively 'generous', in the north and west relatively 'harsh'.<sup>55</sup>

King's claim for regional patterns in the administration of relief is convincing, and by focussing attention on the way parishes operating under the same legislation could function so differently he has done Poor Law historiography a service. However, aspects of his theory are problematic. Three in particular stand out. First, he contends that the disparity between the two regions reflected different 'cultural' approaches to relief administration, but makes no attempt to explain why these cultures developed beyond ruling out economic structures as a main causal factor.<sup>56</sup> Yet, as many studies have shown, the economy played a crucial role in shaping relief policy and practice at local

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<sup>51</sup> Crowther, *The workhouse system*, p.53.

<sup>52</sup> T. Besley, S. Coate, T. Guinnane, 'Incentives, information and welfare: England's New Poor Law and the workhouse test', in *History matters: essays on economic growth, technology and demographic change* (2004), p.253.

<sup>53</sup> King, *Poverty and welfare*, p.256. See also: King, 'Reconstructing lives'; King, 'Poor relief and English economic development reappraised'; King, 'The English proto-industrial family'; King and Tomkins (eds.), *The Poor in England*; King and Gear (eds.), S. King and G. Gear (eds.), *A caring county? Social welfare in Hertfordshire from 1600* (2013).

<sup>54</sup> King, *Poverty and welfare*, pp.256-257.

<sup>55</sup> King, *Poverty and welfare*, chapters 6 and 7.

<sup>56</sup> King, *Poverty and welfare*, pp.267-269.

level, and as Boyer argues must have had some influence on the type of regional variations King found.<sup>57</sup> Around the end of the eighteenth century and beginning of the nineteenth (the period with which King is primarily concerned) the north and south, broadly defined, had become two very different places. In the industrialising regions of the north, where King argues the Poor Law was harshest, high wages and employment contrasted sharply with a southern and eastern agricultural sector characterised by an oversupply of labour and low wages.<sup>58</sup> This is why the southern bias in Old Poor Law historiography is so unfortunate. Indeed, the introduction of Speenhamland and similar systems in the south and east from around 1790, and their general absence in the north, is a classic example of economic conditions shaping policy and practice at regional level.<sup>59</sup> It seems implausible, therefore, to argue that the economy had little influence on the welfare patterns King identified, and his assertion to the contrary leaves us asking far more questions than he is able to provide answers.

The second problem is the rigidity which King applies to his central contention regarding the regionality of relief administration. Thus, while accepting that some places do break the mould, King argues that exceptions can be brushed off as 'noise' which should be 'tolerated'.<sup>60</sup> This is, of course, true; one or two exceptions would not undermine the theory. The question, then, is how much noise is to be tolerated before it becomes too loud to ignore? For Steve Hindle, the noise is far too loud. He argues that the

picture of a regionally differentiated Poor Law administration is significantly overdrawn...variations in the level of both need and of relief *within* regions were at least as, if not more, significant than those *between* them. This was a national system in which the principle differentials were mosaics of local variation rather than major regional schism.<sup>61</sup>

Hindle points out 'extraordinary differentials in the generosity of relief even between adjacent parishes', and argues that economic circumstances and other factors such as neighbourliness,

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<sup>57</sup> G. R. Boyer, 'Review', *The Journal of Economic History*, 62 (2002), pp.873-874.

<sup>58</sup> Boyer, *An economic history*, pp.85-118; A. J. Gritt, 'The "survival" of service in the English agricultural labour force: lessons from Lancashire, c.1650-1851', *Agricultural History Review*, 50 (2002), pp.25-50; E. H. Hunt, 'Industrialisation and regional inequality: wages in Britain, 1760-1914', *Journal of Economic History*, 4 (1986), pp.935-966; C. More, *The industrial age* (1989), p.159; Williams, 'Poor relief, labourers' households and living standards'.

<sup>59</sup> For a discussion of the Speenhamland or 'allowance' system during the Old Poor Law see: Blaug, 'The Myth of the Old Poor Law'; Oxley, *Poor relief in England and Wales* (1974), pp.102-119; Poynter, *Society and pauperism*; Snell, *Annals of the labouring poor*, pp.104-114.

<sup>60</sup> King, *A caring county?*, p.2.

<sup>61</sup> Hindle, *On the parish?*, p.283.

kinship density and charity were all influential in shaping welfare practices at local level.<sup>62</sup> Samantha Williams reached a similar conclusion in her study of two adjacent parishes in Bedfordshire - Campton and Shefford - where different approaches to relief administration across time and space were equated to socio-economic structures, the former being rural and the latter a market town.<sup>63</sup> Williams consequently concluded that 'the poor law operated differently by region and from parish to parish.'<sup>64</sup> Ramsbottom found the same in his study of the rural Fylde of Lancashire, where 'even the smallest townships looked after their poor as they saw fit, and there was no overarching parish policy.'<sup>65</sup> Moreover, in his study of London Green observed that the extent to which changes were implemented at local level after 1834 'depended on local circumstances and here both politics and economics had a part to play.'<sup>66</sup> The mention of politics is important. After 1834 Guardians were elected annually by the ratepayers, and Edsall has shown how important elections were to the anti-Poor Law agitators during the late 1830s.<sup>67</sup> However, very little work has been conducted on their longer term influence. Hurren's study of Brixworth union in Northamptonshire is a notable exception, and she was able to demonstrate a clear link between elections and policy shifts in the late 1860s.<sup>68</sup> Pratt's work on elections in Wigan union, on the other hand, showed no such link during the period 1880-1900.<sup>69</sup> Nonetheless, that elections *could*, under certain circumstances, shape policy at local level adds a layer of complexity to discussions of relief administration.<sup>70</sup> This is explored in Chapter 1. Although none of this refutes King's overarching theory, it does bring considerable nuance to the overall picture and undermines the notion that collective regional cultures, rather than localised economic and political structures, were the driving force behind observable patterns in the administration of relief.

The third and final problem is King's treatment of the years after 1834, or more specifically the methodology he used to examine whether regional differentiation survived the passage of the New Poor Law. King considered this question by comparing relief administration in two unions, Bolton in Lancashire and the New Forest in Hampshire.<sup>71</sup> With the former a large industrial town in the

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<sup>62</sup> Hindle, *On the parish?*, pp.283-285.

<sup>63</sup> Williams, *Poverty, gender and life-cycle*, pp.164-165.

<sup>64</sup> Williams, *Poverty, gender and life-cycle*, pp.164-165.

<sup>65</sup> Ramsbottom, *Christopher waddington's peers*, p.ii. A 'township' is a constituent unit of a parish.

<sup>66</sup> Green, *Pauper capital*, p.2.

<sup>67</sup> Edsall, *The anti-Poor Law movement*.

<sup>68</sup> Hurren, *Protesting about pauperism*, p.253.

<sup>69</sup> Pratt, *Paternalistic parsimonious, pragmatists*, pp.49-69.

<sup>70</sup> The way Poor Law elections operated and developed is explored in: A. Brundage, 'Reform of the Poor Law electoral system', *Albion: a quarterly journal concerned with British studies*, 7 (1975), pp.201-215; Fraser, 'The Poor Law as political institution'.

<sup>71</sup> King, *Poverty and welfare*, pp.239-251.



centre of the cotton districts and the latter a small rural community, the comparison is obviously inadequate to draw meaningful conclusions and King recognises the limitations of his approach. Yet, he still concludes that his two region theory holds true for the years up to 1850.<sup>72</sup> Again, this does not mean King is wrong, but the conclusion is premature. Part of the problem is that too few studies have incorporated an empirical assessment of Poor Law administration within King's regional framework for the period after 1834. Indeed, only Hindle and Williams have directly tackled the issue in published work, and both focussed on parts of southern England under the Old Poor Law. This lacuna is unfortunate. Whereas King asks of the Old Poor Law whether England had, theoretically, 'several Poor Laws and not one' because practice could vary so significantly by region, after 1834 England actually *did* have more than one Poor Law in the sense that the regulations issued by the PLC were distributed unevenly across time and space.<sup>73</sup> An explanation of why is necessary at this point.

The New Poor Law was introduced in 1834 primarily to deal with the reputedly widespread use of allowances and its associated problems in the agricultural south and east of England. These 'problems', as Broad states, explain 'at least part of the acclaim with which the gentry, and those who administered...poor relief, greeted the...New Poor Law' in the south.<sup>74</sup> Indeed, while Wells, Griffin and others have emphasised the strength of popular resistance to the New Poor Law in the south, the general absence of organised middle-class opposition meant the process of unionisation and the imposition of official regulations prohibiting outdoor relief to the able-bodied were introduced comparatively smoothly; 'comparatively', because things were very different in the north.<sup>75</sup> Many middle-class northerners, particularly in the manufacturing districts of Lancashire and Yorkshire where pauperism was typically lowest, did not want or expect the New Poor Law to be introduced beyond the agricultural south. We return here to Joseph Livesey, who expressed this point clearly when he asked Assistant Poor Law Commissioner Alfred Power in 1837, just as the New Poor Law was being brought to Lancashire:

Why, if there had been mismanagement in other places, the south of England for example, should Lancashire against which there was no just complaint, be subjected to the same discipline? If [my] neighbour's house had gone into decay, was it necessary, when it was repaired, for [me] to repair [my] own house, which had suffered no dilapidation?<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>72</sup> King, *Poverty and welfare*, pp.239-251.

<sup>73</sup> King, *Poverty and welfare*, p.259.

<sup>74</sup> J. Broad, 'Parish economies of welfare, 1650-1834', *The Historical Journal*, 42 (1999), p.1006.

<sup>75</sup> Griffin, 'Swing, Swing redivivus, or something after Swing?', p.497; Wells, 'Resistance to the New Poor Law in the rural south'.

<sup>76</sup> P.C. 4<sup>th</sup> March, 1837.

Livesey's view was a popular one, and his hostility indicative of a common feeling in the northern manufacturing districts. For, as Edsall has demonstrated, it was here that the anti-Poor Law movement of c.1837-40 was strongest, most organised and most successful.<sup>77</sup> It was successful because, although hostile unions failed to achieve the primary goal of coercing the PLC to allow them to operate outside the ambit of the New Poor Law, they did force them into making one significant concession: not to introduce the prohibitory regulations into the region. Thus, while eight in ten unions in England and Wales were operating under the Prohibitory Order by 1844, which banned outdoor relief to able-bodied persons (widows excluded), unions in Lancashire and parts of the West Riding of Yorkshire (as well as London) were entirely unencumbered allowing them to continue providing relief autonomously.<sup>78</sup> Only in 1852 were these unions brought under formal regulations, the Outdoor Relief Regulation Order, but this did not force Guardians to confine able-bodied paupers in a workhouse like the Prohibitory Order. Instead, it applied only to men and demanded outdoor labour in exchange for outdoor relief, and was in effect the same as the 1842 Outdoor Labour test Order which had been issued by the PLC in certain midlands unions following strong pressure to repeal the Prohibitory Order.

Clearly, then, as Driver argues, the New Poor Law operated in our period against a backdrop of 'conflict and negotiation' between local unions and the central authority.<sup>79</sup> The workhouse test was strongly resisted in the industrial north, and in the face of considerable local opposition the PLC had to play a careful game if they wanted these unions to co-operate at all. In practice, this meant that by the early 1840s unions across England and Wales, despite operating under the same legislation, were administering relief according to very different rules and regulations. Moreover, these regulations were issued on a distinctly regional basis, adding further complexity to King's theory. It is, therefore, surprising that no study has yet examined spatial patterns of relief at regional level during the decades immediately after 1834, and this thesis seeks to address this lacunae.

### *The economy of makeshifts*

In recent years English Poor Law historiography has increasingly focussed on the various resources the poor had to draw upon to survive, both on a day-to-day basis and during periods of life-cycle crisis. This process has been vividly encapsulated by the useful term the 'economy of makeshifts'. How the makeshift economy operated at the individual level depended on personal circumstances. For those able to work, wages were its most important component. In nuclear families the adult

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<sup>77</sup> Edsall, *The anti-Poor movement*.

<sup>78</sup> Driver usefully maps the spatial coverage of the various formal orders in *Power and pauperism*, p.32-40.

<sup>79</sup> Driver, *Power and pauperism*, p.33.

male wage was central to a stable domestic economy, but in larger families wives and children would have had to work and their wages could be crucial. As Anderson has shown, young families with numerous children below wage earning age were particularly vulnerable to destitution in Lancashire.<sup>80</sup> The wider makeshift economy came into play when the family's aggregate earnings were not enough for their full maintenance, either because they were in poorly paid occupations or because their domestic economy had been thrown into turmoil due to the sickness, injury or the death of a principal earner. Here the family would turn to kin, friends, neighbours, the friendly society and other forms of self-help for support. They might also run a slate at the corner shop or pawn goods before, or in addition to, drawing upon what sociologists have called the 'mixed economy of welfare', which included statutory (Poor Law) and non-statutory (private charity) aid.<sup>81</sup> At any stage in this process the poor might also, as Ager reminds us, resort to crime in order to aid their personal makeshift economies.<sup>82</sup>

The crucial question for our purposes is where historiography has placed the Poor Law within this makeshift economy. The answer must take into account period, place, and how much relief contributed to a pauper's aggregate income. King's regional examination of relief administration before 1834 has shown clearly that the Poor Law touched the lives of far more people in the south and east of England than in the north and west, and with higher sums of relief. From this perspective, the Old Poor Law played a more important role in the makeshift economy in the former than the latter. Yet, the considerable tightening of relief that Snell, Williams and others have argued occurred from sometime around 1780 in the south and east must be taken into consideration when we examine the years after 1834, as, of course, must the effect of the Poor Law Amendment Act itself. To Samantha Williams, this period is in fact crucial, for she argues that 'the 1830s were the key transition decade, and the New Poor Law transformed the role of poor relief from one of centrality in the economy of makeshifts to marginality.'<sup>83</sup>

Local and regional variations notwithstanding, it is generally accepted that after 1834 the role of the Poor Law in the makeshift economy was indeed one of 'marginality'. Lees, in her magisterial account of the Poor Law from 1700-1948, defines the years 1834-1860 as 'residualism refined and

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<sup>80</sup> M. Anderson, *Family structure in nineteenth century Lancashire* (1971), p.31.

<sup>81</sup> Kidd, *State, society and the poor*; Ramsbottom, *Christopher Waddington's peers*, p.20.

<sup>82</sup> A. W. Ager, *Crime and poverty in 19<sup>th</sup> Century England: the economy of makeshifts* (2014).

<sup>83</sup> Williams, 'Earnings, poor relief and the economy of makeshifts', p.46.

restricted'; a period when entitlement, as defined locally and by the centre, narrowed.<sup>84</sup> Kidd argues the same:

The contraction of tax-based redistributive policies [i.e. the Poor Law] from the 1830s [meant] much was left to the resources of the individual. Those in poverty, and those in fear of poverty, were most dependent upon their own resources and those of their family, their neighbours and their class.<sup>85</sup>

This move towards a more restrictive system in the 1830s reflected, Kidd further explains, the prevailing 'climate of individualism' which encouraged self-help and kinship support, and tied into the laissez faire economic zeitgeist which influenced the Poor Law Amendment Act.<sup>86</sup> As Dupree confirms, 'self-maintenance and family maintenance were the aims of the provision of welfare throughout the century from 1850.'<sup>87</sup> Against this backdrop, historians have invariably viewed the post-1834 Poor Law as being right at the bottom of the pile of resources that the poor could draw upon to make shift; quite simply, it was a refuge of last resort. Whether due to the stigma attached to applying for poor relief, or to Guardians actively employing a residual system, and possibly a combination of both, after 1834 the poor only turned to the Poor Law when alternative sources (including charity) had been exhausted.<sup>88</sup> Moreover, historians generally also agree that, after 1834, outdoor paupers were not provided nearly enough relief by the Poor Law to live independently.<sup>89</sup> Outdoor relief merely supplemented, rather than replaced, alternative sources of support. Full maintenance, therefore, was usually only available in a workhouse.

## **(ii) The broader study region – Lancashire**

We turn now to consider how the three historiographical themes discussed above relate to our broader study region, the county of Lancashire in the North-West of England. While the north of England has attracted considerable attention from welfare historians interested in the years after 1834, very little work has looked at Lancashire specifically. The standard text remains Midwinter's *Social administration in Lancashire*, now almost half a century old and little more than a general

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<sup>84</sup> Lees, *The solidarities of strangers*, p.113.

<sup>85</sup> Kidd, *State, society and the poor*, p.109.

<sup>86</sup> Kidd, *State, society and the poor*, pp.107-159.

<sup>87</sup> M. Dupree, 'The provision of social services', in M. Daunton (ed.), *The Cambridge urban history of Britain, 1840-1950* (2000) p.354

<sup>88</sup> For an expression of this point see: Anderson, *Family structure*, pp.137-139; H. M. Boot, 'Unemployment and poor relief in Manchester, 1845-50', *Social History*, 2 (1990), pp.217-228; M. E. Rose, *The relief of poverty, 1834-1914* (1981), p.18; R. Watson, 'Poverty in North East Lancashire in 1843: evidence from Quaker charity records', *Local Population Studies*, 55 (1995), pp.22-44.

<sup>89</sup> Apfel and Dunckley, 'English rural society', pp.37-68; Lees, *The solidarities of strangers*, p.210; Snell, *Annals of the labouring poor*, p.132; Rose, 'The allowance system', pp.607-620; Williams, *Poverty, gender and life-cycle*, p.66.

overview (though a very good one) of the years up to 1860.<sup>90</sup> Boyson's earlier work on north-east Lancashire is more detailed and provides useful comparative material for this thesis, but his research interests were, typical of the time, purely administrative and focussed largely on opposition on the New Poor Law and central/local relations.<sup>91</sup> The conclusions presented by Midwinter and Boyson each fell into the 'continuation' camp, in that they argued for little change to the way poor relief was administered following the introduction of the New Poor Law, and both identified the anti-Poor Law movement, the absence of the Prohibitory Order and enduring local resistance to the workhouse test as key factors. Significantly, however, Midwinter also points out that less *could* have changed in Lancashire than in many other parts of the country because Poor Law administration before 1837 was already not too far removed from the system advocated by the PLC. As he put it, the Old Poor Law in Lancashire was a 'vivid advertisement of what the Poor Law Commissioners planned to do, than the faults they so sternly denounced.'<sup>92</sup> More recently, two studies have taken a union-centric approach to Poor Law administration in Lancashire. Ramsbottom's study of the Fylde, though mainly interested in the Old Poor Law, dedicates a chapter to the years after 1837 and also asks what changed in practice; the answer, echoing Midwinter and Boyson, was very little.<sup>93</sup> Pratt's study of Wigan union looked at the later decades of the nineteenth century, a period associated with the Crusade Against Outdoor Relief. Though not of direct relevance to our period, Pratt's thesis is instructive because it highlights the centrality of the local economy in policy formation. Pratt argued that the Wigan Guardians shunned orthodox crusading ideology, despite many other unions in Lancashire conforming to it, because they had developed a local welfare culture based on providing outdoor relief to temporarily injured or sick men engaged in coal mining, the union's staple industry.<sup>94</sup>

Lancashire's development from an 'obscure, remote, insular and backward corner of England' in the Tudor period to the 'cradle of the world's first industrial revolution' by the nineteenth century has received a great deal of historical attention, and we need not repeat the story here.<sup>95</sup> We must, however, discuss its implications on Poor Law administration, particularly against the backdrop of

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<sup>90</sup> Midwinter, *Social administration*; E. C. Midwinter, 'State intervention at the local level: the New Poor Law in Lancashire', *The Historical Journal*, 10 (1967), pp.106-122.

<sup>91</sup> Boyson, *The history of Poor Law administration in north-east Lancashire*; Boyson, 'The New Poor Law in north-east Lancashire.'

<sup>92</sup> Midwinter, *Social administration*, p.14.

<sup>93</sup> Ramsbottom, *Christopher Waddington's peers*.

<sup>94</sup> Pratt, *Paternalistic, parsimonious pragmatists*, pp.152-179.

<sup>95</sup> Quotations taken from J. K. Walton, *Lancashire: a social history, 1558-1939* (1987), pp.3 and 20. This is still probably the best single volume history of the county. See also: A. Crosby, *A history of Lancashire* (1998), C. B. Phillips and J. H. Smith, *Lancashire and Cheshire from A.D. 1540* (1994); J. D. Marshall, *Lancashire* (1974).

a welfare system in which regional diversity was an important characteristic. Lancashire, of course, as a distinct area exists only insofar as we are willing to accept the artificial boundaries which frame it. Socio-economic structures and cultural identities do not by their very nature sit neatly within lines drawn on a map. Lancashire, for example, had much in common economically with the neighbouring West Riding of Yorkshire in our period and, as Walton points out, the cotton industry spilled into parts of Cheshire and Derbyshire.<sup>96</sup> Moreover, topographical features and economic structures *within* Lancashire varied immensely; from the rapidly growing 'Cottonopolis' itself, Manchester and its satellite cotton towns in the south-east, to the expansive and predominantly agricultural south-west Lancashire; and from the important port town of Liverpool to the Lancashire coalfield, which stretched across the southern part of the county. Yet, it is important to view Lancashire not as an amorphous region but one in which its different parts co-existed in a symbiotic relationship. The port town of Liverpool, for example, though not engaged in cotton manufacturing, fed the cotton towns the raw materials they required, while coal towns such as Wigan fed the increasing demand for fuel and the agricultural areas literally fed the growing urban population.<sup>97</sup> This offers some justification to Walton's view that Lancashire was, certainly by the early nineteenth century, a 'recognisable area which was intelligible to contemporaries, and important to them.'<sup>98</sup>

For their article on workhouse populations Gritt and Park divided Lancashire's Poor Law unions into three broad settlement types – conurbation, urban industrial and rural - and this thesis adopts the same categorisation (Figure 1).<sup>99</sup> The 'conurbation' unions, which sat on the south-east and south-west of the county, were dominated by the densely populated urban centres of Manchester and Liverpool. The 'urban industrial' unions were concentrated across the industrial belt from Preston, spanning across most of north-east, central and southern Lancashire. Each centred upon an economically and demographically dominant industrial town, but most also incorporated rural areas. Finally, the 'rural' unions, located mainly to the north of the county, were sparsely populated compared to the rest of Lancashire and dominated economically by agriculture. Clearly, Lancashire was not a county of 'dark satanic mills' in the nineteenth century; even the urban industrial unions

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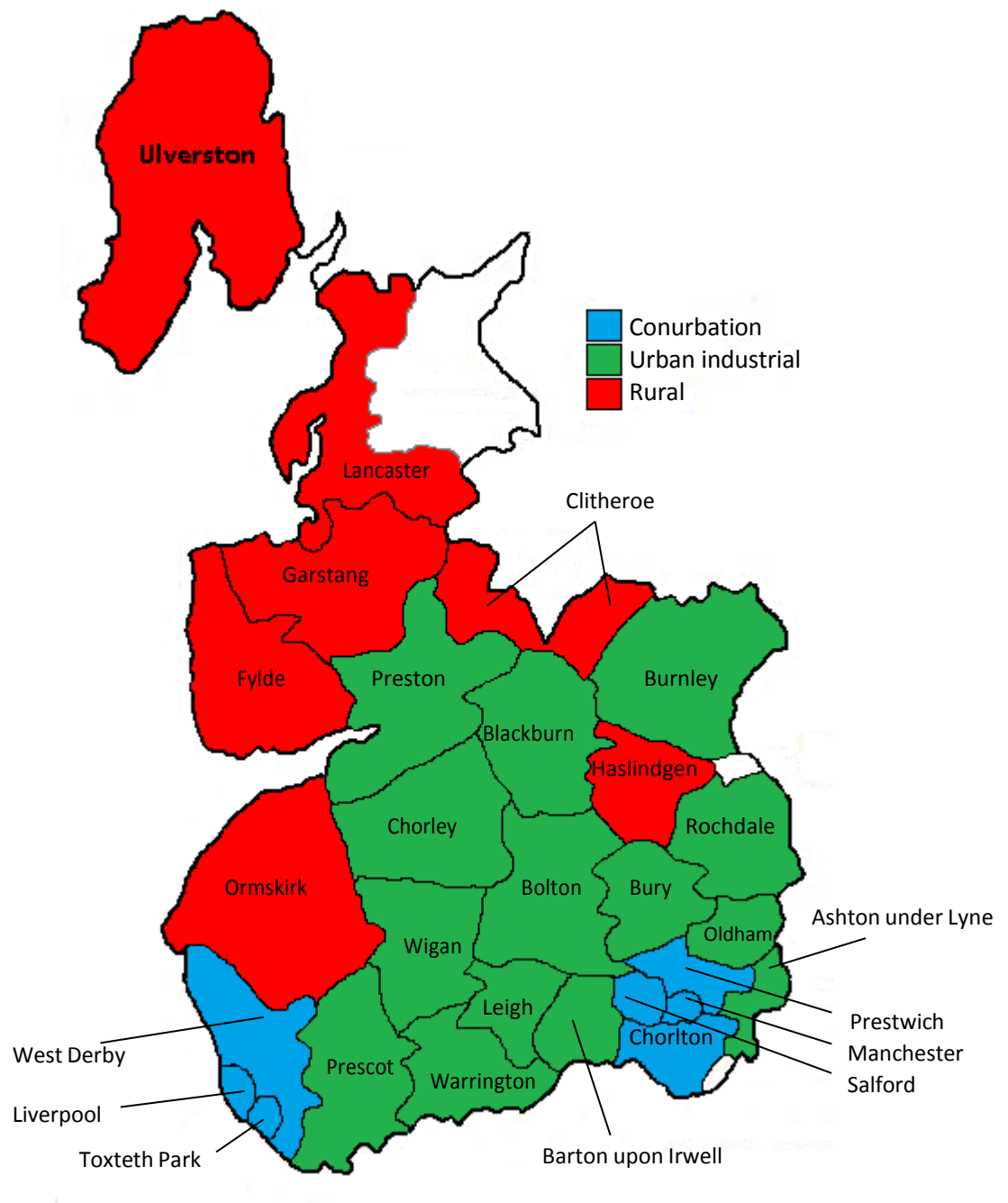
<sup>96</sup> Walton, *Lancashire*, p.2.

<sup>97</sup> O. Ashmore, *The industrial archaeology of North-West England* (1982), p.8; Gritt, 'The "survival" of service', pp.25-50; G. J. Milne, *Trade and traders in mid-Victorian Liverpool: mercantile business and the making of a world port* (2000); M. Winstanley, 'Industrialisation and the small farm: family and household economy in nineteenth century England', *Past and Present*, 152 (1996), pp.157-195.

<sup>98</sup> Walton, *Lancashire*, p.2.

<sup>99</sup> Gritt and Park, 'The workhouse populations of Lancashire', pp.44-47.

**Figure 1: Lancashire's Poor Law unions according to settlement type in 1860**



**Source and notes:** Base map courtesy of Peter Park. The union structure in this map is based on how they existed in 1860. Most unions were formed between 1837 and 1840, but some developed later. Prestwich union was created in 1850, having originally formed part of Manchester union. The same is true of Barton upon Irwell, formed in 1849 from Chorlton union, and Toxteth Park, formed in 1857 from West Derby union.

contained a strong rural component. Yet, industry, and the cotton industry in particular, was undoubtedly the most important sector of the economy, attracting considerable attention from

contemporaries and historians.<sup>100</sup> By the beginning of our period the cotton industry had reached an age of 'maturity', having long since developed into the factory system of mass production associated with the Industrial Revolution.<sup>101</sup> While hand loom weavers, located in towns and villages around the county, still existed in quite large numbers, such numbers were steadily falling along with wages as mechanised power loom weaving machines were introduced into the factory system.<sup>102</sup> By the time of the 1851 census some 17 per cent of men aged 20 and over, and 15 per cent of women, in Lancashire were engaged in factory based cotton manufacture, and this figure would be much higher if we excluded from the calculation those not in work.<sup>103</sup> Moreover, nearly 40 per cent of girls aged fifteen to nineteen, and about 25 per cent of boys, were similarly employed.<sup>104</sup> Indeed, factory work was increasingly a young person's game, and if we consider employment over time the aggregate proportion of the population engaged at some point of their lives in cotton manufacture was much higher than the snapshot data suggests.<sup>105</sup>

The importance of the cotton industry can be seen in the tremendous growth experienced in Lancashire's urban centres during the first half of the nineteenth century. The population of Preston increased fivefold between 1801 and 1851, from 11,877 to 68,537; Blackburn fourfold (11,980 to 46,536) and Bolton more than doubled (24,195 to 60,391).<sup>106</sup> All major towns in Lancashire experienced similar growth. Significantly, most of the growth was achieved through migration within Lancashire. The majority of migrants arriving in Lancashire's towns had travelled only relatively short distances, around half coming from rural communities no more than ten miles away.<sup>107</sup> Indeed, the unique evidence provided by the family records of Benjamin Shaw detail some 167 moves made by himself and members of his extended family between towns and villages during the period c.1760 and 1820, most of which took place within the twenty or so miles which separate

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<sup>100</sup> There are far too many to mention here, but some of the best general studies include: P. M. Deane, *The first Industrial Revolution* (1965); P. Hudson, *The Industrial Revolution* (1992); M. B. Rose (ed.), *The Lancashire cotton industry: a history since 1700* (1996); G. Timmins, *Four centuries of Lancashire cotton* G. Timmins, *Made in Lancashire: a history of regional industrialisation* (1998); J. F. Wilson (ed.) *King Cotton: a tribute to Douglas A. Farnie* (2009).

<sup>101</sup> Walton, *Lancashire*, p.111.

<sup>102</sup> Anderson, *Family structure*, p.22; D. Bythell, *The handloom weavers: a study in the English cotton industry during the Industrial Revolution* (1969); J. S. Lyons, *The Lancashire cotton industry and the introduction of the power-loom, 1815-50* (1977), PhD thesis, pp.34-100; G. Timmins, *The last shift: the decline of handloom weaving in nineteenth century Lancashire* (1993), p.110.

<sup>103</sup> Anderson, *Family structure*, pp.22-23.

<sup>104</sup> Walton, *Lancashire*, p.111.

<sup>105</sup> Anderson, *Family structure*, pp.22-23; Walton, *Lancashire*, pp.110-111.

<sup>106</sup> Phillips and Smith, *Lancashire and Cheshire*, p.136.

<sup>107</sup> Anderson, *Family structure*, pp.34-40.



Preston and Lancaster.<sup>108</sup> This pattern of short distance, often short term migration was very common.<sup>109</sup> While some people came from much further away, there was certainly no mass exodus of emaciated southern agricultural labourers northwards despite early attempts by the PLC to encourage and facilitate such movement.<sup>110</sup> The clear exception here is the Irish, who came over to Lancashire in huge numbers from the mid-1840s as the Great famine took hold, although their presence in the county was already quite substantial before this time.<sup>111</sup> Between 1841 and 1851 the number of Irish born living in Lancashire grew from 105,916 to 191,506, and they made up almost 10 per cent of the population by the latter date.<sup>112</sup> Yet, these figures mask significant local differences. Most Irish immigrants in Lancashire, around 70 per cent, were living in the conurbation districts of Liverpool and Manchester; smaller industrial centres - Preston, Bolton, Blackburn etc. - were relatively untouched by Irish immigration in our period, and the rural areas were almost entirely untouched.<sup>113</sup> Nonetheless, this wave of internal and external migration had significant implications, for it meant large numbers of people living in industrial towns did not have a legal right to relief there under the complex Law of Settlement, and this is explored in Chapter 6.

The magnetic pull many rural village dwellers felt towards the bright (gas) lights of the burgeoning industrial towns had a second important implication: it placed agriculture in direct competition with industry, and had the effect of driving up wages. As Dickson observed in his *General View of agricultural Lancashire in 1815*, 'In a district like this, where the manufacturing spirit is so very predominant, labour cannot be cheap.'<sup>114</sup> Thus, wages in Lancashire's industrial and agricultural sectors were among the highest in the country.<sup>115</sup> Before discussing some of the possible consequences of this for the Poor Law, it is worth considering a quite recent historiographical shift which has taken place in the interpretation of Lancashire's agricultural economy. Most farms in

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<sup>108</sup> C. G. Pooley, 'Migration and urbanisation in North-West England circa 1760-1830', *Social History*, 19 (1994), pp.339-358.

<sup>109</sup> Anderson, *Family structure*, pp.41-42.

<sup>110</sup> P. B. Park, *Between a rock and a hard place: the Poor Law Commission's migration scheme, 1835-37*, M.A. thesis (2008).

<sup>111</sup> M. Handley, 'Settlement, disease, poverty and conflict: the Irish in Birkenhead, 1841-51', *Transactions of the Historic Society of Lancashire and Cheshire*, 163 (2014) pp.73-93; D. Holding, *Conflict and assimilation: Irish communities in Bolton and Preston, 1840-1914* (2002), PhD thesis; F. Neal, 'Lancashire, the Famine Irish and the Poor Laws: a study in crisis management' (1994), *European Studies Research Institute*.

<sup>112</sup> *Parliamentary Papers (P.P.) Census population tables, Vol. II*, p.659.

<sup>113</sup> Neal, 'Lancashire, the Famine Irish and the Poor Law', p.7.

<sup>114</sup> R. W. Dickson, *General view of the agriculture of Lancashire* (1815), p.592.

<sup>115</sup> Boyer, *An economic history*, pp.85-118; A. J. Gritt, 'The "survival" of service', pp.28 and 39; Hunt, 'Industrialisation and regional inequality', pp.965-966; More, *The industrial age*, p.159; A. Mutch, 'The mechanisation of the harvest in south-west Lancashire, 1850-1914', *Agricultural History Review*, 29 (1981), pp.126-7; Williams, 'Poor relief, labourers' households and living standards'; J. G. Williamson, *Coping with city growth during the British Industrial Revolution* (1990), pp.189-194.

Lancashire, unlike those of the cereal and grain growing south and east of England, were small, family run enterprises averaging 30-35 acres.<sup>116</sup> In 1851 the day labourer dominated the male agricultural labour force, but their numbers per farm was low in Lancashire owing to the small size of holdings, averaging fewer than two. Moreover, the proportion of Lancashire agricultural workers engaged in farm service, whereby an employee, usually a young male, would be hired for the year or half year and lived in the home of his employer, stood at around one fifth, much higher than in the south and east of England where service was in sharp decline.<sup>117</sup> Until relatively recently historians had viewed the small Lancashire farm, run as they were by families, and the apparent 'survival' of farm service, as indicative of a backward and inefficient agrarian regime.<sup>118</sup> Yet, this view is no longer credited. A revisionist interpretation has convincingly argued that, far from backward and inefficient, small Lancashire farms were 'an integral part of an industrialising, capitalist economy.'<sup>119</sup> Gritt found Lancashire farmers to be 'innovators who geared their outputs to the demands of capitalist markets', and 'adaptive, effective commodity producers.'<sup>120</sup> He further argues that the apparent 'survival' of farm service was not, in fact, a survival at all, rather a pragmatic response to the need for a guaranteed supply of labour all year round.<sup>121</sup> As such, farmers in Lancashire, facing strong competition from the industrial sector, had to turn to service at a time when farmers in many other regions were turning away from it. The presence of small but efficient market oriented commercial farms, high wages, and the persistence of stable employment in service places Lancashire's agricultural economy in sharp contrast to that of the south and east, where 'stagnant or falling real wages for agricultural labourers [up to 1834] were accommodated by spiralling relief bills and a sharp rise in the number of poor relief recipients'; and wages did not increase for years after the New Poor Law was introduced as Snell has shown.<sup>122</sup>

The comparatively strong financial position of Lancashire's industrial and agricultural workers must at least partly explain why the proportion of the county's population in receipt of relief was, before

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<sup>116</sup> A. J. Gritt, 'The farming and domestic economy of a Lancashire smallholder: Richard Lathom and the Agricultural Revolution, 1724-67', in R. W. Hoyle (ed.) *The farmer in England, 1650-1980* (2014), pp.101-135. In England and Wales as a whole most farms were laid out in holdings of over 200 acres. The largest farms were in the arable south and east of England. See: J. V. Beckett, 'The debate over farm sizes in eighteenth and nineteenth century England', *Agricultural History*, 57 (1983), pp.308-325.

<sup>117</sup> Gritt, 'The "survival" of service', pp.27-29; Snell, *Annals of the labouring poor*, pp.67-103.

<sup>118</sup> See, for example, J. D. Chambers G. E. Mingay, *The Agricultural Revolution, 1750-1880* (1966), p.92; A. Howkins, 'Peasants, servants and labourers: the marginal workforce in British agriculture, c.1870-1914', *Agricultural History Review*, 42 (1914), pp.49-62.

<sup>119</sup> Winstanley, 'Industrialisation and the small farm', p.180.

<sup>120</sup> Gritt, 'The "Survival" of service', p.26.

<sup>121</sup> Gritt, 'The "Survival" of service'.

<sup>122</sup> Williams, 'Poor relief, labourers households and the standard of living', p.1; Snell, *Annals of the labouring poor*, p.130.

and after 1837, consistently among the lowest in the country.<sup>123</sup> This was certainly the view of contemporary observers. In 1837 Alfred Power informed Edwin Chadwick that:

The high rate of wages and superior spirit of independence [in Lancashire] have preserved the mass from all contact with pauperism during the ordinary circumstances of trade.<sup>124</sup>

Similarly, a report on economic distress in the cotton manufacturing districts in 1842 found that:

[T]he income derived from full employment in a prosperous state of trade, by a large portion of those whose manual labour is employed in the several branches of the cotton manufacture, are such as to place the working-hands, and those dependent upon them for support, above the necessity of resorting to parochial relief...[A] factory population, in point of resources and the command of means of enjoyment, [is] above the level, probably, of any other class of working population in the country.<sup>125</sup>

It was not only outsiders which expressed this view. The local middle-class certainly felt that the working people of Lancashire could, for the most part, maintain themselves and their families without the aid of the Poor Law, and actively encouraged the 'spirit of independence' observed by Power. Indeed, pauperism among the able-bodied was usually linked to profligacy. In Preston the District Provident Society, patronised by high ranking members of the local gentry, was formed in 1833 to teach the poor 'the value of domestic economy, sobriety and forethought, and to induce them to lay by some small savings for the hour of need.'<sup>126</sup> Research by Anderson on Preston and Foster on Oldham have undermined these contemporary perceptions, pointing to the existence of unavoidable poverty for many people at certain times in industrial towns. Yet, they do not undermine them entirely, and there is strong evidence to support the view that the Lancashire working-class were indeed better placed than many to maintain independence from communal support. The regions comparatively high wages not only granted greater individual protection, but also placed people in a better position to engage in the sort of *ad hoc* support networks which existed between friends, neighbours and extended family, and which historians agree were crucial to the makeshift economy. Moreover, alternative forms of assistance were more widely available in Lancashire than many places, the most important of which were probably the friendly societies

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<sup>123</sup> Oxley, *The Old Poor Law in West Derby Hundred*, p.1.

<sup>124</sup> Quote from E. C. Midwinter, *Social Administration in Lancashire, 1830-1860: Poor Law, public health, police*, p.14.

<sup>125</sup> P.P. 1842 (158) *Population of Stockport. Copy of evidence taken, and report made, by the Assistant Poor Law Commissioners sent to enquire into the state of the population of Stockport*, p.6.

<sup>126</sup> P.C. 14<sup>th</sup> December, 1833.

where membership flourished in the county during the first half of the nineteenth century.<sup>127</sup> While reliable figures do not survive for our period, it is accepted that Lancashire had by far the largest number of individual societies and number of members.<sup>128</sup> By 1815, when the movement was beginning to take off, 53 per cent of males over the age of 15 in Lancashire were members of a society.<sup>129</sup> Significantly, Supple equated the varied spatial growth of friendly societies to 'the essential precondition of disposable income.'<sup>130</sup> Dupree argues the same, and it is almost certainly telling that, as Gorsky points out, membership was generally highest in northern industrial districts and lowest in regions associated with the Speenhamland system where workers, presumably, could not afford contributions.<sup>131</sup> There is much here to support Walton's conclusion that Lancashire's 'low per capita relief payments probably lies in the relatively high family incomes of the cotton district...along with the strength of family ties and voluntary institutions, and the spirit of independence which contemporaries were so eager to praise.'<sup>132</sup>

Yet, within this positive picture of the Lancashire economy exists important caveats. First, outside of the high wage industrial sectors many people in the county survived on quite low incomes. Thus, while Anderson argues that most members of the urban working-class over the age of 18 in Lancashire were 'able to obtain and hold down a job, to find a home, and to obtain satisfaction of most day to day domestic needs, without assistance of family or kin', he also found that many people, particularly those in nuclear families with young non-wage earning children to support, were vulnerable to extreme poverty at certain stages of the life-cycle.<sup>133</sup> Anderson estimated that around 20 per cent of families in Preston were living in primary poverty in 1851, most of whom had four or more children.<sup>134</sup> Foster found a similar figure, 15 per cent of families, in his study of Oldham in 1849.<sup>135</sup>

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<sup>127</sup> The growth of friendly societies in Lancashire is commensurate with a growing emphasis on self-help, which Whittle argues was 'thriving' among the working-class in Lancashire during the nineteenth century. M. Whittle, *Philanthropy in Preston: the changing face of a nineteenth century provincial town* (1990), PhD thesis, p.6. See also: Kidd, *State, society and the poor*, pp.109-159; M. Rose, *The Poor and the city: the English Poor Law in its urban context* (1985), p.3.

<sup>128</sup> Kidd, *State, society and the poor*, p.112.

<sup>129</sup> M. Gorsky, 'The growth and distribution of Friendly Societies in the early nineteenth century', *Economic History Review*, 51 (1998), pp.489-511; P. H. J. H. Gosden, *Friendly societies in England, 1815-1875* (1961), p.63.

<sup>130</sup> B. Supple, 'Legislation and virtue: an essay on working-class self-help and the state in the early nineteenth century', in N. McKendrick (ed.), *Historical perspectives: studies in English thought and society* (1974), p.24.

<sup>131</sup> Dupree, 'The provision of social services', pp.351-394; Gorsky, 'The growth and distribution', p.495

<sup>132</sup> Walton, *Lancashire*, p.195.

<sup>133</sup> Anderson, *Family structure*, p.136. Anderson based his poverty-line on the Rowntree scale used in his late nineteenth century study of York.

<sup>134</sup> Anderson, *Family structure*, p.201.

<sup>135</sup> J. Foster, *Class struggle and the Industrial Revolution: early industrial capitalism in three English towns* (1974), p.96.

The second important caveat is that the cotton industry was prone to severe economic depression which could affect the whole region, leaving thousands of operatives and handicraft workers unemployed and reducing demand for other trades and services.<sup>136</sup> The late 1830s saw deep trade depression, as did the years 1841-43, 1847-49 and 1857-58, all of which encompass our period. Indeed, this study ends at the onset of the Lancashire Cotton Famine, which saw depression on a scale heretofore unseen.<sup>137</sup> Thus, while in 'normal' times the cotton industry offered near full employment with good wages, they were punctuated by massive downturns which brought many able-bodied men and women before Poor Law Guardians. The third and final caveat brings us to the hand loom weavers, a group which, though still numerous in the 1830s, were in terminal decline and suffering increasingly low wages over the course of our period. The plight of the trade as the weaving process became mechanised has been discussed by Bythell and Timmins, the latter of whom argues that, despite the miserable condition of much of its workforce, relatively large numbers of hand loom weavers could still be found in the 1860s.<sup>138</sup> Most heavily concentrated in and around the industrial towns of central, north-east and south-east Lancashire, Timmins estimates that 54,554 were still engaged in domestic weaving in 1851, although this figure had fallen from around 165,000 in 1821.<sup>139</sup> Significantly, the susceptibility of the manufacturing districts to particularly intense depression, and the endurance of an increasingly desperate domestic weaving sector, were the principal grounds upon which the Prohibitory Order was successfully resisted in Lancashire during the 1830s, and such opposition was to persist for many years after as we shall see in later chapters.

### **(iii) The case study – Preston union**

Preston union was typical of the 'urban industrial' unions identified above in terms of demographic and economic features, in that a large urban industrial centre – Preston – was surrounded by much smaller, and largely rural 'out-townships'. In total, the union comprised twenty-eight townships covering over 60,000 acres, stretching from the rural village of Much Hoole in the south-west to Dutton in the Ribble Valley area to the north-east, and from Broughton in the north to the industrial village of Walton le Dale in the south. The union was, for administrative purposes, divided into five

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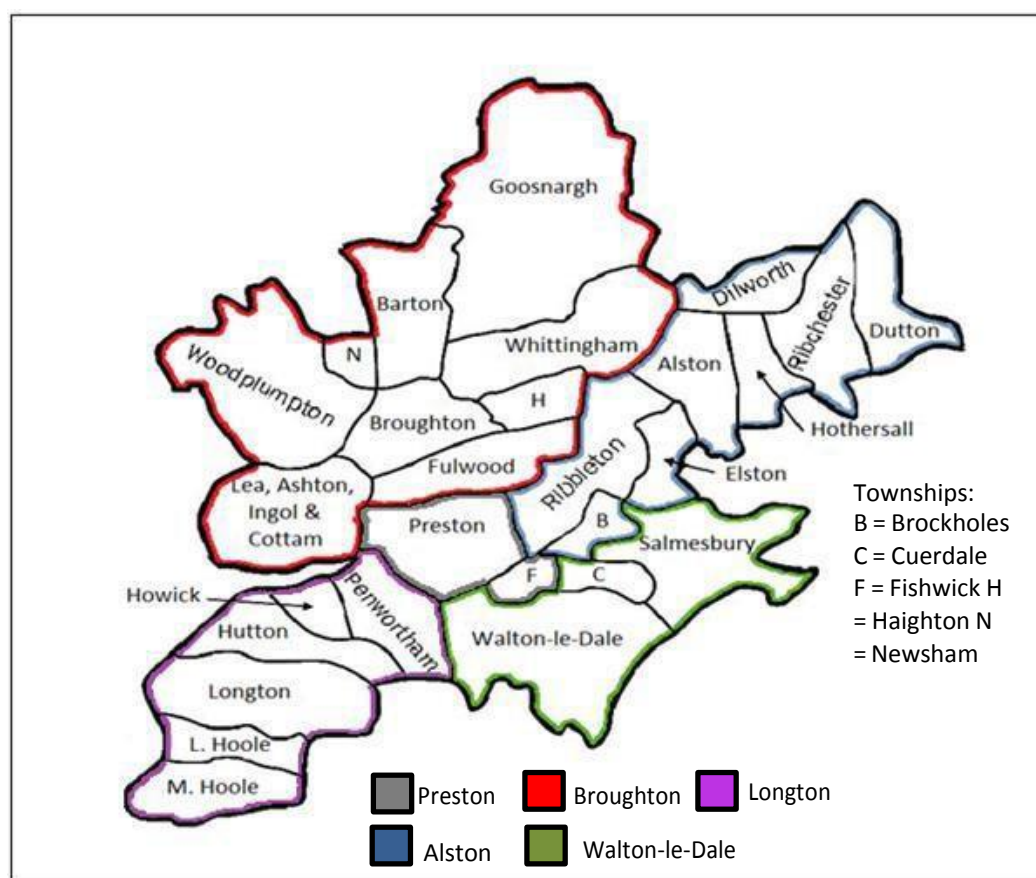
<sup>136</sup> Ashforth, 'The urban Poor Law'; Ashforth, *The Poor Law in Bradford*; G. R. Boyer, 'The evolution of unemployment relief in Great Britain', *The Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, 34 (2004), pp.393-433; Boyson, 'The New Poor Law in north-east Lancashire'; R. C. O. Matthews, *A study in trade-cycle history* (1954).

<sup>137</sup> W. O. Henderson, *The Lancashire Cotton Famine, 1861-65* (1969).

<sup>138</sup> D. Bythell, *The handloom weavers: a study in the English cotton industry during the Industrial Revolution* (1969); G. Timmins, *The last shift: the decline of hand loom weaving in nineteenth-century Lancashire* (1993).

<sup>139</sup> Timmins, *The last shift*, pp.109-113.

**Figure 2: The five Preston union relief districts**



Source: Base map courtesy of Peter Park

**Table 1: Population distribution in Preston union, 1841-1861**

| District       | 1841       |                   | 1851       |                   | 1861       |                   |
|----------------|------------|-------------------|------------|-------------------|------------|-------------------|
|                | Population | Per cent of total | Population | Per cent of total | Population | Per cent of total |
| Preston        | 50,829     | 66                | 69,361     | 72                | 82,985     | 75                |
| Alston         | 4,673      | 6                 | 4,492      | 5                 | 4,686      | 4                 |
| Broughton      | 6,631      | 9                 | 7,446      | 8                 | 7,850      | 7                 |
| Longton        | 6,487      | 8                 | 6,699      | 7                 | 6,640      | 6                 |
| Walton le Dale | 8,476      | 11                | 8,370      | 9                 | 8,654      | 8                 |
| Total          | 77,069     | 100               | 96,545     | 101               | 110,523    | 100               |

Source: Population figures taken from Guardian's minute books: L.A. PUT/1/6; PUT/1/15; PUT/1/25.

districts, each of which had its own Relieving Officer who had to tend to the paupers of their respective districts. The districts, along with their constituent townships, are shown in Figure 2, and provide a means of exploring some of the union's main demographic features. Thus, in terms of population density the union was dominated by the central urban Preston district as demonstrated

**Table 2: Spatial distribution of out-district paupers, Preston union, July 1841**

| District       | Paupers residing in own district | Paupers residing in Preston | Residing elsewhere | Total paupers |
|----------------|----------------------------------|-----------------------------|--------------------|---------------|
|                | Per cent                         | Per cent                    | Per cent           | N.            |
| Alston         | 41                               | 19                          | 40                 | 201           |
| Broughton      | 19                               | 51                          | 30                 | 206           |
| Longton        | 31                               | 40                          | 29                 | 234           |
| Walton le Dale | 32                               | 26                          | 41                 | 197           |

**Source:** L.A. PUT/1/7. The third column – ‘Residing elsewhere’ – could mean those residing in other parts of Preston union other than their native district or the Preston district, or it could mean those residing outside the union, in which case the pauper would have been in receipt of non-resident relief.

in Table 1. In 1841 the Preston district accounted for 66 per cent of the union’s total population, and this had grown to 75 per cent by 1861. The increasing prominence of Preston occurred against the backdrop of more or less stagnant population sizes in the out-townships, which reflected the typical pattern of short distanced intra county migration that largely accounted for the rapid growth of Lancashire’s industrial towns as discussed above. Indeed, figures brought before the Preston Board of Guardians in the early 1840s indicate that large numbers of paupers legally settled in the out-townships were actually living in Preston (Table 2). Only 16 per cent of paupers belonging to townships of the Broughton district were residing in that district, with over half in Preston, and only Alston district which at its extremity was closer to Blackburn than Preston had less than 25 per cent.

The occupational structure of the union was broadly commensurate with the main features of the county at large. Thus, in the majority of the out-townships most men were engaged in agricultural work, either as small family farmers, farm servants or hired day labourers.<sup>140</sup> In Preston itself, on the other hand, cotton manufacturing was the staple industry. In 1851, 32 per cent of adult males and 28 per cent of adult females (53 per cent of all women in employment) were engaged in cotton manufacturing, and with children included the industry employed almost one quarter of the town's entire population.<sup>141</sup> However, the factory system was not confined to the industrial centre of Preston. In the industrial village of Walton le Dale, the second largest township in the union with a population of over 7,000 in 1861, more than 800 people were employed in William Calvert's huge

<sup>140</sup> Many of Preston union’s constituent townships have now been subject to a local study. See: A. Crosby, *Penwortham in the past* (1988); A. Crosby, *Hutton: a millennium history* (2000); R. Eaton, *A history of Salmesbury* (1936); D. Hunt, *A history of Walton le Dale and Bamber Bridge* (1997); C. Knight and M. Burscough, *Historic Fulwood and Cadley* (1998); M. Searson, *Longton: a village history* (1988); T. Smith and J. Shoritt, *The history of the parish of Ribchester* (1890).

<sup>141</sup> Anderson, *Family structure*, pp.24-25; N. Morgan, *Vanished dwellings: early industrial housing in a Lancashire cotton town* (1990), p.16.

Flats Mill.<sup>142</sup> In Farington, the erection of the townships first cotton mill in 1835 transformed the area, immediately making the factory, rather than the field, the chief employer and increasing the population from 672 in 1831 to 1,719 in 1841. In Penwortham too, population 1,372 in 1841, a cotton mill provided employment to over 500 people, although many appear to have been orphaned workhouse children.<sup>143</sup> Clearly, then, the Industrial Revolution did not only directly affect the socio-economic structure of towns. The union's other important industry, at least to the welfare historian interested in our period, was hand loom weaving, and its survival well into the second half of the nineteenth century was largely dependent on access these two principal occupations - agriculture and factory employment. As Timmins explains, while some families were able to manage entirely on their income from hand loom weaving, many increasingly turned to the 'dual economy' of combining domestic weaving with either agricultural or factory work.<sup>144</sup> As such, almost 3,000 hand loom weavers could be found in the town of Preston in 1851, a large proportion of whom were sending their children to the factories to augment the family income. Lyons argues that many weaving families moved to Preston specifically for this purpose.<sup>145</sup> This is presumably why domestic weaving also endured in the Walton le Dale and Penwortham areas, where 710 and 527 people respectively were engaged in the occupation in 1851.<sup>146</sup> The other main concentration was in the rural Ribchester area around the Ribble Valley, which had long been a centre of hand loom weaving. Here, more than 1000 people were so employed in 1851, and women and children would often have woven in the family home while the father undertook the more physically onerous task of farming his land or hiring himself out as a day labourer.

Having discussed the baseline characteristics of the union, we turn now to examine how it shaped the composition of the Preston Board of Guardians. Each of the union's twenty-eight townships was represented by at least one member, elected by the ratepayers of their particular township. Twenty-six townships had one representative, but owing to their respective sizes Walton le Dale had two and Preston six. The union therefore had thirty-four elected members in 1837. In addition to these were the Boards *ex-officio* members, unelected Guardians who could attend meetings and vote on union matters by virtue of being magistrates. The number of *ex-officio* members listed in the Guardian's minutes grew over our period, from ten in 1837 to twenty-eight in 1861, but most generally did not attend meetings. In Preston union, some never attended a single meeting. An

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<sup>142</sup> Hunt, *A history of Walton le Dale*, p.172.

<sup>143</sup> Crosby, *Penwortham in the past*, pp.78-89.

<sup>144</sup> Timmins, *The last shift?* pp.133-134.

<sup>145</sup> Lyons, *The Lancashire cotton industry*, pp.34-100.

<sup>146</sup> Timmins, *The last shift?* pp.133-134.



example of *ex-officio* attendances from 1849, the midpoint of this thesis, is quite typical. Of sixteen members, three did not attend a meeting at all that year, six attended one, and only three attended more than five.<sup>147</sup> Yet, as we shall, as a group the *ex-officio* Guardians played a far from insignificant role in our period, largely because most of them supported the New Poor Law and wished to see it implemented.

Despite having the most representatives, Preston township was underrepresented on the Board. Thus, while the town accounted for 66 per cent of the union's aggregate population in 1841, its Guardians had just 18 per cent of the vote, and less when the *ex-officio* members turned up as they often did when important matters were being voted on. In 1848, the Preston township Guardians succeeded in having their number doubled to twelve, but they still only made up 30 per cent of elected members.<sup>148</sup> The consequences of the numerical disparity between the urban and out-township Guardians is apparent when we look at the Board's occupational structure. Table 3 presents this information for two typical years, 1847 and 1849, which cover the period immediately before and after the number of Preston Guardians was increased. In both years the township of Preston was mainly represented by group 4, which mostly comprised of small tradesmen and merchants. Some of them were very wealthy, but the majority were of the lower middle shop keeping class. Indeed, we can gain some indication of the general status of the Preston township Guardians by considering how many of them served on the Preston Corporation, a Tory dominated 'elite affair' in our period.<sup>149</sup> In total, eighty three people served as a Guardian for the township during the period 1837-61, thirty four of whom (40 per cent) also served on the reformed (post-1835) Corporation.<sup>150</sup> Most of these were of the first three groups - gentlemen, professionals and textile manufacturers - or the larger merchants of group 4. Interestingly, very few cotton magnates served on the Board for Preston, or even attempted to by standing for election. Up to 1850 only two major cotton manufacturers served as Guardians, whereas fifty served on the Corporation.<sup>151</sup> In the out-townships the main occupational grouping was very different. Like Preston, there was always the odd gentleman and professional, but by far the largest body was group 6, farmers and yeoman, who made up 59 per cent of the Board in 1847 and 45 per cent in 1849. This meant that

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<sup>147</sup> Lancashire Archives (L.A.), PUT/1/14. The general absence of *ex-officio* Guardians at Board meetings is quite typical. See: Midwinter, *Social administration*; Ashforth, *The Poor Law in Bradford*.

<sup>148</sup> L.A. PUT/1/14.

<sup>149</sup> B. Lewis, *The middlemost and the milltowns: Bourgeois culture and politics in early industrial England* (2002), p.317; N. Morgan, *Social and political leadership in Preston, 1820-60*, (1980), PhD thesis, pp.183-184.

<sup>150</sup> L.A. PUT/1/3-25. The names of council members for the whole period was found in a local newspaper report on the history of the Corporation: *P.C.* 7th May, 1870.

<sup>151</sup> L.A. PUT/1/15; Lewis, *Middlemost and the milltowns*, p.184.

**Table 3: Occupational structure of the Preston Board of Guardians, 1847 and 1849**

|                             | 1847    |              | 1849    |              |
|-----------------------------|---------|--------------|---------|--------------|
|                             | Preston | Out-township | Preston | Out-township |
| 1. Gentlemen                | 1       | 2            | 1       | 1            |
| 2. Professional             | 0       | 3            | 3       | 5            |
| 3. Cotton manufacturer      | 1       | 1            | 2       | 2            |
| 4. Other manufacturer       | 1       | 0            | 1       | 0            |
| 5. Craft/Tradesman/Merchant | 3       | 2            | 5       | 2            |
| 6. Farmer and Yeomen        | 0       | 20           | 0       | 18           |

**Source:** L.A. PUT/1/12; PUT/1/14.

the urban industrial union of Preston, which centred upon an increasingly important cotton town, was dominated numerically by members who lived and worked in the countryside.

Proportional representation on the Board of Guardians aside, the township of Preston was undoubtedly the union's most important. Preston has received considerable attention from historians. Indeed, few places beyond the country's major cities can surely boast so many single volume histories by so many eminent local historians – Hardwick, Clemeshia, Hewitson and, more recently, Hunt.<sup>152</sup> In between these major and celebrated works are dozens of local studies of varying quality, though the works of Nigel Morgan and, of course, Michael Anderson deserve special mention.<sup>153</sup> Preston was by no means a typical cotton town. Its position in central Lancashire meant that it was geographically separated from the main cotton towns in the south-east of the county by around twenty-five miles, and its development as a major manufacturing centre occurred a little later and a little slower. Indeed, at the end of the eighteenth century, at a time when Manchester was already well on its way to becoming the region's major cotton centre, John Aikin described Preston as:<sup>154</sup>

a handsome well-built town, with broad regular streets and many good houses. The Earl of Derby has a large modern mansion in it. The place is rendered gay by assemblies and other places of amusement, suited to the genteel style of the inhabitants.<sup>155</sup>

<sup>152</sup> C. Hardwick, *History of the Borough of Preston and its environs in the county of Lancaster* (1857); A. Hewitson, *History of Preston* (1883); H. W. Clemeshia, *A history of Preston in Amounderness* (1912); D. Hunt, *A history of Preston* (1992).

<sup>153</sup> Morgan, *Social and political leadership in Preston*; Morgan, *Vanished dwellings*; N. Morgan, *Deadly dwellings: housing and health in a Lancashire cotton town – Preston from 1840-1914* (1993); Anderson, *Family structure*.

<sup>154</sup> M. Newell, 'The social archaeology of industrialisation: the example of Manchester during the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries', in E. Casella and J. Symonds (eds.), *Industrial archaeology: future directions* (2005), p.198.

<sup>155</sup> J. Aikin, *A description of the county from thirty to forty miles round Manchester* (1795), p.286.

Aikin found in Preston a town of professionals, not industrial workers, but four years before his visit the roots of the town's relationship with cotton had been laid, and laid deeply. In 1891 John Horrocks, who according to Hunt chose Preston in order to avoid the competitiveness of the burgeoning industrial towns in south-east Lancashire (namely Manchester, Salford, Bolton and Oldham), erected his huge five storey 'Yellow Factory', which gave the 'first great impetus to the cotton trade' in Preston.<sup>156</sup> In 1825, the historian Edward Baines was able to observe the town's trajectory during the thirty years since Aikin's visit:

For many ages Preston took the lead of all towns of the county, as the resort and residence of persons of birth and polished manners...A material change has taken place in some of these respects within the last forty years, by the introduction of the manufacturers...which has served to place Preston more on a level than it formerly stood with the larger towns of the county.<sup>157</sup>

Further growth and industrial development was yet to come. As Morgan states, 'economically and socially the thirty years from about 1830 transformed the town.'<sup>158</sup> These were the years when Preston's population grew quickest, expanding from under 25,000 in 1821 to over 50,000 in 1841, and when textile factories were constructed in largest numbers, with thirty-four mills erected between 1834 and 1851 against twenty-three during the previous half century.<sup>159</sup> By 1851, Preston was the fifth largest town in Lancashire and half of the labour force was working in textiles.<sup>160</sup> Intermittent industrial disputes between 'capital and labour' would be one result of the textile industry's increasing importance. Preston, indeed, was affected quite badly in this respect. Hewitson perceptively described the town in our period as the 'chief battlefield of Lancashire, so far as cotton trade difficulties of any moment were concerned.'<sup>161</sup> In 1842 the Plug Plot Riots, which formed part of a Chartist influenced General Strike which spread across the northern manufacturing districts, resulted in the death of four men in Preston after the military opened fire.<sup>162</sup> Just over a decade later, in 1853, the 'ten per cent' agitations (discussed in Chapter 2) centred upon Preston, and brought the cotton industry to a twenty-eight week standstill when the employers locked their mills following demands for a wage increase.<sup>163</sup> The affair attracted the attention of Charles

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<sup>156</sup> Hunt, *History of Preston*, p.170; Hewitson, *History of Preston*, p.166.

<sup>157</sup> Quote by the historian Edward Baines, taken from Morgan, *Social and political leadership in Preston*, p.48.

<sup>158</sup> Morgan, *Social and political leadership*, p.22.

<sup>159</sup> Morgan, *Social and political leadership*, p.39.

<sup>160</sup> Population figures taken from, Phillips and Smith, *Lancashire and Cheshire*, p.136.

<sup>161</sup> Hewitson, *History of Preston*, p.174.

<sup>162</sup> J. Leigh, *The Preston Cotton Martyrs: the millworkers who shocked a nation* (2008).

<sup>163</sup> H. I. Dutton and J. E. King, *Ten per cent and no surrender: the Preston strike, 1853-1854* (1981).

Dickens, who visited the town to observe the Lock-Out first hand, and reputedly influenced his portrayal of Coketown in *Hard Times*.<sup>164</sup>

Politically, the social and economic changes Preston underwent from the late eighteenth century also had important implications. By the end of the 1700s Preston's two Parliamentary seats had, for many years, been virtually monopolised by the Whig aristocratic Stanley family, at the head of whom was the Earl of Derby.<sup>165</sup> The town, through an electoral quirk, had had universal manhood suffrage since 1768 (the 1832 Reform Act, ironically, reduced the franchise in Preston) which had benefitted the Stanleys over their Tory rivals.<sup>166</sup> However, in 1796 the rapid success of John Horrocks' cotton enterprise at last gave the long frustrated Tories a candidate who, with his large workforce, could challenge the Derby interest. Yet, rather than go head to head the Whigs and the Tories agreed to share the two seats, and so from that time until 1826 the two parties each returned a candidate under a coalition agreement which, states Clemesha, left the electorate 'practically disenfranchised.'<sup>167</sup> The coalition finally ended because the Tories ceased entering a candidate, but the Derby interest remained strong until 1830 when Lord Stanley (later Earl of Derby and Prime Minister), was defeated in a by-election. We need not discuss the complexities surrounding this election, for it has received extensive attention elsewhere, except to state that his victorious opponent was the famous Radical Henry 'Orator' Hunt. Preston had, by this time, developed something of a reputation as a radical town, even though its Parliamentary representatives would indicate otherwise. According to Morgan, a rapidly expanding working-class and universal manhood suffrage attracted many radicals.<sup>168</sup> Hunt had first stood for Parliament in Preston a decade before his surprise win, in 1820, and the Radical William Cobbett had stood in 1826. Both were defeated, although combined Whig and Tory expenses amounting to over £11,000 during the 1820 election – more than £8,000 of which went to public houses, enough for fifty-four pints per voter! – probably goes some way to explaining why.<sup>169</sup> Hunt's 1830 victory was to be relatively short lived. The passing of the Reform Bill in 1832 prompted a general election, and a resumption of the Whig/Tory coalition led to his removal.<sup>170</sup> Yet, the undoubted strength of radicalism in Preston, even though before and after 1830-32 it was never a serious threat to the established order, seeped into local government

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<sup>164</sup> D. J. Hindle, *Life in Victorian Preston* (2014), pp.18-33.

<sup>165</sup> Hunt, *History of Preston*, pp.151-158.

<sup>166</sup> Clemesha, *A history of Preston*, p.257.

<sup>167</sup> Clemesha, *A history of Preston*, p.257.

<sup>168</sup> Morgan, *Social and political leadership*, pp.57-66.

<sup>169</sup> Clemseha, *A history of Preston*, p.261.

<sup>170</sup> Clemesha, *History of Preston*, p.264.

including the Select Vestry and, later, the Board of Guardians. The consequences of this were significant as we shall see in Chapter 1.

#### **(iv) Aims, sources, methods and structure**

The primary aim of this thesis is to contextualise a detailed empirical examination of Poor Law policy and practice at local level within a broader regional and national framework. At the beginning of this chapter two preliminary research questions were posed pertaining to the local aspect of the study. Having assessed Poor Law historiography and considered the socio-economic base of the study area, we are now in a position to develop these questions, setting a clear research agenda. The first question made specific reference to five key 'variables' which shaped Poor Law administration at local level, identified as follows: the spatial distribution of official orders; a union's socio-economic base; the role of key local figures; local politics; customary notions of entitlement and established local practices. The relative importance of these variables will naturally be determined by the period and place under examination, and must be considered within that particular context. In focusing on the formative decades of the New Poor Law in an industrial union in the north of England, six sub-questions emerge from the original preliminary one which shall guide the focus of this thesis:

1. How did the Preston Board of Guardians respond to the introduction of the New Poor Law in a union which had a strong radical tradition, and in a region described as the 'heartland' of the anti-Poor Law movement?
2. What role did ideology play in determining that initial response in Preston union, and in influencing the direction of Poor Law policy locally in the long term?
3. Where Poor Law elections used as a means of shaping local policy, or did they simply act as party political battles?
4. How did socio-economic conditions shape Poor Law administration at local level in an urban industrial union?
5. How did the Guardians respond to the introduction of the Outdoor Relief Regulation Order in 1852, and to what extent did it reflect or deviate from traditional notions of entitlement and established local practice?
6. Based on questions 1-5, to what extent does Preston union conform to the 'continuation' theory for the years 1837-1860?

These questions, though varied in their direct focus, are by no means mutually exclusive and collectively incorporate three broad themes – politics, ideology and socio-economics – which appear key to understanding how policy was shaped at local level. The second question, inextricably

linked to the first, seeks to examine local policy in practice. The intention is to develop our understanding of how the New Poor Law functioned at local level in a region – Lancashire - which has received very little empirical historical attention. This is in itself of value historiographically, for it answers calls for more local studies, but the contextual framework within which the study is undertaken allows us to ask broader questions and reach more significant conclusions. Three main questions shall be considered here: to what extent did Poor Law administration vary regionally under the New Poor Law? Did relief administration vary within Lancashire, if so how, and where did Preston union fit in the picture? What does all this tell us about the role of the Poor Law in the makeshift economy?

The primary sources used in this study are mainly a combination of local and central Poor Law records. The research on Preston union is based predominantly on evidence from the former. There are two main local sources: the minute books of the Preston Guardians and local newspapers, both of which complement each other. The minute books run from 1838 through to the end of our period and record all decisions made by the Board, and are crucial to understanding how the Guardians operated.<sup>171</sup> Significantly, they also include very detailed statistical information regarding poor relief expenditure and numbers of paupers in receipt of relief every week. This data has been inputted into an excel database, from which it has been possible to create extensive statistical series which reveal weekly patterns of relief. These datasets inform discussion implicitly and explicitly throughout the thesis, providing an essential quantitative base to the study. Local newspapers are an essential qualitative accompaniment to the minute books. They usually reported verbatim accounts of Guardian's meetings, thereby offering a window through which to observe the process of discussion and debate that occurred before the decision recorded in the minute books was made. Newspapers also reported extensively on - and could influence the outcome of - Poor Law elections, and are central to analysis in Chapter 1. In addition to these two principal sources is the MH (12 and 32) series, based at the National Archives. MH12 contains huge, unwieldy files of correspondence between the Guardians and the central authority. Unfortunately, for Preston union they only survive for seven years in our period. However, they have nonetheless been extremely useful, particularly as they provide a unique source for examining pauper family incomes in Chapter 3. MH32 contains correspondence between the Assistant Commissioners (from 1848 Poor Law Inspectors) to the central authority, and has also provided some interesting material. Finally, CEBs

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<sup>171</sup> L. Darwen, 'Assessing the value of Boards of Guardians' minute books', *Institute of Local and Family History*, 5 (2012), pp.24-30.

are used in Chapter 4 to examine the composition workhouse inmates in Preston union over three consecutive census years.

Central Poor Law records have mainly been used for the broader contextual analysis. Central records come in two forms. One is the published annual reports, which include the central authority's general observations on the Poor Law during the preceding year, details of any new legislation or regulations which have been introduced and, particularly importantly for our purpose, pauperism statistics which disaggregate national figures to county level facilitating comparisons between regions over consecutive years. These figures are used extensively in Chapters 2, 3 and 6, but also inform discussion at appropriate times throughout the thesis. The other type of central record comes in the form of *ad hoc* published returns, which were usually compiled in response to a particular issue. Thus, we find information such as that featured in an *ad hoc* return from 1846, which showed the number of paupers removed from every union in the northern manufacturing districts during the years 1841, 1842 and 1843.<sup>172</sup> Another return, from 1854, revealed the amount of workhouse accommodation available in every English and Welsh union that year.<sup>173</sup> These and many others provide really valuable information on issues which it would be practically impossible to compile a regional perspective on through other sources.

The thesis is structured as follows. Chapter 1 examines the political and ideological divisions which emerged in Preston union following the introduction of the New Poor Law in 1837, with a particular focus on the role of Guardian's elections and key individuals in the shaping of policy at local level. Chapter 2 turns to consider the geography of pauperism in practice at the regional and local levels, applying the tripartite approach discussed earlier to provide a crucial contextual framework to the study. Chapter 3 looks at outdoor pauperism. It examines the composition of the outdoor pauper host through comparative analysis of Lancashire against the country as a whole to discuss the nature of short and long term patterns. The chapter also analyses the adequacy of outdoor relief, complementing the findings of previous studies with new evidence from Preston union, and considers the value of outdoor relief in the makeshift economies of the poor. Chapter 4 looks at the form and function of the Preston union workhouses, and the profile of the union's workhouse inmates through the use of CEBs. It thus contributes to, and seeks to develop, recent work in this

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<sup>172</sup> P.P. 1846 (209) *Poor Removal. Further return of the number of families and persons removed, by any local order, &c. from each manufacturing town in Yorkshire, Lancashire and Cheshire, in 1841, 1842 and 1843.*

<sup>173</sup> 1854-55 (524) *Population, &c. Returns of the population of every union, and of every parish not in a union, in England and Wales, showing the amount of workhouse accommodation in each, for the year ending 31<sup>st</sup> December 1854.*

area. Chapter 5 focusses specifically on the controversial issue of relief to able-bodied men. The able-bodied male was the chief target of the PLC's new 'principles' in 1834 and those of their successors, but punitive regulations against this group were strongly resisted in Lancashire. This chapter considers why, incorporating analysis of the Guardian's response to the 1852 Outdoor Relief Regulation Order which applied only to men, and their response to periods of economic distress. In Chapter 6 we then look at how Guardians dealt with non-settled pauperism, which was a particular problem in Lancashire where the principal towns all had large migrant populations. The impact of the 1846 Removal Act receives specific attention here, which it is argued affected Lancashire much more than anywhere else and was probably a net benefit to the poor.



# Chapter 1

## The politics and ideology of Poor Law policy in Preston union

### Introduction

The counties of Lancashire and Yorkshire have been described as the 'heartlands of the anti-Poor Law movement'.<sup>1</sup> This is not without reason: it was irrefutably in the industrial north of England that the PLC's plans to introduce the New Poor Law were most fiercely opposed.<sup>2</sup> Such was the hostility in this part of the country to its two main principles - centralised administration and the workhouse system - that most industrial unions in the region experienced at least some anti-Poor Law agitation between 1837 and around 1840, when organised resistance was at its height.<sup>3</sup> Resistance, however, was by no means universal in the north, and despite a historiographical tendency to focus on the handful of non-compliant unions, particularly Huddersfield in Yorkshire, an obdurate refusal on the part of Boards of Guardians to conform to the basic legislative requirements (sitting as a board, employing officers, administering relief etc.) was unusual.<sup>4</sup> Indeed, it has been shown that in some northern regions such as County Durham the New Poor Law was implemented with very little trouble.<sup>5</sup> Lancashire awaits a detailed systematic survey of how local officials responded to and implemented the New Poor Law, particularly beyond 1840, but even a cursory glance through local records reveals very different experiences. There is evidence of general support for it in certain rural unions such as Lancaster, Ormskirk and West Derby, which is certainly worthy of further attention, although any notion of an urban/rural divide here is undermined by Manchester union where the New Poor Law was also introduced with relative ease.<sup>6</sup> Moreover, even in unions where an organised anti-Poor Law campaign was active, opinions favourable to the New Poor Law were rarely entirely absent. What is clear, then, is that any attempt to generalise

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<sup>1</sup> F. Driver, *Power and pauperism: the workhouse system, 1834-1884* (1993), p.112.

<sup>2</sup> N. C. Edsall, *The anti-Poor Law movement, 1834-44* (1971).

<sup>3</sup> J. E. Archer, *Social unrest and popular protest in England, 1780-1840* (2000), p.73-74; D. Ashforth, 'The urban Poor Law', in D. Fraser (ed.) *The New Poor Law in the nineteenth century* (1976), pp.95-155; R. Boyson, *The history of Poor Law administration in north-east Lancashire, 1837-1871* (1960), M.A. thesis; Driver, *Power and pauperism*, p.112; Edsall, *The anti-Poor Law movement*; J. Knott, *Popular opposition to the 1834 New Poor Law* (1986); E. Midwinter, *Social Administration in Lancashire, 1830-1860: Poor Law, public health, police* (1969), pp.15-60.

<sup>4</sup> Huddersfield union has received extensive case study attention in no fewer than three books: Driver, *Power and pauperism*; Edsall, *The anti-Poor Law movement* and Knott, *Popular opposition*.

<sup>5</sup> P. Dunkley, 'The 'Hungry Forties' and the New Poor Law: a case study, *The History Journal*, 17 (1974), pp.329-346.

<sup>6</sup> The National Archives (T.N.A.) MH32/64; Lancashire Archives (L.A.) PR2815/2; Midwinter, *Social administration*, pp.15-25.

how the New Poor Law was received and implemented in a region as varied as Lancashire is problematic. It must ignore the nuance and complexity which defined the local experience, determined as it was by the numerous interconnected variables identified in the introduction of this thesis. Thus, as Ashforth has observed, in no two unions was the experience the same.<sup>7</sup>

Against this backdrop, the purpose of this chapter is to discuss the political and ideological landscape within which the introduction and implementation of the New Poor Law in Preston union took place. Preston was a deeply divided Poor Law union from its formation. A small but influential group of local magistrates, who to a man supported the New Poor Law and could sit at the Board as unelected *ex officio* Guardians, clashed throughout our period with elected members over fundamental issues of Poor Law policy. Significantly, the nature of the conflict meant the outcome of the annual Poor Law elections was extremely important.<sup>8</sup> This political dimension has received very little attention in Poor Law historiography, particularly after the organised anti-Poor Law years of c.1837-40, partly because, as some local studies have shown, Poor Law elections often had nothing to do with Poor Law policy.<sup>9</sup> They tended to act as part of wider local battles for party political control of administrative bodies, with the Poor Law itself of negligible importance. In Preston union, however, the elections played a crucial role in shaping policy at local level, and how they did so is the main theme of this chapter. In the first section we take a narrative approach, exploring the nature of local conflict during the crucial formative years of the Board up to 1839. In the second section we look more closely at the ideological convictions which underpinned the conflict, focussing specifically on two key individuals, Thomas Batty Addison and Joseph Livesey. Finally, in part three we examine how the conflict played out in the long term through the democratic electoral process.

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<sup>7</sup> Ashforth, 'The urban Poor Law', p.97.

<sup>8</sup> Poor Law Guardians were elected annually by the ratepayers of each township in a Poor Law union. A detailed examination of the Poor Law electoral system, and of its long term evolution, is discussed in A. Brundage, 'Reform of the Poor Law electoral system', *Albion: a quarterly journal concerned with British studies*, 7, 3 (1975), pp.201-215. See also D. Fraser, 'The Poor Law as political institution', in D. Fraser (ed.) *The New Poor Law in the nineteenth century* (1976), pp.111-127.

<sup>9</sup> Both Ashforth and Pratt found that Poor Law elections had very little, if anything, to do with Poor Law policy: D. Ashforth, *The Poor Law in Bradford, c.1834-71* (1980), PhD thesis; J. Pratt, *Paternalistic, parsimonious pragmatists: the Wigan Board of Guardians and the administration of the Poor Laws, 1880-1900* (2011), PhD thesis. For a study where elections were important for Poor Law reasons, see: E. T. Hunnen, *Protesting about pauperism: poverty, politics and poor relief in late-Victorian England, 1870-1900* (2007). Also, see Fraser, 'The Poor Law as political institution', pp.111-127.

### **1 (i): Drawing the battle lines: introduction and implementation, 1837-1839**

Assistant Poor Law Commissioner Alfred Power's visit to Preston in December 1836, to inspect the workhouse and liaise with local officials over the forming of Preston union, was condemned by the town's leading radicals at a meeting of the Preston Council that same week. Thus, in the following months as it became clear that the introduction of the New Poor Law was imminent, an organised anti-Poor Law campaign spearheaded by radicals and liberals emerged in the town.<sup>10</sup> As the borough which just seven years earlier had famously elected Henry Hunt to Parliament, Preston had a strong radical tradition with experienced local leaders; all the ingredients for a sustained movement of popular protest. Yet, opinion within local elite circles was not with the radicals. A small but influential group of town and country magistrates welcomed the New Poor Law, and were prepared to shun political differences to keep control out of radical hands. The emergence of conflict on these lines was not new in Preston, at least not in principle. Morgan has shown that one result of Hunt's victory in 1830 was to give Preston's working-class radicals, who were partly responsible for his election as the town allowed universal male ratepayer suffrage, the confidence to launch an assault upon the only unit of local government open to working-class ratepayer participation: the Whig dominated Select Vestry.<sup>11</sup> The Select Vestry was responsible for Poor Law administration, and in 1832 the radicals successfully assumed control. They immediately took a more liberal approach to relief administration, shunning a system which had reputedly been based upon deterrent principles not too dissimilar to those later advocated by the PLC. Within six months of the radical takeover, the poor rates had increased by a third.<sup>12</sup> The assault was to be short lived, effectively ending in 1833 after an attempt to dismiss the 'cruel' workhouse master failed and the Whigs regained control. However, further radical led challenges to Whig authority occurred in the following years, and with some success.<sup>13</sup> The important point here is that the anti-Poor Law campaign of 1837 did not mark a significant break with the past. Its leaders were generally the same men who had struggled for influence in the Select Vestry, and while opposing the New Poor Law required a movement much wider in scope and scale than previously, the fundamental objective - that of opposing what was perceived to be a punitive Poor Law system - remained the same.

To stand any chance of success the anti-Poor Law agitators in Preston had to get their six chosen representatives elected to the six Preston seats at the Guardian's elections in April. This would allow them to put forward their own candidate as chairman for the ensuing year, safe in the knowledge

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<sup>10</sup> *Preston Chronicle (P.C.)* 7<sup>th</sup> January, 1837.

<sup>11</sup> N. Morgan, *Social and political leadership in Preston, 1820-60* (1980), PhD thesis, pp.90-95 and 227-333.

<sup>12</sup> Morgan, *Social and political leadership*, pp.90-95.

<sup>13</sup> Morgan, *Social and political leadership*, p.227.

that most of the prospective out-township Guardians, who were equally hostile to the New Poor Law, would vote for him.<sup>14</sup> The Board could then act as a bulwark against the New Poor Law. Thus, in the run up to the election popular discourse in Preston was dominated by anti-Poor Law rhetoric in a very public opposition campaign. The movement, conducted through public meetings, banners, handbills and letters to the press, was led by Joseph Livesey, a radical liberal social reformer and self-proclaimed 'friend of the poor', who was already well known beyond the boundaries of Preston as the father of the Temperance movement.<sup>15</sup> Livesey, who had voted for Hunt in 1830 and had been a central figure in the struggle for control of the Select Vestry, was indignant in his opposition to the New Poor Law.<sup>16</sup> He was outraged by the workhouse system, and particularly scathing about the principle that families had to be separated in union workhouses. In an open letter which appeared in Preston's two provincial newspapers, the *Chronicle* and the *Pilot*, both sympathetic to his cause, Livesey made his feeling quite clear, attacking the New Poor Law through a potent combination of religion and morality:

I feel alarmed. The poor are not only to be deprived of casual relief at home...but they are to be transported to a *union prison*. The coarsest food, weighed by the ounce, is to be their fare, and instead of that family sympathy so much needed in these trying circumstances, - the wife, the husband, the children, are all to be separated from each other!...the proposed punishment of separation is a gratuitous chastisement of the poor, in open hostility to the letter and spirit of the scriptures, [and] unworthy of any enlightened nation.<sup>17</sup>

It quickly became clear that ratepayer opinion was with Livesey and the anti-Poor Law movement. Two weeks before the election a petition against the New Poor Law, engineered by Livesey, had been presented to Parliament having been signed by 20,000 'inhabitants of the union'.<sup>18</sup> The momentum was carried through to the election itself. All six men standing for the township of Preston on an anti-Poor Law platform were elected to the Board by a significant majority, collectively receiving 70 per cent of the vote; over 21,000 votes were cast, although the undemocratic system of plural voting leaves us unaware of the actual number of voters.<sup>19</sup> The men

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<sup>14</sup> Most of the out-townships did not contest elections. Their Guardians appear to have been selected locally through an informal process, presumably at a local township meeting. It is likely that, as most of the out-township Guardians opposed the New Poor Law, they were chosen specifically for this purpose.

<sup>15</sup> I. Levitt, 'Radicalism, temperance and social reform in nineteenth century Britain', in I. Levitt (ed.), *Joseph Livesey of Preston: business, temperance, moral reform* (1996), pp.1-10.

<sup>16</sup> Harris Reference Library (H.R.L.) *Alphabetical list of electors polled, 1830* (1831).

<sup>17</sup> *Preston Chronicle (P.C.)*, 25<sup>th</sup> February, 1837; *Preston Pilot (Pr.P.)*, 25<sup>th</sup> February, 1837.

<sup>18</sup> *P.C.* 11<sup>th</sup> March, 1837.

<sup>19</sup> *P.C.* 1<sup>st</sup> April, 1837. In Poor Law elections individuals could have multiple votes depending upon their status as ratepayer. People were given up to six votes as both owners and occupiers of property, meaning somebody in the highest bracket for both categories would have twelve votes. This system, which has been described

elected for Preston were a coalition of radicals and liberals, and included, alongside Livesey, Joseph Mitchell, a dyed-in-the-wool radical who had been a key figure in the Hunt election of 1830 and the 1832 assault on the Select Vestry, and John Noble, a radical who later became a vocal supporter of Chartism.<sup>20</sup>

The anti-Poor Law success meant the inaugural meeting of the Board of Guardians in April was nothing short of explosive.<sup>21</sup> The first issue on the agenda was the election of a chairman. In a packed boardroom Col. Rawstone of Penwortham, *ex-officio*, nominated the Whig magistrate Thomas Batty Addison, and Joseph Livesey nominated his friend, Preston Guardian Joseph Walker. The result was crucial to both sides. Addison, the Recorder of Preston, was an uncompromising figure and a vehement advocate of the New Poor Law. He strongly believed that power should be vested in 'respectable' members of society, and consequently despised the radicalism which had caused the Select Vestry to become 'a bear garden in which no decent man would show his face'.<sup>22</sup> In the weeks leading up to the election Addison had criticised Livesey for exciting the public against the New Poor Law through 'misrepresentation', but he was away at the quarter sessions during the inaugural meeting of the new Board and in the event Walker won in a very close contest nineteen votes to fifteen. The nature of the voting is instructive. The *ex-officio* Guardians, eight in number, all voted for Addison, the Preston Guardians all for Walker. The elected out-township representatives were split seven to thirteen in favour of Walker, but there was a clear class dimension to the divide. The smaller farmers unanimously supported Walker; it was mainly the wealthy landowners and gentlemen who voted for Addison.

With the anti-Poor Law men in control, they immediately turned to resisting the New Poor Law. Their first resolution was to hold occasional rather than weekly meetings, which acted as a precautionary measure against the magistrates and the minority of elected Guardians who were favourable to the New Poor Law. As Poor Law administration was not yet under the purview of the Board of Guardians, there was no actual work for the Board to do. Consequently, the out-township Guardians, many of whom resided many miles outside of Preston, could not be expected to turn up to meetings every week. Having occasional meetings therefore stopped the magistrates getting together and voting in favour of introducing the New Poor Law when numbers were low. The

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as 'blatantly undemocratic' by Brundage, is explained further in his article: Brundage, 'Reform of the Poor Law'.

<sup>20</sup> N. Morgan, *Social and political leadership*, p.229.

<sup>21</sup> The following discussion is taken from *P.C.* 8<sup>th</sup> April, 1837.

<sup>22</sup> *P.C.* 14<sup>th</sup> April, 1838.

second resolution was more explicit. Livesey, amidst angry scenes during which most of the magistrates left the room to cheering from the anti-Poor Law Guardians, moved that a petition be sent to the House of Commons asking for the New Poor Law to be 'made optional, at the discretion of the ratepayers.' The motion was approved by the Board nineteen votes to one. Addison and his supporters, a cross party coalition of mill owners, bankers, barristers and large landowners, eleven of whom held the title 'Esquire', had been defeated by a popular movement inspired by radicalism and achieved through the electoral process.

To Addison, the events of that day were an affront to the ruling class, as he told the Board in no uncertain terms at the inaugural meeting of the Board the following year. During the intervening twelve months neither the magistrates nor the PLC had made any attempt to introduce the New Poor Law into Preston union, and this looked set to continue as an anti-Poor Law majority had again been elected by the ratepayers after another organised campaign led by Livesey.<sup>23</sup> At this first meeting Addison was nominated once again by Col. Rawstorne for the chair, while Livesey nominated the anti-Poor Law agitator John Noble. But before the voting took place, Addison made his opinion on the matter clear. In a protracted speech he launched a scathing attack on those who had been involved in the 'ungracious, rude and unmannerly treatment' of the magistrates the year previously, and for opposing the views of men 'with a greater capacity for information' than themselves. 'Men of education', he told them,

and of station, ought to exert their influence, and their opinions ought to be respected. He did not consider that...the elected Guardians were as well qualified to judge the new poor law as himself, because he had considered, and was *capable of considering it*, and knew better what construction to put upon its provisions, than such persons as Mr. Noble. His opinion was better than that of Mr. Livesey...There was no person of any weight or respectability clamouring against the measure, and he had no respect for any man who opposed it.<sup>24</sup>

This virulent address unsurprisingly provoked disapprobation from Livesey and Noble, and it further demonstrates a clear class dimension to the conflict. As far as Addison was concerned, those who opposed New Poor Law - the elected Guardians and the ratepayers who sent them to the Board - only did so because they did not possess the intellectual capability to understand it. When the vote for the chairman finally went ahead the result was a reverse of 1837, Addison being elected fourteen votes to seventeen. However, his victory was not achieved without convincing allegations

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<sup>23</sup> P.C. 31<sup>st</sup> March 1838.

<sup>24</sup> P. C. 14<sup>th</sup> April, 1838.

of foul play.<sup>25</sup> At the beginning of the meeting Addison, in his role as chief magistrate, had taken the step of examining each election certificate and decided that informalities in those of five out-township Guardians disqualified them from voting. Disqualifying the five was, as he must have known, enough to swing the vote in his favour, and the result was a severe blow to the anti-Poor Law movement. Livesey was in no doubt what it meant, as he made clear in a letter to the *Chronicle* in the aftermath of the 'strange proceedings' which took place at the meeting: 'I have done all I could...Mr. A and his supporters may now congratulate themselves upon the honour which will follow [the New Poor Law's] speedy introduction.'<sup>26</sup> His observation was perceptive. Assistant Commissioner Alfred Power saw the result as a green light to bring Poor Law administration under the control of the Guardians. He wrote in a report to the PLC at the end of April:

A fierce contest again – a nearly equal division of friends and enemies. Thomas Addison of Preston a strong advocate of the new law is chairman, and the magistrates and more respectable guardians are with us. There is every reason for proceeding forthwith.<sup>27</sup>

Within four months Poor Law administration had been brought under the purview of the Board of Guardians. Despite an organised, disciplined campaign of opposition, the anti-New Poor Law movement in Preston collapsed on an unforeseen and somewhat dubious technicality. There was no opposition to Addison in 1839, and he was elected as chairman without a contest.<sup>28</sup> However, introducing the New Poor Law into the union was one thing, implementing its central principles quite another. Livesey, as time would prove, was not prepared to submit to the New Poor Law, and the bitter personal feud which developed between himself and Thomas Batty Addison during these formative years set the agenda for later events.

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<sup>25</sup> P.C. 14<sup>th</sup> April, 1838.

<sup>26</sup> P. C. 14<sup>th</sup> April, 1838.

<sup>27</sup> T.N.A. MH32/64: April, 1838.

<sup>28</sup> L.A. PUT 1/4, 2<sup>nd</sup> April, 1839.

## 1 (ii) Bear ye one another's burdens? The conflicting views of Thomas Batty Addison and Joseph Livesey

*“Bear ye one another’s burthens”, is the maxim of a poor law, but it is only so far as the load really presses with extreme weight upon one that we are justified in forcing it upon the shoulders of others.*

Thomas Batty Addison, 1838<sup>29</sup>

*We ought to bear one another's burdens,  
and thus fulfil the law of Christ.*

Joseph Livesey, 1842<sup>30</sup>

Conflict over the New Poor Law in Preston union was chiefly caused by competing ideological convictions. The result would be nearly thirty years of debate and discord, both inside the Guardian's boardroom and in the wider public sphere, over fundamental issues of Poor Law policy. At the centre of the conflict was the union workhouse, or more precisely the question of whether the Guardians should build a single union workhouse on the deterrent lines advocated by the PLC, and was dominated throughout by Thomas Batty Addison and Joseph Livesey, the two most impassioned and coherent advocates of each side. Here, we consider these men and their convictions before examining in the final section how the controversy played out at local level. It will be shown that the debate did not take place within a vacuum. Rather, it encompassed wider theories regarding the condition of the industrial working-class and the causes of poverty. We shall see that Addison and Livesey actually held similar views about the nature of the social malady inherent among the 'lower orders'. It was its amelioration – the appropriate medicine – over which they disagreed.

Addison and Livesey were very different men, and their ideas reflected their backgrounds. The former was born into one of Preston’s longest standing ruling families, with ties to the town dating back to 1641; his great grandfather and his brother both held the position of mayor, and his father had been the chairman of the Clitheroe Quarter Sessions.<sup>31</sup> Thomas Batty Addison himself followed his father into the legal profession. He was called to the Bar aged 20, had risen to chairman of the Preston Quarter Sessions by age thirty-three and became Recorder aged forty-three.<sup>32</sup> He resided for most of his life in a grand house on the fashionable Winckley Square, the ‘Downing Street of

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<sup>29</sup> T.N.A. MH32/64: 19<sup>th</sup>, December, 1838.

<sup>30</sup> J. Livesey, *The struggle: devoted to the advocacy of free trade and repeal of the Corn Laws*.

<sup>31</sup> A. Hewitson, *Preston town council: or portraits of local legislators* (1870), p.117.

<sup>32</sup> Hewitson, *Preston town council*, pp.119-120.



Preston'.<sup>33</sup> Livesey, on the other hand, was of far more modest origins. He grew up a hand-loom weaver in Walton le Dale before moving to Preston in 1815 aged twenty-one. He later achieved considerable wealth as a cheese factor, a business success which allowed him to actively pursue the philanthropic career for which he is noted.<sup>34</sup> A prolific writer and the founder of numerous popular journals, Livesey was committed to social and moral reform and genuinely motivated by a spirit of benevolence. He regularly visited the poor of Preston and lamented that other public figures did not do the same. Only through visiting the poor, Livesey maintained, would men in power be moved to take proper measures for improving their miserable circumstances. 'It has fallen to my lot', he wrote in 1831,

to visit many of the worst cases [of poverty] in Preston, and it is impossible to describe the feelings I experienced, or to convey the reflections which arose in my mind, on viewing their condition. I would give anything, if I could carry these cases, as they are, into the presence of kings, and nobles, and the great men of the land, who loll at their ease [and] who are surrounded by splendour.<sup>35</sup>

Livesey expressed his views on the subject of poverty and welfare most plainly in his *The Moral Reformer* (1831-33), written at a time when the question of pauperism and the role of the Poor Law was receiving national attention. In a series of lengthy treatises he rejected the abstract principles of political economy, those 'cold hearted systems of Malthus', which sought to blame the poor for their circumstances, and denounced the ruling elite for neglecting their obligation to advance the social, moral and spiritual condition of those below them.<sup>36</sup> Though he was a strong advocate of self-help, Livesey argued that society's ills were perpetuated by the greed and self-interest of the higher orders, both at municipal level and in national government. He felt that the development of large towns had created a society in which the rich and the poor rarely mixed together, and that this had eroded the strong bond which once existed between them:

How sordid are many of those who are immensely rich! They have no idea of their connexion with a world, where poverty and distress are crying on every hand: they have little knowledge of the poor, nor any feeling to commiserate or relieve their condition. They move in a circle where money is the only object of desire, and where morals are practiced in proportion as they answer this end...Is it possible for moral improvement to take root while a disposition of this sort so generally prevails?<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> *Preston Guardian (P.G.)*, 8<sup>th</sup> March, 1858. In making the 'Downing Street' comparison, the *Guardian* was criticising the concentration of power and influence in Preston in one small corner of the town. Just about all of the Preston based *ex-officio* Guardians lived on or adjacent to Winckley Square.

<sup>34</sup> Levitt (ed.) 'Radicalism, temperance and social reform', pp.1-10.

<sup>35</sup> J. Livesey, *The Moral Reformer*, 1, 2, p.36.

<sup>36</sup> Livesey, *Reformer*, 1, 2, p.33-48.

<sup>37</sup> Livesey, *Reformer*, 1, 1, p.6.

While Livesey held the popular view that immorality was a significant cause of destitution among the working-class in large towns, and was deeply critical of what might today be called an 'underclass' who refused to work or contribute to society, indulging instead in drink and other vice, he stressed that until the rich set the right example, and provided education as well as moral and spiritual guidance, their condition could not be expected to improve. It was upon this principle that he famously took the pledge of total abstinence from intoxicating liquors in 1832, establishing Preston the heartland of the Temperance movement.

Livesey's most damning criticism of elite self-interest was reserved for its effects on the industrious labourer. Poverty, he argued, in a country of immense wealth, should only exist among the 'naturally poor'; widows, the young, the old and the helpless.<sup>38</sup> Yet, many able-bodied workers, those whose daily toil had made Britain a 'land of plenty', were 'reduced to the last extremity of suffering.'<sup>39</sup> The circumstances of the hand loom weaver were of particular concern.<sup>40</sup> With wages diminishing over the 1820s and 1830s, their condition was depressed further through legislation designed to protect the rich.<sup>41</sup> The Corn Laws, which 'kept bread dear to support the landowners', were a particular target, and his *The Struggle* (1842-46) campaigned for their repeal.<sup>42</sup> As far as Livesey was concerned, the Corn Laws represented the worst aspects of self-interested policy making. Repressing free trade and making 'slaves' of the working-class, their implementation epitomised the total absence of compassion, humanity and Christian spirit which had driven a wedge between the rich and the poor. 'Do the corn laws', asked Livesey in 1831, 'show any sympathy and good feeling towards the people? Has a constant wish to do what is right guided our successive Parliaments?'<sup>43</sup> The questions were rhetorical but the answers, quite plainly, were 'no', and it is upon this sentiment that we must view his impression of the New Poor Law. Its focus on restricting outdoor relief to the able-bodied was a further affront to an oppressed working-class, while the workhouse system represented that same lack of humanity which maintained support in Parliament for the Corn Laws. As Livesey wrote in *The Struggle* in 1840, after his first battle with Addison over the New Poor Law had ended in defeat, 'The Corn Law ties the arm of the artizan, and

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<sup>38</sup> Livesey, *Reformer*, 1, 2, p.48. In making this point, Livesey actually argued against the need for a Poor Law at all. He believed that in a fair society, the able-bodied would be properly remunerated for their labour, removing the necessity for poor relief. In a compassionate society, the 'naturally poor' would be relieved through the charitable donations of the privileged. In an educated society, drunkenness and profligacy would cease to be a cause of poverty. To Livesey, the rapidly rising cost of Poor Law expenditure from the turn of the nineteenth century was indicative of a society that had lost its way.

<sup>39</sup> Livesey, *Reformer*, 1, 2, p.41.

<sup>40</sup> See chapter 5 for a discussion of hand loom weaving and the New Poor Law.

<sup>41</sup> Livesey, *Reformer*, 1, 3, p.91.

<sup>42</sup> Livesey, *Reformer*, 1, 2, p.43.

<sup>43</sup> Livesey, *Reformer*, 1, 4, p.106.

the Poor Law imprisons him for not using it. The Corn Law makes poverty, and the Poor Law treats it as a crime.<sup>44</sup>

Thomas Batty Addison's approach to moral reform rejected the compassionate scheme advocated by Livesey, though he does appear to have been motivated by a genuine desire to improve the condition of the poor. Addison was a complex figure, the antithesis of the propagandist Livesey. He was a private man who shunned the 'vulgar' press, and did not spill ink elucidating his ideas in published work.<sup>45</sup> Consequently, our understanding of him is largely limited, somewhat ironically, to the many newspaper reports of speeches he made when chairing various public meetings and local administrative bodies. At least up to the 1840s Addison was a Whig, and while a gradual move to Toryism appears to have hardened his views, he had been an enthusiastic proponent during the twenties and thirties of at least limited working-class advancement.<sup>46</sup> He was the first Chairman of the 'Institute for the Diffusion of Knowledge', founded in Preston in 1828 for the benefit of the working-class, and he had supported the Reform Act of 1832.<sup>47</sup> Indeed, he chaired the Great Reform Bill meeting in Preston in 1831, at which he spoke out against certain aspects of the legislation because it would disenfranchise working-class men in Preston, the town being in the peculiar position of allowing full male ratepayer suffrage.<sup>48</sup>

These concerns, however, were in the interest of what Addison would have termed the 'respectable' working class. It was over the question of how to ameliorate the condition of those in or on the margins of destitution that the views of Livesey and Addison conspicuously diverged. To Addison, pauperism in the majority of cases was directly the fault of the individual. As he told the Board in 1847, 'There was no doubt that nine tenths of the distress they were called upon to relieve arose from profligacy...That drunkenness and bastardy...idleness, waste and inattention to the duties of life, were the causes of most distress, was perfectly well known.'<sup>49</sup> With this point Livesey would not have wholly disagreed in principle, but whereas he encouraged a compassionate approach to moral reform, Addison believed it could only be achieved through strict discipline. He was a subscriber to the principles of political economy, and he opposed the provision of outdoor relief to the able-bodied on the same utilitarian grounds as the Commissioners. He also asserted

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<sup>44</sup> Livesey, *The Struggle*, 1, 1, p.2.

<sup>45</sup> P. C. 22<sup>nd</sup> April, 1853.

<sup>46</sup> Hewitson, *Preston town council*, p.120; Hunt, *A history of Preston*, p.228-229.

<sup>47</sup> Hunt, *A history of Preston*, p.228.

<sup>48</sup> P.C. 2<sup>nd</sup> April, 1831.

<sup>49</sup> P.C. 24<sup>th</sup> April, 1847.

that a union workhouse operating a stringent workhouse test was the only avenue to moral improvement. Its deterrent effect would teach the poor good habits and drive down pauperism:

Until they could prevail upon the poor to sacrifice...drink and tobacco, and the vicious habits which debased them, for the more decent and becoming practices of saving and sobriety, and [putting] a little money into the savings bank, to support them when they became old, or ill, or out of work, instead of relying on the poor rates, they had really done nothing towards improving the condition of the poor.<sup>50</sup>

It appears that Addison's institutional approach to welfare was heavily influenced by the pioneering work of the Rev. John Clay, chaplain of the Preston House of Correction, in the field of prison reform. Clay, the chaplain from 1824, became a figure of national importance in penal circles for his detailed statistical reports on the nature of criminality and the best means of reforming convicts.<sup>51</sup> He was convinced that strict discipline was the key to moral improvement, advocating properly classified prisons which separated boys from the corrupting influence of hardened 'lags', and a 'silent system' which stopped the inmates communicating. Addison quickly became an advocate, and by the early 1830s he had convinced his fellow magistrates in Preston and the surrounding townships - the same men, crucially, who supported the New Poor Law - of the utility of Clay's scheme.<sup>52</sup> According to Clay's son Walter, Addison shared 'almost equally with Mr Clay himself the credit of raising the Preston Gaol to its fame and efficacy.'<sup>53</sup> What was good for the criminals was good for the paupers. His view of the poor presumably tainted by encountering the most 'depraved' characters each week at the magistrates' court, Addison made little distinction between the pauper and the convict, and used the success of the prison system to justify his support for a union workhouse.<sup>54</sup> In an attempt to persuade the Guardians to vote for a new union workhouse in 1841, he told them he 'had a great deal of experience among prisoners...and he was sure that many of them...had come out of prison better characters than they went in...and the analogy would hold good with the paupers in the workhouse.'<sup>55</sup> On another occasion he stated that 'idleness, drunkenness and profligacy, the same as fill our prisons, fill our workhouses.'<sup>56</sup> To Addison, the virtue of the workhouse system lay in its capacity to reform by providing relief 'in a way which the poor themselves would not desire'; the

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<sup>50</sup> P.C. 11<sup>th</sup> December, 1841.

<sup>51</sup> M. DeLacy, *Prison reform in Lancashire, 1700-1850: a study in local administration*, p.206.

<sup>52</sup> Lewis, *Middlemost*, pp.142-147.

<sup>53</sup> W. Clay, *The prison chaplain: memoirs of the Rev. John Clay* (1861), p.108

<sup>54</sup> Perhaps tellingly, Addison once unwittingly described the girls in the Penwortham workhouse as 'female prisoners', to the amusement of the Guardians who had to correct him ('children, Mr Addison...'). P.C. 16<sup>th</sup> December, 1848.

<sup>55</sup> P.C. 11<sup>th</sup> December, 1841.

<sup>56</sup> P.C. 3<sup>rd</sup> August, 1850.

epitome of less-eligibility.<sup>57</sup> To Livesey, this was simply de-pauperisation through fear, an attempt to reduce the extent of pauperism by subjecting the poor 'to discipline so severe it was calculated to drive [them] away.'<sup>58</sup>

### **1 (iii) Poor Law electoral politics and the 'workhouse question'**

After the New Poor Law had been introduced into Preston union in 1838, the attention of those who opposed the system turned to resisting its full implementation. There were various ways they did so, as shall become apparent over the course of this thesis, but the most important was by refusing to implement the 'workhouse system', that crucial component of the PLC's ideological orthodoxy.<sup>59</sup> There were two main elements to opposition here. The first was by resisting any attempt to build a union workhouse, and the second by actively ensuring that harsh indoor relief measures were not applied. To achieve both, the electoral process was central. This final section examines how these elements manifested in practice, and we begin with the former.

#### *The 'workhouse question'*

*These union bastilles are a disgrace to humanity. If a man was determined to take [my] wife and children from [me], [I] would, if [I] had a pistol, send a ball through that man's heart -(cheers)- and [I] hope the verdict of the coroner would be justifiable homicide.<sup>60</sup>*

A speaker at an anti-union workhouse meeting in Preston, 1851.

Addison's determination to implement the central tenets of the New Poor Law meant the 'workhouse question', as it became known locally, was the single most divisive issue of our period. The question centred on whether the five Old Poor Law township workhouses retained by the Guardians in 1837 should be replaced by a single union workhouse. In part, this was an economic concern. Opponents argued that a huge outlay of the ratepayer's money, which a new union workhouse would require, would be wasteful as a single building was neither desired nor necessary. The union possessed workhouse accommodation for over 900 inmates across their five existing buildings, and this was considered to be enough. Addison, however, termed this economic argument 'penny wise, pound foolish', on the ground that a union workhouse would save money in the long term by deterring people from applying for relief when they did not really need it.<sup>61</sup> This

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<sup>57</sup> P.C. 11<sup>th</sup> December, 1841.

<sup>58</sup> P.C. 11<sup>th</sup> December, 1841.

<sup>59</sup> For discussion of the workhouse system, see: M. A. Crowther, *The workhouse system, 1834-1945: the history of an English social institution* (1981).

<sup>60</sup> P.C. 28<sup>th</sup> June, 1851.

<sup>61</sup> P.C. 11<sup>th</sup> November, 1854.

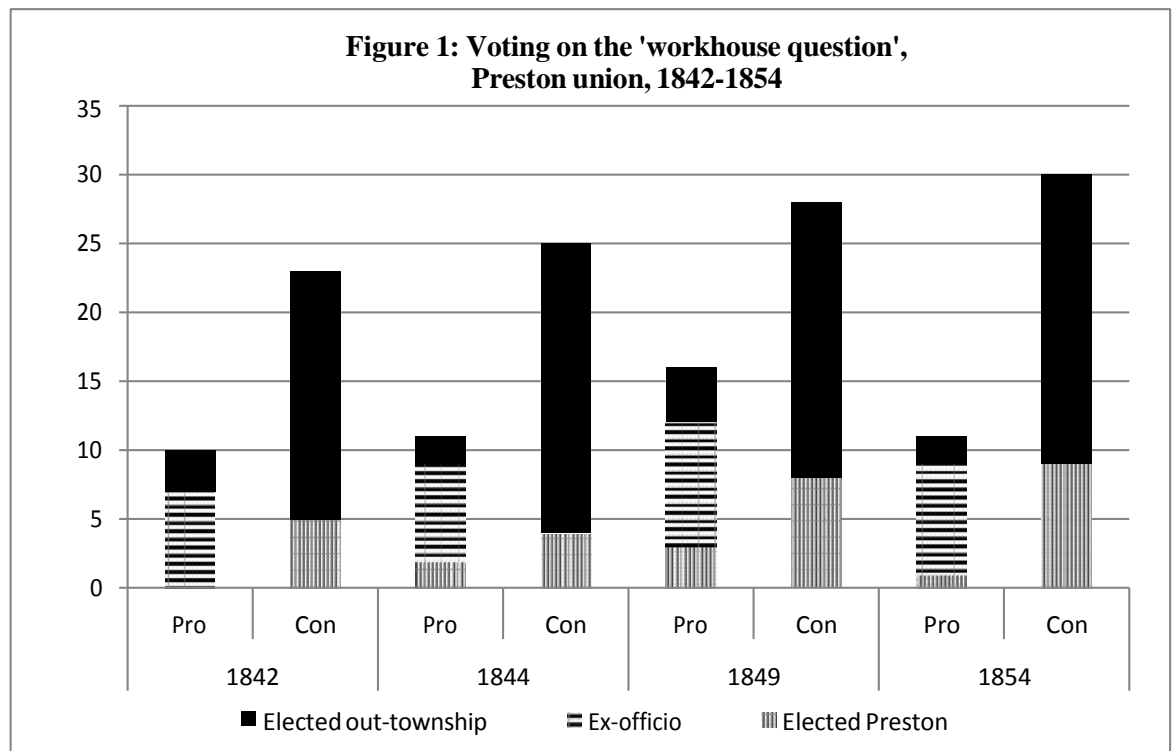
brings us to the second part of the question - ideology. Addison recognised that the existing buildings were not, and could not be, deterrent less eligible workhouses on the orthodox lines advocated by the PLC. Most problematically, they could not be properly classified (i.e. paupers separated according to age and sex) as they were not designed to serve this purpose. To Addison, who wished to replicate in a union workhouse the disciplined environment achieved in the Preston House of Correction, the workhouse question was therefore of considerable importance. This, conversely, is also precisely why it was so important to those who opposed the New Poor Law and its punitive principles. We consider this issue further in Chapter 4, but it is necessary to recognise at this stage that while the union had five workhouses less eligibility could not be achieved, a fact both parties were well aware of.

During our period the weight of opinion was strongly against a union workhouse. However, the workhouse question was so closely tied to the broader issue of implementing the New Poor Law that opinion was by no means uniformly opposed, splitting along lines which mirrored almost exactly the voting for chairman during the elections of 1837 and 1838. The Guardians voted on whether to build a union workhouse nine times in our period, though only one such vote occurred after 1849.<sup>62</sup> Each ended in defeat for the supporters of a union workhouse. We do not know how individual Guardians voted on all seven occasions, but we do for four, and the voting patterns reveal a clear trend (Figure 1). We find that the *ex officio* Guardians, those men who supported Addison for the chair, who supported the implementation of the New Poor Law, and who had backed the Rev. John Clay's reforms of the Preston House of Correction in the early 1830s, were always unanimously in favour of a union workhouse. Indeed, outside of the inaugural meetings when a new chairman was elected, most *ex officio* Guardians only attended the Board when the workhouse question was being decided upon. The elected Guardians, on the other hand, were near universally opposed to a union workhouse. The weight of opinion was so strongly in their favour that it was not until 1865 that 77 year old 'Owd' Batty', as he was by that time affectionately known, finally laid the foundation stone of the new union workhouse.<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> L.A. PUT/1/3: 29<sup>th</sup> January, 1839; 16<sup>th</sup> April, 1839; 3<sup>rd</sup> December, 1839; PUT/1/5: 2<sup>nd</sup> June, 1840; PUT/1/7: 7<sup>th</sup> December, 1841; 6<sup>th</sup> December, 1842; PUT/1/9: 9<sup>th</sup> January, 1844; PUT/1/14: 18<sup>th</sup> December, 1849; PUT/1/19: 28<sup>th</sup> November, 1854.

<sup>63</sup> P.C. 29<sup>th</sup> July, 1865.



**Sources and notes:** L.A. PUT/1/3: 6<sup>th</sup> December, 1842; PUT/1/9: 9<sup>th</sup> January, 1844; PUT/1/14: 18<sup>th</sup> January, 1849; PUT/1/19: 18<sup>th</sup> November, 1854. The increased number of votes for by the elected Preston Guardians after 1844 was caused by an increase to the number in 1848, from six to twelve.

The dominance of persons opposed to a union workhouse among the elected town and country Guardians was no accident. It was the direct result of organised campaigns to elect specific men, which succeeded through the democratic process. These campaigns involved not just a handful of individuals like Joseph Livesey, although Livesey was a crucial figure as we shall see, but many hundreds, even thousands, of local ratepayers who were concerned about the erection of a union workhouse for economic and ideological reasons. To demonstrate this point, a meeting which took place in the town of Preston in June 1851 - the same meeting at which the angry words which opened this part were spoken - proves instructive.<sup>64</sup> It exposes not only the reasons why a union workhouse was opposed, but also the electoral consequences of publicly supporting a union workhouse while acting as a Guardian. The meeting in question had been arranged in response to Poor Law Inspector H. B. Farnall's recent attendance at a meeting of the Board of Guardians, where he had criticised the union's workhouses for lacking discipline and order and encouraged the Board to erect a union workhouse. The meeting attracted a huge crowd, 'not less than 1,500 persons' according to the *Chronicle*, which in itself is indicative of the importance of the question. In a series of fiery speeches made mainly by well-known local agitators such as Edward Swinglehurst, the 'elder statesman of working-class radicalism in Preston', it was repeatedly stated that a union

<sup>64</sup> P.C. 28<sup>th</sup> June, 1851. The following discussion of this meeting is taken from the same report in the *Chronicle*.

workhouse would be an onerous burden upon the ratepayers, and an 'unchristian' and 'inhumane' way to treat the poor.<sup>65</sup> 'Did the poor deserve', asked one speaker, 'after toiling for years, to be thrust into a Bastille, with all its stringencies and horrors?'. Another, echoing the man who talked of putting 'a ball through a man's heart', said that it was 'heart-breaking for a poor man...to be driven into a union workhouse, and prevented from seeing his wife and children.' Every speech, each as emotive and impassioned as the last, met with loud cheers and applause from a receptive crowd.

The specific purpose of the meeting became apparent when one of the speakers put forward a motion that:

in the opinion of this meeting, the men who were elected guardians under the impression that they would vote against a union workhouse should, if they prove themselves unworthy of the confidence placed in them, be called upon to resign.

The motion, and the discussion it provoked, is revealing. It indicates that the ratepayers of Preston were electing as Guardians men who had promised not to vote for a union workhouse if the question came before the Board, and that those who broke that promise would be turned out of office. In the discussion that followed the names of three serving elected Preston Guardians - Mr. German, Dr. Broughton and Mr. F Myers - were brought up as having privately declared support for a union workhouse, and having stated their intention to vote in favour of one. Cries of 'shame', 'turn him out' and, in the case of shopkeeper Myers, 'Don't buy anything from him', could be heard from the crowd as their names were mentioned. Significantly, it was precisely these three men who were not elected by the ratepayers when the Guardian's elections were held in April 1852, some ten months after the meeting took place. Table 2 shows the nature of the voting in the three electoral wards contended by the reputedly pro-union workhouse candidates. Broughton, Myers and German were each defeated convincingly in their respective wards, and this is perhaps all the more surprising in the case of German as he had served as mayor of the town just two years earlier. Moreover, R. Charnley, who defeated Dr. Broughton in Christ Church ward, had chaired the anti-union workhouse meeting discussed above. It was simply electoral suicide, regardless of who you were, to declare support for a union workhouse in our period, and not without reason did the *Preston Chronicle* describe standing for election on an anti-union workhouse platform as a 'cheap passport to office.'<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> H. I. Dutton and J. E. King, '*Ten per cent and no surrender*': the Preston strike, 1853-54 (1981), p.50.

<sup>66</sup> P.C. 22<sup>nd</sup> March, 1856.



**Table 1: Voting patterns in three Preston township electoral wards, 1852**

| Christ Church ward | Votes | St. George's Ward | Votes | Trinity Ward | Votes |
|--------------------|-------|-------------------|-------|--------------|-------|
| W. Howitt          | 347   | M. Satterthwaite  | 437   | J. Knowles   | 448   |
| R. Charnley        | 278   | C. Ward           | 419   | I. Gate      | 398   |
| Dr. Broughton      | 191   | F. Myers          | 91    | J. German    | 59    |

**Source and notes:** P.C. 17<sup>th</sup> April, 1852. The township of Preston began dividing into electoral wards in 1848, when the number of representatives for the township increased from six to twelve. There were six electoral wards in total.

'An inhuman humanity'?: Poor Law policy and the battle for the chair

Despite his advocacy of the New Poor Law and the unpopular union workhouse, Addison was far from marginalised in the Guardian's boardroom. Between the years 1838 and 1857 he was elected as chairman fifteen times, twelve of those without opposition. As an experienced public figure with a near encyclopaedic knowledge of complex Poor Law legislation he was, in a practical sense, the obvious choice. Moreover, while it might be expected that Addison's views on Poor Law administration would have seen him challenged more frequently for the chair, his ideological convictions were of little immediate concern when opinion among the elected majority was so strongly opposed to the union workhouse he desired. In short, as long as an anti-union workhouse majority was achieved during annual Guardian's elections, it did not really matter who was in the chair for the ensuing year. But this was only the case *most* of the time. Being in the chair did allow Addison considerable influence, and on occasions he used that influence in such a way as to provoke organised attempts to challenge him for the chairmanship. In this section we consider why Addison was periodically challenged, and the implications of such challenges in a union where the *ex officio* and elected Guardians were deeply divided over the New Poor Law.

We begin in the early 1840s, a period during which Addison and certain fellow magistrates were actively pursuing the erection of a union workhouse and the implementation of an orthodox workhouse system. This was also a period of economic distress, when many people were unemployed or working short time, and Addison and his supporters had been dealt a blow when he was removed from the chair following the election of 1841 for reputedly carrying out punitive relief policies in response to the crisis.<sup>67</sup> The campaign to challenge him had been led by Joseph Livesey, who revived his anti-Poor Law agitation in Preston after two dormant years in late 1840 with a series of damning letters attacking Addison's 'harsh and absurd' approach to relief

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<sup>67</sup> P.C. 10<sup>th</sup> April, 1841. It seems that Addison rarely attended the meetings where the relief cases were heard, which took place after the general Board meeting, and he did not attend these meetings at all from the late 1840s. Yet, he did during period of economic distress, presumably because he saw it as an opportunity to pursue his ideological agenda.

administration, which featured prominently in the *Preston Chronicle* newspaper.<sup>68</sup> Livesey was certain that Addison was cramming the workhouses with paupers in order to convince the elected Guardians that a large union workhouse was necessary. Fortunately, he had found an important ally in William Melville Lomas, the editor of the *Chronicle*, who was more than happy to publish his letters. A 'stringent conservative' politically, and a wine merchant by trade, Lomas was the antithesis of the radical liberal teetotaler Livesey, but the two met on common ground through their mutual loathing of the New Poor Law. To Lomas, who was elected to the chair in place of Addison in 1841, the New Poor Law was 'the most cold blooded code ever to disgrace the statute book.'<sup>69</sup> It was not, however, just to stop Addison sending paupers to the workhouses that he was opposed. It was also in anticipation of the PLC's workhouse classification order, which would make compulsory the separation of all inmates according to age and sex. Workhouse classification was a deeply emotive issue. Livesey had condemned the enforced separation of children from parents, and husbands from wives, as 'inhumane' and 'unchristian' during his first phase of anti-Poor Law agitation in 1837, and such sentiment was repeated at the anti-union workhouse meeting in 1851 as we have seen.<sup>70</sup> Yet, as explained above, classification was also a crucial component of a less eligible union workhouse, and Addison was consequently frustrated by its absence in the Preston union workhouses. However, there was little he could do without the support of the elected Guardians which he did not have. Only the introduction of a formal order from the PLC, which would render local opinion irrelevant, would see the workhouses classified. That is, unless the elected Guardians chose to defy the order entirely. Addison would not have allowed this to happen, which is why removing him from the chair was vital, and when the workhouse classification order was introduced in February 1842 the Lomas Board voted to ignore each clause point by point.<sup>71</sup>

The importance of the classification issue meant the outcome of the Guardian's elections in April 1842, just two months after the classification order was issued, was crucial. Neither side could afford to see their opponents take the chair. In the town of Preston the anti-Poor Law agitators, led again by Livesey and Lomas, ran on the popular anti-union workhouse, anti-classification platform, and pleaded to the 'Friends of Humanity' for support (Figure 2). The language itself is instructive. Livesey was an experienced hand in these sorts of campaigns. He knew where public sympathy lay, and it was not with those who sought to apply punitive policies against the poor. This is

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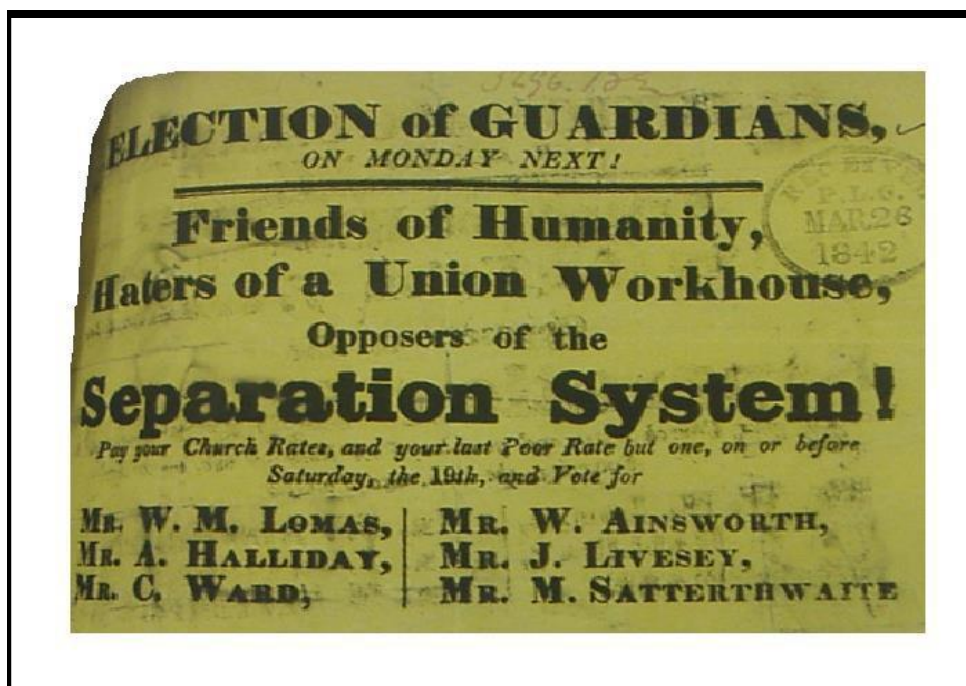
<sup>68</sup> P.C. 17<sup>th</sup> October, 1840; 31<sup>st</sup> October, 1840; 7<sup>th</sup> November, 1840; 14<sup>th</sup> November, 1840; 28<sup>th</sup> November, 1840; 19<sup>th</sup> December, 1840.

<sup>69</sup> P.C. 5<sup>th</sup> March, 1842.

<sup>70</sup> P.C. 25<sup>th</sup> February, 1837.

<sup>71</sup> L.A. PUT/1/7, 22<sup>nd</sup> February, 1842.

Figure 2: Anti-Poor Law handbill, Preston, 1842



Source: T.N.A. MH12/6112.

further supported by the large numbers of ratepayers who went to the polls to support them. Over 10,000 votes were cast in Preston, which was by some margin the highest figure since the election of 1838, and the overwhelmingly majority – 70 per cent – were for the anti-classification men.<sup>72</sup> The election of these six for Preston, however, by no means sealed them the chair. It appears that the importance of the election meant both sides stretched their influence into the out-townships, where Guardians sympathetic to their respective causes were solicited to run for office. Here began a controversy which led to 'indescribable scenes' at the inaugural meeting of the Board.<sup>73</sup> In a blatant attempt to outmanoeuvre the magistrates, Livesey had written to the PLC with evidence of 'irregularities' in certain of the nomination papers written by magistrates.<sup>74</sup> The defects, as Livesey must have known, were minor and accidental (the fault lay in a printing error), but the stakes were far too high for good sporting conduct. The PLC agreed that the nomination papers were indeed defective and declared them invalid, and the success of Livesey's opportunistic move stunned Penwortham magistrate William Marshall, an active proponent of the workhouse system, whose own nominations were now voided. In an angry letter he told the Commissioners, 'Your decision has thrown me completely on my back, three years hard fighting I have had with Livesey and his party and our workhouses remain a disgrace.'<sup>75</sup> Marshall warned them of Livesey's 'indefatigable'

<sup>72</sup> P.C. 16<sup>th</sup> April, 1842.

<sup>73</sup> P.C. 16<sup>th</sup> April, 1842.

<sup>74</sup> T.N.A. MH12/6112: 11<sup>th</sup> March, 1842.

<sup>75</sup> T.N.A. MH12/6112: 26<sup>th</sup> March, 1842.

opposition to the New Poor Law; 'no language I could use could convince you of this man's perseverance in effecting his object.'<sup>76</sup> As far as Marshall was concerned there would be no classification, no union workhouse, no workhouse system, 'so long as Livesey is a Guardian.'<sup>77</sup>

With the six Preston Guardians elected, and some of the magistrate's out-township nominees disqualified from running, electing Lomas as chairman for a second term should have been a foregone conclusion. However, the magistrates, adopting Livesey's own tactics, happened to notice that some of the nomination papers of their opponents had been filled in by more than one person.<sup>78</sup> By the letter of the law this rendered them invalid as well, and at the first meeting of the new Board William Marshall, provisionally chairing the meeting before a chairman was elected, declared void the election certificates of three Preston Guardians (including Livesey and Lomas) and four out-township Guardians.<sup>79</sup> Marshall refused to accept any votes from these seven men, and a motion to strike them off the list of elected members was easily pushed through by the magistrates. The disqualified anti-Poor Law Guardians could then only watch on as Addison was elected as chairman twelve votes to two. The events echoed the first meeting of the 1838 Board, when Addison had controversially disqualified some out-township Guardians on rather dubious grounds, and their victory on this occasion again brought an end to organised anti-Poor Law activity. With Addison back in the chair the implementation of the classification order was inevitable, and this was a bitter blow to Livesey and Lomas. With the New Poor Law introduced, and workhouse classification imminent, two major battles had been lost, and neither of them would run for the office of Guardian again.

The 1841 and 1842 elections indicate that a humane concern for the treatment of the poor, underpinned by a strong ideological opposition to the New Poor Law's punitive policies, motivated Livesey, Lomas and others involved in anti-Poor Law agitation to challenge Addison for the chair. This was equally apparent when Addison was next challenged, in 1848. The mid-1840s brought a period a relative quiescence in the Guardian's boardroom, but a return to economic depression in 1847, and Addison's reputedly punitive response to the crisis, again acted as a catalyst to challenge him. The campaign was directed once again by Joseph Livesey, aided by his son John. Through the

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<sup>76</sup> T.N.A. MH12/6112: 18<sup>th</sup> April, 1842.

<sup>77</sup> T.N.A. MH12/6112: 22<sup>nd</sup> April, 1842.

<sup>78</sup> Livesey had kept the nomination papers of all the anti-Poor Law Guardians in his office in Preston. The discrepancy arose because he had asked Robert Ascroft, the lawyer who supported the anti-Poor Law movement as a Guardian in 1837 and 1838, to check over the papers and make sure they all conformed to the correct standard. It was Ascroft's alterations, ironically, that made the papers illegal, though this was a minor administrative error which in less acrimonious years would probably have been ignored.

<sup>79</sup> P.C. 16<sup>th</sup> April, 1842.

pages of their appropriately titled *Preston Guardian* newspaper, established by Joseph in 1844 and soon the biggest selling provincial paper in the area, they attacked Addison in extensive editorials just about every week in the run up to the election:

We look upon him as the embodiment of certain principles [the workhouse system], the representative of a certain system [the New Poor Law], both repugnant to common sense and humanity, and therefore we oppose his assumption of a position [chairman] in which he can enforce that system and its principles.<sup>80</sup>

Joseph Livesey urged the ratepayers to vote for a list of candidates to oppose Addison, which included his son and a number of individuals associated with working-class radicalism in Preston. They included John Tomlinson and Thomas Swindlehurst, both of whom had voted Hunt in 1830.<sup>81</sup> The latter was an old friend of Livesey's and a leading Temperance reformer, nicknamed 'The king of the reformed drunkards.'<sup>82</sup> John Noble, who had stood against Addison for the chair in 1838, was also advocated, as was John Sergeant, a radical who would go on to be a leading figure in the Preston Lock-Out of 1853-54. The political and ideological position of the men trying to remove Addison, then, was very similar to that of 1837 and 1838. Yet, significantly, the lines of division blurred this year in a way that they had not at any previous time. The agitators received the support of Thomas Birchall Esq., the current Mayor of Preston, who had controversially agreed to stand against Addison for the chair. Birchall was a Tory barrister who ran in the same circles as the magistrates, and had voted against the anti-Poor Law candidates for the chair in 1837 and 1838 as an elected Guardian for Ribbleton. He now supported Addison's opponents because he thought the chairman was overseeing a harsh regime. The position of Birchall was not the only surprise. At the meeting to decide the chairman, the Rev. John Owen Parr, Vicar of Preston and an *ex officio* member of the Board of Guardians, took the unique step of condemning Addison's methods of administering relief. In an impassioned speech which is worth quoting at length, the Vicar told the Board that Addison's 'theory and practice of administering relief I do not agree with':

He had declared that the poor are to be treated in the category of criminals, and that the severest measure of assistance should be given to them on the meanest scale on which it can be afforded. There I dissent from him. I cannot think that the poor, or even the majority of them, are poor by their own fault. I know that idleness and vice are the parents of poverty, but I do not think that they are the only parents of poverty; for something should be allowed for sickness, infirmities, age and the hand of God - (Cheers.)...I must confess that it is with pain that I see him administering relief to the poor. I have no doubt that Mr. Addison believes his is the principle of true humanity;

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<sup>80</sup> *Preston Guardian (P.G.)* 22<sup>nd</sup> April, 1848.

<sup>81</sup> H. R. L. *Alphabetical list of electors polled, 1830.*

<sup>82</sup> Dutton and King, *Ten percent no surrender*, p.51.

but he has committed himself to what I think is an inhuman humanity, or humane inhumanity.<sup>83</sup>

The speech was a firm rebuttal of Addison's view that poverty was usually the fault of the individual, and drew cheers and applause from the elected Guardians. The ratepayers had again sent an anti-Poor Law majority to the Board, and although the magistrates' block voting (Parr excepted) ensured the contest for the chairmanship was a close one, Birchall was elected 24 votes to 19.<sup>84</sup> Taken alone, the elected Guardians voted 23 to 10 in favour of Birchall. This was an important result. It undermined the legitimacy of Addison's approach to relief administration because he was no longer only being criticised by the radical opponents of the New Poor Law. He now had the Mayor and the Vicar speaking out against him, 'respectable' members of the Board who according to his own theory *could* understand the New Poor Law. Birchall himself recognised the significance of the election upon taking the chair. This was, he declared, 'a triumph of the defenders of the true objects of benevolence and judicious humanity over cold hearted political economy.'<sup>85</sup>

Addison's inability to implement the central tenets of the New Poor Law increasingly frustrated him. By the mid-1850s, with ratepayer opinion and, by extension, opinion in the boardroom still overwhelmingly opposed to a union workhouse, he recognised that he was not going to be able to achieve his aim through the traditional democratic process. Thus, in 1855 he decided to take the controversial step of exploiting a legal loophole which allowed the Poor Law Board (PLB) to grant individuals the authority to make decisions 'other than at a meeting of the Board' provided they had the approval of the majority of its members.<sup>86</sup> In practice, this meant that if Addison could get thirty Guardians to sign a document in favour of a union workhouse, the PLB could sanction it. Addison and one or two other magistrates clandestinely solicited the signatures, and they achieved the amount required largely by approaching the union's twenty-five *ex officio* Guardians, many of whom had never attended a single meeting of the Board of Guardians.<sup>87</sup> In total, magistrates made up more than 70 per cent of the signatories. Unsurprisingly, when these underhand, if perfectly legal, proceedings came to light at the beginning of 1856 there was outrage. Preston Guardian Christopher Ward summed up the general feeling when he complained that:

Most of the gentlemen who had given their signatures in favour of a union workhouse were *ex-officio* Guardians, who never put a foot in that room since they were made

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<sup>83</sup> P.C. 6<sup>th</sup> May, 1848.

<sup>84</sup> P.C. 6<sup>th</sup> May, 1848.

<sup>85</sup> P.C. 6<sup>th</sup> May, 1848.

<sup>86</sup> Parliamentary Papers (P.P.) 1834 (44) 38<sup>th</sup> Section of the Poor Law Amendment Act.

<sup>87</sup> P.P. 1856 (246) *Correspondence, &c. respecting the erection of a new workhouse in the Preston union, Lancashire.*

magistrates, and never took a share of the labour of the board. [I do] not think it right in such cases for gentlemen to...reverse the decisions of those who were the real working men of the board.<sup>88</sup>

The importance of Poor Law elections in Preston union is again demonstrated in the response to Addison's actions. The PLB sent a formal Order to the Guardians 'for the erection of a union workhouse' in March, just a few weeks before the elections were due to take place, and in this regard Addison's plan fell victim to bad timing.<sup>89</sup> Indeed, he immediately recognised that his position as chairman was under threat. Had he been in any doubt, it was spelled out for him by Preston Guardian Thomas Dixon who prophesied that the election 'would be a battle between the new union workhouse men and the anti-new union workhouse men.'<sup>90</sup>

In the public sphere the campaign to depose Addison was once again led by Joseph Livesey, this time with another of his sons, William. In February 1856, William sent to the PLB a petition against the union workhouse which had been signed by 1,827 ratepayers in Preston.<sup>91</sup> Joseph Livesey also communicated with the PLB at this time, writing a series of letters which questioned the legality of Addison's method of obtaining signatures, and pointing out the unfairness of allowing people 'who do not choose to attend meetings' to make important decisions.<sup>92</sup> The PLB, however, defended Addison and refused to rescind their order. The only way to stop the erection of a union workhouse was, therefore, by removing Addison from his position of influence and refusing to comply with the PLB's request, and this is exactly what happened. The men sent to the Board by the ratepayers for the township of Preston had all publicly declared their opposition to a union workhouse, while one Preston Guardian, Michael Satterthwaite, lost his seat after twelve years continuous service because it transpired he had signed Addison's memorial.<sup>93</sup> In the out-townships, the results were the same. The election marked a watershed in the history of the Preston Poor Law union. At the inaugural meeting of the new Board Addison's position as chairman was challenged for the first time in seven years and his opponent, William Livesey, was comfortably elected to the chair 32 votes to 12.<sup>94</sup> Only two elected Guardians voted for Addison, whose actions had left him marginalised, and he would not serve the office of chairman again. With Livesey in the chair, the Board was in a position to defy the PLB's order. Over the course of 1856 the PLB wrote frequently

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<sup>88</sup> P.C. 19<sup>th</sup> January, 1856.

<sup>89</sup> P.C. 15<sup>th</sup> March, 1856.

<sup>90</sup> P.C. 22<sup>nd</sup> March, 1856.

<sup>91</sup> P.P. 1856 (246) *Correspondence, &c*, p.5.

<sup>92</sup> P.P. 1856 (246) *Correspondence, &c*. pp.7-11.

<sup>93</sup> P.G. 28<sup>th</sup> March, 1856.

<sup>94</sup> L.A. PUT/1/20, 22<sup>nd</sup> February, 1856.

to the Guardians on the subject of taking land for the building of a union workhouse, but the Guardians refused to even consider the question. In what would be the Guardian's final response, they simply told the PLB they 'had not yet thought it proper to take any steps in the matter.'<sup>95</sup>

## **Conclusion**

It was stated in the introduction of this chapter that the experience of implementing the New Poor Law in Lancashire at local level was, despite certain commonalities, unique in each union. This has previously been demonstrated in studies of the anti-Poor Law movement in the north of England, but the process of implementing the system and its principles, and the discord it often engendered, continued in some unions long after the initial agitation had ended around 1840. In Preston union, it continued into the 1860s. For it is certainly true that the Preston Board of Guardians had not, by the end of our period, 'implemented' the New Poor Law in a way which pleased either the central authority or its local proponents such as Thomas Batty Addison. Most conspicuously, the refusal of the elected Guardians to build a union workhouse, the physical embodiment of the New Poor Law, constituted an emphatic rejection of the very ethos of the system. But it was not only by refusing to construct a union workhouse that the 'principles of 1834' were rejected. It was equally apparent in the movement against workhouse classification, and in attempts to remove Addison from the chair when he was perceived to be practising harsh indoor relief policies. Addison shared with the PLC a diagnosis of pauperism which viewed individual negligence as one of its chief causes, and he asserted that the less eligible union workhouse was the only appropriate medicine. Few of the elected Guardians, however, agreed with his prescription in Preston union.

This brings us to the issues of politics and ideology, which give this chapter its title. Those who sought to obstruct the implementation of the New Poor Law and its principles did so through the inherently political electoral process. This is significant. The few studies to examine Poor Law electoral politics at local level have tended to find that they constituted little more than party political battles, with no principle of Poor Law policy at stake. In Preston union, however, where the potential direction of local policy bred conflict rather than consensus, the outcome of Guardian's elections was crucial. Moreover, they were crucial for fundamentally ideological reasons. This is most apparent in the part played by Joseph Livesey, whose unremitting quest to resist the 'inhuman' and 'unchristian' New Poor Law would repeatedly frustrate Addison's desire for a union workhouse. However, Livesey was by no means alone in opposing the New Poor Law, or aspects of it, on ideological grounds. William Melville Lomas' description of the system as 'cold blooded', and

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<sup>95</sup> L.A. PUT/1/21, 9<sup>th</sup> September, 1856.



Thomas Birchall's as 'cold hearted', both reflected a deep ideological aversion to what were perceived to be harsh relief measures. The same is true of the Rev. Parr's claim that Addison's approach to relief administration represented an 'inhuman humanity.' Significantly, this sentiment was also held by many ratepayers. Why else would Joseph Livesey use powerfully emotive language, appealing to the 'Friends of humanity', during election campaigns? The same question could be asked of those who spoke at the huge anti-union workhouse meeting in Preston in 1851, where condemnation of separation in a 'Bastille', and threats of physical violence against anyone who would force families into a union workhouse, met with cheers from the crowd. Poor Law elections in Preston union were deeply ideological affairs, and the ratepayers invariably responded by electing men who were hostile to the 'principles of 1834'. The elected wing of the Preston Board of Guardians was therefore able to resist the more punitive aspects of the system for the best part of thirty years, despite strong pressure from influential local magistrates to conform.

The implications of local hostility to the rigours of the New Poor Law will be discussed further over the course of this thesis. In the next chapter we move away from what we might call the 'low politics' of local administration – divisions and conflicts over the union workhouse/classification/the chairmanship etc. – and turn our attention to the provision of relief to the poor in practice, with a particular focus on socio-economic characteristics and how they influenced the form and function of Poor Law administration at local and regional level.

## Chapter 2

### The geography of pauperism in Preston union and the regions

#### Introduction

Poor Law administration after 1834 did not operate within a framework of national uniformity. This is true in a regulatory sense because the central authority's orders prohibiting outdoor relief were created on an *ad hoc* basis and implemented unevenly across time and space.<sup>1</sup> It is also true because, even after these numerous relief regulation orders had been introduced, their narrow focus meant policy formation remained a genuinely local affair. As the primary concern of the orders was the able-bodied, who typically constituted only a small proportion of the outdoor pauper host, the persons most likely to receive poor relief – the young, the old, the widowed, the sick and disabled – continued to be treated by local administrators after 1834 just as they had before. The New Poor Law, therefore, cannot be artificially abstracted from the long history which preceded it. The system did not mark a year zero, and relief continued to be administered according to traditional notions of entitlement and established local practice. In recent years the local and regional variations which developed as a result of local autonomy has received increasing attention from historians, although most of their work has focussed on the Old Poor Law.<sup>2</sup> This chapter develops the discussion by examining practices at the regional (English counties), county (Lancashire) and union (Preston) levels during the first two decades of the New Poor Law for the first time. The regional analysis allows us to present a picture of pauperism across England, and to consider the nature, extent and causes of observable variations. Further, by examining a period of over twenty years, we can assess how welfare practices evolved during the 1840s and 1850s. The Lancashire analysis operates in much the same way by comparing unions within the county. Finally, against this regional and sub-regional backdrop, Preston union acts as a case study, providing a means of discussing in detail Poor Law administration at local level.

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<sup>1</sup> F. Driver, *Power and pauperism: the workhouse system, 1834-1884* (1993), pp.32-57; K. Williams, *From Pauperism to Poverty* (1981), pp.64-65. See Introduction to this thesis for full discussion of these orders.

<sup>2</sup> See: D. Green, *Pauper Capital: London and the Poor Law, 1790-1870* (2010); S. Hindle, *On the parish?: the micro-politics of poor relief in rural England, c.1550-1750* (2009); S. King, *Poverty and welfare in England: a regional perspective, 1700-1850* (2000); S. King and A. Tomkins, *The Poor in England, 1700-1850: an economy of makeshifts* (2003); L. H. Less, *The solidarities of strangers: the English Poor Laws and the people, 1700-1948* (1998); S. Williams, *Poverty, gender and life-cycle under the English Poor Law, 17060-1834* (2011).

## 2 (i) The geography of pauperism at the regional level

This section utilises quantitative data provided by the annual reports of the central authority to present a regional picture of Poor Law administration across England over a twenty year period. The way statistical information was compiled and presented varied over the period, and is not without problems as MacKinnon has explained, but as a means of demonstrating general patterns and longitudinal trends they are instructive.<sup>3</sup> Two key themes shall be examined in turn. First, the incidence of pauperism in the English counties, and second, the proportion of paupers relieved inside a workhouse.

### The extent of pauperism

Studies have shown that the extent of pauperism across England during the early decades of the nineteenth century varied markedly, but with a distinct regional element in the overall pattern. Broadly, the extent of pauperism in southern and eastern counties was generally much higher than in northern ones, the difference in some cases being more than double.<sup>4</sup> Figures 1-3 demonstrate that this general pattern survived the process of unionisation and central regulation, crossing over to the New Poor Law fundamentally unaltered. While the three figures use different statistical bases - Figure 1 shows the proportion in each county relieved by the Poor Law over a quarter year, and Figures 2 and 3 on a single day - it is immediately apparent that, over both the short term and the long term, northern unions generally experienced a lower incidence of pauperism than their southern and eastern counterparts. Indeed, a line drawn from the Wash across to the Severn would usefully distinguish between typically high and typically low pauperism counties. Pauperism was lowest in the more urbanised counties. This is true of heavily industrialised Lancashire and adjacent West Riding of Yorkshire, as well as Derbyshire, Staffordshire and Nottinghamshire in the midlands and London and Kent in the south. Pauperism was consistently highest, on the other hand, in southern and eastern agricultural regions, particularly those associated with the Speenhamland system of wage subsidies under the Old Poor Law; Buckinghamshire, Dorset, Norfolk, Oxfordshire, Suffolk and Wiltshire.<sup>5</sup>

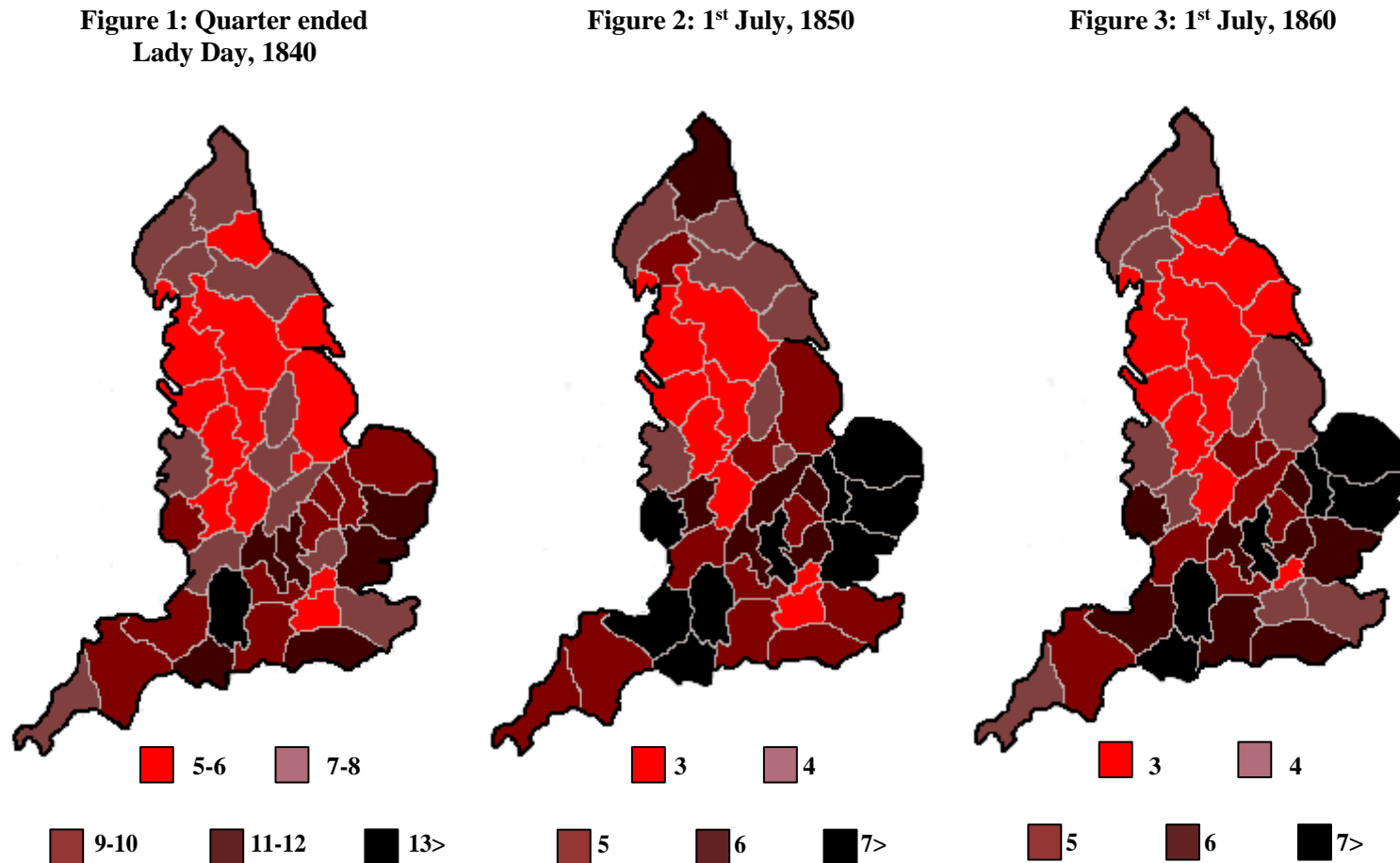
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<sup>3</sup> M. Mackinnon, 'The use and misuse of Poor Law statistics, 1857-1912', *Historical Methods: A Journal of Quantitative and Interdisciplinary History*, 21 (1988), pp.5-19.

<sup>4</sup> Green, *Pauper Capital*, pp.26-50; King, *Poverty and Welfare*, p.86.

<sup>5</sup> For a discussion of the Speenhamland or 'allowance' system during the Old Poor Law see: M. Blaug, 'The Myth of the Old Poor Law and the making of the New', *Journal of Economic History*, 23 (1963), 151-184; G. W. Oxley, *Poor relief in England and Wales, 1601-1834* (1974), pp.102-119; J. R. Poynter, *Society and pauperism: English ideas on poor relief, 1795-1834* (1969); K. D. M. Snell, *Annals of the labouring poor: social change and agrarian England, 1660-1900* (1985), pp.104-114.

Figures 1-3: Proportion of the population (per cent) in receipt of relief in English counties, 1840 - 1860



**Sources:** Figure 1: P.P. 1841 (126) A return showing the number of indoor and outdoor paupers relieved in unions formed (under the Poor Law Amendment Act) in each county in England and Wales; Figure 2: P.P. 1852 (583) Return of the number of paupers receiving indoor and outdoor relief in 607 unions and single parishes in England and Wales; Figure 3: P.P. 1860 (383B) Poor rates and pauperism. Return (B.) Paupers relieved on 1<sup>st</sup> July, 1860.

The lack of empirical research at local level, particularly of the post-1834 period, prevents firm conclusions being drawn as to the cause of these patterns. King argues that regional variation chiefly reflected differing cultural approaches to the treatment of poverty; that Poor Law administrators in the south and east simply operated a more inclusive system than their counterparts in the north and west.<sup>6</sup> However, while his claim for regional variation is clearly supported in Figures 1-3, his explanation problematically plays down the importance of socio-economic structures.<sup>7</sup> The industrial north, where pauperism was consistently lowest according to Figures 1-3, had a very different socio-economic composition than the agricultural south and east where pauperism was highest. As explained in the introduction to this thesis, the industrial north did not suffer from the endemic poverty experienced in southern agricultural England. There was no widespread use of allowances before or after 1834 (except to some hand loom weavers as we shall see in Chapter 5), wages were on the whole much higher in both agriculture and industry in the north, employment was full in normal times, and access to alternative formal and informal sources of support was much wider.<sup>8</sup> It is unsurprising, then, that pauperism was much higher in the south and east, where an oversupply of labour caused chronic unemployment in the agricultural sector and drove down wages, limiting alternative networks of support.<sup>9</sup> Moreover, the industrial north experienced from the late-eighteenth century extremely high levels of in-migration, rivalled only by London.<sup>10</sup> This meant that in manufacturing areas there existed great numbers of non-settled people who were not legally *entitled* to support in the place they were living, and were therefore less likely to *apply* for relief for fear of removal.<sup>11</sup> This too would have had the effect of lowering the proportional ratio of pauperism in the industrial north; it would be interesting to know

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<sup>6</sup> King, *Poverty and welfare*, pp.256-257.

<sup>7</sup> G. R. Boyer, 'Review', *The Journal of Economic History*, 62 (2002), pp.873-874.

<sup>8</sup> G. R. Boyer, *An economic history of the English Poor Law 1870-1850*, pp.85-118; M. Gorsky, 'The growth and distribution of Friendly Societies in the early nineteenth century', *Economic History Review*, 51 (1998), pp.489-511; P. H. J. H. Gosden, *Friendly societies in England, 1815-1875* (1961), p.63; A. J. Gritt, 'The 'survival' of service in the English agricultural labour force: lessons from Lancashire, c.1650-1851', *Agricultural History Review*, 50 (2002), pp.28 and 39. P. Hastings, *Poverty and the Poor Law in the North Riding of Yorkshire, c.1780-1837*, (1982), pp.3 and 10-11; E. H. Hunt, 'Industrialisation and regional inequality: wages in Britain, 1760-1914', *Journal of Economic History*, 4 (1986), pp.935-966; Lees, *The solidarities of strangers*, p.66; E. C. Midwinter, *Social administration in Lancashire, 1830-1860: Poor Law, public health, police* (1969), pp.10-14; C. More, *The industrial age* (1989), p.159; A. Mutch, 'The mechanisation of the harvest in south-west Lancashire, 1850-1914', *Agricultural History Review*, 29, 1981, pp.126-7; Poynter, *Society and pauperism*, pp.77-79; B. Supple, 'Legislation and virtue: an essay on working-class self-help and the state in the early nineteenth century', in N. McKendrick (ed.), *Historical perspectives: studies in English thought and society* (1974), p.24; R. Tames, *Economy and society in nineteenth century Britain* (1972), p.109; J. G. Williamson, *Coping with city growth during the British Industrial Revolution* (1990), pp.189-194.

<sup>9</sup> Snell, *Annals of the labouring poor*, p.130; S. Williams, 'Poor relief, labourers' households and living standards in rural England c.1770-1834: a Bedfordshire case study', *Economic History Review*, 58 (2005), pp.485-519.

<sup>10</sup> C. B. Phillips and J. H. Smith, *Lancashire and Cheshire from A.D. 1540* (1994), pp.132-136.

<sup>11</sup> This is explored further in Chapter 6.

the extent to which regional variation existed among the settled population, but this is unfortunately not possible from the available evidence. Further, northern administrators were by no means averse to providing relief to large numbers of people at certain times. When industry entered depression, as it did on three occasions in Lancashire during our period (c.1841-43, 1847-49 and 1857-58), ratios of pauperism were among the highest in the country. On 1<sup>st</sup> July 1848, for example, 6 per cent of the population of Lancashire and 13 per cent of the population of Preston union were in receipt of relief, figures considerably above the national average.<sup>12</sup>

The continuation of the broad north/south divide after 1834 is, however, immediately intriguing, as most southern and eastern unions were operating under the Prohibitory Order which banned outdoor relief to healthy able-bodied persons and was not applied in some northern regions such as Lancashire and the West Riding of Yorkshire.<sup>13</sup> Digby and Boyer have explained away the significance of this regulation, arguing that as it was in the economic interest of farmers in the south and east, who dominated Boards of Guardians as they had the vestries, to continue using outdoor relief to retain a permanent supply of agricultural labour during slack seasons, they simply worked around them.<sup>14</sup> Digby argues specifically that Guardians frequently disguised outdoor relief to able-bodied men by categorising them as 'sick', an exemption clause in the Prohibitory Order, and while this claim has been summarily and on the whole convincingly dismissed by Williams such practices may well have existed in places.<sup>15</sup> Yet, in any case, we should not expect the Prohibitory Order to have influenced too greatly the ratio of pauperism at regional level, as the able-bodied only constituted a minority of the aggregate pauper host.<sup>16</sup> We must, therefore, also include in this discussion the way socio-economic factors might have influenced how the Poor Law at local level dealt with a numerically far more important group – people who could not maintain themselves for reasons of temporary sickness or injury, or permanent physical or mental debility. Those, in other words, who were unable, or less able, to work and required other means of support. Again, the paucity of empirical historical investigation is problematic here, but research that has been undertaken suggests the Poor Law played a far greater part in the maintenance of people unable

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<sup>12</sup> Parliamentary Papers (P.P.) 1849 (586) *Paupers: Return of the number of paupers in receipt of relief in the several unions of England and Wales, on the 1<sup>st</sup> day of July, 1848*, p.8; P.P. (1142) *Second Annual Report of the Poor Law Board*.

<sup>13</sup> Williams, *From pauperism to poverty*, pp.59-90.

<sup>14</sup> Boyer, *An economic history of the English Poor Law*, pp.193-231; A. Digby, *The operation of the Poor Law in the social and economic life of nineteenth century Norfolk*, PhD thesis (1978); A. Digby, 'The rural Poor Law', in D. Fraser (ed.) *The New Poor Law in the nineteenth century* (1976), p.158.

<sup>15</sup> Digby, 'The rural Poor Law', pp.158.

<sup>16</sup> A. Kidd, *State, society and the Poor in nineteenth century England* (1999), pp.31-33; D. Englander, *Poverty and Poor Law reform in nineteenth century Britain, 1834-1914: from Chadwick to Booth* (1998), pp.27-29. See also Chapter 3 of this thesis.

to work in regions where low wages naturally limited networks of kinship support, and limited access to alternative resources.<sup>17</sup> In particular, Thane has argued that the capacity, and expectancy from the view of local administrators, of kin to maintain relatives was significantly lower in regions where the typical nuclear family income was barely at subsistence level.<sup>18</sup> Thus, the ratios of pauperism we should expect to find are exactly those featured in Figures 1-3.

#### The ratio of indoor pauperism

A further factor which might be expected to have had some influence on regional rates of aggregate pauperism is the workhouse. Advocates of the New Poor Law championed the workhouse as a means of reducing pauperism, and the workhouse test formed the basis of official policy thereafter.<sup>19</sup> Figures 4-6, however, show no correlation between the proportion of paupers in workhouses and ratios of pauperism at regional level. All across the country indoor relief played a secondary role to its outdoor counterpart, with fewer than 15 per cent of paupers being inside a workhouse at any one time in most counties up to 1860. Within this overall picture, there is no notable distinction between the north and the south, at least after 1840, and there are instances of contiguous regions experiencing similar ratios of pauperism despite having very different ratios of indoor paupers. Take, for example, Lancashire and the neighbouring West Riding of Yorkshire on 1<sup>st</sup> July 1860. Pauperism in the two regions stood at 3 per cent (Figure 3 above), but in Lancashire the workhouse appears to have played a much more prominent role in the response to poverty (Figure 6). Thus, it does not appear that the workhouse had a significant part in determining ratios of pauperism at regional level in our period.

A particularly striking feature of figures 4-6 is the apparently negligible role of the Prohibitory Order in determining ratios of indoor pauperism. The pattern we might expect to see over the whole period is that of Figure 4, which shows a generally, and in some places significantly, higher ratio of indoor pauperism where the Prohibitory Order was applied. That this disparity is not maintained throughout the period offers some support for Snell and Digby's view that the vigour

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<sup>17</sup> M. Dupree, 'The provision of social services', in M. Daunton (ed.), *The Cambridge urban history of Britain, 1840-1950* (2000) p.354; B. Supple, 'Legislation and virtue: an essay on working-class self-help and the state in the early nineteenth century', in N. McKendrick (ed.), *Historical perspectives: studies in English thought and society* (1974), p.24.

<sup>18</sup> P. Thane, 'Old people and their families in the English past', in M. Daunton (ed.), *Charity, self-interest and welfare in Britain: 1500 to the present* (1996), pp.84-103.

<sup>19</sup> P.P. 1834 (44) *Report from His Majesty's commissioners for inquiring into the administration and practical operation of the Poor Laws*, p.127.

Figures 4-6: Proportion of paupers (per cent) in receipt of indoor relief in English counties, 1840 - 1860

Figure 4: Quarter ended Lady Day, 1840

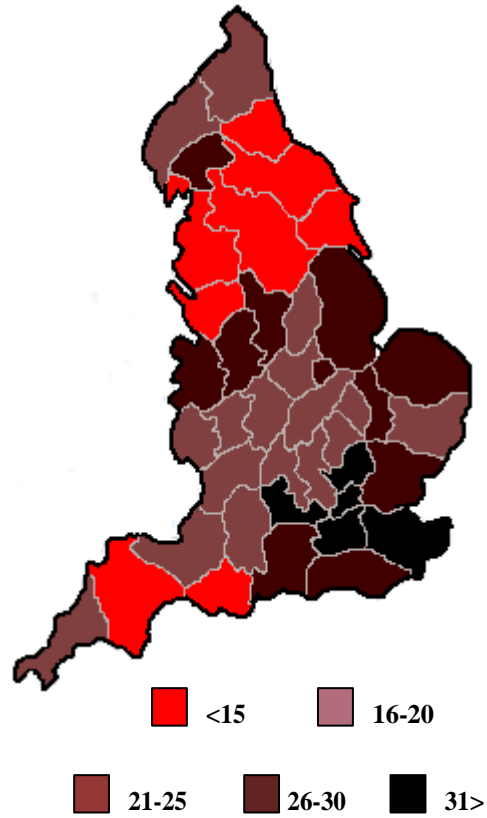


Figure 5: 1<sup>st</sup> July, 1850

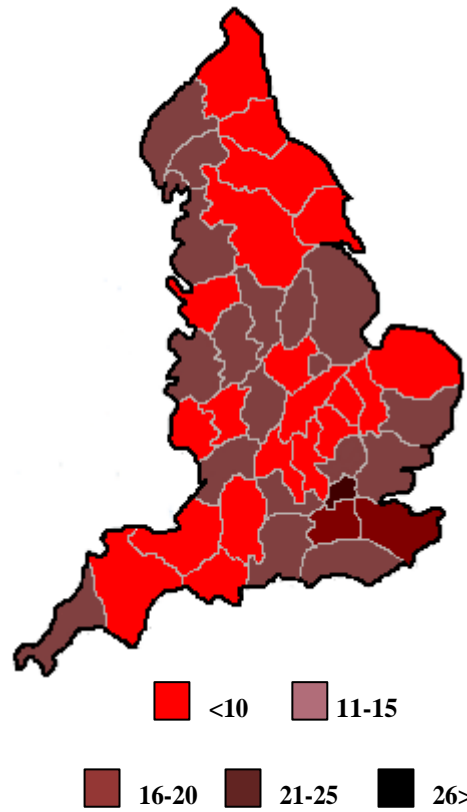
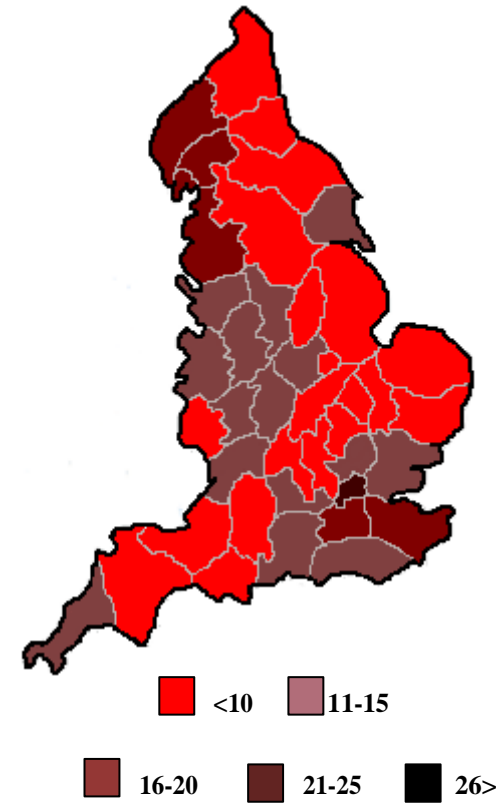


Figure 6: 1<sup>st</sup> July, 1860



Sources: Figure 1: P.P. 1841 (126); P.P. 1852 (583); P.P. 1860 (383B.)



with which some southern and eastern unions initially applied the 'principles of 1834' was not maintained in the long term.<sup>20</sup> Of course, workhouses did not just accommodate the able-bodied. These were complex institutions which also housed the weak and the vulnerable.<sup>21</sup> Nonetheless, given that the Prohibitory Order dictated that Guardians had to send able-bodied applicants to the workhouse, it is perhaps surprising that ratios of pauperism were not higher in this part of the country. Indeed, by 1860 they were highest in places where the Prohibitory Order was *not* applied. London is the most notable example, having by some way the highest proportion of indoor paupers in the country despite not operating under the Prohibitory Order, but the Capital was something of an anomaly as Green has demonstrated.<sup>22</sup> From the early nineteenth century, workhouses had been used extensively in London as a practical response to the socio-economic problem of an overstocked labour market and very high population turnover. The institution was therefore used on a scale not replicated elsewhere.<sup>23</sup> Workhouses had, however, also played an important role in certain of the larger Lancashire parishes under the Old Poor Law, particularly in Manchester and Liverpool, and figures 4-6 indicate a growing role for the institution in the county between 1840 and 1860.<sup>24</sup> By the end of our period, Lancashire had among the highest ratios of indoor pauperism in the country. It is to relief administration here that we now turn.

## **2 (ii) The geography of pauperism in Lancashire**

Analysis of Poor Law administration at the national level, though instructive, can mask significant variations within counties. This is a particularly pertinent point in relation to Lancashire in our period, where teeming industrial centres sat, like blots on paper, against the backdrop of a vast rural landscape. The socio-economic diversity of Lancashire, as with the country as a whole, led to the development of relief practices which reflected local circumstances. In this section various published and unpublished statistical returns are used to examine how the Poor Law operated across the county. Prior to 1857, the central authority did not publish a consistent series of annual

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<sup>20</sup> Digby, 'The rural Poor Law', p.158; Snell, *Annals of the labouring poor*, p.132.

<sup>21</sup> M. A. Crowther, *The workhouse system, 1834-1945: the history of an English social institution* (1981).

<sup>22</sup> Green, *Pauper Capital*, 115-157.

<sup>23</sup> On 1<sup>st</sup> July, 1860, for example, 30 per cent of paupers in Middlesex (London division) were in workhouses. The next closest county was Kent, with 18 per cent.

<sup>24</sup> C. D. King, 'The Liverpool Brownlow Hill institution', *Liverpool Medical Institution* (website, see bibliography for full reference); Oxley, *Poor relief*, pp.79-101; G. B. Hindle, *Provision for the relief of the poor in Manchester, 1754-1826* (1975) chapter 2.

**Table 1 : Proportion of the population in receipt of relief,  
Lancashire unions, 1st July 1860**

| Settlement type and union | Population | Total number of paupers | Pauperism as per cent of population |
|---------------------------|------------|-------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| <b>Conurbation</b>        |            |                         |                                     |
| Chorlton                  | 169,573    | 2,765                   | 1.6                                 |
| Liverpool                 | 269,733    | 14,242                  | 5.2                                 |
| Manchester                | 185,040    | 5,206                   | 2.8                                 |
| Prestwich                 | 58,575     | 631                     | 1                                   |
| Salford                   | 105,334    | 2,439                   | 2.3                                 |
| Toxteth Park              | 61,334     | 1,800                   | 2.9                                 |
| West Derby                | 156,327    | 3,126                   | 1.9                                 |
| Average                   | 143,702    | 4,315                   | 3                                   |
| <b>Urban industrial</b>   |            |                         |                                     |
| Ashton under Lyne         | 134,761    | 1,803                   | 1.3                                 |
| Barton upon Irwell        | 39,050     | 879                     | 2.2                                 |
| Blackburn                 | 119,937    | 2,923                   | 2.4                                 |
| Bolton                    | 130,270    | 3,381                   | 2.5                                 |
| Burnley                   | 75,588     | 1,488                   | 1.9                                 |
| Bury                      | 101,142    | 2,104                   | 2                                   |
| Chorley                   | 41,679     | 1,316                   | 3.1                                 |
| Leigh                     | 37,697     | 859                     | 2.2                                 |
| Oldham                    | 111,267    | 1,749                   | 1.5                                 |
| Prescot                   | 73,112     | 1,855                   | 2.5                                 |
| Preston                   | 110,488    | 3,339                   | 3                                   |
| Rochdale                  | 91,758     | 2,103                   | 2.2                                 |
| Warrington                | 43,788     | 1,265                   | 2.8                                 |
| Wigan                     | 94,559     | 2,692                   | 2.8                                 |
| Average                   | 86,078     | 1,982                   | 2.3                                 |
| <b>Rural</b>              |            |                         |                                     |
| Clitheroe                 | 20,476     | 649                     | 3.1                                 |
| Fylde                     | 25,681     | 719                     | 2.7                                 |
| Garstang                  | 12,424     | 456                     | 3.6                                 |
| Haslingden                | 69,782     | 900                     | 1.2                                 |
| Lancaster                 | 24,019     | 943                     | 3.9                                 |
| Ormskirk                  | 46,250     | 745                     | 1.6                                 |
| Ulverston                 | 35,734     | 1,147                   | 3.2                                 |
| Average                   | 33,480     | 794                     | 2.3                                 |

Source: P.P. 1860 (383B.).

pauperism statistics for each union as they did with the county figures used above. Thus, the data utilised here has been derived from *ad hoc* published central reports, as well an unpublished series of statistics compiled by H. B. Farnall, Poor Law Inspector for Lancashire in the early 1850s, which appear in his MH32 correspondence files.<sup>25</sup>

<sup>25</sup> The National Archives (T.N.A.) MH32/23.

### The extent of pauperism

Despite socio-economic diversity, a common feature of Lancashire's Poor Law unions was an almost uniformly low rate of pauperism in 'normal' times. This is demonstrated in Table 1 which, adopting an approach devised by Gritt and Park, categorises the county's unions into three broad settlement types: conurbation, urban industrial and rural.<sup>26</sup> On 1<sup>st</sup> July 1860, a normal year despite the imminent Lancashire Cotton Famine, average rates of pauperism fell within a rather narrow margin right across these districts, being between 2.3 and 3 per cent.<sup>27</sup> However, within these averages the experience could vary considerably. The lowest rates of pauperism tended to be in unions close to Manchester and Liverpool, which presumably reflected at least in part the wider availability of work in large urban centres. After all, many English migrants in Lancashire's towns, as Anderson has demonstrated, had been born fewer than ten miles away.<sup>28</sup> Thus, the unions of Ashton under Lyne, Chorlton, Haslingden, Oldham and Prestwich, all near Manchester, and West Derby and Ormskirk, both near Liverpool, each experienced pauperism rates of less than 2 per cent. The highest figures, on the other hand, are found in the northernmost rural unions of Clitheroe, Garstang, Lancaster and Ulverston, where pauperism was over 3 per cent. Perhaps significantly, these rural unions were all furthest away from the industrial towns. The clear exception in the overall picture, with pauperism standing at 5.2 per cent, is Liverpool. The Parish of Liverpool did not operate under the auspices of the central authority, having in 1841 successfully fought against unionisation and absorption into the new mode of administration.<sup>29</sup> In 1832 Gilbert Henderson, the Assistant Commissioner reporting on Lancashire, wrote very favourably of the Liverpool Select Vestry, and the Parish operated under this body until 1922.<sup>30</sup> This retention of local autonomy was unusual, but as the most densely populated town (for Liverpool was not a city until 1880) in the county, and burdened by tremendous numbers of poor migrants arriving daily from Ireland, Liverpool, like London, was something of an anomaly.<sup>31</sup>

### The use of workhouses

At the aggregate level Lancashire reflected the country at large in having only a small minority of its paupers in workhouses as we saw in the previous section. However, it was also evident that

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<sup>26</sup> A. Gritt and P. Park, 'Workhouse populations of Lancashire in 1881', *Local Population Studies*, 86 (2011), pp.36-55. These districts are discussed in the Introduction of this thesis.

<sup>27</sup> For the Famine, see: W. O. Henderson, *The Lancashire Cotton Famine, 1861-65* (1969).

<sup>28</sup> Anderson, *Family structure in nineteenth century Lancashire* (1971), pp.34-42.

<sup>29</sup> E. C. Midwinter, *Social administration in Lancashire: Poor Law, public health, police* (1969), pp.17-18.

<sup>30</sup> P.P. 1834 (44) *Report from his Majesty's commissioners for inquiring into the administration and practical operation of the Poor Laws*, pp.912-917.

<sup>31</sup> For Irish immigration into Lancashire, see: F. Neal, 'Lancashire, the Famine Irish and the Poor Laws: a study in crisis management', *European Studies Research Institute* (2004), University of Salford, p.7.

Figures 7-9: Proportion of paupers (per cent) in receipt of indoor relief in Lancashire, 1846-1860

Figure 7:  
20<sup>th</sup> September, 1846

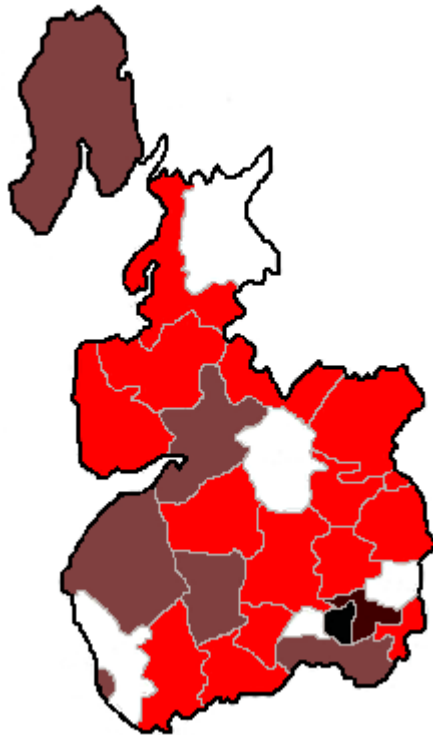


Figure 8:  
w/e 30<sup>th</sup> September, 1853

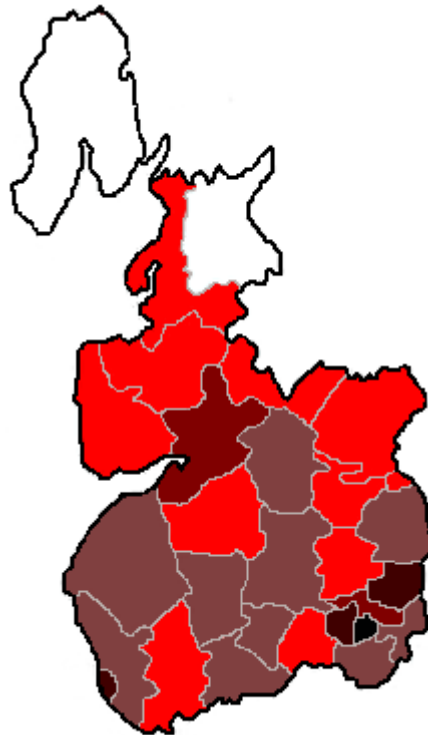
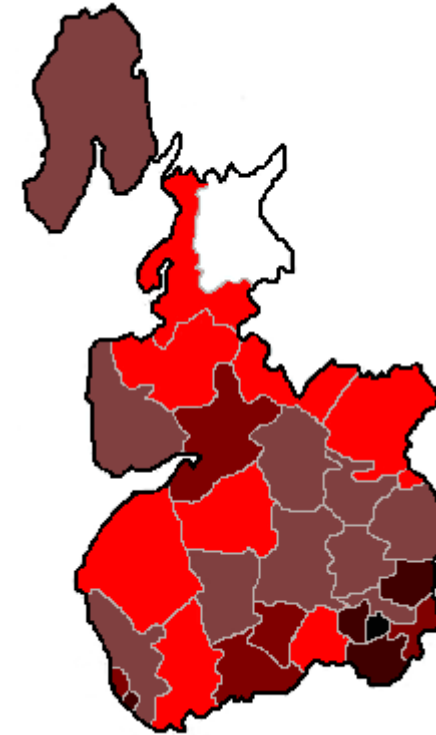


Figure 9:  
1<sup>st</sup> July, 1860



Sources and notes: Figure 3.7: P.P. 1847-1848 (642) Return of the number of families relieved with outdoor relief; Figure 3.8: T.N.A. MH32/23; Figure 3.9: P.P. 1860 (383B). Where unions have been left blank, data was not available. The consistent exception is the Caton union, adjacent to Lancaster, which was not a Poor Law union in our period.

the use of these institutions had increased in the county by 1860. The nature of this increase comes into sharper focus in Figures 7-9, which show the proportion of paupers relieved inside a workhouse at three points in time between 1846 and 1860. We find, as expected, a noticeable rise in the proportion of indoor paupers over the period, but one which was uneven. It occurred almost exclusively in the conurbation and urban industrial districts in the north-eastern and south-eastern parts of the county; in other words, in those unions which centred upon large industrial towns. By 1860 every union in this area, with the exception of Burnley, had over 11 per cent of their paupers in workhouses, and in the wider Manchester area four unions - Chorlton, Manchester, Oldham and Salford - had over 20 per cent. Amongst these unions, Manchester stands out. Whereas the proportion of indoor paupers stood at between 21 and 22 per cent in Chorlton, Oldham and Salford, it was 40 per cent in Manchester, a figure more than double the Lancashire average and higher than the London average. In most of the county's rural unions (the south western and northern parts of the county), the experience was very different. Here, indoor pauperism was consistently much lower, and it would not rise above 10 per cent in most cases in our period.

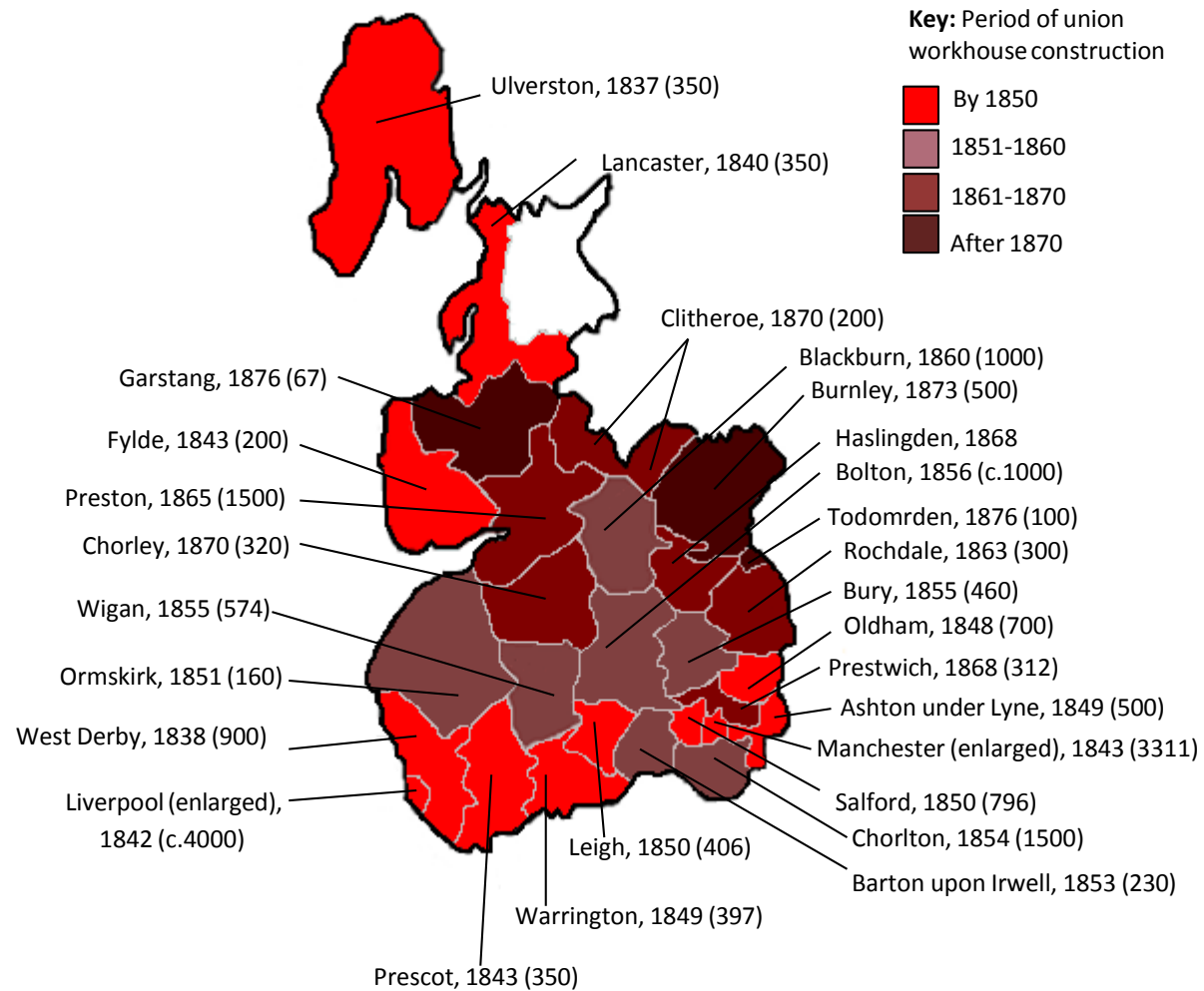
The increasing importance of the workhouse in industrial Lancashire between 1840 and 1860 has not previously been recognised by historians. It must call into question a historiography which claims that the workhouse system was, during the 1840s and 1850s, thoroughly rejected in the north of England by Guardians who stubbornly refused to conform to the New Poor Law.<sup>32</sup> Ashforth's work on the Poor Law in the north has put forward this view most strongly. His interpretation is based on the apparent lack of workhouse construction in Lancashire and Yorkshire before the 1850s: 'No workhouses' states Ashforth, 'were built in the West Riding of Yorkshire during the 1840s, [and] in Lancashire...the general response was equally poor.'<sup>33</sup> Yet, as far as Lancashire is concerned this statement is simply incorrect. In fact, a significant number of union workhouses had been built in the county by 1850. Figure 10 shows the year in which construction on workhouses began in every union in Lancashire after 1837. We find that, far from an absence of workhouse construction, twelve unions in the county, just under half of the total, had erected or were in the process of erecting new workhouses by 1850. Indeed, a number of unions decided almost as soon as they were formed to construct new workhouses. This was the case in the Fylde,

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<sup>32</sup> D. Ashforth, 'The urban Poor Law', in D. Fraser (ed.) *The New Poor Law in the nineteenth century* (1976), pp.95-155; R. Boyson, *The history of Poor Law administration in north-east Lancashire, 1837-1871* (1960), M.A. thesis; Midwinter, *Social administration*, p.61 claimed that 'It would appear that the pattern of union workhouse construction [in Lancashire] did not crystallise until the 1860s.'

<sup>33</sup> D. Ashforth, 'The urban Poor Law', p.84. This view has been repeated in other studies. See, for example, Lees, *The solidarities of strangers*, p.149.

**Figure 10: Workhouse accommodation and construction in Lancashire**



**Sources and notes:** P.P. 1854-55 (524) *Return of every union showing the amount of accommodation in each for the year ending 31<sup>st</sup> December 1854*. The year of construction and the size of some workhouses were ascertained from [www.workhouses.org.uk](http://www.workhouses.org.uk). The year which follows the name of each union indicates when the decision to build a union workhouse was resolved. Usually, a workhouse would be completed within two years. The bracketed figure indicates the size of the workhouse when completed.

Lancaster, Ulverston, Prescot and West Derby unions, all of which had built new workhouses by 1843. Moreover, towards the end of the 1840s a spate of large workhouses were constructed in south-east Lancashire which continued, almost domino like, into the 1850s. By 1855, every union with an urban centre less than ten miles from Manchester had built a union workhouse. While it would be wrong to suggest, given the enduring dominance of outdoor relief, that an indoor welfare culture emerged in south-east Lancashire between 1840 and 1860, there is a direct correlation between workhouse construction in the region and an increasing proportion of indoor paupers which certainly points to a shift in the way poor relief was administered at local level.

The sheer size of some of the workhouses built in Lancashire at this time is also significant, as Figure 10 further demonstrates. When the union of Manchester and the Parish of Liverpool enlarged their workhouses in the 1840s, they did so on a massive scale. In 1843, Manchester Bridge Street workhouse was extended to hold 1500 inmates, and in 1845 Liverpool's Brownlow Hill workhouse was overhauled almost completely to accommodate around 3000.<sup>34</sup> With further structures added - including the huge Swinton Industrial School for pauper children - Manchester's aggregate workhouse accommodation stood at 3300 by mid-century, and Liverpool's 4096; in 1853 Liverpool and Manchester each possessed more workhouse accommodation than any other union or parish in the country.<sup>35</sup> Elsewhere in the 1840s and early 1850s, Oldham union build a workhouse capable of accommodating 700 inmates, Salford 800, West Derby 900 and Chorlton 1500. Moreover, some of the unions which did resist building a union workhouse during the 1850s ended up building very large ones. Blackburn union workhouse, opened in 1864, could accommodate 1000 inmates, and the Preston union workhouse, opened in 1868, could hold 1500. Thus, by 1870, when the process of union workhouse construction in Lancashire was almost complete, six unions in the county (seven if we include the Parish of Liverpool) had built workhouses able to accommodate over 1000 inmates. A similar concentration of such large workhouses did not exist anywhere outside of London, and viewed from this perspective the most significant feature of workhouse construction in Lancashire was not the resistance of Boards of Guardians, but the sheer size of the institutions many of them built.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> King, 'The Liverpool Brownlow Hill institution' p.34; [www.workhouses.org](http://www.workhouses.org).

<sup>35</sup> P.P. 1854-55 (524).

<sup>36</sup> Gritt and Park have shown that in 1881 6 unions in Lancashire (7 if we include Liverpool) had more than 1000 paupers in a workhouse on 1<sup>st</sup> January. Only London had a higher number, and no other county had more than two such unions. A. Gritt and P. Park, 'Workhouse population of Lancashire in 1881', *Local Population Studies*, 86, 2011, p.65.

The preceding analysis bring into focus an important question: were Boards of Guardians in Lancashire implementing a workhouse test in our period? The prevailing historiographical view is that they were not and the evidence presented in this section, on the whole, supports such an interpretation.<sup>37</sup> While the provision of indoor relief increased in many unions over our period as new workhouses were constructed, in 1860 only a handful of unions had as many as two in ten paupers in a workhouse. Manchester was something of an exception with four in ten, but its workhouses included a large school and a hospital, and it cannot be assumed that the greater than average indoor figure represents the implementation of punitive policies. Of course, the orthodox workhouse test was aimed squarely at the able-bodied, but even taking this group alone into account outdoor relief was still overwhelmingly dominant as demonstrated in Table 2. Even in 1860, only 20 per cent of able-bodied male paupers in Lancashire were inside a workhouse at any one time. Thus, although most unions probably used their workhouses to ‘test’ the poverty of individuals deemed to be of ‘bad character’, and this was certainly policy in Preston union as we shall see in Chapter 4, it seems clear that relief applicants were not, as a rule, routinely offered the workhouse in our period.

This assertion can be tested. During the Crusade against outdoor relief of the 1870s and 1880s unions were encouraged by the central authority to employ the workhouse test against all relief applicants (lunatics and other particularly vulnerable groups excepted), as opposed to just the able-bodied as had previously been official policy.<sup>38</sup> In Lancashire four unions, all industrial - Manchester, Liverpool, Salford and Preston – enthusiastically implemented the scheme. These ‘restrictor’ unions, as Williams defines them, had 70 per cent or more of their paupers in a workhouse at any one time.<sup>39</sup> The Crusade was enacted not through compulsory formal regulations but local initiative, and Pratt has shown that orthodox crusading policies were rejected in Wigan union.<sup>40</sup> A brief examination of how they were implemented in one restrictor union, Preston, can tell us something about earlier policy and practice.

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<sup>37</sup> See, for example, Ashforth, ‘The urban Poor Law’, pp.128-148; Driver, *Power and pauperism*, pp.48-53; N. C. Edsall, *The anti-Poor Law movement, 1834-44* (1971), p.48; Midwinter, *Social administration*, pp.49-62; M. E. Rose, ‘The allowance system under the New Poor Law’, *Economic History Review*, 19 (1966), pp.607-620; J. K. Walton, *Lancashire: a social history, 1558-1939* (1987), pp.195-197.

<sup>38</sup> E. T. Hurren, *Protesting about pauperism: poverty, politics and poor relief in late-Victorian England, 1870-1900* (2007); M. MacKinnon, ‘English Poor Law policy and the Crusade against outdoor relief’, *Journal of Economic History*, 3 (1987), 603-25; Williams, *From pauperism to poverty*.

<sup>39</sup> Williams, *From Pauperism*, p.105.

<sup>40</sup> J. Pratt, *Paternalistic, Parsimonious Pragmatists: The Wigan Board of Guardians and the Administration of the English Poor Laws, 1880-1900* (2011), PhD thesis, pp.188-194.



**Table 2: Able-bodied adult males and females in receipt of relief, 1st July 1851 and 1861**

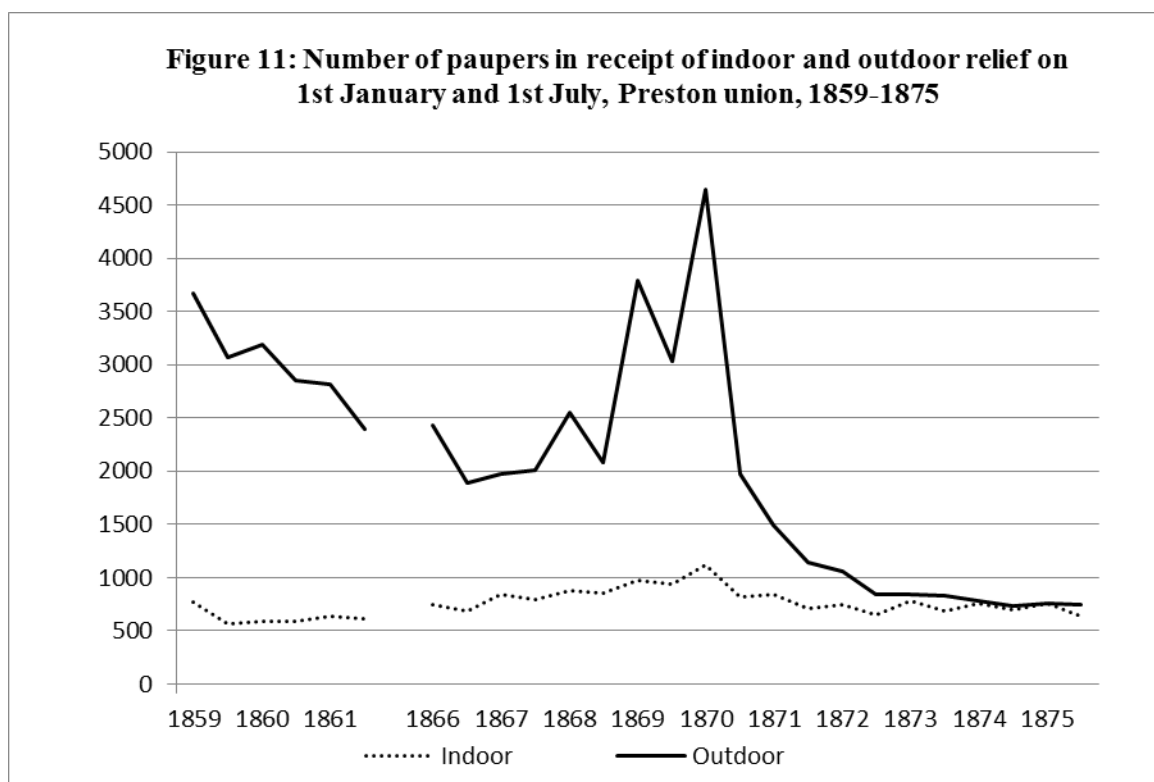
|                | Males  |         | Females |         | Total  |         |
|----------------|--------|---------|---------|---------|--------|---------|
|                | Indoor | Outdoor | Indoor  | Outdoor | Indoor | Outdoor |
| 1st July, 1850 | 273    | 3,735   | 434     | 9,775   | 707    | 13,510  |
| 1st July, 1860 | 417    | 1,662   | 1,066   | 7,697   | 1,483  | 9,359   |

**Source:** P.P. 1851 (645) *Poor Relief. Returns showing the total number of paupers (indoor and outdoor), and the number of adult able bodied paupers (male and female) in receipt of relief on the first day of July 1851;* 1861 (324B) *Poor rates and pauperism. Return (B.) Paupers relieved on 1st July, 1861.*

Figure 11 shows the number of paupers in receipt of indoor and outdoor relief on 1<sup>st</sup> January and 1<sup>st</sup> July each year in Preston union between 1859 and 1878. Throughout our period, right up to the Cotton Famine of 1861, the number of outdoor paupers had typically fluctuated somewhere between 2500 and 3000 during ‘normal’ times. The gradual decline between 1859 and 1861 reflected in part a recovery from a temporary slump in 1858, and the increase between 1868 and 1870 was also caused by temporary trade downturn.<sup>41</sup> Thereafter, the reduction in outdoor relief is quite staggering. In 1872, the number of outdoor paupers fell below 1000 for the first time in the union’s history, and in 1875 indoor relief overtook outdoor relief for the first time. Between 1860 and 1875, the proportion of the union population in receipt of relief fell from 3 per cent to 1 per cent - the lowest in the county - and outdoor numbers dropped by over a third. Such results clearly point to a radical shift in local policy, and one which could only have been achieved with the use of a deterrent union workhouse. Moreover, that indoor numbers did not significantly increase suggests that a rigorously enforced workhouse test had the effect of inducing people either not to apply to the Guardians, or, when they did, to refuse an offer of indoor relief. Contrary to the views of many historians, the workhouse test *could* work in an industrial union, though at what human cost it was implemented is another matter entirely.<sup>42</sup> We can say little more about this later period, but the evidence presented here demonstrates that local policy in 1870s Preston was *very* different to that of the 1840s and 1850s. Punitive measures of this nature simply were not applied. Indeed, the results of the Crusade may well have stunned most Guardians of our earlier period.

<sup>41</sup> The years of the Cotton Famine (1861-1865) have been excluded from Table 3 because the number of paupers in receipt of relief was so large as to distort the overall pattern.

<sup>42</sup> Ashforth, ‘The urban Poor Law’, pp.95-155; Rose, ‘The allowance system under the New Poor Law’, pp.607-620.



**Sources and notes:** P.P. 1859-1875, *Poor rates and Pauperism. Return (B.) Paupers relieved on 1st January and 1st July*. Data for the years of the 'Cotton Famine' (c.1861-1865) have been purposely left out as they distort the overall figures.

## 2 (iii) The geography of pauperism in Preston union

This final section offers a focussed examination of poor relief administration at the level of an individual union, Preston. The intention is to examine, first, the administrative framework within which the Preston Board of Guardians provided relief to the poor, and to consider how this might have affected the way in which paupers were treated across the union. Second, to examine more fully the relationship between pauperism and socio-economic conditions which, it was argued earlier, had a direct and demonstrable influence on relief administration at local level. This section draws heavily upon unpublished statistical data found primarily in the Guardian's minute books.

### The administrative framework

Studies of Poor Law administration at local level have noted a tendency for the routine weekly duties to devolve upon local committees of Guardians, and Preston union was no different.<sup>43</sup> Each year the Guardians appointed workhouse visiting committees, farming committees, labour committees, district relief committees, and they formed additional *ad hoc* committees when required. Our interest here are the district relief committees, which after their formation in Preston

<sup>43</sup> Midwinter, *Social administration*, p.89.

union in 1841 were responsible for deciding the amount and type of relief to be provided to the poor on a case by case basis. When the union took over the administration of poor relief from the townships in 1838, five Relieving Officers were appointed and each was assigned to a district in the union.<sup>44</sup> Initially, the relief application process was thus: every relief claimant had to apply first to a Relieving Officer, who was to examine the circumstances of their case before reporting to the Board of Guardians. The relief claimant was then to appear before the Guardians to have their case heard and decided upon. For the first three years all the relief cases were heard by a single committee of Guardians. However, this changed in 1841 when the Guardians began to split into two separate divisions, one consisting of the Preston Guardians, the other the out-township Guardians.<sup>45</sup> The ostensible cause of the division was a practical one. In 1841 the union was entering a period of economic depression, and it was claimed that it was taking far too long for a single committee to examine all the cases. However, there was also another reason. Splitting the cases on urban/rural lines allowed the Guardians, each representing their own township, a greater degree of control over the provision of relief to their own poor. From this perspective, the formation of district relief committees acted as a means of undermining the restrictions on local township control purposely imposed by unionisation. It was a move to regain local autonomy, and one which would see relief administration devolve upon smaller and smaller committees throughout our period.

The formation of separate relief committees was an important and controversial issue in Preston union. It was tied inextricably to the question of whether relief claimants should be known personally by the Guardians hearing their cases, as dividing the caseloads by region naturally had the effect of eroding their anonymity. The PLC formally sanctioned the formation of separate committees in large unions in 1842, but the official line was always that relief was more diligently provided when the claimant was unknown to the persons hearing their case.<sup>46</sup> In Preston union, Thomas Batty Addison was strongly opposed to separate committees on precisely this ground, and it was only after he had been replaced in the chair by anti-Poor Law Guardian William Melville Lomas that the Board began dividing the relief cases.<sup>47</sup> In 1854, Addison made his position on the subject quite clear:

When [I try] prisoners at the sessions, [I have] not particular acquaintance with them – (a laugh) – [I have] not especial fondness for them, and had no reason to be more severe on one rather than another...it was exactly the same thing with regard to the

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<sup>44</sup> L.A. PUT/1/3: 3<sup>rd</sup> July, 1838. See the Introduction to this thesis for the size and structure of relief districts.

<sup>45</sup> L.A. PUT/1/6: 6<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> April, 1841.

<sup>46</sup> King, *Poverty and welfare*, p.224.

<sup>47</sup> For a discussion of the 1842 Poor Law election see Chapter 1.

Farnall disfavoured this approach, and suggested that Guardians from one district should mix with those of another so as to induce impartiality. However, the Guardians do not appear to have taken his advice. They preferred to consider the cases from their own districts, and by the end of our period the administration of relief was conducted in a way which cannot have been too far removed from the Old Poor Law vestry system.<sup>51</sup>

### Relief administration in practice

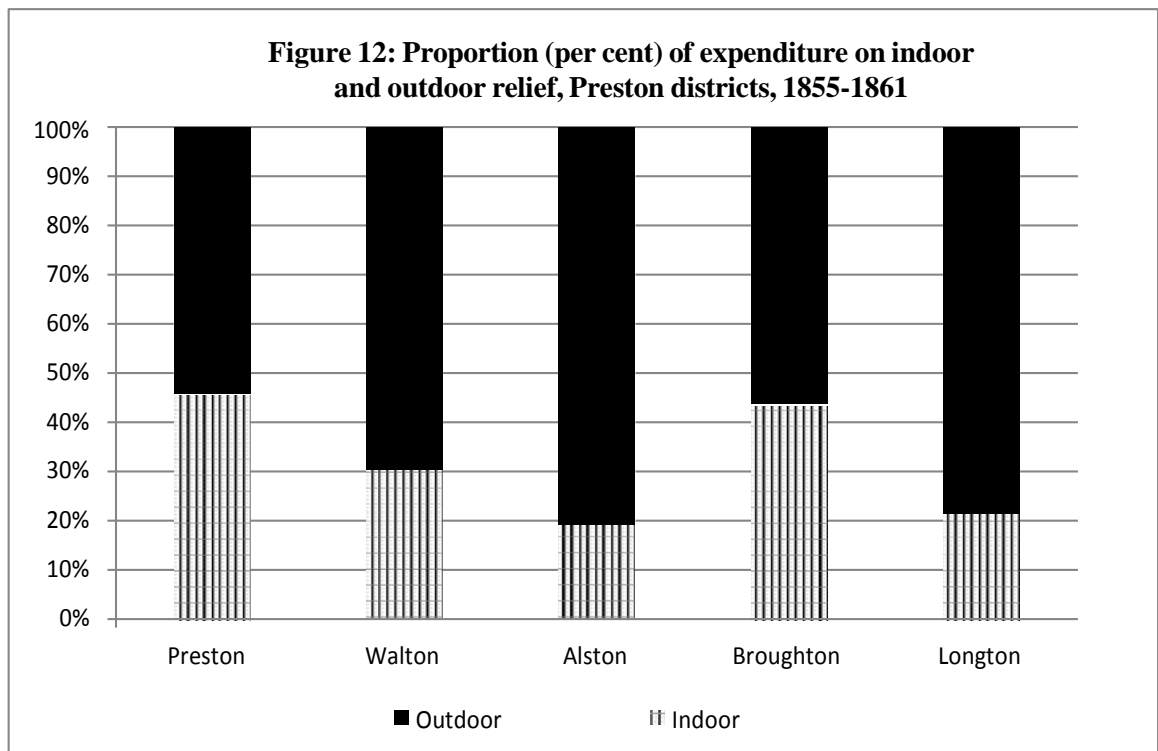
The Guardians' parochial approach to poor relief administration meant, in practice, that it lacked uniformity within Preston union. Not only were numerous committees examining the relief cases separately, with each Guardian bringing his own personal views to the party, but the Guardians' decisions were informed and influenced by the district Relieving Officers who must themselves have held their own biases. It is unfortunate, then, that the individual committee minute books have not survived. However, the general minutes provide weekly statistical data pertaining to each of the five relief districts, and these provide instructive indications of welfare practices across the union. It would be appropriate first to look at the use of workhouses, as this relates to analysis in previous sections. Figure 12 shows the proportion of expenditure on indoor and outdoor relief in the five districts over the years 1855 to 1861, the only period for which such information exists. While it must be noted that it was more expensive to relieve a pauper inside a workhouse than to give them outdoor relief, meaning proportional expenditure is not proxy for the proportion of individuals, it is nonetheless clear that the workhouse played a more central role in the response to poverty in some parts of the union than others.<sup>52</sup> Whereas outdoor relief expenditure was overwhelmingly dominant in the Longton, Alston and Walton le Dale districts, figures of over 40 per cent in the Preston and Broughton districts ranked amongst the highest in Lancashire. During the year ending Lady Day 1861, for example, only six unions in Lancashire spent 40 per cent or more on indoor relief, four of which were in or around the Manchester area where the workhouse played a more prominent role as we saw above, and only Manchester union spent more than 50 per cent.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> The formation of numerous relief committees was not unusual in Lancashire, and Boyson has shown that in the north-east of the county committees could devolve into very small township units. In some unions, the committees included local ratepayers who were not members of the Board of Guardians. Boyson, *The history of Poor Law administration*, pp.144-156.

<sup>52</sup> The cost of maintaining a pauper in the workhouses of Preston union fluctuated between 2s and 3s (higher during periods of depression) a week during the 1840s. The Guardians did not set a uniform scale of outdoor relief, but as we shall see in Chapter 3 the average per capita cost did not get near 2s-3s.

<sup>53</sup> The six unions to spend more than 40 per cent were Chorlton, Liverpool, Manchester, Oldham, Preston and Salford. The county average was 29 per cent. By way of comparison with the post 1870 Crusading years, the Preston union spent 42 per cent on indoor relief during the half year ending Lady Day 1861, but 78 per cent during the half year ending Lady Day 1881. P.P. 1861 (2820) Thirteenth Annual Report of the Poor Law Board; P.P. 1881 (60C) Poor rates and pauperism. Return (C.). In-maintenance and out-relief. Half year ended Lady Day 1881, p.24.



**Source:** L.A. PUT/1/19-25.

The relatively high proportion in the Preston district clearly reflects this broader pattern of higher indoor pauperism in urban centres. Quite why the predominantly rural Broughton district figure is so high is less clear, but a possible explanation is that the district had a much larger than average proportion of its paupers residing in Preston than did the three other districts. As we saw in the introduction to this thesis, over half of Broughton district's paupers were living in the town of Preston in the early 1840s. Again, the link between urban based populations and higher incidences of indoor pauperism is apparent here.

It was stated in the first section of this chapter that socio-economic forces had a direct influence on the extent of pauperism at local level, and this can be demonstrated through quantitative data pertaining to the number of paupers in receipt of indoor and outdoor relief each week. The Preston union clerk, Joseph Thackeray, served the office throughout our period, and he kept a particularly detailed and relatively consistent set of statistical information in the Guardian's minute books. From the late 1830s he began recording the number of indoor paupers relieved weekly, and from the mid-1840s the number of outdoor pauper 'cases' (i.e. applicants) and their dependents. Thus, the minutes offer a means of observing the number of paupers at both the aggregate level and at the level of the individual relief districts, and of assessing the causes of fluctuations.<sup>54</sup> We begin by

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<sup>54</sup> L. A. PUT/1/4-25.

looking at the aggregated indoor and outdoor figures (13-14). These figures cover slightly different lengths of time, the indoor beginning in 1838 and the outdoor in 1844. A direct comparison is therefore not possible, but we are nonetheless able to observe two consistent patterns. The first and most conspicuous are the dramatic peaks during periods of industrial depression. Depression hit the manufacturing districts of Lancashire on three occasions over our period, in 1841-43, 1847-49 and 1857-58, and on each occasion the number of paupers both inside and outside of the workhouse rose significantly. During the first two periods the workhouses were filled way beyond their maximum capacity of 934, and it was on these occasions that Thomas Batty Addison was challenged for the chair by Joseph Livesey and others who opposed his indoor approach to relief administration as we saw in the previous chapter. The second pattern is seasonal, and particularly apparent from 1854. An augmentation of poverty during the winter months of December and February was a common feature of Poor Law administration, and both rural and urban day labourers, whose work was dependent upon the elements, were particularly vulnerable at this time of the year.<sup>55</sup>

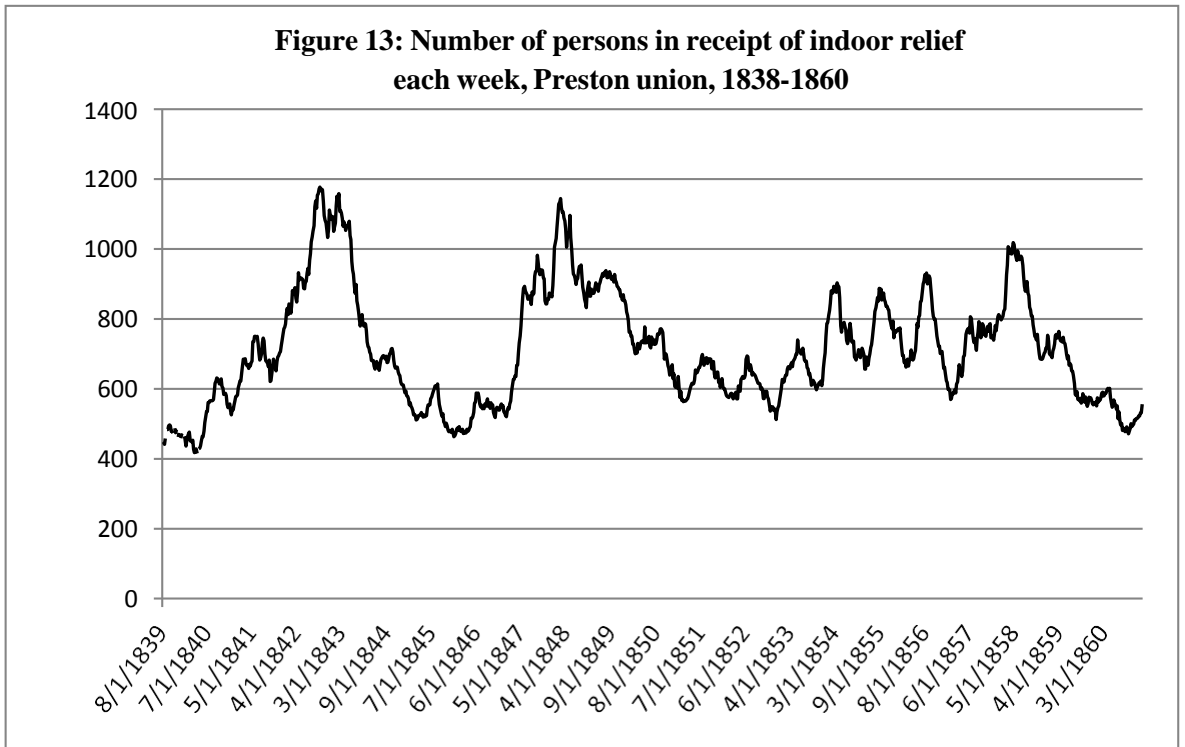
Looking at the broader trend across these figures, there is a clear general increase in the number of indoor and outdoor paupers during the mid-1850s. This appears to have been common to unions across Lancashire, for in November 1855 H. B. Farnall wrote to each union in the county asking why the number of paupers had risen during the preceding year. In Preston Union, Joseph Thackeray responded by explaining that the rise was 'owing to the increased price of food, meal+c., less labour arising from different causes...and the wives and children becoming chargeable of men who have enrolled.'<sup>56</sup> His explanation is instructive. The economic aspect – 'the increased price of food' - is in keeping with the findings of economic historians who have argued that the mid-1850s was a period of general heavy inflation.<sup>57</sup> Further, in claiming that a 'lack of labour' was part of the cause, Thackeray pointed specifically to the enduring effects of the 'late strike', a direct reference to the Preston Lock-Out of 1853-54 which we discuss below. Finally, his view that the wives and children and men who had 'enrolled' (which presumably meant signed up to the army or navy during the Crimean War) came before the Guardians in large numbers is supported in Poor Law

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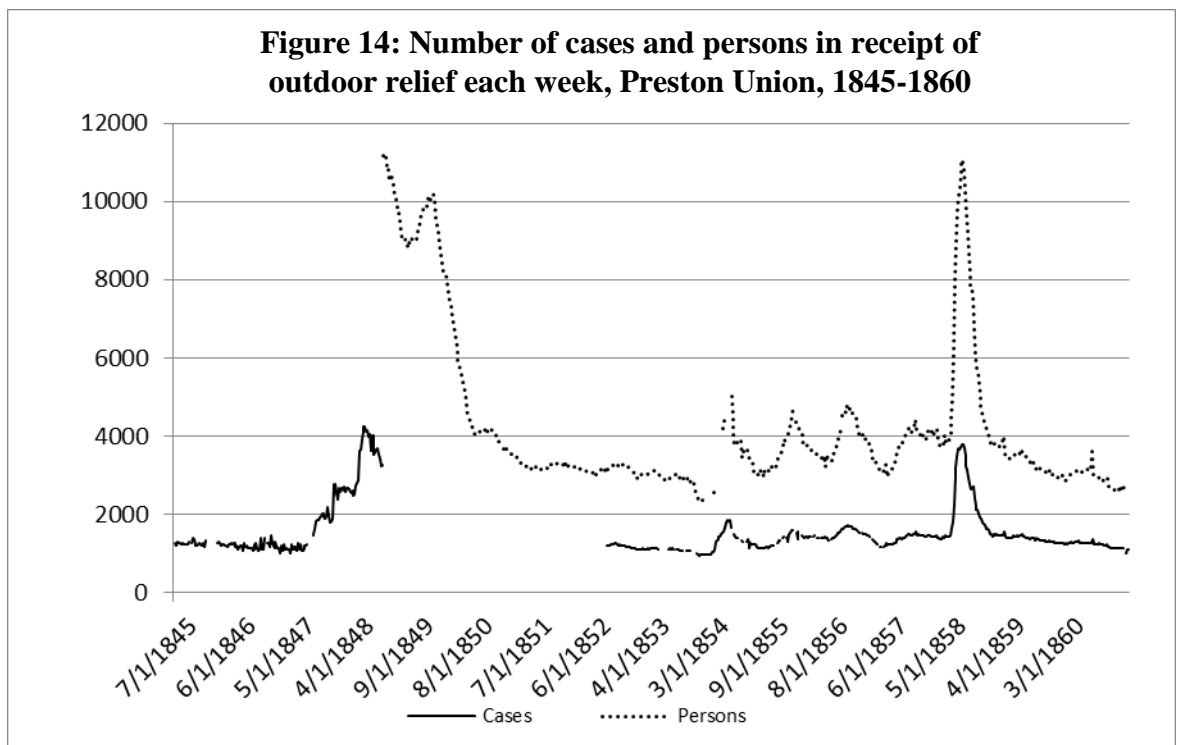
<sup>55</sup> Anderson, *Family structure*, pp.23.

<sup>56</sup> T. N. A. MH32/23: Most responses from unions in Lancashire also put the increase down to inflation.

<sup>57</sup> R. A. Church, *The Great Victorian Boom* (1975); F. Crouzet, *The Victorian economy* (2006), pp.54-58.



Sources: L.A. PUT/1/3-25.



Sources: L.A. PUT/1/11-25.

statistics as we shall see in the next chapter. What Thackeray provides in this statement, then, is a valuable insight into how a range of factors, both endogenous and exogenous, social and economic, were able, even during relatively normal times to determine the number of people requiring support from the Poor Law at any given moment. The Poor Law demonstrably responded to increased need, as the augmented pauper numbers testify.

Disaggregating the outdoor relief figures allows us to examine how each of the five relief districts fit into this overall pattern (Figures 15-19). Comparable district statistics for indoor relief are not available, which is frustrating but not too problematic as the vast majority of paupers were in receipt of outdoor relief. The most significant feature of these disaggregated figures is that the general pattern of relief over this fifteen year period was remarkably similar across all the relief districts, the intensity of certain fluctuations notwithstanding. In each district the number of paupers increases significantly over 1847-49, and again, though less noticeably, over 1857-58. There are, of course, minor anomalies in each district which must have reflected local circumstances, but the influence of the sort of social and economic factors identified by Thackeray in determining the number of paupers in receipt of relief is clearly observable in these figures. This is particularly true of the Preston district itself (Figure 15). From 1848 the Guardians began dividing this district across two independent committees, each with its own Relieving Officer, and yet the timing and intensity of fluctuations mirror each other almost exactly.<sup>58</sup>

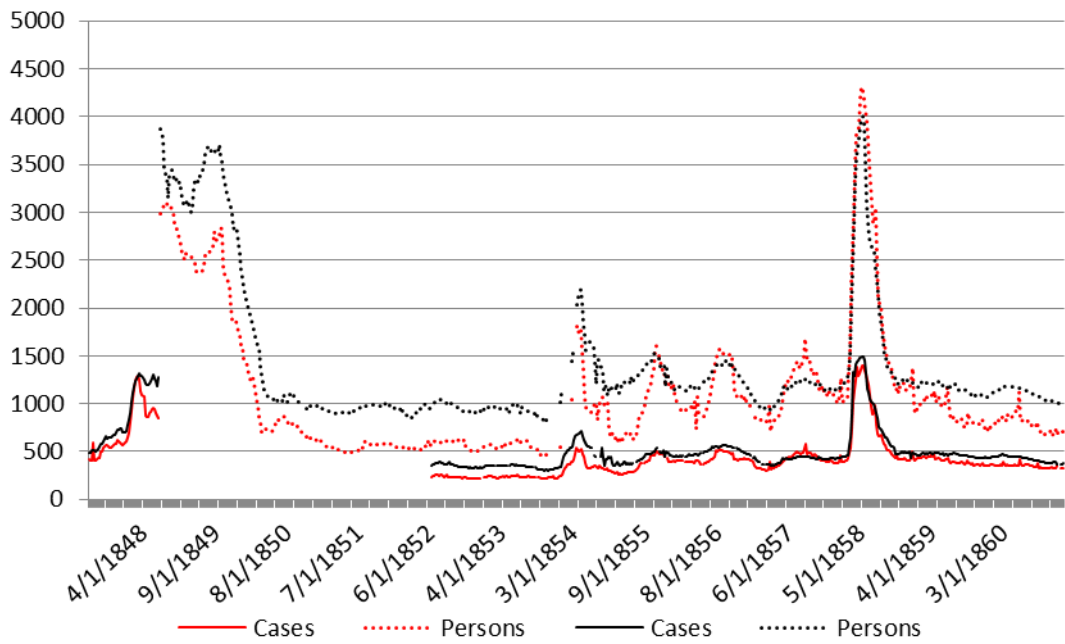
The similar general pattern of fluctuations across the relief districts can largely be explained by the demographic structure of the union. As the vast majority of the population of Preston union (some 70 per cent) were concentrated in the urban centre of Preston, which relied heavily upon the prosperity of its staple industry, cotton, a downturn in the cotton industry had severe implications. Each relief district felt the effects of a downturn for a number of reasons. First, many people residing in the town of Preston were actually legally settled in other townships of the union, and these townships maintained responsibility for their maintenance. A downturn in the town of Preston, therefore, impacted directly upon the out-district relief committees. Moreover, cotton factories were by no means confined to the town of Preston as we saw in the Introduction. In growing villages such as Walton le Dale and Farrington, cotton mills provided employment to a significant proportion of the local population. Thus, even if Preston was taken out of the equation, the other relief districts would still have been heavily affected by the depression. Finally, it must be remembered that downturn in the cotton industry did not only directly affect people who worked

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<sup>58</sup> L.A. PUT/1/13: 30<sup>th</sup> May, 1848.

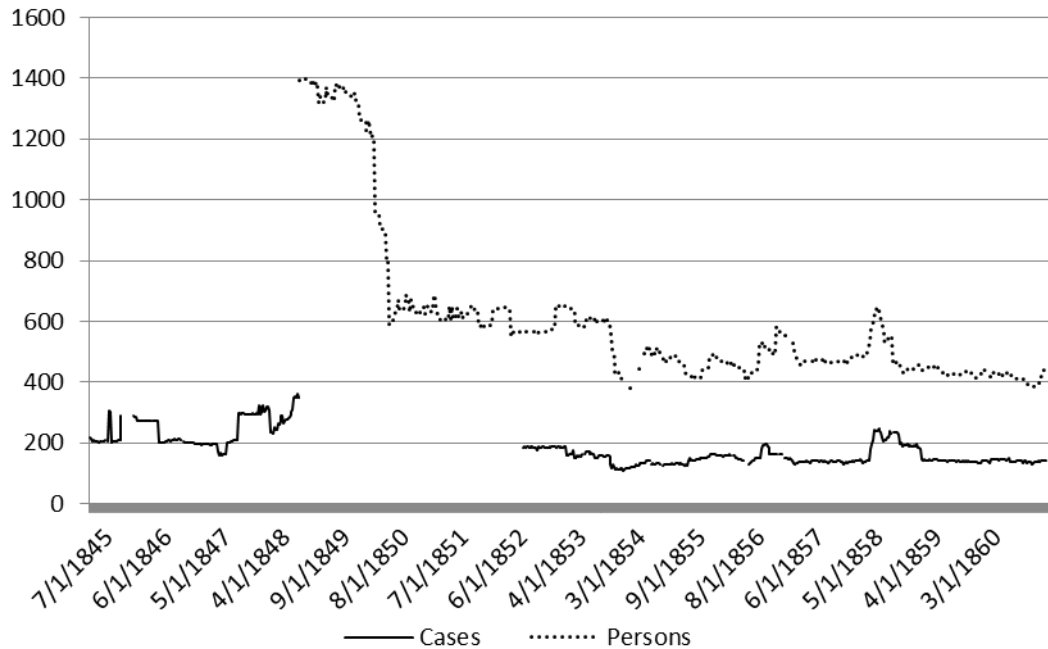


**Figure 15: Number of cases and persons in receipt of outdoor relief each week, Preston district (two divisions), 1848-1860**



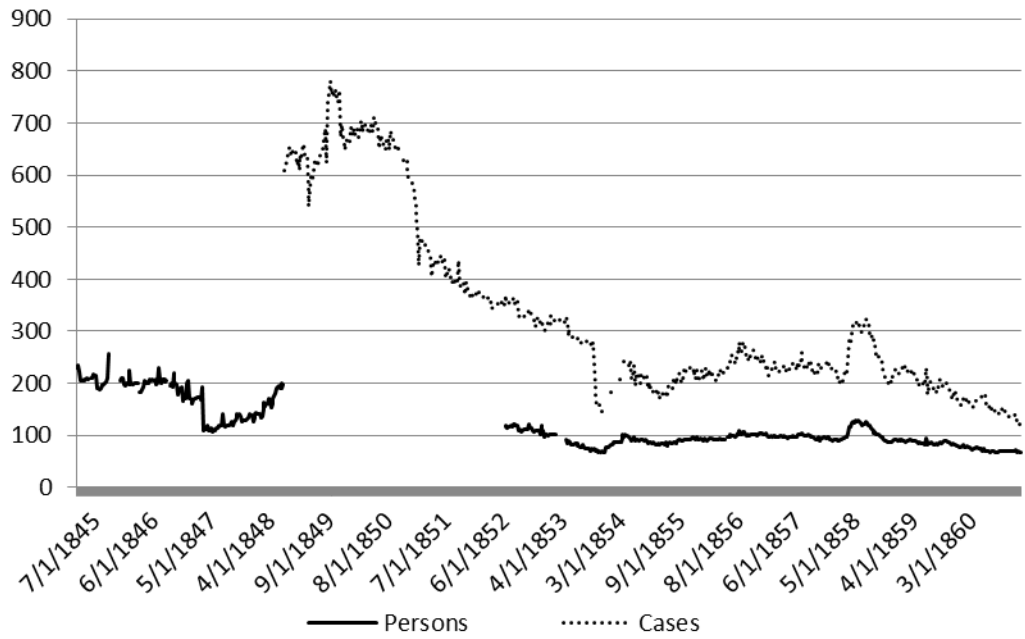
Sources: L.A. PUT/1/14-25.

**Figure 16: Number of cases and persons in receipt of outdoor relief each week, Alston district, 1845-1860**



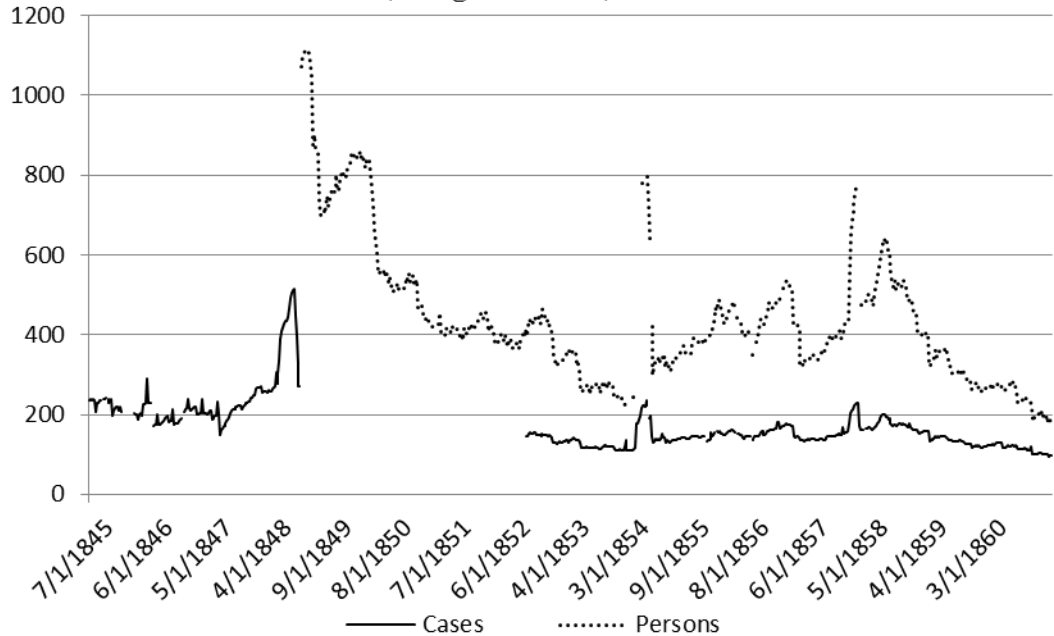
Sources: L.A. PUT/1/11-25.

**Figure 17: Number of cases and persons in receipt of outdoor relief each week, Broughton district, 1845-1860**

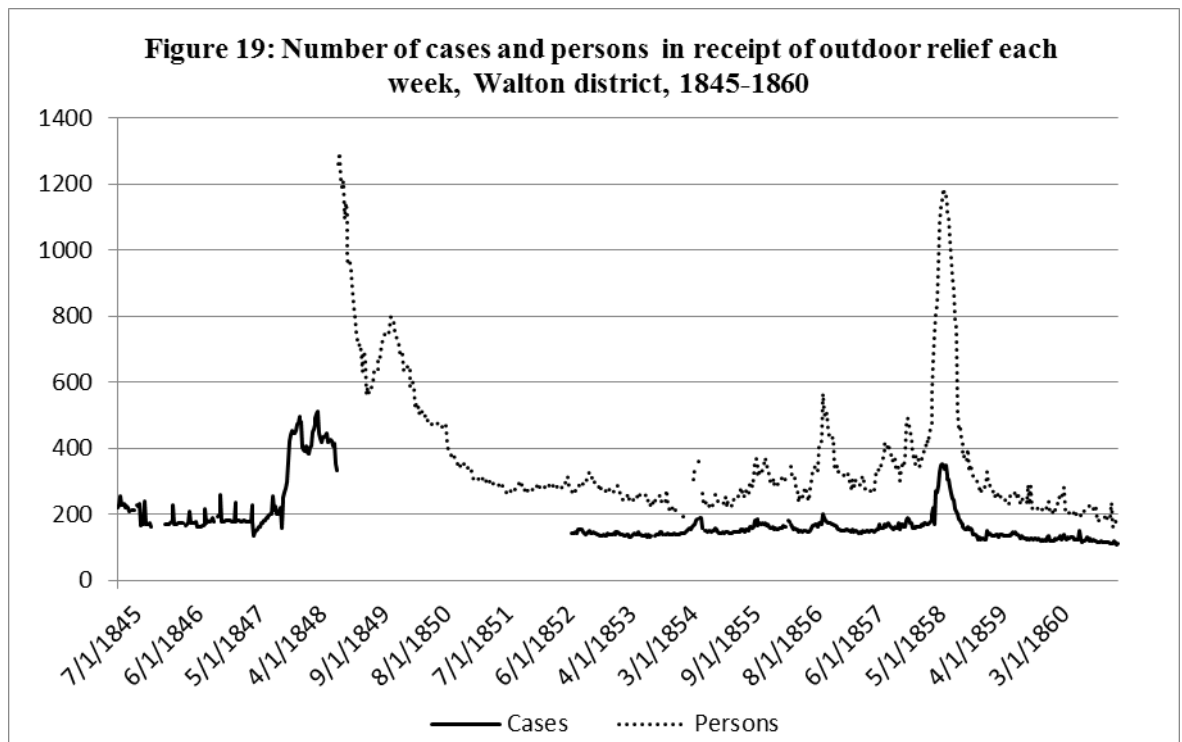


Sources: L.A. PUT/1/11-25.

**Figure 18: Number of cases and persons in receipt of outdoor relief each week, Longton district, 1845-1860**



Sources: L.A. PUT/1/11-25.



Sources: L.A. PUT/11-25.

in mills. It also severely affected domestic hand loom weavers, who in Preston and the wider central Lancashire area still existed in relatively large numbers at mid-century, as well as shopkeepers and other providers as demands for goods and services declined.<sup>59</sup>

Outside of exogenous economic factors, these disaggregated outdoor relief figures also demonstrate how more localised events or issues could impact upon the number of paupers requiring relief. We refer here specifically to the Preston Lock-Out of 1853-54, which Joseph Thackeray mentioned as a causal factor for rising pauperism in Preston union as noted above. The Lock-Out was a protracted period of industrial conflict which centred upon the town of Preston, but which also had implications on certain townships in the wider region.<sup>60</sup> The dispute began when weavers and mill operatives went on strike demanding that the 10 per cent the masters had cut from wages during the depression of 1847-49 be restored. Some of the mill owners refused, and a general lock-out was announced in October 1853 when negotiations failed. The Preston Guardians, placed in a difficult position, made the decision not to provide relief to the unemployed and their

<sup>59</sup> G. Timmins, *The last shift? The decline of handloom weaving in nineteenth century Lancashire* (1993), pp.108-111.

<sup>60</sup> See R. Bradshaw, *The Preston Lock-Out: a case study of a mid-nineteenth century Lancashire cotton strike* (1972), M.A. Thesis; H. I. Dutton and J. E. King, *Ten per cent no surrender: the Preston strike, 1853-1854* (1981).

families because to do so would have the effect of prolonging the strike.<sup>61</sup> Figure 15 (above) indicates that the Guardians generally stuck to this policy, although King and Dutton argue that the locked out weavers and mill operatives held out from applying for relief anyway, surviving instead on subscriptions from neighbouring mill towns.<sup>62</sup> In any case, very few received support from the two Preston district relief committees. Despite a notable upturn in 1854, the aggregate number of paupers, many of whom would not have been involved in the Lock-out, peaked at fewer than 4000. This was a marginal figure against the c.20,000 operatives involved in the six month event. Elsewhere in the union, the Walton le Dale relief committee figures also show barely an increase at all during the period of the Lock-Out. This is presumably because the two chief mill owners in the area, William Calvert and Richard Ashworth, were already paying the 10 per cent and decided not to close their mills.<sup>63</sup> The same, however, cannot be said of the Longton district. Here, the closing of Balshaw's huge Farrington mill brought an almost fourfold increase in the number of 'persons' in receipt of outdoor relief. One assumes that as the Farrington based weavers and operatives were not directly involved in the Preston strike, the Guardians of the Longton district relief committee was willing to aid those left unemployed as a result of the dispute.

## Conclusion

The previous chapter discussed how internal local dynamics, inherently unique to each union, influenced the development of Poor Law policy in Preston union. In this chapter analysis shifted to examine relief administration in practice, taking a tripartite approach to observe patterns of relief at the level of the English counties, Lancashire and Preston union. The approach reflects current historiography which, while emphasising the genuinely local nature of Poor Law administration, has recognised broadly regional trends in the provision of relief to the poor. Almost all research on this issue, however, has been conducted on the Old Poor Law, and the main purpose of this chapter has been to examine the decades after 1834.

Analysis at the regional level showed clearly that the conspicuous disparity between the north and the south, broadly defined, which King found of the Old Poor Law survived the passage of the New and continued throughout our period. Pauperism was invariably highest in the south and east of England, in some cases standing at more than double that of parts of the north according to the

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<sup>61</sup> It should be pointed out that the chief Preston mill owners, many of whom were ex-officio Guardians, did not have any involvement in boardroom discussions at this time. None of them attended a single meeting, and if they had any influence on proceedings at all it was behind the scenes.

<sup>62</sup> H. I. Dutton and J. E. King, *Ten per cent no surrender: the Preston strike, 1853-1854*, p.94

<sup>63</sup> Dutton and King, *Ten per cent no surrender*, p.94

single day totals. We cannot offer definitive conclusions as to why these patterns emerged and endured, but the strong correlation between wage levels and ratios of pauperism cannot be comfortably ignored and indicates the centrality of socio-economic structures. Thus, the endemic structural poverty associated with a low wage, high underemployment agricultural sector in the south and east necessitated a wider role for the Poor Law than in the industrial north where pauperism was lowest. Here, high wages, high employment and wider access to alternative formal and informal resources meant the Poor Law played a more marginal role in the makeshift economies of the poor than elsewhere. Indeed, the importance of socio-economic structures in determining ratios of pauperism becomes clear when we look at the effects of industrial depression in Lancashire. As analysis of the weekly outdoor relief figures in Preston union demonstrate, pauperism could increase exponentially when the mills began operating short time or closing altogether, and had statistics for 1848 instead of 1850 been used in figures 1-3 the results would have been very different.

Yet, while it is clearly important to recognise the nature and extent of regional variation to understand how the Poor Law functioned, we must in doing so be careful not to miss the wood for the trees. For the Poor Law was, certainly after 1834, hardly inclusive anywhere. Figures presented in this chapter clearly demonstrate that the Poor Law, right across the country, was only providing relief to a small minority of persons who would have been living in poverty *at that moment*. In the introduction to this thesis it was shown that work by Foster and Anderson indicate that somewhere between 15 and 20 per cent of working families in Oldham and Preston respectively would have been living below the poverty line in normal times during the mid-nineteenth century, and this figure was presumably higher in the low wage agricultural regions of the south and east.<sup>64</sup> Moreover, these figures do not include the elderly, single mothers, widows and other vulnerable groups unable or less able to work. Yet, just 3 to 7 per cent of the population across England were in receipt of relief on 1<sup>st</sup> July 1850 and 1<sup>st</sup> July 1860, with most falling within a narrow 3 to 5 per cent range. These figures, of course, do not inform us of the turnover of paupers over longer periods of time, and it is unfortunately not possible to determine turnover without undertaking detailed community research on places with an adequate set of records. However, to mitigate this problem Lees used late nineteenth century data, which showed that 2.3 times the number relieved on a single day were so over a year, to estimate the annual turnover of paupers in our period.<sup>65</sup> While pauperism had fallen by the late nineteenth century, meaning the 2.3 figure is probably an

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<sup>64</sup> Anderson, *Family structure*, pp.29-32; J. Foster, *Class struggle and the Industrial Revolution: early industrial capitalism in three English towns* (1974), pp.96-98.

<sup>65</sup> Lees, *Solidarities*, pp.179-184.

underestimation, and it does not take into account local and regional variations, it is unlikely to be wildly inaccurate either. Based on this calculation, Figures 1-3 would fall within a 7 to 16 per cent range, with most within a range of 6-10 per cent. Thus, it seems likely that most people living in poverty in mid-nineteenth century England would not have received poor relief over the course of any given year, although most might over a longer period as Lees explains.<sup>66</sup> While the use of a poverty line here is anachronistic, it nonetheless serves to demonstrate that the Poor Law was not particularly inclusive wherever we look. Regional differences were largely matters of degrees.

We should also be careful not to focus too closely on regional variations, for relief administration could and did vary at sub-regional and sub-union level. All Lancashire unions experienced comparatively low pauperism compared to the national level, but the urban/rural disparity so evident across the regions is also evident in the county. The larger towns, Liverpool excepted (which was in any case an anomaly), all had proportionally fewer paupers than their rural counterparts, with pauperism highest in those rural unions furthest away from industrial centres. There was also a clear, if less marked, urban/rural disparity in the use of workhouses; 'less marked', because some unions such as Burnley bucked the trend. Nonetheless, it is clear that as industrial south-east Lancashire experienced a spate of workhouse construction from the mid-1840s, comparatively very high concentrations of indoor paupers emerged in this region. Here, some urban unions had more than twice the proportion of indoor paupers as their rural Lancashire counterparts, and Manchester had three times the proportion. Higher concentrations of indoor pauperism in industrial areas was also a characteristic of Poor Law administration within Preston union. In the urban district of Preston itself almost 50 per cent of relief expenditure was spent on indoor paupers during the late 1850s, and the figure was similar for the rural Broughton district which appears to have had a larger than average proportion of its paupers living in Preston. There is, then, a clear but not inherent (because there are some exceptions) relationship between urbanisation and a higher incidence of indoor pauperism in Lancashire, which intensified over our period as union workhouses were erected.

However, in spite of these differences the absence of rigorous indoor policies in Lancashire and Preston must be emphasised. Outdoor relief remained the overwhelmingly dominant form of welfare provision across urban and rural settlements in our period, and it would not be until the Crusade Against Outdoor Relief of the 1870s that this would, in certain unions, be reversed. Interestingly, the most stringent 'Crusading' unions in Lancashire – Manchester, Liverpool, Salford

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<sup>66</sup> Lees, *Solidarities*, pp.179-184.

and Preston – also had among the highest ratios of indoor pauperism during the 1840s and 1850s.<sup>67</sup> It might therefore be possible to argue that their orthodox adherence to Crusading ideology marked not a sudden shift in local policy but a development – an extreme manifestation – of policies which had existed during the two decades or more before the Crusade was established. This, of course, can only be said in hindsight. Guardians in our period did not foresee the Crusade, and it is more important to recognise dissimilarities between pre and post Crusading ideology to better understand the nature of relief administration in the former period. In Preston union, the proportion of indoor paupers averaged between 16 and 20 per cent up to 1860, a figure higher than the county average but considerably lower than the 70+ per cent achieved after 1870. Policy before 1860 was therefore very different to the later decades of the nineteenth century. What we seem to find in our earlier period is evidence of a more humane approach to relief administration which may have been lost over time as sentiment hardened. The debate over the formation of district relief committees and its association with anonymity is instructive here. As Addison complained, too many Guardians, when they knew the applicant, ‘could not say ‘no’ when it was wrong to say ‘yes’’. While the Poor Law was by no means inclusive in our period, it was not devoid of humane feeling either. Most Guardians, where possible, preferred to give outdoor relief than offer the workhouse, and it is to outdoor pauperism that we now turn.

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<sup>67</sup> Williams, *From pauperism*, p.105.

## Chapter 3

### The administration of outdoor relief: entitlement, need, and provision

#### Introduction

Outdoor relief remained the overwhelmingly dominant form of welfare provision after 1834. At national level more than 85 per cent of paupers were in receipt of relief outside the workhouse throughout our period, and despite local and regional variation very few unions had more than two paupers in ten inside a workhouse at any one time. Against this backdrop, it might be argued that the workhouse system has received disproportionate attention in studies of the New Poor Law, although that is not to disregard the importance of researching institutional provision and development during the nineteenth century. It is, however, crucial to recognise that the experience for most paupers was that of receiving poor relief in their own homes. Despite many decades of detailed study at local, regional and national level, fundamental questions relating to outdoor pauperism under the New Poor Law remain under researched. Thus, while we are broadly aware of who was most likely to be in receipt of outdoor relief after 1834, Poor Law historiography tells us little about whether the composition of the outdoor pauper host simply reflected *need* or also less tangible ideas regarding *entitlement*, as perceived by local administrators. Moreover, hardly anything has been said about whether, and the extent to which, the composition of outdoor pauperism varied regionally, less still about how it might have been shaped by such factors as the formal relief regulation orders and changes in the local economy. In terms of provision, we should also like to know more about not only the amount of relief granted to outdoor paupers, but the adequacy of their aggregate incomes to which it was contributing. Within this, it is also necessary to consider the role of kinship support, particularly when many historians have argued that outdoor relief did not often provide paupers with enough to live on alone.<sup>1</sup> These themes are the subject of this chapter. The intention is to develop our understanding of how the Poor Law operated within the regional framework discussed in the last chapter and, more specifically, to examine the provision of outdoor relief in Preston union within that framework.

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<sup>1</sup> See, for example: L. H. Lees, *The solidarities of strangers: the English Poor Laws and the people, 1700-1958* (1998), p.210; M.E. Rose, 'The allowance system under the New Poor Law', *Economic History Review*, 19, 3 (1966), pp.607-20; M. E. Rose, *The relief of poverty, 1834-1914* (1981), p.35.



### **3 (i): Entitlement and need: a quantitative analysis of the profile of outdoor pauperism at national level and in Lancashire**

In this section the composition of outdoor pauperism during the mid-nineteenth century is explored through the pauperism statistics featured in the PLB's annually published reports. The way statistics were presented during our period was inconsistent. Up to 1848, under the PLC, they show the number of paupers relieved during a single quarter of each year.<sup>2</sup> Thereafter, from 1849 when the PLC was replaced by the PLB, the method of presenting statistics changed to recording the number relieved on the 1<sup>st</sup> January and 1<sup>st</sup> July each year and continued this way until 1859.<sup>3</sup> This section uses the second series of statistics, those covering the years 1848-1859. In these reports outdoor paupers were grouped into three main categories: 'able-bodied', 'not able-bodied' and 'lunatics and idiots'.<sup>4</sup> These were further divided into twenty-four sub-categories which related primarily to gender, marital status and physical condition; the full series of statistics for England and Wales and Lancashire are in Appendix 1. Historians have frequently used these figures to look at who was, and by extension who was not, in receipt of outdoor relief around mid-century, but our approach here presents the information in unique ways allowing us to ask new questions.<sup>5</sup> It does so in two ways. First, figures for the county of Lancashire are presented alongside those for England and Wales, allowing us to consider the extent to which Lancashire reflected, or deviated from, national trends. Second, in presenting their statistical reports the PLB categorised paupers in such a way as to allow some of them to be grouped together according to their familial status. Historians, however, have tended to neglect taking this into consideration. It will be demonstrated that it is crucial to consider family structure to understand more fully the composition of pauperism at mid-century. Finally, the issue of whether the composition of outdoor pauperism simply reflected need, or whether it was also shaped by customary ideas and formal regulations regarding entitlement to outdoor relief, forms a central strand throughout the analysis.

There are some limitations to this evidence. The single day counts do not allow any observations to be made regarding the turnover of pauperism over time. They can only provide a snapshot of

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<sup>2</sup> Parliamentary Papers (P.P.) *Sixth to thirteenth annual reports of the Poor Law Commissioners*, appendix B.

<sup>3</sup> P.P. *First to eleventh annual reports of the Poor Law Board*, appendix.

<sup>4</sup> While the terms 'able-bodied' and 'not able-bodied' were not formally defined during our period, it is likely that most of the former were under the age of 60 and capable of work (though some were temporarily ill or injured), and that the latter were aged and infirm, and more or less permanently unable to work. See: M. Mackinnon, 'The use and misuse of Poor Law statistics, 1857 to 1912', *Historical Methods: A Journal of Quantitative and Interdisciplinary History*, 21, 1 (1988), pp.5-19.

<sup>5</sup> D. Englander, *Poverty and Poor Law reform in nineteenth century Britain, 1834-1914: from Chadwick to Booth* (1998); A. Kidd, *State, society and the poor in nineteenth century England* (1999), pp.8-64; Rose, 'The allowance system', pp.607-620; K. Williams, *From pauperism to poverty* (1981).

pauperism on a single day. Moreover, it is important to remember that the official pauperism statistics only record those whose application for outdoor relief was approved by the Guardians. They tell us nothing of how many people applied for outdoor relief, thus asserting their entitlement to communal support, but were turned away by local officials or offered relief on unsatisfactory terms. How many people, for example, pulled out of the application process when offered the workhouse? How many non-settled people did the same when threatened with removal? These are important questions, but local evidence is largely silent on answers. The absence of such information is frustrating because there was certainly a disparity between the number of applicants and the number of paupers as Old Poor Law records indicate. The vestry books for the Lancashire township of Ormskirk during the 1820s, for example, provide a number of instances of applications being turned down, and Steve King found that around 40 per cent of applications were refused in certain Lancashire townships in the same period.<sup>6</sup> However, in spite of these problems, the annually published statistics under examination here provide an instructive insight into both entitlement and need at mid-century.

#### Aggregated outdoor pauperism

At the aggregate level outdoor pauperism was very heavily gendered among adults. In England and Wales as a whole, and Lancashire specifically, women generally made up around seventy per cent of adult outdoor paupers during the 1840s and 1850s according to the single day totals (Table 1). However, while this gender disparity is well known, historians' explanations for it have not always complemented one another. Most have tended to argue that the far greater number of women in receipt of outdoor relief simply reflected need. Lees, for example, claims that women were prime candidates for poor relief because they faced a 'depressingly long list of familiar problems' which included widowhood, longevity, desertion by husbands, childcare responsibilities, poor diets and low wages.<sup>7</sup> While few historians would challenge this view, Nigel Goose offers an additional explanation. Focussing specifically on the aged, he argues that the far greater number of women in receipt of outdoor relief reflected not so much need but a greater willingness of the part of Boards of Guardians to provide such support to them.<sup>8</sup> Applications from aged males, argues Goose, were generally looked upon less favourably than those from females, and they were consequently

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<sup>6</sup> Lancashire Archives (L.A.) PR2815/1: Ormskirk Select Vestry minute book, 1819-1824; S. King, *Poverty and welfare in England, 1700-1850: a regional perspective* (2000), p.101.

<sup>7</sup> Lees, *The solidarities of strangers*, p.196. See also, P. Thane, 'Women and the Poor Law in Victorian England', *History Workshop*, 6 (1978), pp.29-51; M. L. Clark, 'Engendering relief: women, ablebodiedness, and the Poor Law in early Victorian England', *Journal of Women's History*, 11, 4 (2000), pp.108-130.

<sup>8</sup> N. Goose, 'Poverty, old age and gender in nineteenth century England: the case of Hertfordshire', *Continuity and Change*, 20, 3 (2005), pp.315-384.

**Table 1: Adult paupers in receipt of outdoor relief in England and Wales and Lancashire, 3 year intervals, 1848-1858**

|                           | England and Wales |           |          |          | Lancashire |           |          |          |
|---------------------------|-------------------|-----------|----------|----------|------------|-----------|----------|----------|
|                           | Male N.           | Female N. | Total N. | Female % | Male N.    | Female N. | Total N. | Female % |
| 1 <sup>st</sup> July, '48 | 150,457           | 314,740   | 465,197  | 68       | 18,312     | 31,210    | 49,522   | 63       |
| 1 <sup>st</sup> July, '50 | 132,659           | 303,776   | 436,435  | 70       | 10,071     | 22,022    | 32,093   | 69       |
| 1 <sup>st</sup> July, '52 | 130,041           | 297,143   | 427,184  | 70       | 8,602      | 19,564    | 28,166   | 69       |
| 1 <sup>st</sup> July, '54 | 127,134           | 305,147   | 432,281  | 71       | 9,073      | 23,077    | 32,150   | 72       |
| 1 <sup>st</sup> July '56  | 124,677           | 309,794   | 434,471  | 71       | 8,736      | 23,731    | 32,467   | 73       |
| 1 <sup>st</sup> July, '58 | 124,708           | 311,365   | 436,073  | 71       | 9,683      | 25,332    | 35,015   | 72       |

**Sources and notes:** P.P. First to eleventh annual Reports of the Poor Law Board, 1849-1859. N=number.

more likely to be offered the workhouse. Goose's argument is convincing, as shall become clear through analysis of outdoor pauperism in this chapter and indoor pauperism in the next. Moreover, his emphasis on the importance of ideas regarding entitlement in shaping the profile of outdoor and indoor pauperism should not be limited to the aged and infirm. Entitlement influenced the response to relief applications at all levels, and was determined by both the central authority's official relief orders and the more informal ideas held by local administrators.

Table 2 sub-divides the aggregated figures from Table 1 in five main categories based on family structure. For example the first category, 'able-bodied males...', includes the wives and dependent children of married men, but also includes any single or widowed men and men without children. Later tables shall disaggregate each of the first three groups featured in Table 2 for more detailed analysis. The data presented here covers each of the single day counts between 1848 and 1859. The results show that, certain fluctuations notwithstanding, able-bodied adult women and adults who were not-able-bodied usually accounted for between seventy and eighty per cent of the outdoor pauper host with their dependent children included. The numerical dominance of these groups in the relief lists at local and national level should come as little surprise to historians of nineteenth century poverty and welfare for reasons previous explained. Adult females of working age, and the elderly who made up the vast majority of 'not able-bodied' persons, were not only more likely candidates for outdoor relief than young able-bodied men as many historians have noted, but, as Goose's reasoning suggests, were also more likely to have their applications accepted by local administrators. This was increasingly the case over the 1840s and 1850s, when healthy adult males faced formal orders designed to prohibit or restrict the provision of outdoor relief to them.

**Table 2: 'Able-bodied' and 'not able-bodied' males and females in receipt of outdoor relief, England and Wales and Lancashire, 1848-1859**

|           | Able bodied males including dependent wives and children |          | Able-bodied women including dependent children |          | Not-able bodied adults including dependent children |          | Children under 16 without parents |          | Lunatics and idiots |          | Total paupers |           |
|-----------|--|----------|--|----------|---|----------|-----------------------------------|----------|---------------------|----------|---------------|-----------|
|           | E+W %  | Lancs. % | E+W %  | Lancs. % | E+W %   | Lancs. % | E+W %                             | Lancs. % | E+W %               | Lancs. % | E+W N.        | Lancs. N. |
| July, '48 | 28   | 54       | 27   | 26       | 42  | 19       | 2                                 | 2        | 1                   | 1        | 786,030       | 100,765   |
| Jan. '49  | 29   | 48       | 27   | 29       | 41  | 22       | 2                                 | 2        | 1                   | 1        | 815,044       | 93,317    |
| July, '49 | 23   | 35       | 28   | 33       | 45  | 30       | 2                                 | 3        | 1                   | 1        | 736,828       | 69,030    |
| Jan. '50  | 23   | 35       | 29   | 33       | 45  | 31       | 2                                 | 3        | 1                   | 1        | 769,687       | 68,592    |
| July, '50 | 18   | 29       | 30   | 36       | 49  | 34       | 2                                 | 3        | 1                   | 1        | 708,571       | 60,058    |
| Jan. '51  | 19   | 30       | 29   | 35       | 49  | 35       | 2                                 | 3        | 1                   | 1        | 723,851       | 58,793    |
| July, '51 | 17   | 26       | 29   | 37       | 50  | 35       | 2                                 | 3        | 1                   | 1        | 698,370       | 56,148    |
| Jan. '52  | 17   | 27       | 29   | 34       | 52  | 37       | 2                                 | 3        | 1                   | 1        | 703,149       | 56,488    |
| July, '52 | 16   | 22       | 28   | 36       | 52  | 41       | 2                                 | 3        | 2                   | 1        | 679,700       | 50,278    |
| Jan. '53  | 16   | 17       | 29   | 36       | 52  | 45       | 2                                 | 3        | 1                   | 2        | 670,660       | 45,058    |
| July, '53 | 14   | 14       | 30   | 40       | 53  | 45       | 2                                 | 3        | 1                   | 2        | 648,325       | 51,463    |
| Jan. '54  | 18   | 22       | 28   | 37       | 51  | 39       | 2                                 | 2        | 2                   | 2        | 695,387       | 60,672    |
| July, '54 | 16   | 18       | 30   | 39       | 51  | 41       | 2                                 | 2        | 2                   | 2        | 688,042       | 58,513    |
| Jan. '55  | 18   | 23       | 30   | 36       | 49  | 38       | 2                                 | 2        | 2                   | 2        | 721,611       | 65,855    |
| July, '55 | 16   | 19       | 31   | 41       | 50  | 38       | 2                                 | 2        | 2                   | 2        | 707,225       | 63,422    |
| Jan. '56  | 18   | 23       | 31   | 40       | 48  | 35       | 2                                 | 2        | 2                   | 2        | 751,179       | 72,765    |
| July '56  | 14   | 14       | 32   | 43       | 50  | 41       | 2                                 | 3        | 2                   | 2        | 694,424       | 59,420    |
| Jan. '57  | 16   | 19       | 30   | 40       | 50  | 39       | 2                                 | 2        | 2                   | 2        | 719,451       | 62,905    |
| July, '57 | 14   | 17       | 31   | 41       | 51  | 39       | 2                                 | 2        | 2                   | 2        | 685,941       | 57,646    |
| Jan. '58  | 21   | 37       | 30   | 36       | 46  | 26       | 2                                 | 2        | 2                   | 1        | 780,930       | 99,868    |
| July, '58 | 14   | 19       | 32   | 42       | 50  | 37       | 2                                 | 2        | 2                   | 2        | 691,364       | 64,610    |
| Jan. '59  | 15   | 18       | 31   | 42       | 49  | 38       | 2                                 | 2        | 3                   | 3        | 715,023       | 63,826    |

**Sources and notes:** P.P. First to eleventh annual Reports of the Poor Law Board, 1849-1859. E+W = England and Wales. Lancs. = Lancashire. N=number.

More surprising, perhaps, is that men defined as 'able-bodied', despite being on the whole marginalised by the more traditionally 'deserving' groups, could account for a significant proportion of the aggregate outdoor pauper host when considered – as they should be – alongside their wives and dependent children. In Lancashire, able-bodied males and their families averaged 26 per cent of the total over the period, reaching as high as 54 per cent during the depressed year of 1848. A notable increase also took place during the depression of 1858. Moreover, as these figures are for the whole of the county, and include rural unions which were less severely affected by industrial depression than the large urban centres, they mask a much higher incidence of pauperism amongst this group in unions like Preston. In July 1848, the only year for which these county figures have corresponding union ones, able-bodied males and their families accounted for a full 72 per cent of outdoor paupers in Preston union.<sup>9</sup> Evidently, during the periods of economic distress we examined in the previous chapter, it was families headed by able-bodied males that came to dominate the relief lists. Interestingly, the proportion of able-bodied men in receipt of outdoor relief was much lower in the country as a whole than in Lancashire throughout most of this period, which might indicate the role of the Prohibitory Order (which, to reiterate, was not applied in Lancashire) in restricting outdoor relief to men in employment. Indeed, a closer examination of these able-bodied males and their dependents suggests that this was the case, and it is with this group that we begin our more detailed examination.

#### 'Able-bodied males' disaggregated

Table 3 breaks down the 'able-bodied males' column from the previous table into three main heads as featured in the annual reports: 'sudden and urgent necessity', 'sickness...' and 'want of work or other causes'. Also included in this table is data extrapolated from, but not specifically categorised in, the reports: the per cent of male paupers who were married, and the average number of children per male pauper.<sup>10</sup> If we begin with these last two columns, it is immediately apparent that the vast majority of able-bodied males in receipt of outdoor relief were the heads of nuclear family units. In most years, at both the national level and in Lancashire, over eighty per cent were married and they each had around 2.5 children. The predominance of married men with families among outdoor able-bodied male paupers should not surprise us. Over half of the adult population (over the age of 20) were married, and Anderson has argued that men with families, particularly when they had

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<sup>9</sup> P.P. 1849 (586) *Paupers. Return of the number of paupers in receipt of relief in the several unions of England and Wales, on the first day of July, 1848*, p.13.

<sup>10</sup> The annual reports include in separate columns the number of wives and children 'dependent' upon the males, making it possible to determine the proportion married men and the average number of children. See Appendix 1.

**Table 3: Able-bodied males and dependent wives and children, England and Wales and Lancashire, 1848-1859**

|           | Sudden and urgent necessity |          | Sickness of male head or a member of his family |          | Want of work or other causes |          | Total paupers, inc. wives and children |           | Per cent of male paupers who were married |          | Average number of children per male pauper |        |
|-----------|-----------------------------|----------|---|----------|------------------------------|----------|--|-----------|---|----------|--|--------|
|           | E+W %                       | Lancs. % | E+W %   | Lancs. % | E+W %                        | Lancs. % | E+W N.                                 | Lancs. N. | E+W %                                     | Lancs. % | E+W  | Lancs. |
| July, '48 | 2                           | 0.3      | 64  | 20       | 34                           | 80       | 220,138                                | 54,253    | 79  | 83       | 2.3  | 2.6    |
| Jan. '49  | 1                           | 1        | 67  | 24       | 32                           | 75       | 232,410                                | 45,160    | 80  | 85       | 2.4  | 2.9    |
| July, '49 | 1                           | 0.9      | 77  | 33       | 22                           | 66       | 169,066                                | 24,366    | 80  | 81       | 2.3  | 2.7    |
| Jan. '50  | 1                           | 0.9      | 77  | 36       | 23                           | 63       | 103,030                                | 24,245    | 80  | 81       | 2.3  | 2.7    |
| July, '50 | 1                           | 0.5      | 85  | 44       | 15                           | 55       | 126,546                                | 17,223    | 79  | 81       | 2.4  | 2.7    |
| Jan. '51  | 1                           | 0.4      | 83  | 43       | 16                           | 56       | 137,572                                | 17,886    | 80  | 81       | 2.3  | 2.8    |
| July, '51 | 1                           | 0.4      | 84  | 47       | 15                           | 52       | 118,124                                | 14,787    | 80  | 80       | 2.3  | 2.8    |
| Jan. '52  | 1                           | 0.3      | 85  | 48       | 14                           | 51       | 121,439                                | 15,686    | 80  | 82       | 2.4  | 2.7    |
| July, '52 | 1                           | 0.5      | 90  | 52       | 10                           | 47       | 111,287                                | 11,147    | 78  | 82       | 2.4  | 2.9    |
| Jan. '53  | 1                           | 1.1      | 93  | 70       | 6                            | 29       | 105,982                                | 7,837     | 80  | 84       | 2.3  | 2.8    |
| July, '53 | 0.3                         | 0.3      | 94  | 79       | 5                            | 20       | 86,052                                 | 6,954     | 80  | 81       | 2.3  | 2.6    |
| Jan. '54  | 1                           | 0.8      | 88  | 60       | 11                           | 39       | 120,960                                | 13,243    | 82  | 88       | 2.4  | 2.8    |
| July, '54 | 1                           | 0.7      | 91  | 71       | 9                            | 28       | 105,279                                | 10,624    | 81  | 86       | 2.3  | 2.8    |
| Jan. '55  | 0.3                         | 0.1      | 85  | 58       | 14                           | 42       | 124,504                                | 15,059    | 81  | 84       | 2.3  | 2.6    |
| July, '55 | 0.3                         | 0.1      | 90  | 69       | 10                           | 31       | 109,120                                | 11,923    | 82  | 86       | 2.3  | 2.9    |
| Jan. '56  | 1                           | 0.2      | 84  | 55       | 16                           | 45       | 131,734                                | 16,700    | 82  | 89       | 2.3  | 2.9    |
| July '56  | 0.3                         | 0.2      | 93  | 75       | 6                            | 25       | 95,154                                 | 8,327     | 81  | 89       | 2.3  | 3.1    |
| Jan. '57  | 0.2                         | 0.1      | 86  | 65       | 14                           | 35       | 116,468                                | 11,906    | 82  | 88       | 2.3  | 2.8    |
| July, '57 | 1                           | 0.3      | 93  | 79       | 7                            | 21       | 95,154                                 | 9,584     | 81  | 87       | 2.3  | 2.8    |
| Jan. '58  | 0.3                         | 0.5      | 69  | 32       | 31                           | 67       | 161,262                                | 36,940    | 82  | 82       | 2.2  | 2.3    |
| July, '58 | 0.3                         | 0.4      | 90  | 67       | 10                           | 33       | 96,992                                 | 12,312    | 82  | 89       | 2.2  | 2.6    |
| Jan. '59  | 0.3                         | 0.2      | 90  | 69       | 9                            | 30       | 107,331                                | 11,680    | 82  | 89       | 2.2  | 2.6    |

**Sources and notes:** P.P. First to eleventh annual Reports of the Poor Law Board, 1849-1859. E=W = England and Wales. Lancs. = Lancashire. N = number.

young, non-wage earning children to support, were at a life-cycle stage in which they were particularly vulnerable to poverty.<sup>11</sup> It is also probable, if difficult to prove, that most of the twenty or so per cent of unmarried men were actually widowed men with children to support, as young and unmarried males were firmly rooted in the class of 'undeserving' poor and were unlikely to receive relief outside the workhouse as we shall see in the next chapter. Interestingly, the proportion of married male paupers, and the average number of children per male pauper, was consistently lower, if only slightly, at the national level than it was in Lancashire. The most likely explanation for this is that Guardians across much of England and Wales were generally more willing to approve applications from single men, or from men with small families, than they were in Lancashire.

Turning now to the first three columns, there are some noticeable and important distinctions between Lancashire and the rest of the country which are worthy of some consideration. Of particular interest are the 'sickness...' and 'want of work...' categories, the latter of which incorporated the unemployed and those in receipt of low or irregular earnings; so few people were in receipt of relief for reasons of 'sudden and urgent necessity' that it is statistically insignificant. The two columns show that in England and Wales as a whole the overwhelming majority of able-bodied males in receipt of outdoor relief required such support because either they, or members of their immediate family, were sick. In most years this was the case for between eighty and ninety per cent of able-bodied male paupers. In Lancashire, however, the picture is clearly very different. Here a much larger proportion of able-bodied males, though declining over the period, were relieved for employment related reasons. There appears to be two main causes of this disparity. The first is that during periods of industrial depression in Lancashire, when the jobs market contracted leaving many thousands unemployed or working short-time hours, the proportion of male headed families relieved for 'want of work...' far eclipsed those relieved because of sickness. This is demonstrated by the notably high 'want of work...' figures for the years 1848, 1849 and 1858, all periods of industrial distress. But this can only be a partial explanation because 'want of work...' remained much higher in Lancashire than the country as a whole in good economic times as well as bad. The second main cause appears to be the official relief orders issued by the central authority. By the mid-1840s eight unions in ten across England and Wales were operating under the Prohibitory Order, which banned outdoor relief to males (and by extension their families) who were able to work.<sup>12</sup> The absence of this Order in Lancashire thus facilitated the provision of outdoor

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<sup>11</sup> M. Anderson, *Family structure in nineteenth century Lancashire*, (1971), pp.30-32.

<sup>12</sup> F. Driver, *Power and pauperism: The workhouse system, 1834-1884*, pp.51-53.

relief to men for work related reasons. Indeed, the influence of relief regulation orders can be seen in the very sudden decline in the proportion of men relieved for 'want of work...' from January 1853 in Lancashire, which corresponds with the introduction of the Outdoor Relief Regulation Order in the county in August 1852. This evidence for the continuation of outdoor relief to healthy able-bodied males in Lancashire during the 1840s and 1850s offers a corrective to Karel Williams' claim that a 'line of exclusion' had been drawn against such men by 1850, and this is discussed further in Chapter 5.<sup>13</sup>

#### 'Able-bodied women' disaggregated

From 1849 the PLB categorised pauperism among able-bodied women differently to that of men. Middle-class ideas regarding gender roles assumed the ubiquity of the nuclear family unit headed by a male breadwinner, in which the wife looked after the children at home.<sup>14</sup> Thus, two the parent families examined in the previous table were categorised according to whether the husband or a member of *his* family was sick, or whether *he* was out of work. That the family might be struggling because the wife was out of work - a very real possibility in Lancashire - was not considered.<sup>15</sup> It also meant that women without husbands, or whose husbands were absent, were grouped in the annual reports according not to their health or employment status like males but to their current marital status, their marital status when they had children, or the cause of their husband's absence. In each category, seven in total, the females' relationship with a male, or lack thereof, is implicit.

Table 4 demonstrates that in most years over ninety per cent of women in receipt of outdoor relief at the national level and in Lancashire either had been or were at that time married. Moreover, the majority appear to have had children, with an average of 2.4 each in England and Wales and 2.6 in Lancashire.<sup>16</sup> The overwhelming majority of these women were widows, and from a purely economic perspective there is good reason for this. All the other groups in the table, single women excluded, were in a position to receive financial aid from their husbands or from the fathers of their children. In cases where a husband had deserted his wife, or a father his bastard child, the Poor

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<sup>13</sup> K. Williams, *From pauperism to poverty*, p.59.

<sup>14</sup> Clark, 'Engendering relief', pp.108-112; Englander, *Poverty and Poor Law reform*, pp.17-19; Lees, *The solidarities of strangers*, p.196; Thane, 'Women and the Poor Law', pp.29-30.

<sup>15</sup> Anderson, *Family structure*, pp.22-25 discusses the importance of female employment to the family economy in Lancashire.

<sup>16</sup> Single women without children were, of course, excluded from this calculation.



**Table 4: Able-bodied women and dependent children, England and Wales and Lancashire, 1848-1859**

|           | Widows |          | Single women, no children |          | Mothers of illegitimate children |          | Married with children, father in prison |          | Wives of soldiers and sailors |          | Wives of non-resident husbands |          | Total   |           | Av. number of children per married/widowed female |           |
|-----------|--------|----------|---------------------------|----------|----------------------------------|----------|---|----------|-------------------------------|----------|--------------------------------|----------|---------|-----------|---|-----------|
|           | E+W %  | Lancs. % | E+W %                     | Lancs. % | E+W %                            | Lancs. % | E+W %                                   | Lancs. % | E+W %                         | Lancs. % | E+W %                          | Lancs. % | E+W N.  | Lancs. N. | E+W N.  | Lancs. N. |
| July, '48 | 78     | 61       | 4                         | 6        | 6                                | 15       | 5                                       | 6        | 1                             | 1        | 6                              | 11       | 214,558 | 26,492    | 2.2   | 1.9       |
| Jan. '49  | 78     | 63       | 4                         | 4        | 6                                | 13       | 4                                       | 5        | 1                             | 1        | 7                              | 14       | 221,312 | 26,723    | 2.2   | 2.1       |
| July, '49 | 79     | 66       | 4                         | 3        | 5                                | 12       | 4                                       | 4        | 1                             | 1        | 6                              | 15       | 209,029 | 22,959    | 2.2   | 2.2       |
| Jan. '50  | 81     | 69       | 3                         | 3        | 5                                | 11       | 4                                       | 3        | 1                             | 1        | 6                              | 13       | 222,160 | 22,624    | 2.3   | 2.3       |
| July, '50 | 82     | 71       | 3                         | 2        | 5                                | 9        | 4                                       | 4        | 1                             | 1        | 6                              | 13       | 213,060 | 21,871    | 2.4   | 2.4       |
| Jan. '51  | 82     | 72       | 3                         | 2        | 5                                | 9        | 4                                       | 3        | 1                             | 1        | 6                              | 12       | 211,378 | 20,970    | 2.4   | 2.4       |
| July, '51 | 83     | 73       | 3                         | 3        | 4                                | 8        | 3                                       | 3        | 1                             | 1        | 6                              | 12       | 205,416 | 20,784    | 2.4   | 2.4       |
| Jan. '52  | 83     | 74       | 3                         | 2        | 4                                | 8        | 4                                       | 4        | 1                             | 1        | 6                              | 12       | 201,848 | 19,256    | 2.4   | 2.6       |
| July, '52 | 82     | 75       | 3                         | 2        | 4                                | 7        | 4                                       | 4        | 1                             | 1        | 6                              | 11       | 193,259 | 17,635    | 2.4   | 2.7       |
| Jan. '53  | 83     | 79       | 3                         | 1        | 4                                | 6        | 4                                       | 3        | 1                             | 1        | 6                              | 11       | 192,375 | 16,332    | 2.5   | 2.8       |
| July, '53 | 84     | 81       | 2                         | 1        | 4                                | 4        | 3                                       | 3        | 1                             | 1        | 6                              | 10       | 194,451 | 20,476    | 2.5   | 2.9       |
| Jan. '54  | 83     | 77       | 3                         | 1        | 4                                | 5        | 3                                       | 3        | 1                             | 1        | 6                              | 13       | 194,537 | 22,596    | 2.3   | 2.7       |
| July, '54 | 81     | 74       | 3                         | 1        | 4                                | 5        | 4                                       | 3        | 2                             | 2        | 7                              | 15       | 203,129 | 23,012    | 2.4   | 2.6       |
| Jan. '55  | 80     | 72       | 3                         | 1        | 4                                | 5        | 4                                       | 4        | 2                             | 4        | 7                              | 15       | 216,796 | 24,706    | 2.4   | 2.7       |
| July, '55 | 80     | 71       | 2                         | 1        | 4                                | 4        | 4                                       | 3        | 3                             | 5        | 7                              | 15       | 222,738 | 25,896    | 2.4   | 2.4       |
| Jan. '56  | 80     | 68       | 3                         | 2        | 4                                | 5        | 4                                       | 3        | 3                             | 7        | 7                              | 16       | 229,638 | 28,861    | 2.3   | 2.5       |
| July '56  | 80     | 72       | 2                         | 1        | 3                                | 4        | 4                                       | 3        | 3                             | 5        | 7                              | 14       | 219,185 | 25,319    | 2.4   | 2.6       |
| Jan. '57  | 81     | 73       | 2                         | 1        | 3                                | 5        | 4                                       | 3        | 2                             | 3        | 7                              | 15       | 217,979 | 25,101    | 2.4   | 2.7       |
| July, '57 | 81     | 73       | 2                         | 1        | 3                                | 5        | 4                                       | 4        | 2                             | 2        | 7                              | 14       | 212,770 | 23,958    | 2.4   | 2.7       |
| Jan. '58  | 79     | 65       | 3                         | 3        | 4                                | 5        | 4                                       | 4        | 3                             | 4        | 9                              | 20       | 230,713 | 35,726    | 2.4   | 2.3       |
| July, '58 | 81     | 71       | 2                         | 1        | 3                                | 5        | 4                                       | 4        | 2                             | 4        | 8                              | 15       | 219,315 | 27,042    | 2.4   | 2.6       |
| Jan. '59  | 81     | 71       | 2                         | 1        | 3                                | 4        | 4                                       | 4        | 3                             | 5        | 7                              | 15       | 218,311 | 26,602    | 2.4   | 2.6       |

**Sources and notes:** P.P. First to eleventh annual Reports of the Poor Law Board, 1849-1859. E+W = England and Wales. Lancs. = Lancashire. N=number.

Law authorities could and often did intervene to ensure he contributed to the maintenance of his family, occasionally taking legal action to make him do so as we shall see later in this chapter. Widows, on the other hand, were naturally deprived of this potentially vital resource, and if kin were not able to provide support many had little option but to turn to the Poor Law.<sup>17</sup> Further, it is perhaps significant that widows with legitimate children were the only group explicitly exempt from the Prohibitory Order, which might explain why their proportion at the national level was higher than in Lancashire; Guardians in Lancashire had more leeway to provide outdoor relief to other female groups.<sup>18</sup> It is also certainly true that, outside of formal regulations, widows were generally considered to be of the 'deserving' poor by Poor Law Guardians and were therefore not only more likely to require relief, but more likely to be granted it.<sup>19</sup> Other women were not looked upon so favourably, and those with illegitimate children appear to have been viewed in a particularly unfavourable light. Unlike widows, they were often thought to have brought poverty upon themselves through the deeply immoral 'crime', as one Preston Guardian described it in 1852, of bearing a bastard child.<sup>20</sup> They were therefore far more likely to find themselves in a workhouse than other women as we shall see in the next chapter. This, of course, adds a layer of complexity to the distinction Goose made between the treatment of men and women; women themselves were treated differently.

The predominance of widows among these women indicates the importance of spousal support as a means of staving off poverty. We can take this point further by simply counting the total number of married female paupers living with husbands and the total number of pauper widows in Lancashire on each of the single day counts over this period (Appendix 1). The figures stand at 72,696 married women and 103,539 widows. Given that widows were proportionally only a small minority of the adult population, and presumably smaller still among people who would have been considered 'able-bodied', the disparity here is striking.<sup>21</sup> The particular vulnerability of women when devoid of direct support from a spouse is further suggested by the considerably increased proportion of 'soldiers and sailors' families in receipt of outdoor relief after the male head of the

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<sup>17</sup> Englander, *Poverty and Poor Law reform*, p.23.

<sup>18</sup> Williams, *From pauperism*, pp.52-55.

<sup>19</sup> Studies indicate that throughout modern history widows, particularly in old age or when they had young children, have consistently formed a section of the 'deserving' poor in England and Wales in a welfare context. See, M. Abramovich, *Regulating the lives of women: social welfare from colonial times to the present* (1996), p.151; M. Baker, *Restructuring family policies: convergences and divergences* (2006), p.44; N. A. Barr, *The economics of the welfare state* (1987), p.257; S. Williams, *Poverty, gender and life-cycle under the English Poor Law, 1760-1834* (2011), p.111.

<sup>20</sup> P.C. May 8<sup>th</sup>, 1852.

<sup>21</sup> R. G. Fuchs, *Gender and poverty in nineteenth century Europe* (2005), p.23.

family enlisted during the Crimean War of the mid-1850s. In Lancashire, their proportion rises from one per cent in January 1854 to seven per cent just two year later, which in numerical terms represents an increase from 289 to 1,901 according to the single day totals (Appendix 1). Similarly, many wives of 'non-resident' males in Lancashire were left to the Poor Law when their husbands either deserted them or left the town in search of work. The practice of migrating from one town to another for work was common in mid-nineteenth century Lancashire, but it could divide the family unit and women, when left alone at home with children to feed and clothe, were obviously more likely to struggle without the direct financial support of their husbands.<sup>22</sup> Historians have long recognised the greater economic security provided by marriage in the nineteenth century, and evidence presented here very clearly supports this view.<sup>23</sup> However, the evidence also demonstrates how economic forces and other exogenous factors - in these cases war and migration - could, by dividing the family unit, also bring married women onto the brink of destitution.

#### 'Not able-bodied' disaggregated

It is safe to assume that the vast majority of the adult paupers classified as 'not able-bodied' were, in nineteenth century parlance, 'aged and infirm'. As Table 5 demonstrates, very few had children under the age of 16 residing with them, suggesting that these were not young adults with families like most of the able-bodied adult paupers examined above. Most were probably around or over the age of sixty, as this appears to have generally been the stage at which one was suitably old to be considered 'aged'.<sup>24</sup> However, reaching the age of sixty was not enough in itself to guarantee that an application for poor relief would be accepted, and it is probable therefore that these paupers were both old and more or less permanently unable to work. Assuming this to be the case, outdoor pauperism among aged and infirm persons was dominated by women, who in most years more than doubled the proportion of males. Some reasons for this disparity have already been suggested; it appears that aged women were for a number of reasons more likely to require support from the Poor Law and also more likely to obtain it. However, another important reason can be proffered. Evidence provided by Anderson in his study of mid-nineteenth century Preston shows that kin were more willing to offer co-residential support to aged female relatives over aged male

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<sup>22</sup> On migration in Lancashire see: Anderson, *Family structure*, pp.34-42; C. G. Pooley and Shani D'Cruze, 'Migration and urbanisation in north-west England circa 1760-1830', *Social History*, 19 (1994), pp.339-358.

<sup>23</sup> Fuchs, *Gender and poverty*, p.23; A. Gritt and P. Park, 'The Workhouse Populations of Lancashire in 1881', *Local Population Studies*, 86 (2011), pp.37-65

<sup>24</sup> Most historians agree that people were considered 'aged' at age sixty. See, Mackinnon, 'The use and misuse', pp.5-19; P. Thane, *Old age in English history: past experiences, present issues* (2002), pp.20-27; Williams, *Poverty, gender and life-cycle*, p.56.

**Table 5: Not able-bodied adults and children, England and Wales and Lancashire, 1848-1859**

|           | Males |        | Females |        | Children u 16<br>with parent |        | U 16 without<br>parent |        | Total   |        |
|-----------|-------|--------|---------|--------|------------------------------|--------|------------------------|--------|---------|--------|
|           | E+W   | Lancs. | E+W     | Lancs. | E+W                          | Lancs. | E+W                    | Lancs. | E+W     | Lancs. |
|           | %     | %      | %       | %      | %                            | %      | %                      | %      | N.      | N.     |
| July, '48 | 28    | 31     | 57      | 56     | 10                           | 5      | 5                      | 8      | 342,352 | 19,323 |
| Jan. '49  | 28    | 31     | 58      | 56     | 10                           | 5      | 5                      | 8      | 351,558 | 20,720 |
| July, '49 | 28    | 30     | 58      | 57     | 10                           | 4      | 5                      | 9      | 349,388 | 20,914 |
| Jan. '50  | 28    | 29     | 57      | 57     | 10                           | 5      | 5                      | 9      | 364,951 | 20,977 |
| July, '50 | 28    | 30     | 58      | 59     | 10                           | 3      | 5                      | 8      | 360,625 | 20,288 |
| Jan. '51  | 28    | 32     | 58      | 57     | 10                           | 3      | 5                      | 7      | 367,310 | 20,763 |
| July, '51 | 27    | 29     | 58      | 58     | 10                           | 5      | 5                      | 8      | 364,114 | 19,856 |
| Jan. '52  | 27    | 30     | 57      | 59     | 12                           | 4      | 4                      | 7      | 376,848 | 20,633 |
| July, '52 | 27    | 29     | 58      | 60     | 10                           | 4      | 4                      | 7      | 363,793 | 20,473 |
| Jan. '53  | 27    | 29     | 58      | 59     | 10                           | 5      | 4                      | 6      | 360,925 | 20,147 |
| July, '53 | 27    | 27     | 59      | 61     | 10                           | 7      | 4                      | 5      | 356,959 | 22,987 |
| Jan. '54  | 27    | 27     | 60      | 60     | 10                           | 7      | 4                      | 6      | 365,768 | 23,888 |
| July, '54 | 27    | 26     | 59      | 59     | 10                           | 9      | 4                      | 6      | 363,314 | 23,820 |
| Jan. '55  | 27    | 28     | 59      | 59     | 10                           | 8      | 4                      | 5      | 367,017 | 24,745 |
| July, '55 | 27    | 28     | 59      | 57     | 10                           | 9      | 4                      | 6      | 364,768 | 24,414 |
| Jan. '56  | 27    | 26     | 59      | 59     | 10                           | 9      | 4                      | 6      | 372,750 | 25,579 |
| July '56  | 26    | 27     | 60      | 59     | 10                           | 7      | 4                      | 6      | 363,314 | 24,417 |
| Jan. '57  | 27    | 28     | 60      | 59     | 10                           | 7      | 4                      | 6      | 373,093 | 24,596 |
| July, '57 | 26    | 26     | 60      | 62     | 10                           | 6      | 4                      | 6      | 365,331 | 22,745 |
| Jan. '58  | 27    | 27     | 60      | 60     | 10                           | 7      | 4                      | 6      | 375,259 | 25,863 |
| July, '58 | 26    | 27     | 60      | 61     | 10                           | 6      | 4                      | 6      | 362,115 | 23,876 |
| Jan. '59  | 26    | 27     | 60      | 60     | 10                           | 6      | 4                      | 6      | 367,643 | 24,117 |

**Sources and notes:** P.P. First to eleventh annual Reports of the Poor Law Board, 1849-1859. E + W = England and Wales. Lancs. = Lancashire. N=number.

ones.<sup>25</sup> He puts this down to the greater usefulness of old women domestically, they being able to help out the family with traditionally female tasks such as cooking and childcare, the latter of which was often essential as it allowed to mother to work. The implications of this will be discussed further when we examine kinship support later in this chapter, and workhouse populations in the next.

<sup>25</sup> Anderson, *Family Structure*, p.74.

### **3 (ii) Pauperism and the poverty line: the form and value of outdoor relief in Preston union**

What did Boards of Guardians grant to those individuals whose entitlement to outdoor relief they recognised, and what did it contribute to their makeshift economies? It was suggested in the previous chapter that at any given time the overwhelming majority of people were managing to survive without the help of the Poor Law, and this supports recent historical work which has viewed the Poor Law after 1834 as a marginal element in the 'makeshift economy', a useful term which neatly encapsulates the drawing upon of various resources (earned and charitable) which the poor had to do to survive.<sup>26</sup> From this perspective the New Poor Law was little more than a safety net, even if we recognise that the net was larger in some parts of the country than others. Moreover, most historians agree that our proverbial net did not on its own provide nearly enough to maintain an outdoor pauper, as the relief granted by Boards of Guardians was usually meagre.<sup>27</sup> Thus, current research indicates that rather than substituting for wages, kinship support, charity and other forms of income, outdoor poor relief merely supplemented them.

Within this broad picture studies have suggested that the amount of outdoor relief granted at local level could vary from place to place. Steve King's regional approach to the study of Poor Law administration led him to conclude that relief rates could vary considerably, and he distinguished a 'generous' south and east from a 'parsimonious' north and west.<sup>28</sup> Others, however, are not so sure and the picture remains a muddled one. Focusing, like much Poor Law historiography, on the agricultural south under the Old Poor Law, Steve Hindle and Samantha Williams have doubted the existence of clear spatial patterns of relief, drawing attention to considerable differences between adjacent parishes.<sup>29</sup> Moreover, Williams and Snell have both argued that per capita poor relief expenditure in the south and east, while relatively generous and wide ranging during the early nineteenth century, declined significantly before and after 1834, which suggests that any conspicuous north/south divide under the Old Poor Law might have been bridged after the

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<sup>26</sup> For a detailed description of the 'economy of makeshifts' in theory and practice see: M. Handley, 'The economy of makeshifts and the poor law: a game of chance?', in S. King and A. Tomkins (eds.) *The poor in England, 1700-1850: an economy of makeshifts*, pp.76-99; Kidd, *State, society and the poor*, p.6; S. King and A. Tomkins, 'Introduction', in King and Tomkins (eds.), *The Poor in England*, pp.1-38; S. Williams, 'Earnings, poor relief and the economy of makeshifts: Bedfordshire in the early years of the New Poor Law', *Rural History*, 16 (2005), pp.21-52.

<sup>27</sup> Lees, *The solidarities of strangers*, p.210; Rose, 'The allowance system', pp.607-20; Rose, *The relief of poverty*, p.35.

<sup>28</sup> King, *Poverty and welfare*, pp.54, 197, 257.

<sup>29</sup> S. Hindle *On the Parish? The micro-politics of poor relief in rural England, c.1550-1750*; Williams, *Poverty, gender and life-cycle*, pp.164-165.

introduction of the New.<sup>30</sup> Lees offers support for such a contention, arguing of the New Poor Law that while the amount of relief provided by Guardians did vary across the country, it was pretty miserable wherever we look. In her view 'where you were mattered, but not a lot.'<sup>31</sup>

Work by Boyson and Ramsbottom on Lancashire confirm the absence of regional uniformity in the value of outdoor relief, though variation appears to have generally been small.<sup>32</sup> In his study of north-east Lancashire Boyson found that 'pension' rates in Bolton union were set to a standard scale of 2s per head per week during the 1840s, unless the individual was aged or infirm when 2s 6d was given. In the unions of Bury and Rochdale the scale was between 2s to 2s 5d per head, and in the Blackburn union, where the Guardians did not set a standard scale, relief at 2s per head was typical.<sup>33</sup> In the unions of Burnley and Haslingden it was around 1s 6d per head for families and 2s for single persons, while the paltry 1s per head offered in the Clitheroe union during the 1840s was raised to 2s in 1852.<sup>34</sup> In the broadly rural north-west Lancashire union of the Fylde, Ramsbottom found pension payments of 1s 6d to 2s most common.<sup>35</sup> On the whole, these figures do not appear to compare unfavourably to relief offered elsewhere. In his study of the Bradford union in Yorkshire, Ashforth found sums of 1s 6d to 2s per week typical around mid-century, though he notes that the elderly often got slightly more, while in her national survey Lees estimated that most adults under the age of 60 could expect, on average, between 1s and 2s per head per week right up to 1890; again, the elderly tended to get slightly larger amounts, their relief in some unions reaching 3s per week.<sup>36</sup> Thompson also found relief payments of 3s, rarely given it seems on this scale in Lancashire, commonly offered to the elderly in the southern and eastern counties of Bedfordshire, Norfolk and Suffolk.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> K. Snell, *Annals of the labouring poor: social change and agrarian England, 1660-1900* (1985), p.132; Williams, *Poverty, gender and life-cycle*, p.66. See also W. Apfel and P. Dunkley, 'English rural society and the New Poor Law: Bedfordshire, 1834-47', *Social History*, 10 (1985), pp.37-68.

<sup>31</sup> Lees, *The solidarities of strangers*, p.186

<sup>32</sup> R. Boyson, *The history of Poor Law administration in North-East Lancashire, 1837-1871*, MA thesis (1960), p.164; M. Ramsbottom, *Christopher Waddington's peers: Poor Law administration in the Fylde*, PhD thesis (2011), pp.264-266. The term 'pension' as defined here and by previous historians, is the provision of regular, guaranteed, weekly outdoor relief. In Preston union relief to 'pensioners' - who could be any age but were usually old - was guaranteed for 13 weeks, after which time the case was reviewed.

<sup>33</sup> Boyson, *The history of Poor Law administration*, pp.264-266.

<sup>34</sup> Rex Watson's study of Quaker charity books in Burnley confirms the 1s 6d per head average poor relief payment in the Burnley union: R. Watson, 'Poverty in North East Lancashire in 1843: evidence from Quaker charity records', *Local Population Studies*, 55 (1995), pp.22-44.

<sup>35</sup> Ramsbottom, *Christopher Waddington's peers*, pp.264-266.

<sup>36</sup> D. Ashforth, *The Poor Law in Bradford, c.1834-1871* (1979), PhD thesis, p.162; Lees, *The solidarities of strangers*, p.186.

<sup>37</sup> D. Thompson, 'The decline of social welfare: falling state support for the elderly since early Victorian times', *Ageing and Society*, 4 (1984), pp.451-482.

The provision of outdoor relief was not, however, as inelastic or certain as these figures suggest. People came before Poor Law authorities with different needs, and the relief granted was tailored according to both what the applicant asked for and what Guardians thought they deserved. The two did not always amount to the same thing. Local administrators had to take into account the size of a family, their earned and other income (if any), and their age and physical condition. Almost certainly, these decisions were influenced by how officials judged the character of the applicant.<sup>38</sup> Paupers therefore received different amounts of aid in different forms and for different lengths of time. Some people were offered relief entirely in money, others entirely or partly 'in kind'; that is, in items such as food or clothing.<sup>39</sup> Some got a single casual payment at need, while others were granted a regular weekly pension which could be augmented with additional aid if required. In some cases, paupers were only offered relief in the form of a loan, to be repaid when they regained independence. Thomas Batty Addison strongly encouraged the provision of relief by way of a loan, arguing that too many people, having previously been in receipt of good wages, turned to the Poor Law as soon as they encountered a period of temporary unemployment or sickness. If relief was given as a loan, he argued in 1852, 'it would only be applied for by the aged and helpless.'<sup>40</sup> Some years earlier he had made it clear why relief should, where practicable, be loaned rather than given:

It was time to look at the matter upon principle. The relief granted should be considered as a loan, not as a gift...Many looked upon it as a right, but if afterwards they had the power of paying it they ought to pay it; and if they [the Guardians] did not insist upon this they set a bad example. They were teaching [the poor] to live upon others, instead of depending on themselves...Many looked upon the parish fund as a purse, in which any man might put his hand and take out as much as he could get.<sup>41</sup>

There was some support for Addison's view among the Preston Guardians, and for a very brief period the Preston union led a national campaign to try and influence Parliament to make the process of enforcing loan repayments easier.<sup>42</sup> However, very little changed in practice at local level in either the short or the long term. In 1854, a local report into relief policy in the four out-districts of Preston union showed that the Longton district relieving officer had no cases of relief given as a

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<sup>38</sup> Englander, *Poverty and Poor Law reform*, p.19. That local Guardians took into account the character of the individual is very clear in the discussion over the formation of district relief committees in Preston union, as discussed in the previous chapter.

<sup>39</sup> This theme is discussed in L. Darwen, *The Old Poor Law in rural south-west Lancashire: a case study of Aughton during the early nineteenth century* (2011); King, *Poverty and welfare*; Lees, *The solidarities of strangers*, p.65; Ramsbottom, *Christopher Waddington's peers*, pp.107-184; Snell, *Annals of the labouring poor*, pp.105-106.

<sup>40</sup> P.C. 10<sup>th</sup> April, 1852.

<sup>41</sup> P.C. 24<sup>th</sup> April, 1847.

<sup>42</sup> L.A. PUT/1/15: 13<sup>th</sup> May, 1851.

loan on his books, and the Walton-le-Dale district relieving officer had only one. In the other two out-districts, Alston and Broughton, accounts for relief given as a loan were not even kept.<sup>43</sup> While it was more common to find relief given as a loan in the Preston districts, even here it does not appear that there were more than a handful of cases at any one time. In 1861, for example, when the clerk began recording in the minutes the amount of relief repaid each month, the sum for September in the two Preston districts was £13 2s 2d, or 3.8 per cent of the total spent in the same districts during the previous four weeks.<sup>44</sup> Addison's vaunted scheme to deter pauperism by loaning relief largely proved a damp squib during our period.

So how much relief did paupers in Preston union get, and in what form was it provided? Evidence is far from comprehensive for our period. Outdoor relief lists do not survive for the union, nor do the books of the individual relief committees. The Preston Guardians did not set a standard union rate of relief as some of their counterparts in other Lancashire unions studied by Boyson did, and with five relief committees operating more or less independently administration was susceptible to variation at sub-union level.<sup>45</sup> Enough evidence does, however, survive to allow us to form a revealing and instructive picture. Most paupers in the Preston union, and this appears true of Lancashire more broadly, received their relief in money, though the amount of relief given in kind increased over time and people fared differently depending on which part of the union they resided.<sup>46</sup> The issue was not without controversy. During the 1840s relief in kind was a negligible proportion of aggregate annual outdoor expenditure. It amounted to just 15 per cent in the Preston district in 1844, and in the four out-districts relief does not appear to have been given in kind at all.<sup>47</sup> The two contractors who supplied the bread and oatmeal which constituted the two formal types of in-kind relief in Preston union were based in the township of Preston itself, and it was simply inconvenient for the Relieving Officers of the out-districts to provide relief from this source. Indeed, for this reason the Guardians resolved in 1838 that anyone residing more than two miles outside of the centre of Preston could have their relief entirely in money.<sup>48</sup>

The central authority, however, always favoured relief being given in kind, and in their Outdoor Relief Regulation Order of 1852 it was stipulated that half of all relief to able-bodied males had to

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<sup>43</sup> L.A. PUT/1/18, 25<sup>th</sup> July, 1854.

<sup>44</sup> L.A. PUT/1/25.

<sup>45</sup> Boyson, *Poor Law administration in north-east Lancashire*, pp.164.

<sup>46</sup> Boyson, *Poor Law administration in north-east Lancashire*, pp.188-200.

<sup>47</sup> L.A. PUT/PUT/9-10.

<sup>48</sup> L.A. PUT/1/3: 25<sup>th</sup> September, 1838.



be given in this form.<sup>49</sup> One reason they enforced this particular regulation was because they viewed it as another means of testing the poor. PLB Inspector H. B. Farnall explained this line of reasoning to the Preston Guardians during a visit in October of 1852. 'The obligation', he told them,

to carry away the relief in the shape of food acted as a test to the undeserving poor. There was a man with a family; it was very easy to slip six or eight shillings into that man's hand, and it was very easy for that man to carry them away; but put into his hands the same number of loaves, and, in some cases, he would refuse the relief altogether.<sup>50</sup>

The regulation meant that the Relieving Officers were legally obliged to provide a not insignificant proportion of paupers with half of their outdoor relief in kind, and failure to comply ran the risk of being surcharged by the district auditor. Thus, in the two Preston districts, where relief in-kind had always been provided, annual expenditure on food for outdoor paupers rose significantly after the Order was implemented at the end of 1852. Between September 1855 and September 1856 over £1300 was spent on 'meal' alone, some 500 per cent more than was spent on this article on the eve of the Order in 1851-52; in total, just under half of aggregate outdoor expenditure in 1855-56 went on relief in kind in the two Preston districts.<sup>51</sup> In the four out-districts the experience was very different. Having for practical reasons never provided relief in-kind, administrators here simply ignored the regulation. Though some paupers were given tickets worth a certain value which were redeemable in specific local shops, physical items were not provided by the Guardians.<sup>52</sup> By the late 1850s the district auditor began attempting to force compliance by surcharging the Relieving Officers for each monetary payment they made in defiance of the Order, but sums like the £67 surcharged to Longton district officer Thomas Pickering and the £61 to Alston district officer William Halsall were far too large (these men earned £60 per annum) for any realistic chance of repayment, and the surcharges were in every case remitted upon appeal.<sup>53</sup> In short, as Walton-le-Dale district relieving officer John Hay, himself subjected to a £49 surcharge in 1859, explained to the PLB that year, it was 'the practice of the Preston Board of Guardians generally to give relief to paupers in the rural districts in money instead of part food.'<sup>54</sup> Logistics meant relief administration varied geographically at local level.

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<sup>49</sup> The Order had initially extended the regulation stipulating that relief had to be given partly in-kind to the aged and infirm, but this was quickly overturned following widespread disapprobation. Most paupers naturally preferred receiving their relief in money as they could spend it on what they liked, and Guardians tended to oblige in deserving cases.

<sup>50</sup> P.C. 16<sup>th</sup> October, 1852.

<sup>51</sup> L.A. PUT/1/15-16; PUT/1/19-20.

<sup>52</sup> The National Archives (T.N.A.) MH12-6115.

<sup>53</sup> T.N.A. MH12-6116.

<sup>54</sup> T.N.A. MH12-6116.

The value of outdoor relief provided by the Guardians, whether in money or in kind, was determined by individual circumstances. We get some sense of this by adopting Ramsbottom's method of judging outdoor relief payments from the sums given to paupers as they left the workhouse, which began to appear intermittently in the Preston union minute books from 1858.<sup>55</sup> People in ostensibly similar circumstances received different amounts of relief for varying lengths of time. Thus, while Isabella Lancaster and her three children received a seemingly miserable two shillings per week for thirteen weeks upon leaving the Preston workhouse in 1858, Ellen Wright and her three children got four shillings per week for five weeks.<sup>56</sup> Upon leaving the Ribchester workhouse in 1858, sixty-eight year old Peter Longtrice was provided with two shillings per week for four weeks, while sixty-seven year old Robert Moss received just a single payment of 1s 6d.<sup>57</sup> Assessing relief payments in this way can be insightful, but it does leave us asking more questions than it provides answers. Most problematically, it gives no indication of a pauper's aggregate income which would allow us to judge the adequacy of their relief. Poor Law historiography, indeed, says little on this issue, largely due to a lack of sufficient source material. One particular source, however, which is potentially available for every union operating under the 1852 Outdoor Relief Regulation Order, offers a unique insight into aggregate pauper family incomes and facilitates quantitative cohort analysis. Under said Order outdoor relief to healthy able-bodied males was only sanctioned by the auditor if the male undertook a task of labour, but the PLB allowed Guardians to deviate from this instruction if they notified them of every exception.<sup>58</sup> Consequently, from the end of 1852 Guardians across the industrial north of England began sending forms to the PLB which contained the details of each male headed pauper family relieved contrary to the Order. The information typically included household size, the age of each family member, their individual and collective incomes, and the amount and type of relief they were given (Figure 1).<sup>59</sup> What these 'outdoor relief approval forms' provide, then, is detailed information pertaining to pauper families, including 'hidden dependents' (namely children) who have frustrated previous historical enquiries in this area.<sup>60</sup> While it must be recognised that able-bodied males in employment are by no means

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<sup>55</sup> Ramsbottom, *Christopher Waddington's peers*, pp.264-265.

<sup>56</sup> L.A. PUT/1/23: 11<sup>th</sup> January, 1859.

<sup>57</sup> L.A. PUT/1/22: 28<sup>th</sup> September, 1858.

<sup>58</sup> P.P. 1852-53 (1625) *Fifth annual Report of the Poor Law Board*, pp.17-31

<sup>59</sup> T.N.A. MH12-6114-6117.

<sup>60</sup> Williams, *Poverty, gender and life-cycle*, p.55.

**Figure 1: A typical outdoor relief approval form**

14 Dec  
New Poor Law Board's General Order, No. 2, 1832

PRESTON UNION.

RECEIVED  
P. I. B.  
27 JAN 1859

Case of Relief *Thomas Barker & family*

Preston, 25 January 1859

My Lords and Gentlemen,

I am instructed by the Board of Guardians of this Union to transmit to you herewith a Statement of the following Case, falling under Art. 5 of your General Order, which has been relieved by order of the Guardians, in consequence of *insufficient earnings* and an inability to Maintain the Family without Parochial Relief, viz.—

STATEMENT OF FAMILY.

| Names.               | Ages.     | Trade or Calling.      | Amount of Weekly Earnings. | Township belonging to. | Observations.                |
|----------------------|-----------|------------------------|----------------------------|------------------------|------------------------------|
| <i>Thomas Barker</i> | <i>40</i> | <i>Handloom weaver</i> | <i>7/-</i>                 | <i>Ribblesdale</i>     | <i>Insufficient Earnings</i> |
| <i>Anna wife</i>     | <i>41</i> |                        | <i>7/-</i>                 |                        |                              |
| <i>John</i>          | <i>17</i> |                        | <i>5/-</i>                 |                        |                              |
| <i>Ellen</i>         | <i>14</i> |                        | <i>4/-</i>                 |                        |                              |
| <i>Susannah</i>      | <i>11</i> |                        | <i>2/-</i>                 |                        |                              |
| <i>Lina</i>          | <i>8</i>  |                        |                            |                        |                              |
| <i>William</i>       | <i>6</i>  |                        |                            |                        |                              |
| <i>Mary</i>          | <i>3</i>  |                        |                            |                        |                              |
| <i>Ruth</i>          | <i>1</i>  |                        |                            |                        |                              |

*2/- per week for 4 weeks by order of the Guardians*

**Source and notes:** The National Archives: MH12/6116. This case is of Thomas Barker, his wife and seven children.

a representative sample of outdoor paupers, assessing their aggregate incomes through this source provides an instructive means of determining how much paupers were expected to subsist upon under the New Poor Law after mid-century.

In total, the outdoor relief approval forms have provided suitable quantitative data for 55 pauper families relieved by the Preston Guardians between 1852 and 1860. There are a few important points to note about the cohort. Each family was headed by a male who was in employment at that time. Most of the males were married, with only fifteen per cent widowed and none unmarried. All of them had at least two children, though most had five or more. The male heads were also relatively young, their ages ranging from 29 to 46, indicative of the fact that men in their thirties and forties were simultaneously old enough to have large families and young enough to have infant children who were unable to contribute to the domestic economy. In most cases their relief was granted for a period of three months, the maximum allowed in Preston union before re-examination, meaning they were in receipt of a weekly dole rather than irregular, *ad hoc* cash payments. Finally, the majority of these men fell into two occupations, hand loom weaving (46 per

cent) and agricultural labour (21 per cent). In both, work could be irregular, and wages in the unskilled hand loom weaving sector were increasingly desperate through the 1850s.<sup>61</sup> A full week's work has been assumed in the presentation of wage information.

The quantitative data is presented in Table 6 and categorised according to family size. The sheer size of many of these families is worth noting. As most were of the traditional nuclear model, headed by a husband and wife, with an average of five children each, over half of the families contained seven or more persons. The average *household* size in Preston in 1851 was 5.4 persons, which included extended and non-family members.<sup>62</sup> The nuclear pauper families featured in Table 6, therefore, were unusually large, and this was presumably a prerequisite for employed able-bodied males to be entitled to outdoor support. As the relief provided to these families acted as an income subsidy, it was rather small in scale. For example, the average of 3s 8d granted to families of nine persons amounted to just 5d each. However, the relief was contributing to an aggregate total income which increased with the size of the family and brought the average per capita rate up to between 1s 8d and 2s 5d, figures which fall within the typical range of outdoor 'pension' payments found in other studies as discussed earlier. Looking beyond these averages, we find some variation between families of the same size. John Robinson, a farm labourer with a wife and five children, earned 9s per week and received 2s poor relief which brought his family's aggregate income up to 11s, or 1s 6d per head.<sup>63</sup> Edmund Duckworth, on the other hand, with exactly the same family structure, earned 13s 11d per week and also received 2s poor relief, bringing the aggregate family income up to 15s 11d, or 2s 3d per head.<sup>64</sup> It is not possible to determine from the information available why such discrepancies exist, but Guardians were clearly treating each case upon its individual merits. That they were doing so is, indeed, demonstrable. As Table 7 shows, families headed by widowed men always had a higher aggregate income than their married counterparts, the average difference translating to a significant 9d per person. The reason for the disparity is obvious enough. Not only were families headed by widowed men deprived of the wife's earnings, which often formed a substantial proportion of family incomes in Lancashire, but they

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<sup>61</sup> For the condition of hand loom weavers in our period see: D. Bythell, *The handloom weavers: a study in the English cotton industry during the Industrial Revolution* (1969); J. S. Lyons, *The Lancashire cotton industry and the introduction of the power-loom, 1815-50* (1977), PhD thesis, pp.34-100; G. Timmins, *The last shift: the decline of handloom weaving in nineteenth century Lancashire* (1993).

<sup>62</sup> M. Anderson, 'Household structure in the Industrial Revolution: mid-nineteenth century Preston in comparative perspective', in P. Laslett (ed.) *Household and family in time past* (1972). The average family size of 5.4 in Preston was higher than the national average, but may have been typical in Lancashire where a high incidence of kinship co-residency is evident.

<sup>63</sup> T.N.A. MH12-6115.

<sup>64</sup> T.N.A. MH12-6115.

**Table 6: Average incomes of 55 male headed pauper families, Preston union, 1852-1860**

|  | Number of persons in each family |        |        |        |        |        |
|--|----------------------------------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|
|  | 4                                | 5      | 6      | 7      | 8      | 9      |
| Average amount of outdoor relief (shillings/pence)           | 2s                               | 2s 5d  | 2s 9d  | 2s 6d  | 2s 5d  | 3s 8d  |
| Average total income including poor relief (shillings/pence) | 10s 4d                           | 11s 1d | 12s 1d | 12s 7d | 14s 5d | 20s 1d |
| Average per capita (shillings/pence)                         | 2s 5d                            | 2s 2d  | 2s     | 1s 8d  | 1s 8d  | 2s 2d  |
| Number of families in each category                          | 5                                | 6      | 10     | 21     | 8      | 4      |

Source: T.N.A. MH12/6114-6116.

**Table 7: Average incomes of 21 male headed pauper families, distinguishing between married and widowed men, Preston union, 1852-1860**

|         | Family of four |    |         |       | Family of five |       |        |       | Family of six |       |        |       |
|---------|----------------|----|---------|-------|----------------|-------|--------|-------|---------------|-------|--------|-------|
|         | N.             | R. | T.      | P.Ca. | N.             | R.    | T.     | P.Ca. | N.            | R.    | T.     | P.Ca. |
| Widowed | 4              | 2s | 10s 10d | 2s 7d | 3              | 3s 6d | 13s 1d | 2s 6d | 3             | 3s    | 15s 5d | 2s 6d |
| Married | 1              | 2s | 8s      | 2s    | 3              | 1s 6d | 9s 1d  | 1s 8d | 7             | 2s 8d | 11s 1d | 1s 8d |

Source and notes: T.N.A. MH12/6114-6116. N = number. R = relief. T = total income (relief + earned). P.Ca = per capita.

could also find themselves in a difficult position if kin or perhaps neighbours were not able to offer free or cheap childcare.<sup>65</sup> Without a wife to look after the children, the male head had to pay someone to do it while he worked, and this could be extremely costly to an already precarious domestic economy. John Forrest, a widowed power loom weaver with three young children (aged 5, 3 and 2 months), told the Guardians in 1854 that he paid 6s a week (half his earnings) on childcare and lodgings alone, while John Dagger, widowed and with four children, was paying 4s a week on childcare in 1860.<sup>66</sup> Local administrators evidently knew these widowed men needed extra help and scaled relief accordingly.

It now remains to consider the extent to which these aggregate incomes provided families with a level of subsistence. The incomes themselves do not compare unfavourably with the earnings of many adult males in mid-nineteenth century Lancashire. Hunt puts the average adult wage in agriculture at around 12s 5d per week, and Anderson states that many, perhaps half, of adult male

<sup>65</sup> M. Anderson, 'The study of family structure', in E. A. Wrigley (ed.) *Nineteenth century society: essays in the use of quantitative methods for the study of social data* (1972), p.61.

<sup>66</sup> L.A. PUT/1/18: 16<sup>th</sup> May, 1854; PUT/1/24: 10<sup>th</sup> July, 1860.

cotton operatives received around 15s.<sup>67</sup> An aggregate family income, however, could be significantly augmented if the wife and at least some of the children worked, and this appears to have been a primary cause of poverty among most of the pauper families featured in Table 6. While the wives and children of this cohort were in some cases in employment, their wages were very poor and their families too large - with too many young, non-wage earning mouths to feed - to maintain a viable domestic economy. It is surely significant that seventy-nine per cent of the pauper families for whom we have age information contained infant children, and all of them contained at least one child below wage earning age.<sup>68</sup> There is no adequate marker for comparing aggregate incomes against the cost of living in the mid-nineteenth century, but the Rowntree poverty scale adopted by Anderson in his study of Preston proves instructive.<sup>69</sup> There are, of course, problems with using such a scale for this purpose, not least because it is anachronistic. Local administrators in the mid-nineteenth century did not define poverty according to the scales adopted in late-nineteenth century sociological studies. At a time when a far lower proportion of the population was in receipt of poor relief than in poverty as it was later defined, we cannot expect aggregate pauper incomes to go beyond a hypothetical poverty line. Nonetheless, as a means of providing a basic subsistence marker, the Rowntree scale is useful. There is one further methodological issue. Our examination must presume that the resources of these families did not extend beyond their earned income and poor relief, and this must be an erroneous assumption in some cases. Some, for example, might have received additional support from kin, friends, neighbours or private charity, while others may have had resources such as a small parcel of land upon which to grow vegetables and the like, which was not uncommon in the rural out-districts.<sup>70</sup> This would obviously increase the level of subsistence. It is, however, reasonably safe to assume that the aggregate incomes found in the relief approval forms under examination here constituted the bulk of a family's resources.

The Rowntree poverty scale, adapted to compare average pauper family incomes against the approximate amount it would cost to live outside of poverty, is presented in Table 8. It makes for rather grim reading. Based on these figures, pauper incomes did not get near to the poverty line as defined by Rowntree. A family of nine could expect their aggregate income to cover just 62 per cent

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<sup>67</sup> Anderson, *Family structure*, pp.31-32; E. H. Hunt, 'Industrialisation and regional inequality: wages in Britain, 1760-1914', *Journal of economic history*, 4 (1986), pp.935-966.

<sup>68</sup> Of the 55 pauper families featured in Table 6, we have age information for 38.

<sup>69</sup> Anderson, *Family structure*, pp.29-32.

<sup>70</sup> M. Winstanley, 'Industrialisation and the small farm: family and household economy in nineteenth century England', *Past and Present*, 152 (1996), p.174.

**Table 8: Primary poverty expenditure against pauper family incomes, Preston union, 1852-1860**

| Family size | Required weekly expenditure |                   |                       |         | Av. weekly pauper incomes<br>(taken from Table 6) |
|-------------|-----------------------------|-------------------|-----------------------|---------|---|
|             | Food                        | Rent<br>(approx.) | Household<br>sundries | Total   | Total   |
| 4           | 10s 6d                      | 4s                | 4s 4d                 | 18s 10d | 10s 4d  |
| 5           | 12s 9d                      | 4s                | 4s 11d                | 21s 8d  | 11s 1d  |
| 6           | 15s                         | 5s 6d             | 5s 6d                 | 26s     | 12s 1d  |
| 7           | -                           | -                 | -                     | 28s 10d | 12s 7d  |
| 8           | -                           | -                 | -                     | 30s 8d  | 14s 5d  |
| 9           | -                           | -                 | -                     | 32s 6d  | 20s 1d  |

Source: T.N.A. MH12/6114-6116.

of the amount required living outside of poverty, and they fared the best. Most of these families could expect the incomes to cover only around half of the amount required. Even if we take into account, as Anderson informs us, that Rowntree's estimated rental costs are slightly too high for the mid-nineteenth century, and also consider that additional means of subsistence would have been available to at least some of these families as noted above, the gap between average income and required expenditure would not be bridged.<sup>71</sup> Thus, it appears that with the aid of poor relief paupers might have been able to afford the cheapest food at the barest level of subsistence, and perhaps the rental costs of the very poorest housing, but little else. It is almost certainly true that the regular purchase of 'household sundries' - bedding, clothing, heat and light - would have been beyond the means of these pauper families. Indeed, many middle-class women who visited the poor on behalf of the Bedding Charity in Preston during periods of economic depression in the 1840s found that when money was in short supply, families often went without this important provision.<sup>72</sup> There is little scope, then, to argue other than that paupers in the Preston union must have experienced considerable day-to-day hardship maintaining themselves and their families. Moreover, as the per capita incomes of the 55 pauper families featured in Table 6 were similar to typical pension levels found in other studies, this is almost certainly true of many – perhaps most – places elsewhere. Outdoor relief under the New Poor Law acted as a minor supplement to resources which were far below the primary poverty line as it was later defined; but it probably gave pauper families an aggregate income similar to that of many others living in primary poverty without the aid of communal support.

<sup>71</sup> Anderson, *Family structure*, p.201.

<sup>72</sup> P.C. 9<sup>th</sup> January, 1841.

### 3 (iii) Outdoor relief and the crucial role of kin

Many people in receipt of relief, of course, did not earn any income to supplement their outdoor doles. A great number of permanently or long term dependent aged and infirm paupers would have been entirely unable to work, and weekly pension sums of 1s 6d - 2s 6d, which appear to have been typical in Lancashire, would not have been enough to maintain them alone. While the pauper families examined above could probably just about manage on a similar per capita rate, as their aggregated incomes allowed them to scrape together basic food and rent costs, a single payment of around 2s could not. So how did elderly 'pensioners' manage? Charities provided an additional financial resource for some, and neighbours and friends offered short term support at times.<sup>73</sup> However, it will be argued in this section that kin, notably adult children, were the most important element within the makeshift economies of the not able-bodied aged poor in Lancashire, and that Boards of Guardians encouraged (sometimes enforced) kin to provide full or partial support as *the* primary means of mitigating poverty. Kin, it seems, recognised their obligation to do so when they were able to. It will further be argued that this was at least partly why pauperism, as we saw in the previous chapter, was lower in Lancashire than many other parts of the country.

Since before the introduction of the 1834 Poor Law Amendment Act adult males, and unmarried adult females, had been legally required to provide financial support for their destitute aged parents if they were in a position to do so.<sup>74</sup> Those who refused to offer such support could, if they were thought able to upon investigation, be taken to court by Poor Law authorities and compelled.<sup>75</sup> Historians have disagreed over the extent to which society, and specifically the Poor Law, actually expected adult children to perform this duty in practice. On one end of the scale is David Thomson, who argues that during the first decades of the New Poor Law, as under the Old, the responsibility of maintaining the aged poor lay with the community rather than kin.<sup>76</sup> In other words, despite the law, adult children were not customarily expected to maintain their parents. While Thomson notes a very slight increase in the number of adult children taken to court after 1834, he found that it was not until the Crusading years from 1870 that the maintenance of the elderly shifted from the community to individual kin.<sup>77</sup> Pat Thane, at the other end of the scale, disagrees. She argues that there was always strong moral pressure on adult children to support

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<sup>73</sup> Kidd, *State, society and the poor*, pp.65-109.

<sup>74</sup> P. Thane, 'Old people and their families in the English past', in M. Daunton (ed.), *Charity, self-interest and welfare in Britain: 1500 to the present*, pp.84-103.

<sup>75</sup> Thane, 'Old people and their families', pp.84-103.

<sup>76</sup> D. Thomson, 'I am not my father's keeper: families and the elderly in nineteenth century England', *Law and History Review*, 2 (1984), pp.265-286.

<sup>77</sup> Thompson, 'I am not my father's keeper', p.284.



their aged parents, but that they were only forced to 'if they could afford it.'<sup>78</sup> Those who could, claims Thane, generally did so without the interference of the Poor Law. Thane is particularly critical of the limited evidence base upon which Thomson formed his interpretations, as he examined only a handful of southern agricultural unions which, she explains, were 'precisely the sort of poor rural districts in which there was no point in pursuing men for payments they could not afford.'<sup>79</sup> Thane's conclusion is persuasive; Thomson fell into the trap, not uncommon in Poor Law historiography, of viewing national practice through evidence from one part of the country.

Based on Thane's view, the high wage county of Lancashire would be just the sort of place where many adult children could be expected, and forced if necessary, to maintain their elderly parents. Primary and secondary evidence suggests this was the case. Indeed, studies indicate that the primacy of kinship support during periods of life-cycle crisis was a distinctive feature of Poor Law policy in the northern manufacturing districts. In his study of illegitimacy during the last years of the Old Poor Law, Thomas Nutt has shown that Poor Law officials in Lancashire and the West Riding of Yorkshire pursued putative fathers for the repayment of relief given to the mothers of their children to an extent not replicated elsewhere.<sup>80</sup> Whether this reflected the greater ability of working men in Lancashire and Yorkshire to repay relief is unclear, and Nutt offers no explanations, but it is certainly indicative of a welfare culture which placed kin firmly above the community in the response to poverty. This has been demonstrated clearly in local Old Poor Law studies by King and Hallas, who have both shown the centrality of kin as a coping strategy in Lancashire and Yorkshire during the years before the new system.<sup>81</sup> Of more direct relevance to our current enquiry is co-residency data provided by Anderson for mid-nineteenth century Preston. Anderson found a very high incidence of co-residency between aged parents and adult children, with 68 per cent of non-institutionalised men and women aged 65 and over living with their children. As this probably accounted for the vast majority of aged people who had children alive, Anderson was able to conclude that the figures 'suggest very strongly that there were few old people [in Preston] who could not find one among their children prepared to give them house room in old age.'<sup>82</sup>

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<sup>78</sup> Thane, 'Old people and their families' p.89.

<sup>79</sup> Thane, 'Old people', p.89.

<sup>80</sup> T. Nutt, 'Illegitimacy, parental financial responsibility, and the 1834 Poor Law Commission Report: the myth of the old poor law and the making of the new', *Economic History Review*, 63, 2 (2010), pp.335-361.

<sup>81</sup> S. King, 'Reconstructing lives: the poor, the poor law and welfare in rural industrial communities', *Social History*, 22 (1997), 318-338; S. King, 'The English protoindustrial family: old and new perspectives', *History of the Family*, 8 (2003), pp.21-43; C. S.Hallas, 'Poverty and pragmatism in the northern uplands of England: the north Yorkshire Pennines c.1770-1900', *Social History*, 25 (2000), pp.67-84.

<sup>82</sup> Anderson, *Family structure*, pp.139-140.

Anderson's data, then, suggests that many, perhaps most, elderly people in Lancashire were receiving support from their children by allowing them to move into their homes, at least in towns. On occasions, these arrangements would have been reinforced by the Poor Law authorities with small outdoor relief doles, which might explain why the top-rate pensions (3s.) found in some southern counties were rarely matched in Lancashire. More clearly, this culture of kinship support distinguishes the region from the south and east in welfare terms, both before and after 1837. Contemporary observers, too, noticed this disparity. A PLC report on the northern manufacturing districts in 1842, for example, stated that 'the disposition and *ability* of the operatives [in Lancashire] to support their aged relatives' was a chief cause of the region's low rate of pauperism during normal economic times.<sup>83</sup> Other primary evidence suggests such support was expected by the Poor Law authorities in the county. In their responses to the 'town queries' issued by the Royal Commission in 1832, most parish officials in Lancashire stated that the competency of adult children to maintain their parents was always enquired into upon the latter making an application for poor relief.<sup>84</sup> Moving into the New Poor Law period, Guardians' minute books suggest the veracity of this claim. The books of the rural Lancashire unions of Ormskirk and Garstang, for instance, indicate that a policy of summoning typically male individuals to, in common phraseology, 'show cause why they should not maintain their parent[s]' was pursued with vigour.<sup>85</sup>

Less clear is the extent to which a policy enforcing adult children to support their aged parents was pursued in Preston union. In other words, it is not possible to determine the role played by the Poor Law in fostering the high incidence of co-residency as a supporting mechanism in the town of Preston, nor to ascertain how often people across the union were compelled by Poor Law officials to contribute financially to their elderly parent's maintenance. Evidence from local newspapers, which regularly reported on weekly court sessions in Preston, suggests that recourse to the law was rarely taken for this purpose. While the reports are replete with bastardy affiliation cases, and cases of absent fathers summoned to support their wives and children, there are very few of adult children summoned to support their parents. Moreover, people could not be compelled by law to co-reside with extended family; they could only be forced to provide financial support. Thus, the co-residential arrangements which were clearly very common between adult children and their elderly parents in Preston were made outside the ambit of the Poor Law. However, this does not

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<sup>83</sup> P.P. 1842 (158) *Population of Stockport*, p.7; emphasis added.

<sup>84</sup> P.P. 1834 (44) *Report from his Majesty's commissioners for inquiring into the administration and practical operation of the Poor Laws*, pp.5513-5526.

<sup>85</sup> L.A. PUY/1/1, Garstang union minute book, 1837-1844; PUS/1/1-5, Ormskirk union minute books, 1837-1860.

preclude the Poor Law as an influential factor. Within a welfare culture which placed kinship support at the forefront of the response to poverty, moving a parent into the home of an adult child offered a cheaper means of this fulfilling this obligation as it removed their rental costs.<sup>86</sup> Moreover, people knew all too well that failure to offer some support to a destitute elderly parent would inevitably see them go into the workhouse. Co-residential arrangements again offered a means of providing support here, and outdoor relief must in many cases have been dependent on, and therefore been an inducement to, such arrangements being made.

We can examine three particular reports of legal cases which appear in the Preston newspapers to develop this discussion. The reports shed light on the circumstances of the (invariably male) individuals the Guardians expected to contribute to their parent's maintenance, how these people perceived their own responsibility, and more broadly some of the coping strategies of poor families. Summonses were only made by the Poor Law authorities after an initial, informal, request to support a parent had been refused. It was then left to the magistrates - ex-officio Guardians - to make the final decision and set the terms. While it might be expected that the involvement of magistrates (as members of the Board of Guardians) would work in the union's favour, most of the cases appear to have been dismissed. The first case, that of brother's John and Robert Cooper, is instructive and typical. These two men were both cotton operatives living in Blackburn, and were summoned to court in 1859 for refusing to support their 82 year old father who was in receipt of 2s 6d a week from the township of Preston. The two men were on relatively good wages, 20s a week, but protested against contributing to the maintenance of their father on the grounds that they were both married, had two children each, and because they already contributed 3s between them to their mother. Moreover, they told the court that they felt 'no occasion to give him [their father] anything, he has not brought us up.'<sup>87</sup> There are two main points to take from their testimony. First, that the brothers evidently recognised their responsibility to support their mother, to whom they were providing financial support on a scale which matched the higher rate of Poor Law pensions given in the south of England. Second, that this recognition of responsibility did not extend to their father, who appears to have left them at a young age and to whom they consequently felt no familial attachment. In the event the court ruled in the brother's favour, though one assumes on financial - they had families and were already giving money to their mother - rather than on sentimental grounds.

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<sup>86</sup> Anderson noted a high incidence of elderly women residing with children for this very purpose: Anderson, *Family structure*, p.74.

<sup>87</sup> P.C. 6<sup>th</sup> August, 1859.

The second case is that of Edward Southworth, a married card loom weaver with no children. Southworth, who earned conjointly with his wife 20s a week, was brought before the bench in 1859 for failing to contribute towards the maintenance of his sick mother, who was in receipt of 1s 6d a week from the Poor Law. By way of explanation, he told the court that he was unable to offer anything as his wife was also presently in ill health, and that because she was unable to work their income had been cut to the 12s he was able to earn each week. Pleading his defence, Southworth told the presiding magistrate that 'I have done my best for her [his mother] ever since she was poorly. She is not in the workhouse. She receives outdoor relief, and lives with my two sisters.'<sup>188</sup> His statement is revealing. Southworth and his sister's evidently recognised that they had to support their mother if she was to be kept out of the workhouse, and they consequently made co-residential arrangements as a means of providing for her. This arrangement was being reinforced by small weekly outdoor relief doles from the Poor Law. By stressing that he had 'done his best' for his mother despite his own problems at home with an ill wife, and by showing that the family had put in place measures to provide some support, Southworth was able to persuade the magistrate that this was not a case of neglect. Thus, as with the Cooper brothers, the case was dismissed.

Our final case is that of three brothers, Robert, John and Thomas Nelson, whose good earnings led to a maintenance order being placed upon them with strong rebuke from the presiding magistrate William Ainsworth, who served as an elected Guardian for Preston during the 1840s and 1850s. The brothers were summoned for refusing to maintain their 76 year old father, who was in receipt of 1s 6d per week from the Poor Law. All three men were married with children, and like the Cooper brothers they protested against their inability to contribute on these grounds. Yet, being cotton operatives each earning over 20s a week, Ainsworth was not of the same view. He told the brothers that he was 'ashamed' of them for leaving their father chargeable to the community when they were in a position to provide support, and ordered them to contribute 1s 6d per week - a miserly 6d each - between them as maintenance. One assumes the father had additional help from somewhere, as he could not have survived on such small amounts alone. Aside from reinforcing a view that Guardians in Lancashire firmly placed kinship before communal support, the case is interesting because of a parting shot made by Ainsworth after he had delivered his verdict. He told the brothers that if they were struggling to make their contributions they should 'take three or four glasses of beer less in the week - (Laughter). That will do it.'<sup>189</sup> His advice was imbibed with the view,

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<sup>188</sup> *P.C.* 27<sup>th</sup> August, 1859.

<sup>189</sup> *P.C.* 27<sup>th</sup> August, 1859.

espoused by both Addison and Livesey as we saw in Chapter 1, that profligacy, chiefly alcohol, was at the heart of much negligence and familial hardship.

## **Conclusion**

The previous chapter showed that, despite regional variation, the Poor Law after 1834 was far from inclusive with only a small proportion of people living in poverty at any one time also being in receipt of relief. Against this backdrop, the intention of this chapter has been to examine the profile of those whose circumstances were such that they were considered entitled to outdoor support - by far the most common form of welfare provision - and to assess the adequacy of the relief they were given. In terms of the profile of outdoor pauperism, it is obviously impossible for the historian to ascertain at the individual level why each person applied for and received poor relief rather than (or in addition to) turning to kin, friends, neighbours, charity and other alternative resources in the makeshift economy. Yet, viewed through the prism of need and entitlement there are clear trends at both the national level and in Lancashire which allow firm conclusions to be drawn as to causation. A basic need for assistance was, of course, at the heart of all relief applications, and the data series used in this chapter very clearly demonstrates this. Widows with children applied for relief when their husbands died. The aged did the same when other sources of support were unavailable or inadequate. Able-bodied men with families applied when they were sick or unemployed, as did women when their husbands deserted them, moved away in search of work or joined the army. In short, the data shows that life-cycle events determined the likelihood of a person requiring relief. However, inextricably tied to this were ideas regarding entitlement to outdoor support as Goose argues, and the data further indicates that these notions of entitlement were commonly held. Widows and aged persons, for example, who were consistently predominant among the outdoor pauper host, may have been particularly vulnerable to destitution, but they were also rooted in the category of deserving poor and consequently more likely to be offered outdoor rather than indoor relief. Conversely, certain 'undeserving' groups were much more likely to be offered only the workhouse as we shall see in the next chapter, where this discussion is developed.

A more formal determinant of eligibility to outdoor relief was the central authority's official relief orders. The Prohibitory Order narrowed entitlement by banning outdoor relief the able-bodied (widows excepted) who could work, and appears to have been largely successful as Williams argues. One result of this was that a far lower proportion of able-bodied men were in receipt of outdoor relief for work related reasons in the country as a whole than in Lancashire, where the Prohibitory

Order was never applied. Indeed, this constituted the only major difference in the profile of outdoor pauperism between Lancashire and England and Wales as a whole. The disparity is significant. Not only did it facilitate the very large numbers of able-bodied men who were in receipt of outdoor relief during periods of economic depression in Lancashire, but most of these men were married heads of nuclear family units. The family structure of able-bodied male paupers is rarely incorporated into statistical analyses, and they have consequently been seen as a marginal element among aggregated pauperism. However, during periods of depression in Lancashire able-bodied men with their dependents included accounted for up to 54 per cent of the aggregate pauper host. Thus, they constituted a significant *majority* at these times, and they were hardly insignificant in other times when viewed from this perspective. This discussion is developed in Chapter 5.

To those applicants whose entitlement to outdoor relief was recognised, Boards of Guardians appear to have given only very minimal support. Studies suggest that, regardless of local and regional variations, outdoor relief payments were far from generous under the New Poor Law. Although much further research is required before firmer conclusions can be made here, Lees' view that, after 1834, 'where you were mattered, but not a lot' in terms of the size of relief payments seems persuasive when figures for other studies are taken into account. The pioneering quantitative examination of pauper family incomes undertaken in this chapter indicates that outdoor relief in Preston union was granted to a per capita scale of around 2s per week, with the highest sums going to widowed men who required childcare while they worked. These figures are consistent with the typical range of payments identified elsewhere. Significantly, these aggregate incomes stood, on average, at only around half the amount required to live outside of primary poverty in the mid-nineteenth century according to Anderson's adapted poverty line. As a marker of the adequacy of outdoor relief this is instructive, although broader conclusions, particularly beyond Lancashire, would depend on gathering similar evidence and adjusting the Anderson poverty line according to local costs of living. Nonetheless, it is unlikely based on what we know about the typical size of Poor Law payments that any union was administering relief on a scale that would bring pauper family incomes above or even near to the poverty line. Thus, in Preston union and it seems more generally, the Poor Law in our period granted outdoor relief on a scale which, at best, augmented incomes to the very barest level of subsistence.

This assessment supports the view that the Poor Law was a marginal element in the makeshift economies of the poor after 1834. Not only did it relieve the few rather than the many, but it did so on a scale which merely supplemented other resources. In Lancashire, however, and it seems

the industrial north more broadly, the Poor Law appears to have been particularly marginal.<sup>90</sup> Evidence indicates that both before and after 1834 Poor Law administrators in the manufacturing districts encouraged kinship support as a means of mitigating poverty to an extent not mirrored elsewhere. The impact of this is apparent when we look at the treatment of aged persons who, unable or less able to work, had to rely on family, charity and the Poor Law - perhaps all at the same time - to survive. The aged and infirm tended to be granted outdoor relief, but the scale at which it was provided in Lancashire, typically 1s 6d to 2s 6d per week, was hardly enough to live on alone. Family therefore needed to step in with additional support, and in Preston many adult children did so by offering house room to their parents. This was the cheapest and most effective way, and may actually have benefitted the family because an adult was in the home who could provide childcare while both parents worked. Moreover, when adult children failed to offer support, leaving their parents to the Poor Law, Guardians could and occasionally did take legal proceedings to enforce contributions, although how frequently they did so in Preston is unclear. Nonetheless, evidence from the resulting hearings at Preston's court sessions indicates that adult children recognised their obligation to maintain their parents, for it is surely telling that both the Cooper brothers, and Edward Southworth and his sisters, were already supporting their parents when summoned for larger contributions. That this culture of kinship support did not develop with the same vigour in southern and eastern agricultural regions, in Thane's view because men with families simply could not afford it, is significant in the context of the welfare patterns explored in Chapter 2. It might also explain why top rate pensions to the aged of around 3s were not provided in the northern manufacturing districts. In Lancashire, the failure of kin to provide relatively substantial support to an aged parent would invariably see them enter the workhouse, and it is to this great Poor Law institution that we now turn.

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<sup>90</sup> For expressions of this view, see: C. S. Hallas, 'Poverty and pragmatism in the northern uplands of England: the north Yorkshire Pennines c.1770-1900', *Social History*, 25 (2000), pp.67-84; Hanley, 'The economy of makeshifts', pp.76-99; S. King, 'Reconstructing lives', pp.318-338; S. King, 'The English protoindustrial family: old and new perspectives', *History of the Family*, 8 (2003), pp.21-43; E. C. Midwinter, *Social administration in Lancashire, 1830-1860: Poor Law, public health, police* (1966).

## Chapter 4

### The workhouses and their inmates

#### Introduction

Although the vast majority of paupers after 1834 continued to receive outdoor relief as they always had, the union workhouse is *the* enduring symbol of welfare provision during the Victorian era. Emotive literature by popular contemporary authors and social commentators, the most popular of which was undoubtedly Dickens' *Oliver Twist*, attacked the workhouse system with stories of cruelty and brutality which ensured the institution gained an infamous reputation which survives to this day.<sup>1</sup> Indeed, popular modern histories of the institution often serve to perpetuate this negative view. The recent television series *Secrets of the Workhouse* (2013) opened with the outlandishly ahistorical claim that 'anyone who was poor' after 1834 'was either left to starve on the streets or forced to submit themselves to the harsh conditions of the workhouse.'<sup>2</sup> The introduction to a recent republication of *Jessie Phillips*, an 1840s novel heavily critical of the workhouse system, did the same, stating that under the New Poor Law 'most paupers either had to live in the workhouse, which meant submitting not only to a harsh regime but also to a social stigma, or die outside it.'<sup>3</sup> Even scholarly texts are susceptible to such exaggerations and falsehoods. The blurb to Simon Fowler's quite recent book *Workhouse* incorrectly informs us that 'workhouses...known for their soul-numbing routines, deprivation and cruelty, were after 1834 almost the sole source of relief for paupers across the land.'<sup>4</sup> Academic historians are, of course, well aware that the workhouse played a much smaller role in the Victorian welfare regime than these statements suggest, and that many of the stories of cruelty which have shaped what we might term our popular cultural understanding of these institutions turn out, upon close inspection, to be fabricated.<sup>5</sup> The problem for the academic historian, as Carter observes, is determining 'where

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<sup>1</sup> C. Dickens, *Oliver Twist* (1837). See also: F. Trollope, *Jessie Phillips: a tale of the present day*, (1843). John Walter, the owner of *The Times*, was also an opponent of the New Poor Law and filled his newspaper with many exaggerated or completely untrue stories of workhouse cruelty. Robert's has described the newspapers during the 1840s as 'a compendium of Poor Law crimes': D. Roberts, 'How cruel was the Victorian Poor Law?', *The Historical Journal* (1963), pp.97-107. For historian's take on Dickens' and others influence on enduring perceptions of the workhouse see: A. Digby, *Pauper palaces* (1978), p.ix; M. A. Crowther, *The workhouse system, 1834-1929: the history of an English social institution* (1981), p.2; R. Richardson, *Dickens and the workhouse: Oliver Twist and the London poor* (2012); L. Smith, S. Thornton, J. Reinartz and A. Williams, "Please sir, I want some more", *British medical journal*, 337 (2008), a2722.

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.itv.com/presscentre/ep1week26/secrets-workhouse> (Accessed 1/10/2014)

<sup>3</sup> Trollope, *Jessie Phillips*, p.7.

<sup>4</sup> S. Fowler, *Workhouse: the people, the places, the life behind doors* (2007).

<sup>5</sup> Roberts, 'How cruel', pp.97-99.



popular myth stops and the truth begins.<sup>6</sup> Workhouses were never designed to be nice places, and there are examples during the 1830s and 1840s of paupers receiving inhumane treatment at the hands of some extremely violent workhouse masters.<sup>7</sup> But 'less eligibility', the principle which determined that living in a workhouse had to be less attractive than living independently, did not endorse cruelty. Incidents such as the Andover workhouse scandal of the mid-1840s occurred when something went wrong, not when the regulations were applied correctly.<sup>8</sup> The deterrent aspect of less eligibility, as Crowther argues, lay in the rigid discipline of workhouse life, the monotonous labour and the loss of personal autonomy. If there was any cruelty inherent in the workhouse system, it was psychological rather than physical.<sup>9</sup>

How far the deterrent workhouse system as endorsed by the central authority was actually carried out at local level is, however, another question entirely, a fact which further complicates matters. As with most aspects of welfare provision after 1834, official policy and local practice was rarely one and the same thing, and workhouses could vary considerably from one union to another in both form and function. Evidence presented from Preston union over the course of this chapter shall create a very different picture of the workhouse than the one typically painted in popular history. In the first section we examine how the workhouse system, loosely defined, operated in Preston union and how it developed during a period in which the 'workhouse question' (which asked whether the union should have a single, deterrent workhouse) dominated the union's ideological and political landscape. In the second section we then turn to examine the inmates themselves; those people whose circumstances were such that they accepted an offer from the Guardians - for they could not be forced - to enter the workhouse. This second section serves two main purposes. First, it contributes to and develops upon recent work which has examined the populations of workhouses using census enumerators' books (CEBs).<sup>10</sup> These studies have

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<sup>6</sup> P. Carter, *Bradford Poor Law union: papers and correspondence with the Poor Law Commission, October 1834-January, 1839* (2004), p.xxiv.

<sup>7</sup> Crowther, *The workhouse system*; F. H. Lofthouse (2001) *Keepers of the house, a workhouse saga*; N. Longmate, *The workhouse* (2003), pp.122-33.

<sup>8</sup> Crowther, *The workhouse system*, pp.2-3; J. Seabrook, *Pauperland: poverty and the poor in Britain* (2013), pp.102-103.

<sup>9</sup> Crowther, *The workhouse system*, p.34. See also U. Henriques, 'How cruel was the Victorian Poor Law?', *Historical Journal*, 11 (1968), pp.365-71.

<sup>10</sup> N. Goose, 'Workhouse Populations in the Mid-Nineteenth Century: the case of Hertfordshire' *Local Population Studies*, 62 (1999), pp.52-69; A. Gritt and P. Park, 'The Workhouse Populations of Lancashire in 1881, *Local Population Studies*, 86 (2011), pp.37-65; A. Hinde and F. Turnbull, 'The Populations of Two Hampshire Workhouses, 1851-1861' *Local Population Studies*, 61 (1998), p.38-53; D. G. Jackson, 'Kent Workhouse Populations in 1881: a study based on the census enumerators' books', *Local Population Studies*, 69 (2002), p.51-66; D. G. Jackson, 'The Medway union Workhouse, 1876-1881: a study based on the administration and discharge registers and the census enumerators' books', *Local Population Studies*, 75 (2005), pp.11-32; S. Page, 'Pauperism and the Leicester Workhouse in 1881', *Transactions of the*

enhanced considerably our understanding of the role of workhouses at local level, and this thesis will extend that line of research to a union in an English manufacturing region for the first time in our period. Second, analysing workhouse populations in Preston union allows us to consider further the role of entitlement in the process of relief administration, and examine the extent to which it influenced who was most likely to be offered the workhouse.

#### **4 (i) The workhouse as an institution: their form and function in Preston union**

While the PLC only intended the workhouse test to apply to able-bodied persons, and more specifically able-bodied males, in reality most of the regulations designed to make the workhouse a deterrent affected all who entered the institution. According to official doctrine the workhouse system at local level was to centre upon a single, mixed union establishment in which all the indoor paupers would reside. Therein, they would live by strict routine in a controlled environment. Crowther neatly summarises the Commissioner's intentions in a passage which is worth quoting in full:

Separation was to be enforced between the different ages and sexes. A school must be provided for the children. The able-bodied must be set to work and given plain, frugal, but sufficient food. Tobacco and spirits must be banned. The sick should have separate wards, and cleanliness, order and ventilation were to be enforced, not merely because of hygiene (though this was important to the Commissioners), but because they were essential to discipline. When a pauper entered the workhouse [they were] to be bathed, and [their] clothes and property taken from [them]. [They] were to be put into workhouse uniform, and not leave the workhouse without permission. Clearly there were many similarities with the prison system, but the pauper could discharge themselves at will.<sup>11</sup>

It is important to note that many of these regulations were by no means new in 1834. Most Old Poor Law township workhouses in Lancashire had long separated men from women, adults from children, the sick from the healthy.<sup>12</sup> Moreover, local administrators invariably placed restrictions on leaving the institution without permission, on alcohol and tobacco consumption, and generally set the able-bodied to work at menial labour.<sup>13</sup> In Preston, the General Vestry in 1827 published a

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*Leicestershire Architectural and Archaeological Society*, 63 (1989), p.85-95. C. Seal, 'Workhouse populations in the Cheltenham and Belper unions: a study based on the census enumerators' books, 1851-1911', *Family and Community History*, 13 (2010), pp.83-100.

<sup>11</sup> Crowther, *The workhouse system*, pp.41-42: the word 'he' or 'his' used in Crowther's text has been changed to 'they' or 'their' here, as these regulations applied to females as well as males.

<sup>12</sup> Parliamentary Papers (P.P.) 1834 (44) *Report from his majesty's commissioners for inquiring into the administration and practical operation of the Poor Laws*. See responses to question No.19 of 'Town queries, Part II'.

<sup>13</sup> G. W. Oxley, *Poor relief in England and Wales, 1601-1834* (1973), pp.79-101.

list of 84 workhouse rules and regulations, one of which charged the governor and governess with 'inculcating and encouraging religious and moral duties, industrious and frugal habits, and submissive and obedient behaviour in all the inmates.'<sup>14</sup> Discipline, in other words, was an ingrained part of workhouse life before the New Poor Law was introduced. What the PLC did, however, was enforce these regulations in more stringent form, often riding roughshod over long standing local practices. In Preston, for example, pauper separation under the Old Poor Law had not extended to nuclear families who, if they were admitted at all, were allowed to live together in the workhouse.<sup>15</sup> The Commissioners' mandatory regulations put an end to this, demanding all paupers be separated according to age and sex.<sup>16</sup> The Commissioners' regulations also brought to an end a long standing policy of allowing workhouse inmates in Preston to eat as much as they liked at mealtimes. When Assistant Poor Law Commissioner Alfred Power visited the Preston workhouse for the first time in December 1836 he reportedly 'appeared dissatisfied' with this policy.<sup>17</sup> Soon after, meals would have to conform to tightly controlled dietary tables designed by the central authority; in vain might one ask for 'more' under the new regulations.<sup>18</sup> The differences between the old and new systems might have been one of degrees, but the degrees mattered a great deal to many local men who became Poor Law Guardians from 1837.

The PLC's regulations determining how workhouses were to be run were not, however, merely restricted to discipline and deterrence. 'Less eligibility' was only one aspect of the workhouse system, and in other areas the Commissioners were eager to improve the quality of institutional provision in workhouses. Under their behest education became compulsory for all inmates under 16 in workhouse schools, for example. These schools, usually a room in the workhouse converted into a classroom, were to be run by trained teachers possessing formal qualifications. Moreover, the central authority subsidised the wages of qualified workhouse teachers to encourage Guardians to employ them, and the schools were regularly examined by an inspector.<sup>19</sup> The Commissioners also placed high priority on improving standards of medical care and the general sanitary conditions

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<sup>14</sup> Lancashire Archives (L.A.) DDP 140/13: Rules for the workhouse, 1827.

<sup>15</sup> L.A. DDP 140/13.

<sup>16</sup> P.P. 1842 (389) *Eighth annual report of the Poor Law Commissioners, with appendices*, pp.48-49.

<sup>17</sup> *Preston Chronicle (P.C.)* 24<sup>th</sup> December, 1836.

<sup>18</sup> This is not to say that the workhouse diet was inadequate under the PLCs dietary tables. Indeed, workhouse inmates almost certainly ate better than most of the poorest independent people outside its walls. For interesting discussions on workhouse food see: N. Durbach, 'Roast beef, the New Poor Law and the British nation, 1834-63', *Journal of British Studies*, 52 (2013), pp. 963-989; Smith, Thornton, Reinartz and Williams, 'Please sir, I want some more'; I. Miller, 'Feeding in the workhouse: the institutional and ideological functions of food in Britain, ca.1834-70', *Journal of British Studies*, 52 (2013), pp.940-962.

<sup>19</sup> P.P. 1984 (1024) *Report of the Commissioners for administering the laws for the relief of the poor in England*, p.6.

in workhouses.<sup>20</sup> Each Poor Law union had to employ a qualified medical officer to tend to the workhouse inmates, and the recruitment of qualified, paid nurses was encouraged from the early 1840s. Limits on the number of paupers allowed in each workhouse were also imposed by the centre, and the institutions were frequently inspected by the Assistant Poor Law Commissioners (from 1848 Poor Law Inspectors) to ensure standards were maintained and the various regulations properly exercised. Against this backdrop, the dual role of the workhouse in our period becomes apparent. They were to simultaneously deter the reputedly idle and care for the vulnerable. If during the 1840s the emphasis fell on the side of deterrence, the balance would slowly shift over to care, and by the end of the century most workhouses were chiefly operating as hospitals and old persons homes; in short, as places for the most needy in society.<sup>21</sup>

The evolution of the workhouse system is often lost in popular histories, but *period* is crucial to understanding how these institutions functioned in both a physical and ideological sense. The workhouse of the 1840s, often a retained and inadequate Old Poor Law building operating at a time when institutional expertise was in its infancy, was very different to the workhouse of the 1890s when most unions had constructed a purpose built institution.<sup>22</sup> Nor can we learn very much about how workhouses functioned in practice at local level through national legislation and official regulations. It is quite apparent, as shall become clear throughout this section, that workhouses did not always conform to either the ideological principles and administrative standards demanded or encouraged by the centre. For reasons which shall be discussed, formal regulations were followed loosely if at all in Preston union.

### Number of workhouses

The most notable deviation from central policy in the Preston union during our period was the Guardians' refusal to build a union workhouse. This 'workhouse question', as it became known locally, caused considerable division in the boardroom and dominated Poor Law Guardians' elections as we saw in Chapter 1. The Preston Board of Guardians inherited nine Old Poor Law

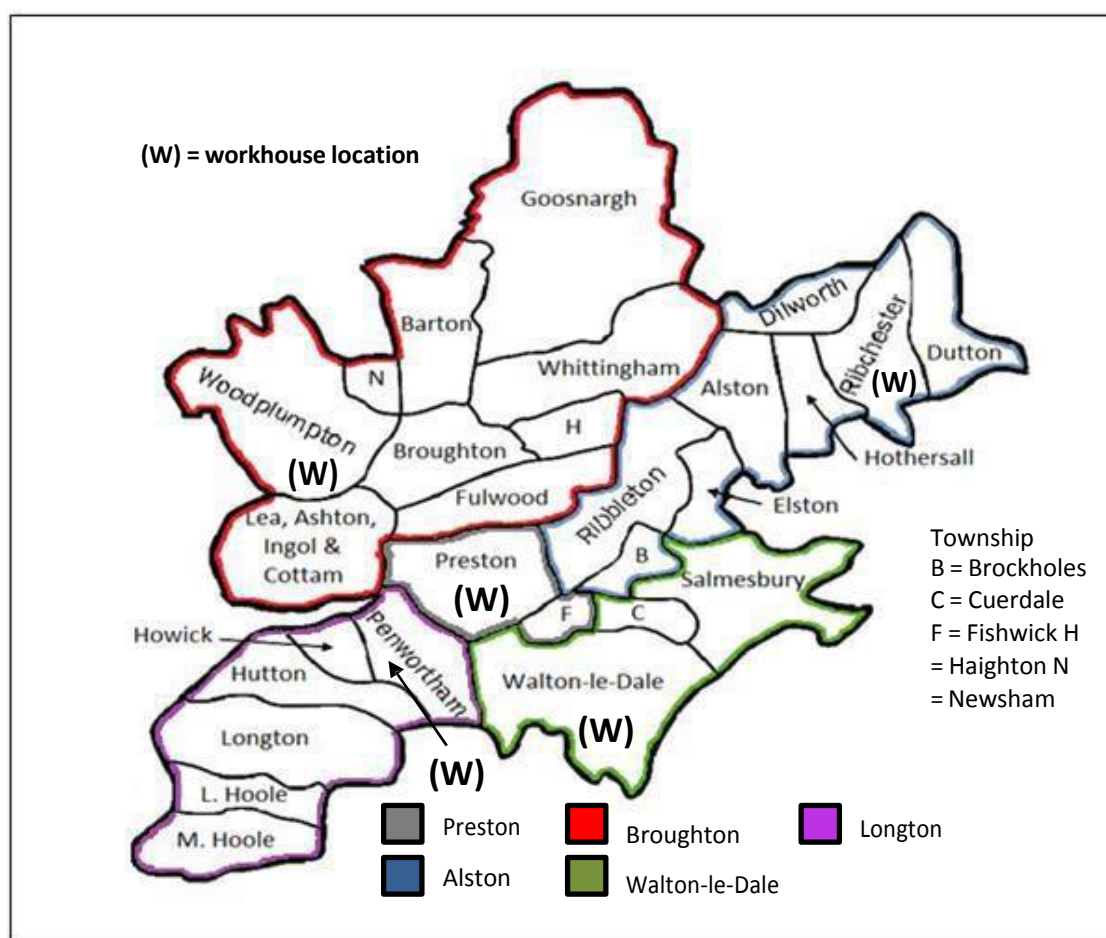
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<sup>20</sup> J. Lane, *A social history of medicine: health, healing and disease in England, 1750-1950* (2001), pp.44-68.

<sup>21</sup> V. Crossman, 'Workhouse medicine in Ireland: a preliminary analysis, 1850-1914', in J. Reinartz and L. Schwartz, *Medicine and the workhouse* (2013), pp.123-124; Crowther, *The workhouse system*, pp.54-87; M. Pelling and R. M. Smith (eds.), *Life, death and the elderly: historical perspectives* (2003), p.14. Seal, 'Workhouse populations in the Cheltenham and Belper unions', pp.83-100.

<sup>22</sup> Crowther, *The workhouse system*, pp.54-87.

**Figure 1: Location of the five Preston union workhouses**



**Source:** Base map courtesy of Peter Park. The (W) workhouse symbol is not set in the exact position the workhouses were located in each township. Colours indicate relief districts.

township workhouses in 1837, out of which they decided to retain five for the purposes of the union (Figure 1). While it was not uncommon for unions in Lancashire to retain more than one workhouse, Preston union was quite unusual in keeping so many. According to a published return from 1854, in Lancashire only the Rochdale union with six workhouses had a larger number than Preston.<sup>23</sup> Seventeen unions in the county (63 per cent) possessed a single workhouse, while a further six (22 per cent) had just two workhouses; in 1854 the Preston and Rochdale unions possessed exactly one quarter of all the workhouses in the county.

Perhaps surprisingly, when the Preston Guardians met in September 1838 to decide which of the nine workhouses to keep there does not appear to have been any objection to the suggestion that

<sup>23</sup> P.P. 1854-55 (524) *Population, &c. Returns of the population of every union, and of every parish not in a union, in England and Wales, showing the amount of workhouse accommodation in each, for the year ending 31<sup>st</sup> December 1854*, pp.5-6.

five should be retained.<sup>24</sup> This is all the more surprising given that the suggestion was made by two anti-Poor Law Guardians, Joseph Livesey and Robert Ashcroft, who almost certainly had an agenda. In a letter to the *Preston Chronicle* in 1837 Livesey drew a distinction between sending people to 'their own parish workhouse' and 'transport[ing]' them to a 'union prison', often some distance away.<sup>25</sup> Thus, to Livesey the continued use of numerous old parish buildings acted as a means of undermining the core principles of the New Poor Law. With this in mind, it is probable that the absence of any obvious conflict over this question in 1838 reflected the fact that nobody could possibly have anticipated the deep divisions it would cause in the long term. There were also sound practical reasons for keeping a large number of workhouses in the late 1830s, as it was a period of industrial depression in the cotton manufacturing districts. Col. Rawstorne, *ex-officio*, a chief advocate of a union workhouse in the 1840s, supported keeping five workhouses in 1838 for this very reason. Moreover, keeping five workhouses allowed the Guardians to establish some degree of local autonomy, which in a union with more townships than most in Lancashire was presumably considered particularly important. Indeed, it is no accident that each of the union's five relief districts contained one of the five retained workhouses as shown in Figure 1. In the years before the workhouse classification order was issued in 1841, which forced the Guardians to separate paupers across the workhouses according to age and sex, the workhouses essentially catered for the district in which they were situated.

#### Infrastructure and institutional provision

The retention of numerous workhouses and the consequent emergence of the workhouse question had negative implications for both the infrastructure of the workhouse buildings and the development of institutional provision therein. In part, this was because the ubiquity of the workhouse question itself had the effect of creating an atmosphere of uncertainty as to the future of the five workhouses which stifled improvement. If we look first at infrastructure, as long as the workhouse question remained unresolved many Guardians were naturally reluctant to spend vast sums on buildings which might at any time be given up for a single union workhouse. Moreover, precisely because the five workhouses might be given up at any moment, those who wished for a single union establishment were opposed to spending money on the existing buildings; to spend money on improvements would only reduce the likelihood of them being abandoned. Finally, the five workhouses were not actually owned by the Preston Guardians but rented from the townships in which they were located, and this arrangement led some Guardians to question whether they

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<sup>24</sup> P.C. 1<sup>st</sup> September, 1838.

<sup>25</sup> P.C. 25<sup>th</sup> February, 1837.

should be spending the rates on improving buildings they did not own. An example from 1851 demonstrates these numerous issues in action. In January of that year Preston Guardians Christopher Ward and Michael Satterthwaite brought before the Board a proposal for carrying out essential maintenance work, costing up to £500, at the Preston workhouse. The proposal was prompted by a critical report on the workhouse by the Poor Law Inspector Harry Farnall, and involved the construction of separate yards for the women and boys, and a drying stove which was 'certainly a very necessary thing'.<sup>26</sup> In putting forward a motion for the work to be undertaken, Satterthwaite anticipated the grounds upon which it might be opposed:

[He] knew what some parties present would say. They would there denounce money being laid out on property not their own, and which might be taken from them...They would caution the country guardians; he knew what they would say. Then they would want to get them into one mind for having a union workhouse...He wished to caution his country friends not to be deluded by thinking that the present outlay would be throwing their money away.<sup>27</sup>

His statement proved prophetic. Thomas Walmsley, a magistrate and prominent advocate of a union workhouse, responded by stating that he would support the motion if the words 'at the expense of the township of Preston' were added as he thought 'it was wrong to cast the burden upon the country townships...it was wrong to expend money on a building that did not belong to them, of which they had not a lease, and which they were only tenants of'.<sup>28</sup> This was not the first time magistrates had tried to block maintenance work in this way. A year earlier William Marshall of Penwortham, also a supporter of a union workhouse, tried to convince the country Guardians to vote against a £2200 extension to the Preston workhouse by asking them, 'would any sensible person lay out money on land that is not their own?'<sup>29</sup> The answer was a resounding no, the out-township Guardians voting unanimously against the extension. Prior to this, in 1844, the same William Marshall had opposed supplying piped water to the Preston workhouse on the grounds that the out-townships should not have to pay for it.<sup>30</sup> Again the elected out-township majority, who always resented contributing towards a common fund which was largely eaten up by Preston, had voted against the plans. Going back to our example from 1851, Walmsley no doubt knew very well that his suggested amendment would not be taken seriously (it was in fact illegal), but it was

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<sup>26</sup> P.C. 4<sup>th</sup> January, 1851.

<sup>27</sup> P.C. 4<sup>th</sup> January, 1851.

<sup>28</sup> P.C. 4<sup>th</sup> January, 1851.

<sup>29</sup> P.C. 7<sup>th</sup> December, 1850.

<sup>30</sup> P.C. 21<sup>st</sup> May, 1844.

nonetheless enough for Satterthwaite's motion to be defeated. Thus, essential work was left undone, and the Preston workhouse continued to have, in the words of Farnall, 'many defects.'<sup>31</sup>

All this inevitably meant that the quality of institutional provision - of the services provided in the workhouses - suffered. Old Poor Law workhouses were not built to the specifications or standards demanded by the central authority, and the Preston workhouses would not reach that standard so long as the majority of Guardians remained resistant to carrying out expensive re-development. While the five buildings all appear to have been structurally sound, they lacked many of the basic specialist facilities which would become standard in union workhouses. None of them contained receiving wards (isolated wards where the medical condition of all new inmates was examined), which the central authority viewed as crucial to protecting the workhouse inmates from the spread of common infectious diseases such as 'the itch' (scabies). Nor were there proper sick wards at any of the workhouses except the one at Preston, where a purpose built 'House of Recovery' had been erected in 1821. Moreover, educational facilities for the workhouse children were non-existent before the late 1840s, and there was no chapel at any of the workhouses for the spiritual wellbeing and religious instruction of the inmates throughout the period.<sup>32</sup>

Having to run five workhouses, rather than just one or two, also brought economic disadvantages which affected the quality and number of officers employed in the workhouses. There were no paid chaplains resident in any of the Preston union workhouses during our period, partly because the Guardians could not justify appointing one for each workhouse. Chaplains of the Roman Catholic and Church of England denominations instead attended the workhouses voluntarily, the former apparently much more frequently and dutifully than the latter.<sup>33</sup> It also meant that the principal workhouse officers, the master and matron, were financially worse off than their peers in most other Lancashire unions. The sum total the Preston Guardians expended on salaries to masters and matrons was among the highest in the county, but because they required a larger than average number the per capita rate was among the lowest (Table 1). It is evident, as a consequence, that

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<sup>31</sup> The National Archives (T.N.A.), MH12-6114: Poor Law Board Inspector H. B. Farnall to the Preston Guardians, May 1851.

<sup>32</sup> Reports on the Preston union workhouses which cover all these issues have been located in: Lancashire Archives (L.A.) PUT/1/7, 16<sup>th</sup> November, 1841: report by Assistant Poor Law Commissioner Charles Mott; T.N.A. MH12-6113, February 1847: report by Assistant Poor Law Commissioner Alfred Austin; L.A. PUT/14, November, 1849: report by Poor Law Board Inspector John Mainwaring; T.N.A. MH12-6114, May 1851: report by Poor Law Board Inspector H. B. Farnall; T.N.A. MH12-6115, February 1857: report by Poor Law Board Inspector John Mainwaring.

<sup>33</sup> P.C. 3<sup>rd</sup> August, 1850.



**Table 1: Aggregate and per capita salaries of workhouse masters and matrons, selected urban industrial unions, Lancashire, 1854**

| Union     | No. of w/houses | No. of M + M | Ag. capacity | Ag. Salaries (£) | Av. per M + M (£) |
|-----------|-----------------|--------------|--------------|------------------|-------------------|
| Preston   | 5               | 6            | 963          | 211              | 35                |
| Salford   | 1               | 1            | 530          | 150              | 150               |
| Bolton    | 2               | 2            | 402          | 130              | 65                |
| Blackburn | 1               | 1            | 650          | 60               | 60                |
| Stockport | 1               | 1            | 690          | 100              | 100               |
| Bury      | 2               | 2            | 327          | 85               | 42                |
| Oldham    | 1               | 1            | 600          | 60               | 60                |
| Wigan     | 2               | 2            | 447          | 100              | 50                |
| Rochdale  | 6               | 5.5          | 300          | 128              | 23                |

**Source:** P.C. 2<sup>nd</sup> December, 1854. M+M = masters and matrons; Ag. Capacity = aggregate capacity; Ag. Salaries = aggregate expenditure on salaries for these officers; Av. per M+M = the average salary paid to each master and matron. Masters and matrons were invariably husband and wife, and their collective rather than individual salaries have been taken into account in this table. The Preston union employed a master and matron at the House of Recovery, hence the larger number of these officers than workhouses.

the Guardians had difficulty attracting suitably qualified persons to these positions. In 1842, for example, the PLC only sanctioned the appointment of Robert and Alice Bolton, previously publicans who had 'insufficient experience of accounts', as master and matron of the main Preston workhouse because they recognised 'the difficulty of obtaining efficient persons to fulfil the duties'.<sup>34</sup> Moreover, the masters and matrons were assisted almost exclusively by inmates. At the Preston workhouse during the 1840s all of the children - over 100 of them - were taught by a single pauper 'schoolmaster'.<sup>35</sup> Further, while the union employed qualified medical officers to attend to the indoor and outdoor poor, they only visited the workhouses when called upon to do so; at all other times the sick paupers inside the workhouses were nursed by inmates.

The use of pauper assistants was not by any means uncommon in workhouses of the 1840s, and over the period the number of trained workhouse personnel gradually increased in Preston union as it did elsewhere.<sup>36</sup> The first step towards a more professional system in Preston was taken in 1848, when the Guardians decided to move all the female children (aged 7-15) to the Penwortham workhouse where they were to be educated, and a qualified teacher was employed for the purpose.<sup>37</sup> A government grant, which covered the cost of teacher's wages, aided this process, but

<sup>34</sup> L.A. PUT/1/7, 12<sup>th</sup> April, 1842.

<sup>35</sup> L.A. PUT1/14, 20<sup>th</sup> November, 1849.

<sup>36</sup> Crowther, *The workhouse system*, pp.113-134.

<sup>37</sup> PUT/1/14, 19<sup>th</sup> December, 1848; 2<sup>nd</sup> January, 1849.

the move was also heavily influenced by Thomas Batty Addison who expressed concern that the Preston workhouse was a breeding ground for pauperism as children there were mixing with 'immoral' adults. Thus, moving the girls to Penwortham stopped them being 'contaminated by the bad example of older paupers.'<sup>38</sup> In 1851, the Walton workhouse began to serve the same purpose for the male children.<sup>39</sup> Further, advances in the quality of medical provision were made in 1851 when the Guardians began employing full time resident nurses in the Preston workhouse and the neighbouring House of Recovery.<sup>40</sup> These appointments marked a notable development in the standard of institutional expertise, but improvement was uneven. In the smaller out-district workhouses, presumably for reasons of economy, the masters and matrons continued to be assisted solely by inmates beyond the end of our period. Indeed, expertise as a rule rather than an exception would not be achieved until the Guardians had a union workhouse. In 1871, the master and matron of the Preston union workhouse (opened in 1868) were assisted by a total of eleven subordinate paid officers and assistants.<sup>41</sup>

#### *A less eligible institution?*

It is very easy to criticise the shortcomings of the 1840s and 1850s workhouse with the benefit of hindsight. We now know that by the later decades of the nineteenth century the professional had replaced the amateur, and that the workhouses themselves would ultimately make way for the retirement home, the children's home and the NHS hospitals of the twentieth century, all specialised institutions run by trained staff.<sup>42</sup> However, in an age hardly accustomed to specialisation and institutional expertise these shortcomings were much less marked. A more pertinent issue for our period is not what the workhouses lacked but the conditions therein and how far they acted as a deterrent, particularly as the workhouse question in the Preston union encompassed ideological views concerning the utility of less eligibility as a punitive means of reforming the poor. This is, of course, a many sided and complex issue. Conditions in the Preston union workhouses do not appear to have been particularly pleasant. Some were poorly ventilated, while a lack of beds meant sharing was occasional amongst adults and common amongst children. In the day rooms stone floors, bare whitewashed walls and hard wooden furniture could not have made for an inviting or comfortable environment.<sup>43</sup> However, for all this they were still better than

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<sup>38</sup> P.C. 23rd December, 1848.

<sup>39</sup> L.A. PUT/1/15, 10<sup>th</sup> June, 1851.

<sup>40</sup> L.A. PUT/1/15, 10<sup>th</sup> June, 1851; 1<sup>st</sup> July, 1851.

<sup>41</sup> Census enumerators' books, Preston union workhouse, 1871.

<sup>42</sup> D. Thomson, 'Workhouse and nursing home: residential care of elderly people in England since 1840, *Aging and Society*, 3 (1983), pp.43-69; Longmate, *The workhouse*, pp.276-286.

<sup>43</sup> See footnote 32 for workhouse reports which cover these themes.

the wretched, filthy and cramped conditions many of the poorest were used to experiencing in their own homes.<sup>44</sup> Did this make workhouses tolerable places in which to reside? We cannot be so presumptive. Much obviously depended on the individual, but for many the loss of anonymity, the feeling of hopelessness, the stigma, the separation from husbands, wives, parents and children must have caused untold misery regardless of conditions. While Charles Dickens and other popular authors generally exaggerated the horrors of the Victorian workhouse, their views are not entirely without foundation and it is almost certainly true that most people sought to avoid the workhouse until there was no alternative.<sup>45</sup>

Poor Law Guardians, of course, were not oblivious to the potential suffering an offer of the workhouse could cause. We have seen that the majority preferred to give outdoor relief to the deserving poor where possible, and this was particularly true in the case of nuclear families that, from 1841, had to be separated if they entered the workhouse according to the classification order (see the next section of this chapter). It is also quite evident that the Guardians often ignored, or worked around, what were perceived to be some of the harsher central regulations. For a start, and this complicates the issue, there appears to have been a total lack of administrative uniformity across the five workhouses. The PLC sought to implement a national workhouse system, but this was not even achieved in Preston union during our period. In practice, the workhouse masters continued to exert considerable influence on indoor policy as they had under the Old Poor Law, and each workhouse was generally only inspected by Guardians from the district in which it was located. Variation was therefore a notable feature of workhouse administration in Preston union long after 1837. The dietaries, for example, differed from one workhouse to another, and until the mid-1850s none of them conformed to the formal dietary tables.<sup>46</sup> In 1851, the Poor Law Inspector complained that the inmates of Penwortham workhouse ‘consume as much as they please’ at mealtimes, a complaint Alfred Power had made of Preston workhouse back in 1836; old habits did not die easily.<sup>47</sup> Moreover, the provision of items such as tobacco and snuff also varied between the workhouses, the decision of whether to allow such luxuries being in the hands of the workhouse

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<sup>44</sup> L.A. PUT/1/14, 5<sup>th</sup> June, 1842. On the terrible condition of some housing in parts of Preston see: N. Morgan, *Deadly dwellings: health and housing in a Lancashire cotton town: Preston from 1840 to 1914* (1993).

<sup>45</sup> As Preston journalist and historian Anthony Hewitson wrote in 1864, ‘when all else fails, there is the workhouse.’: P.C. 7<sup>th</sup> May, 1864.

<sup>46</sup> L.A. PUT/1/20, 29<sup>th</sup> April, 1856.

<sup>47</sup> T.N.A. MH12-6114, May, 1851; P.C. 24<sup>th</sup> December, 1836.

master. Whereas the aged inmates at the Preston and Walton workhouses were allowed tobacco, those at Woodplumpton were not, at least during the late-1850s.<sup>48</sup>

Yet, in spite of varying approaches to aspects of indoor relief administration, the overall impression of workhouse policy across the union is that it was quite different from that popularly associated with the Victorian workhouse system, and at variance to the central authority's more stringent regulations. The Guardians, for example, routinely treated the inmates to roast beef, plum pudding and a glass of beer each Christmas and on other special occasions such as the Queen's Coronation, despite the PLC being very much opposed to such treats.<sup>49</sup> This appears to have been common in many unions.<sup>50</sup> The Guardians also built a playground for the children at Preston workhouse in the 1840s, and took them on boat trips to resorts such as Blackpool and Fleetwood throughout the period.<sup>51</sup> They also allowed the inmates of the Preston workhouse to be visited by family members almost at will until the early 1850s, when the ruling was suspended after 'serious depredations' had been committed by some inmates.<sup>52</sup> It is not clear if this policy was later restored, but that the inmates were later allowed to leave the Preston workhouse each Thursday to visit family and friends suggests it was not.<sup>53</sup> Still, both regulations were a departure from official policy and point to humane sentiment on the part of the Guardians and the workhouse masters. Moreover, the inmates at Preston were allowed to leave the workhouse each Sunday to attend mass and various other special events, even though the workhouse master was not infrequently forced to take disciplinary action against individuals for returning intoxicated!<sup>54</sup>

In other regards too, workhouse policy exhibited a distinct absence of less eligibility. For most of our period able-bodied adult females generally do not appear to have been made to undertake less eligible task work of any sort. There is no mention in the minutes of employing women in such work

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<sup>48</sup> L.A. PUT/1/20, 3<sup>rd</sup> June, 1856; PUT/1/23, 30<sup>th</sup> June, 1859. <sup>48</sup> L.A. PUT/1/14, 5<sup>th</sup> June, 1842.

<sup>49</sup> For an interesting cultural and political assessment of pauper food, and particularly notions of what paupers should be allowed to eat, see Durbach, 'Roast beef, the New Poor Law and the British nation'.

<sup>50</sup> A. Brundage, 'Private charity and the 1834 New Poor Law', in D. Critchlow and C. Parker (eds.) *With us always: a history of private charity and public welfare* (1998), pp.99-122; M. Ramsbottom, *Christopher Waddington's peers: a study of the workings of the Poor Law in townships of the Fylde of Lancashire, 1803 to 1865* (2011), PhD thesis, pp.254-255.

<sup>51</sup> L.A. PUT/1/10, 29<sup>th</sup> July, 1845; PUT/1/13, 8<sup>th</sup> August, 1848; PUT/1/18, 22<sup>nd</sup> August, 1854; PUT/1/21, 3<sup>rd</sup> March, 1856.

<sup>52</sup> L.A. PUT/1/15, 21<sup>st</sup> January, 1851.

<sup>53</sup> L.A. PUT/1/19, 3<sup>rd</sup> April, 1855.

<sup>54</sup> L.A. PUT/1/19, 28<sup>th</sup> May, 1855.

until 1856, when Preston Guardian Thomas Dixon ‘called attention to the unemployed manner in which the female inmates at the Preston workhouse passed their time.’<sup>55</sup> It was decided that a room should be set up in the workhouse for the picking of cotton waste as an indoor test, but this does not appear to have happened as over a year later, in November 1857, a committee was formed to consider ‘the propriety of providing labour for the [female] inmates of the [Preston] [work]house.’<sup>56</sup> Thereafter, some females were employed ‘in knitting, and making articles of clothing required by the inmates of the workhouses’, although this work hardly constituted a less eligible test of pauperism.<sup>57</sup> Indeed, in 1859 a committee of Guardians reported that the ‘many comforts’ which were provided in the Preston workhouse were encouraging prostitutes and pregnant women ‘to avail themselves of the house.’<sup>58</sup> The inmates, claimed the report, were so well treated that people were coming to the Preston workhouse ‘from other unions for the purpose of admitting themselves.’<sup>59</sup> The able-bodied male inmates were treated with a great deal more stringency, tasked as they were with cultivating workhouse land which constituted a form of test labour. However, even here policy could be lax, as they only worked when the weather was dry. If it was raining they ‘remained in the workhouse, smoking their pipes and discussing politics’, as one Guardian complained in 1854.<sup>60</sup> Politics, indeed, appears to have been a favourite topic among the inmates of the Preston union workhouses. The elderly male inmates of Penwortham workhouse during the 1840s, which before it became a girls’ school acted as a quasi-old persons home, named the two wings of the building the ‘House of Commons’ and the ‘House of Lords’, as they spent their days sat there discussing the ‘affairs of the nation’.<sup>61</sup>

The issue of less eligibility, or lack thereof, was always a key element of the workhouse question during the 1840s and 1850s, and when the question resurfaced in 1864, having lain more or less dormant since Addison’s underhand dealings of 1855-56 (see Chapter 1), it again formed a central strand of the debate. Joseph Livesey, less active and influential in Poor Law affairs than he had been

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<sup>55</sup> L.A. PUT/1/20, 3<sup>rd</sup> June, 1856.

<sup>56</sup> L.A. PUT/1/22, 10<sup>th</sup> November, 1857.

<sup>57</sup> L.A. PUT/1/22, 17<sup>th</sup> November, 1857; PUT/1/25, November 6<sup>th</sup>, 1860.

<sup>58</sup> L.A. PUT/1/24, 29<sup>th</sup> November, 1859.

<sup>59</sup> L.A. PUT/1/24, 29<sup>th</sup> November, 1859.

<sup>60</sup> P.C. 23<sup>rd</sup> December, 1854.

<sup>61</sup> P.C. 9<sup>th</sup> May, 1846.

a decade earlier, was nonetheless compelled to write an impassioned letter to the local press defending the township workhouses against the spectre of a union establishment:

The whole atmosphere and general arrangements of the large new buildings are that of a prison...In the small houses the inmates can gaze upon green fields; can have a reasonable amount of liberty to see others not so unfortunate as themselves; have access to the master or mistress with their little troubles and wants, and obtain many indulgencies, without expense, which they cannot where rigid regulations, routine, and red tatism rule, and where "governors" are unapproachable.<sup>62</sup>

However, an alternative and, it seems, by that time increasingly popular view was expressed by Preston journalist and historian Anthony Hewitson who evidently felt, as did some Guardians, that the township workhouses were encouraging pauperism.<sup>63</sup>

One large workhouse would have a more deterrent effect than the honey-suckle fronted places we now have. It would be a bigger and more tremendous embodiment of pauperism – that repulsive idea that we all associate with workhouses would be more tangible...we do not wish to make workhouses like prisons, or chambers for the reception of disciplinarian horrors. But it is absolutely necessary that they should not be particularly nice places – that there should be more to dislike than love about them.<sup>64</sup>

During our period the Livesey view, romantic though it was, prevailed in both the form and the function of the Preston union workhouses. These were not the 'less eligible' institutions associated with the workhouse system. Afterwards, from 1868 when the new union workhouse was opened, Hewitson's (and Addison's) vision became reality. The driving down of pauperism through anti-outdoor relief measures and the application of the workhouse test, as demonstrated in Chapter 2, would be one result.

#### **4 (ii) Workhouse populations: a comparative analysis based on the census enumerators' books**

Who was most likely to enter the workhouse? Our understanding of the profile of indoor pauperism, and thus of the role of the workhouse within the wider Poor Law framework, has been enhanced considerably in recent years through a series of quantitative studies of workhouse populations based primarily on CEBs. Beginning with Page's work on the Leicester union workhouse in 1881, most have taken a union or a group of contiguous unions as their focus and examined a

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<sup>62</sup> *P.C.* 7<sup>th</sup> May, 1864.

<sup>63</sup> For the Guardians views see: *P.C.* 12<sup>th</sup> November, 1864; *P.C.* 19<sup>th</sup> November, 1864.

<sup>64</sup> *P.C.* 7<sup>th</sup> May, 1864.

single census year, typically 1851 or 1881.<sup>65</sup> Only Seal's recent study of the Cheltenham and Belper unions between 1851 and 1911 has taken a longitudinal approach.<sup>66</sup> Collectively, these studies have shown a considerable degree of variation in the composition of indoor pauperism, even between neighbouring unions in the same county. However, more significantly – and reflecting what we found of outdoor pauperism in Chapter 3 – clear trends have emerged at the aggregate level across all the studies. Broadly, it has been shown that workhouses were dominated by the young and the old, with males forming a majority particularly in old age. Among the adult population, the married were far less likely to be found in a workhouse than their unmarried and widowed counterparts. Moreover, as the nineteenth century made way for the twentieth, Seal has shown that the workhouses she examined were increasingly dominated by the elderly, becoming a majority by 1911.<sup>67</sup> This appears to have been mirrored at national level, and reflects the evolving role of the workhouse within the welfare system.<sup>68</sup> These are important patterns, though it should be noted that the 'snapshot' data provided by CEBs masks the turnover of paupers across shorter periods of time. Using admission and discharge registers, Goose and Jackson have shown that workhouse populations could fluctuate significantly, with a notable peak during winter periods. Within this, both found that a far larger proportion of men entered the workhouse than the CEBs suggest, the disparity being the result of males forming the majority of short-term inmates and were consequently less likely to be caught in the census.<sup>69</sup> Nonetheless, as Goose has noted, CEBs remain *the* central source for studying workhouse populations as they are 'available for every locality', providing the only means of comparison across the country.<sup>70</sup>

In this section CEBs are used to examine the workhouse populations of the Preston union over the three census years between 1841 and 1861. It serves to complement previous studies by providing further comparative data, and the focus on a northern industrial union offers a different context to the southern agricultural unions thus far studied during the period up to 1861. Moreover, the data also provides a means of assessing the profile of indoor pauperism against outdoor pauperism as examined in the previous chapter, allowing us to develop our understanding of how different pauper groups were treated under the New Poor Law. In taking this approach, analysis is more nuanced than most previous work in this area as it is firmly embedded within the framework of local and central policy. Further, the New Poor Law was never, as Gritt and Park have stated, a

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<sup>65</sup> For studies of workhouse populations based on CEBs see footnote 10 of this chapter.

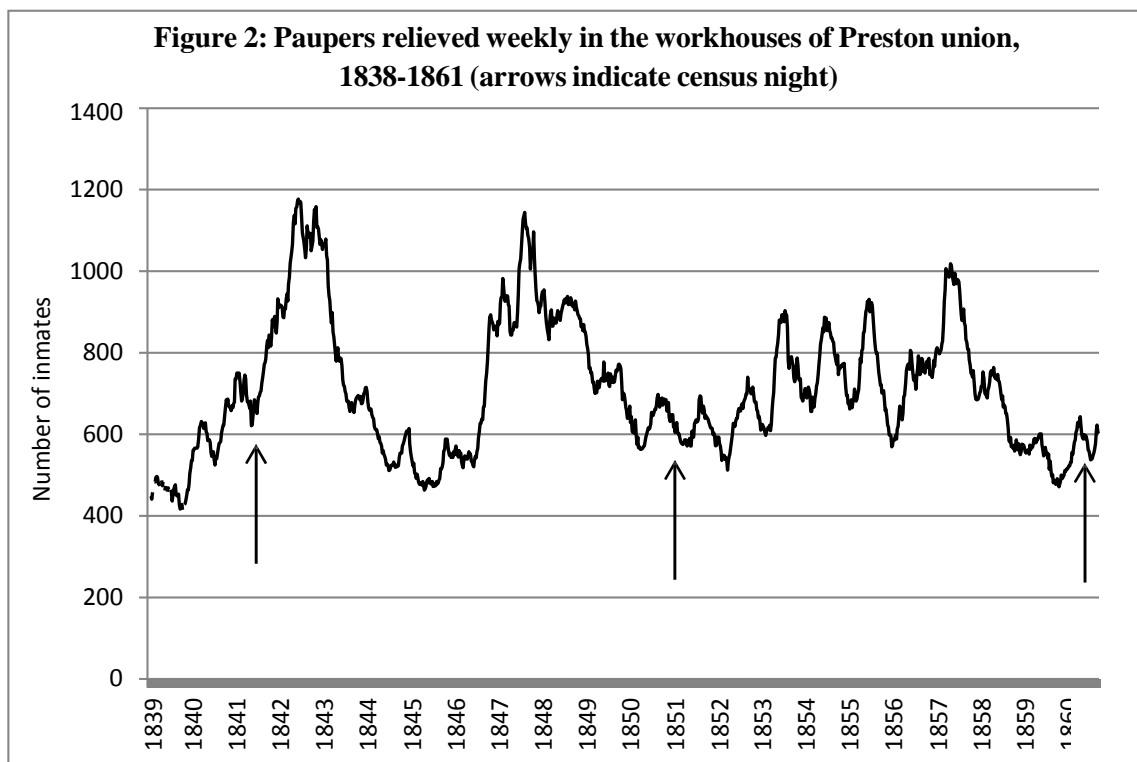
<sup>66</sup> Seal, 'Workhouse populations in the Cheltenham and Belper unions'.

<sup>67</sup> Seal, 'Workhouse populations', p.98.

<sup>68</sup> Crowther, *The Workhouse System*, pp.88-113.

<sup>69</sup> Goose, 'Workhouse populations', pp.64-67; Jackson, 'Medway union workhouse', p.29.

<sup>70</sup> Goose, 'Workhouse populations', p.67.



**Source:** Lancashire Archives (hereafter LA), PUT/1/3-30

**Table 2: Workhouse classification orders, 1841 and 1851**

| 1841 workhouse classification order |          |                           |
|-------------------------------------|----------|---------------------------|
| Workhouse                           | Capacity | Class                     |
| Preston                             | 480      | Women, Children, the sick |
| Walton le Dale                      | 124      | Able-bodied males         |
| Ribchester                          | 145      | Able-bodied males         |
| Woodplumpton                        | 64       | Aged and infirm males     |

| 1851 workhouse classification order |          |                                    |
|-------------------------------------|----------|------------------------------------|
| Workhouse                           | Capacity | Class                              |
| Preston                             | 480      | Women, children aged 0-6, the sick |
| Walton le Dale                      | 124      | School for boys aged 7-15          |
| Ribchester                          | 145      | Able bodied males                  |
| Woodplumpton                        | 64       | Aged and infirm males              |
| Penwortham                          | 68       | School for girls aged 7-15         |

**Source:** L.A, PUT/1/3; PUT/1/10.



'static' welfare system, and the longitudinal aspect of this work enables the evolution of the workhouse populations to be considered over time.<sup>71</sup>

#### Aggregated profile of workhouse inmates

It was shown in Chapter 2 that the number of workhouse inmates fluctuated in accordance with the economy and the seasons. Most conspicuously, the number of people inhabiting the Preston union workhouses increased considerably during periods of economic distress, but they also rose during the winter months of December-February. This is important to note, as it limits the value of CEBs as a means of studying workhouse populations. Assuming that the proportional representation of particular pauper groups changed according to the seasons and prevailing economic circumstances, a 'snapshot' view of one day might present an untypical picture. In the case of the Preston union, census night always fell when the aggregate indoor pauper population was relatively low (Figure 2). The year 1851 was a prosperous one in the cotton districts of Lancashire, and the industrial depressions of 1841 and 1861 had yet to take firm hold when the census was conducted. Had it been taken in 1842, or 1862, the results may well have been very different.

Table 2 shows how the workhouses of the Preston union were classified according to the formal orders issued by the central authority. It is crucial to briefly consider these before we proceed, and to bear them in mind throughout the following analysis, as they had considerable influence on the profile of the union's workhouse populations. The first classification order was issued in 1841 and applied to the four workhouses (Preston, Walton, Ribchester and Woodplumpton) the Guardians were using at that time, the Penwortham workhouse having been temporarily given up as it was surplus to requirements. This classification order was replaced in 1851 as institutional provision developed. Notably, space dedicated to able-bodied males in 1841 diminished a decade later as workhouse schools for Children aged 7-15 were opened at Penwortham and Walton le Dale.

The age profile of the Preston union workhouse populations and those of areas previously studied is revealed in Table 3. Taken as a whole, the proportional representation of the different groups clearly varied from one place to another. The Belper workhouse in 1851, for example, is notable for a comparatively high proportion of children (0-14) but few aged persons (60+), while Lancashire in 1881 stands out for the low proportion of children and high proportion of males of prime working age (15-59). Various factors shaped this diversity. The size of the workhouse populations under

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<sup>71</sup> Gritt and Park, 'Workhouse populations', p.37.

**Table 3: Age profile of workhouse populations, various years**

|                     | Males per cent |       |     | Femi: per cent |       |     | Total per cent |       |     | Total population |
|---------------------|----------------|-------|-----|----------------|-------|-----|----------------|-------|-----|------------------|
|                     | 0-14           | 15-59 | 60+ | 0-14           | 15-59 | 60+ | 0-14           | 15-59 | 60+ |                  |
| Preston union, 1841 | 46             | 29    | 25  | 35             | 46    | 18  | 41             | 36    | 22  | 623              |
| Preston union, 1851 | 28             | 37    | 34  | 33             | 40    | 26  | 30             | 38    | 31  | 662              |
| Preston union, 1861 | 27             | 29    | 44  | 32             | 45    | 23  | 30             | 36    | 34  | 504              |
| Hertfordshire, 1851 | 32             | 31    | 37  | 36             | 41    | 23  | 34             | 35    | 32  | 1,884            |
| Cheltenham, 1851    | 40             | 30    | 30  | 30             | 55    | 15  | 34             | 44    | 22  | 525              |
| Belper, 1851        | 63             | 19    | 18  | 37             | 53    | 10  | 51             | 35    | 14  | 197              |
| Lancashire, 1881    | 21             | 40    | 39  | 18             | 49    | 33  | 19             | 45    | 36  | 21,598           |
| Kent, 1881          | 33             | 24    | 43  | 36             | 37    | 27  | 35             | 29    | 36  | 1,937            |

**Source:** Preston figures from census enumerators books, 1841 – 1861. Hertfordshire figures from Goose, 'Workhouse populations', pp.56-57; Kent figures from Jackson, 'Kent workhouse populations', pp.57; Cheltenham and Belper figures from Seal, 'Workhouse populations', p.87, figures for Lancashire in 1881 from Gritt and Park, 'Workhouse populations', p.50.

**Table 4: Sex ratio (number of males per 100 females) of workhouse inmates, Preston union, 1841 - 1861**

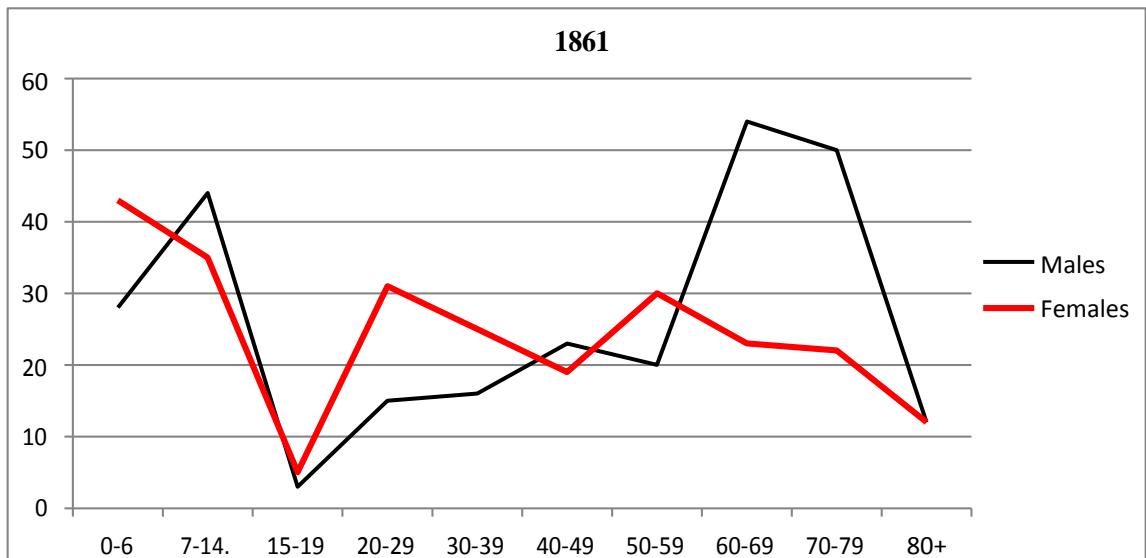
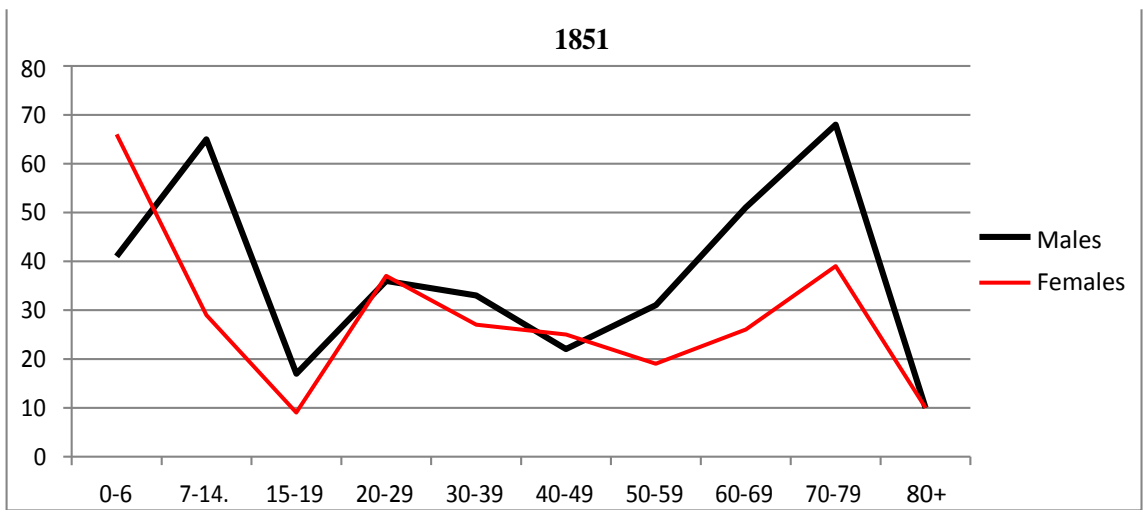
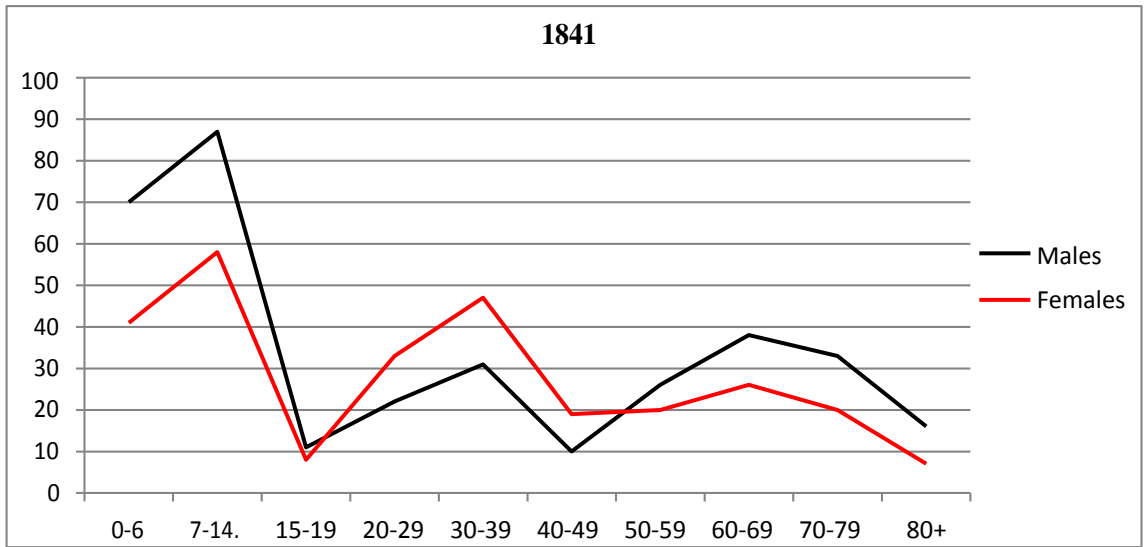
|      | 0-14 | 15-59 | 60+ |
|------|------|-------|-----|
| 1841 | 158  | 74    | 167 |
| N.   | 256  | 227   | 140 |
| 1851 | 111  | 128   | 172 |
| N.   | 201  | 183   | 204 |
| 1861 | 92   | 78    | 203 |
| N.   | 150  | 141   | 173 |

**Source:** CEBs, 1841-1861

examination must be taken into account, as must the condition of the local economy at the time the census was taken. Local policy, which of course varied according to time and place, was also of undeniable importance. A case in point is the aforementioned large proportion of male inmates aged 15-59 in Lancashire in 1881, which must at least in part reflect punitive measures imposed upon this group during the Crusade Against Outdoor Relief.<sup>72</sup> In the Preston union there are clear

<sup>72</sup> K. Williams, *From pauperism to poverty* (1981).

**Figures 3 - 5: Age and sex profile of inmates, Preston union workhouses, 1841 – 1861**



Source: CEBs, 1841-1861

variations between and within the male and female categories across the three census years, and it shall become clear that centrally imposed regulations in particular engendered many of these changes. Yet, in spite of differences, trends are apparent as mentioned earlier. We find that children and the aged, regardless of region and period, consistently account for the overwhelming majority of the indoor pauper host. Between 61 and 64 per cent of inmates in Preston were from one of these two groups, compared with figures elsewhere which range from 55 per cent (Lancashire) in 1881 to 70 per cent (Kent in 1881). The greater likelihood of the young and the old entering the workhouse when destitute is quite evident here.

Sex ratio data also reveals a familiar pattern. Jackson, Goose, and Gritt and Park have all found, though to varying degrees, a predominance of males over females in the 0-15 age group, which reverses over the 1820s and 1830s as women outnumber men, with males again becoming the majority from age 40-45.<sup>73</sup> The same is broadly the case in the Preston union. As Table 4 shows, males usually outnumbered females under the age of 15, with the reverse true over the ages 15-59. Importantly, males in the 60+ category outnumbered their female counterparts by a considerable majority each census year. This general pattern is shown more clearly in Figures 3-5, which further disaggregate age classifications for more detailed analysis. We find males a consistent majority between the ages of 7-14 across all census years, with the numbers of both men and women dropping significantly from the ages of 15 to 19. Turning 15 meant becoming an adult, and able-bodied inmates were expected to leave the workhouse and enter the labour market upon reaching this milestone. From the age of twenty numbers across both sexes begin to rise again. In 1851, the trend for both males and females between the ages of 20-39 is very similar, but in 1841 and 1861 women constitute a clear majority. This begins to reverse around the age of 40, and thereafter men overwhelmingly outnumbered women into old age.

#### *Inmates aged 0-14*

There appears to be a clear local explanation for the significant decline in the proportional representation of children, from 40 per cent to 30 per cent, in the workhouses of Preston union between 1841 and 1851. As Table 5 indicates, after the workhouses were classified in 1841 married couples with children were not admitted in the numbers they had been previously. There were twenty nuclear families with a total of forty-eight children residing together across the four

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<sup>73</sup> Goose, 'Workhouse populations', p.23; Jackson, 'Workhouse populations', p.34, Gritt and Park, Workhouse populations, p.23.

**Table 5: Children enumerated with and without parents in Preston union workhouses, 1841 - 1861**

|      | Both parents<br>per cent | Father<br>per cent | Mother<br>per cent | No parent<br>per cent | Total N. |
|------|--------------------------|--------------------|--------------------|-----------------------|----------|
| 1841 | 19                       | 6                  | 39                 | 36                    | 256      |
| 1851 | 1                        | 2                  | 37                 | 59                    | 195      |
| 1861 | 1                        | 1                  | 24                 | 74                    | 150      |

unclassified, mixed workhouses of 1841, but only a single family the following decade.<sup>74</sup> Nor were such families, as might be expected, separated across the workhouses after 1841 according to the first classification order. A return for the 1<sup>st</sup> July 1848 shows that, even during the height of industrial depression, there were not more than two married couples with children in the workhouses.<sup>75</sup> Their absence might reflect the deterrent effect of classification, but a more likely cause was the strong aversion many Guardians felt towards splitting up nuclear family units across the workhouses. The 1841 classification order met with a fierce campaign of resistance in Preston union which delayed its implementation for over a year as we saw in Chapter 1, and thereafter it seems that most nuclear families were offered outdoor relief instead of a place in the workhouse. The numbers are quite clear; when the union had two nuclear families in the workhouses on 1<sup>st</sup> July 1848, over 1000 such families were in receipt of outdoor relief.<sup>76</sup>

A far larger proportion of children featured in Table 5 are found in the workhouses with a lone parent. The vast majority of single parents with children were, unsurprisingly, mothers, who accounted for between 85 per cent and 96 per cent of the total. Indeed, the predominance of young adult females over young adult males, which has been noted in all previous studies, was principally caused by their association with children. The continued presence of single parent families and the absence of the nuclear unit after 1841 might indicate the greater economic viability of the latter. However, as stated in the previous chapter, it also reflected a moralistic prejudice against unmarried mothers, tainted as they were by the stigma of illegitimacy. Unmarried women with children in the workhouse were always numerically dominant among the female headed single parent families, accounting for a full 50 per cent in 1851. Widows, who the Guardians were far more

<sup>74</sup> Families are grouped together in every workhouse in each census year, making them easily identifiable.

<sup>75</sup> P.P. 1849 (586) *Return of the number of paupers in the receipt of relief in the several Unions of England and Wales, on the 1st day of July 1848*, p.8.

<sup>76</sup> P.P. 1849 (596), *Paupers. Return of the number of paupers in receipt of relief in the several unions of England and Wales, on the 1st day of July, 1848*, p.8.

inclined to treat sympathetically and relieve with outdoor payments, were the least likely to find themselves inside a workhouse with their children, never accounting for more than 25 per cent.

The final group to consider in Table 5 are children enumerated without any parents. Their increasing proportion after the census of 1841 was largely caused by the opening of the workhouse schools at Walton le Dale and Penwortham, as children were taken from their parents in Preston workhouse and placed there from age 7. Orphans were of course prominent among lone children, but, interestingly, others had been admitted to the workhouses to ease pecuniary pressure on their parents who remained outside. The practice of admitting children to the workhouse without parents appears to have become more common after the Relief Regulation Order was issued in 1852 (whether it occurred before this Order is unclear, as is how frequently it occurred thereafter), and was encouraged by the PLB as it was a less eligible than outdoor relief. One such case was that of John Forrest, a widower with three young children who we encountered very briefly in the previous chapter. Forrest had been in receipt of outdoor relief for 13 weeks when his case came up for review, and he told the Guardians that he could not manage without continued support. However, rather than oblige him the Guardians, aware perhaps that the PLB would question, as they had previously, subsidising the wages of a person earning twelve shillings a week, offered to place his youngest child in the Preston workhouse at a personal weekly cost to him of 1s6d.<sup>77</sup> This made financial sense as Forrest had been spending far more than this on childcare, and by placing his youngest under the care of the Guardians the family's per capita income was raised to a reasonably healthy 3s 6d. The potential emotional cost such a policy had on families is, of course, another matter entirely.

#### *Inmates aged 15-59*

From 1837 successive Assistant Poor Law Commissioners reiterated to the Preston Board of Guardians that workhouses should mainly accommodate able-bodied adults, and stressed that the aged and infirm, where possible, should be relieved in their own homes.<sup>78</sup> This view of the role of the workhouse was reflected in the 1841 classification order, which dedicated two of the union's four workhouses, amounting to space for 269 individuals and 33 per cent of aggregate accommodation, to able-bodied adult males. However, the rejection of the workhouse test in Preston union meant that males of prime working age are not found in anything near this proportion. In 1851, just 20 per cent of the total workhouse population comprised of men aged 15-

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<sup>77</sup> PUT/1/18, 15<sup>th</sup> May, 1854.

<sup>78</sup> See, for example, Charles Mott's letter to the Preston Guardians of 23<sup>rd</sup> May, 1841: L.A. PUT 1/4.

59. Thus, when the classification order was revised later that year local policy was taken into account, and space for able-bodied adult males was reduced to a single workhouse and 16 per cent of the total capacity. Men aged 15-59 consequently accounted for just 15 per cent of all inmates in 1861.

However, given that the Guardians were not restricted to offering only indoor relief to any class of pauper, and opposed the application of a stringent workhouse test, it is perhaps surprising that men aged 15-59 are still found in relatively high numbers; 100, 139 and 77 over the three census years. Indeed, standing at 37 per cent the proportion of males in this group in 1851 is particularly high, and considerably above figures noted elsewhere (see Table 3 above). In Hertfordshire, a county operating under the Prohibitory Order, just 31 per cent of male inmates were aged 15-59, and only 23 per cent in Kent. For females the picture is similar. Between 40 per cent and 46 per cent of all women in the Preston workhouses were aged 15-59, against 40 per cent in Hertfordshire and 36 per cent in Kent. Only in Gritt and Park's study of Lancashire during the 'Crusading' years, which found men at 40 per cent and women at 49 per cent, were figures notably higher. The relatively high proportion of men and women of prime working age in the Preston workhouses between 1841 and 1861, similar as they are to those found by Gritt and Park in Lancashire in 1881, indicates that punitive indoor policies were being employed against at least some able-bodied paupers during the period covered by this article. This contention is supported by Table 6, which compares the number of 'able-bodied' workhouse inmates in Preston with those of other industrial Lancashire unions. The figures for Preston, in both the depressed year of 1848 and the relatively prosperous 1852, were markedly higher than those of similarly sized unions. Indeed, the extent of able-bodied indoor pauperism is in most unions utterly negligible, and Preston clearly stands out as unusual.

It is difficult to determine precisely the reason for this disparity, but two probable and interlinked causes stand out. Firstly, the Preston union workhouses, as we have seen, were far from less eligible institutions, and the absence of punitive conditions might have encouraged some people to enter them in cases where they might not had the buildings been more uninviting. After all, the Guardians' 1859 report quoted in the first section of this chapter claimed that the 'many comforts' offered in the Preston workhouse acted as an inducement to prostitutes and single women to apply for admission. Moreover, during an earlier period Joseph Livesey had expressed a similar view, telling a Select Committee in 1846 that 'I have seen a great number of idle, lazy men filling a small

**Table 6: Number of adult indoor paupers classified as 'able-bodied' in selected Lancashire unions, 1848 and 1852**

| Union      | Pop. 1851 | 1st July, 1848 |        |       | 1st July, 1852 |        |       |
|------------|-----------|----------------|--------|-------|----------------|--------|-------|
|            |           | Male           | Female | Total | Male           | Female | Total |
| Preston    | 96,545    | 159            | 137    | 296   | 68             | 58     | 126   |
| Blackburn  | 90,739    | 14             | 65     | 79    | 9              | 20     | 29    |
| Bolton     | 114,712   | 6              | 33     | 39    | 0              | 8      | 8     |
| Burnley    | 63,868    | 26             | 33     | 59    | 2              | 6      | 8     |
| Manchester | 186,986   | 94             | 226    | 320   | 38             | 85     | 123   |
| Oldham     | 86,785    |                |        |       | 9              | 9      | 18    |
| Salford    | 87,523    | 13             | 31     | 44    | 8              | 6      | 14    |
| Wigan      | 77,545    | 14             | 36     | 50    | 2              | 11     | 13    |

**Source:** P.P. 1849 (586) *Return of the number of paupers in the receipt of relief in the several Unions of England and Wales, on the 1st day of July 1848*, p.8; P.P. 1852-53 (513) *Poor Law. Abstract of return.*

workhouse we had [Walton], and we could not get them out unless we used very forcible means.<sup>79</sup> Secondly, the high proportion of able-bodied inmates was at least partly the product of a policy, enforced perhaps more strongly than elsewhere, of discriminating against persons deemed to be immoral or otherwise of bad character which excluded them from relief outside the workhouse. Addison unwittingly outlined the prevailing policy quite in 1858, when he criticised the suggestion that it would be better to allow outdoor relief to prostitutes and other 'depraved' women rather than the workhouse as they contaminated the minds of younger inmates:

At their relief committees, they urged that they should not offer a workhouse order to certain parties, but give them outdoor relief, as they were worthy people...yet now they proposed to place abandoned people...on the same footing as the deserving poor. Why should they give outdoor relief to such parties, they were improvident, extravagant [and] incapable of living as poor people generally do.<sup>80</sup>

One such 'abandoned' inmate, in the Preston workhouse on census night 1861, was thirty year old Mary Mawdsley, a notorious local figure who had been brought before the magistrates on no less than twenty-nine occasions for drunkenness, violence and prostitution.<sup>81</sup> Another woman, in on the same night, was Mary Ann Hesketh, a reputedly idle nineteen year old who had previously been

<sup>79</sup> P.P. 1847 (409) *Sixth report from the Select Committee on settlement, and poor removal; together with the minutes of evidence and appendix*, p.189.

<sup>80</sup> *Preston Guardian (P.G.)*. 25<sup>th</sup> June, 1858.

<sup>81</sup> *P.C.* 1<sup>st</sup> September, 1860.



charged with stealing from her mother.<sup>82</sup> Though we must be careful not to tar all able-bodied inmates with the same brush, these cases are not untypical, and their presence in the workhouse is indicative of a link which was frequently made between destitution and criminality and between workhouses and prisons. The workhouse was deemed to be the proper place for the undeserving poor in Preston union, and not without reason did a Guardian describe the Ribchester workhouse, classified to receive only able-bodied males, as a 'penal settlement, where they sent their refractory paupers.'<sup>83</sup>

#### Inmates aged 60+

Typically seen in more favourable light were the aged, a generally uncontroversial class of pauper whose destitution was naturally associated with physical decline. Yet, the aged were particularly likely to experience a term in a workhouse. Whereas over 30 per cent of inmates in 1851 and 1861 were aged 60 and over, their proportion in the union population as a whole was just 6 per cent.<sup>84</sup> Kinship support, as explained in the previous chapter, was crucial if an elderly destitute person was to avoid the workhouse, and against this backdrop the Preston data (Table 4, above) shows a clear bias towards aged males in the workhouses across all three census years, the sex ratio ranging from 167 to 203 despite women outnumbering men in the population at large.<sup>85</sup> This is interesting given that females were overwhelmingly dominant among the 'not able-bodied' (and therefore largely aged) paupers in receipt of outdoor relief. In 1848, for example, 62 per cent of adults categorised as 'not able-bodied' in receipt of outdoor relief were female, while 60 per cent in the workhouses were male.<sup>86</sup> This supports Goose's claim that Guardians were generally much more willing to provide women with outdoor relief than men.<sup>87</sup> Further, Michael Anderson's view that families often preferred to offer co-residential support to domestically useful aged female than male relatives must also have proved important; elderly men were a financial burden and could contribute little to the domestic economy.<sup>88</sup> It might also be the case that adult children often looked upon the needs of an aged father, who may in their youth have been a hard disciplinarian, with less sympathy than their mother, and felt more comfortable allowing him to go to the workhouse.<sup>89</sup>

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<sup>82</sup> P.C. 26<sup>th</sup> July, 1856.

<sup>83</sup> P.C. 21<sup>st</sup> June, 1845.

<sup>84</sup> P.P. 1852-53 (1691-II) *census of Great Britain, 1851. Population Tables II*, p.616; P.P. 1863 (3221) *Accounts and papers: forty-eight volumes (25 – Part II) Population (England and Wales)*, p.619.

<sup>85</sup> P.P. 1852-53 (1691-II) *census of Great Britain, 1851*, p.616; P.P. 1863 (3221) *Accounts and papers*, p.619.

<sup>86</sup> P.P. 1849 (596), *Paupers*, p.8.

<sup>87</sup> N. Goose, 'Poverty, old age and gender in nineteenth century England: the case of Hertfordshire', *Continuity and Change*, 20, 3 (2005), pp.315-384.

<sup>88</sup> Anderson, *Family structure in nineteenth century Lancashire* (1971), p.74.

<sup>89</sup> Anderson, *Family structure*, p.70.

**Table 7: Marital status of inmates aged 20+, Preston union, 1851 - 1861**

|                   | 1851     |    |          |    |          |     |
|-------------------|----------|----|----------|----|----------|-----|
|                   | 20-59    |    | 60+      |    | Total    |     |
|                   | per cent | N. | per cent | N. | per cent | N.  |
| Unmarried males   | 17       | 93 | 8        | 35 | 25       | 128 |
| Married males     | 5        | 22 | 8        | 35 | 13       | 57  |
| Widowed males     | 6        | 24 | 13       | 59 | 19       | 83  |
| Unmarried females | 13       | 65 | 3        | 12 | 16       | 77  |
| Married females   | 7        | 31 | 5        | 22 | 12       | 53  |
| Widowed females   | 5        | 21 | 10       | 43 | 15       | 64  |

|                   | 1861     |    |          |    |          |     |
|-------------------|----------|----|----------|----|----------|-----|
|                   | 20-59    |    | 60+      |    | Total    |     |
|                   | per cent | N. | per cent | N. | per cent | N.  |
| Unmarried males   | 13       | 48 | 4        | 16 | 17       | 64  |
| Married males     | 4        | 15 | 4        | 13 | 8        | 28  |
| Widowed males     | 4        | 14 | 24       | 87 | 28       | 101 |
| Unmarried females | 16       | 61 | 2        | 6  | 18       | 72  |
| Married females   | 6        | 21 | 2        | 9  | 8        | 30  |
| Widowed females   | 6        | 23 | 16       | 42 | 22       | 65  |

CEBs: 1851-1861.

*Marital status of inmates*

The marital status of the inmates brings the nature of indoor pauperism into clearer perspective (Table 7). Immediately noticeable is the much lower proportion of married men and women over unmarried and widowed single persons in the workhouses. Given that well over 50 per cent of the adult population (over the age of 20) in 1851 and 1861 were married, this is a significant disparity, though one which has been shown repeatedly in previous studies.<sup>90</sup> Marriage augmented life-cycle stability, opening up wider kinship networks than those available to the spouseless and consequently decreased a person's vulnerability to destitution.<sup>91</sup> However, the comparatively low proportion of married inmates was also caused by the Guardians' aversion to separating married, particularly aged, couples across the workhouses. Only 5 per cent of married women in 1851, and 6 per cent in 1861, had a potential spouse in another workhouse. Indeed, the notable decline in the number of indoor married couples aged 60+ between 1851 and 1861 was principally the result of centrally imposed restrictions on such inmates living together. Central policy stipulated that aged married partners could sleep in the same bed provided they had a room in the workhouse to themselves, but this had been more or less ignored during the 1840s as it was impracticable. When

<sup>90</sup> Goose, 'Workhouse populations', p.62; Gritt and Park, 'Workhouse populations', p.59-60.

<sup>91</sup> Gritt and Park, 'Workhouse populations', p.59-60.

the classification order was revised in Preston union in 1851, however, the PLB began to enforce the letter of the law, and the Guardian's response was to admit far fewer aged married couples to the workhouses. Fourteen resided together in 1851, but just two in 1861.

Table 7 also shows that the vast majority of inmates aged 15-59 were unmarried, and for this there are two principal causes. First, able-bodied unmarried men and women of this age group were generally more likely to be considered undeserving of outdoor relief than their married and widowed counterparts.<sup>92</sup> Second, a number of persons in this age group, as we shall see in the next section, were afflicted with various long term conditions, and almost all of them were unmarried. In the 60+ category the proportional majority switches from the unmarried to the widowed, though this must have reflected the demographic shift in the wider population as people married and became widowed with age. The vulnerability to destitution of aged widowed men in particular is quite evident here, being almost one quarter of all adults in the workhouses of 1861 but just 2 per cent in the union entire.<sup>93</sup>

### **5 (iii) The vulnerable poor and long term residency**

Workhouse populations were by their very nature extremely transient. During the month of the 1851 census, for example, well over 100 people were admitted and a similar figure discharged from the workhouses of the Preston union, and this during a prosperous period when inmate numbers were relatively low.<sup>94</sup> For most adults their time in the institution would be quite short, and the vast majority would certainly expect to leave as soon as their personal or familial circumstances improved. But there were always a significant proportion of inmates whose circumstances were such that their stay would be a protracted one. Admission and discharge registers do not survive for Preston, but it is possible to examine the nature and extent of long term residency through various sources in order to develop our understanding of the workhouses and the paupers who stayed therein.

In 1861 every union in England and Wales made a return of each adult inmate resident for a continuous period of at least five years. At the national level the published results show 14,216 such inmates, around 21 per cent of adult indoor paupers, while in Preston the proportion was slightly

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<sup>92</sup> M. Levine-Clark, *Unemployment, welfare and masculine citizenship: "so much honest poverty" in Britain, 1870-1930* (2015), p.235.

<sup>93</sup> P.P. 1863 (3221) *Accounts and papers*, p.619.

<sup>94</sup> L.A. PUT 1/15.

**Table 8: Causes of long term indoor pauperism (resident over 5 years) in the Preston union**

| Old age | Infirmity | Old and infirm | Idiot | Lunacy | Lameness/cripple | Other | Total |
|---------|-----------|----------------|-------|--------|------------------|-------|-------|
| 12      | 28        | 8              | 7     | 6      | 8                | 15    | 84    |

Source: P.P. 1861 (490) *Paupers in workhouses*, p2

higher at 24 per cent.<sup>95</sup> However, given that many indoor paupers resident for less than five years when the return was made would go on to stay many years longer, the actual proportion of long term dependent inmates in the workhouses at any one time was clearly considerable, probably far exceeding one quarter. The return also included the reasons why these individuals were dependent. The figures for Preston, presented in Table 8, indicate the strong correlation between natural physical decline and long term destitution, with persons in categories relating to old age and infirmity accounting for 57 per cent of the total. A full 70 per cent of these were male, further delineating the vulnerability of old men. Other long term inmates, however, were suffering mental and physical afflictions which transcend demographic boundaries. The not insignificant number of inmates described as 'lunatics' and 'idiots' in particular reflects the rather contradictory role of these institutions, being simultaneously places of punishment for the undeserving and of asylum for the most vulnerable and disadvantaged.

The usefulness of the return is limited as it does not include additional demographic information, but as 52 of the 84 paupers featured in Table 8 were in the workhouses on census night 1861 we can build a more detailed picture. Turning first to those identified as aged and/or infirm, 30 of the 48 inmates were in the workhouses on census night and most turn out to be, as expected, very old. All but three were over the age of 60 and nineteen were over 70. Discharge figures, taken from the Guardians minute books, reveal that aged persons were particularly likely to experience a protracted stay in a workhouse. By way of example, figures show that during the year preceding the 1861 census a combined total of 31 paupers were on average discharged from the union's five workhouses each week, but at the Woodplumpton workhouse (classified to receive only aged males) only 28 inmates were discharged *all year*.<sup>96</sup> The turnover of inmates at Woodplumpton was therefore considerably lower than the union average, and these old men could expect a long, perhaps permanent, stay in the institution.

<sup>95</sup> P.P. 1861 (490) *Paupers in workhouses*, pp2 and 71-72.

<sup>96</sup> L.A. PUT 1/24-25.

Of the remaining thirty-six long term inmates featured in Table 8, twenty-one were in the workhouses on census night and all were suffering various kinds of mental or physical afflictions unrelated to age. Among them we find the likes of Joseph Leeming, a 30 year old who was 'subject to fits'. Another, 57 year old John Moss, was a 'cripple when born'. Betty Metcalf, 50, had a 'diseased spine', while Susan Cooper, 55, was 'paralysed'. Being destitute, unable to work and requiring specialised treatment and care, the maintenance of these helpless paupers became the responsibility of the Poor Law Guardians. Requiring particular attention was the union's insane paupers. Most institutionalised pauper lunatics were in the county asylum at Lancaster, but the high fees charged for their maintenance meant the Guardians were keen to remove the harmless cases to the workhouses. The able-bodied male workhouse at Ribchester slowly developed separate lunatic wards, and by 1861 the Guardians were employing a 'lunatic assistant' as carer for the male lunatics. On census night 1861 there were thirteen insane paupers in the workhouses, ten males at Ribchester and three females at Preston, being just over 2 per cent of the aggregate indoor pauper population.<sup>97</sup>

Interestingly, the numerical bias towards males among the 'lunatics' is characteristic of the union's indoor paupers afflicted with non-age related conditions. 37 such adult inmates have been identified in the workhouses on census night in 1861, of which males formed 74 per cent. Of particular importance is the very high proportion of these males who were unmarried and aged 20-59. They account for a full 35 per cent of all unmarried men of this age group in 1861, a figure which, if typical, indicates that observations of the extent of able-bodied indoor pauperism might be overstated through analysis of age profiles alone.

## **Conclusion**

The union workhouse was the physical embodiment of the ideology which underpinned the New Poor Law. Although workhouses had existed in one form or another for more than a century before the Act was introduced, the workhouse system, with its twin principles of less eligibility and the workhouse test, was something quite different. It marked a punitive and deeply controversial attempt to reduce pauperism by offering relief in a form so uninviting that it would drive potential applicants away. The use of workhouses to deter pauperism was not, in itself, entirely novel in 1834, but less eligibility as defined by the PLC was to operate with a stringency which many local administrators were unwilling to fully implement. Against this backdrop, in a union such as Preston,

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<sup>97</sup> The CEBs do not identify lunatics, but their names can be found in the Guardian's minute books and the annual 'Lunatic Returns' located in the MH12 series held at The National Archives, allowing their number to be ascertained.

where the Board of Guardians were irreconcilably divided over the New Poor Law and its ethos in our period, it is unsurprising that local conflict centred upon the workhouse question. It was shown in Chapter 1 that the numerical dominance of the elected Guardians, who almost uniformly opposed a union workhouse, over their ex-officio counterparts, meant the building of a union institution was held back until the mid-1860s. This was by no means typical, however, as most Boards of Guardians in Lancashire built a union workhouse much earlier as we saw in Chapter 2. But Preston was peculiar in that divisions in the boardroom were so intense and endured for so long. Most unions did not have influential figures as polarised as Thomas Batty Addison and Joseph Livesey involved in local Poor Law affairs, and consequently the union workhouse did not become the political tool it evidently did in Preston.

Addison's failure to convince the elected majority to vote in favour of a union workhouse meant Preston union variously used four or five Old Poor Law township workhouses throughout our period. This is significant for a number of reasons. One negative implication was its effect on the quality of institutional provision offered by the union. While the workhouses themselves were not particularly old, and appear to have been structurally sound, they were not built according to specifications which included, or allowed them to accommodate, some of the more progressive demands which historians have recognised in the post-1834 system. Thus, receiving wards, proper sick wards and other basic facilities which would become standard in union workhouses were notably absent in the workhouses of Preston union, the House of Recovery notwithstanding. Moreover, the enduring debate over the workhouse question meant attempts to improve the facilities in the buildings often failed. As the interventions of Thomas Walmsley and William Marshall at various times in the 1840s and 1850s demonstrate, advocates of a union workhouse were actively opposed to costly maintenance work because it would reduce the likelihood of the buildings being abandoned for a union workhouse. Thus, the workhouses were left in a condition which pleased no one. The retention of five workhouses also had implications on staffing, for it meant the Guardians would have to appoint five sets of each officer if every workhouse was to have the full complement of paid staff. The Guardians had to appoint the essential officers, the master and matron, but their unwillingness to recruit the full range of non-essential officers (as in not required by the central authority) is indicative of the amateurism which defined institutional provision at this time. Only the Preston workhouse, for example, had paid nurses, though there was no chaplain, and in all four out-district workhouses the master and matron were assisted solely by inmates. This would only be rectified when the union workhouse was opened in 1868.

More positively, at least from the view of those who opposed the union workhouse on ideological grounds, retaining five workhouses was also deeply symbolic. It epitomised the antipathy many elected members of the Board, and the ratepayers who sent them there we saw in Chapter 1, felt towards the principles which underpinned the post-1834 workhouse system and their unwillingness to implement them. We should be careful not to stress this *too* forcefully, as the question of economy was arguably as important, but there can be no doubt that refusing to erect a union workhouse acted to subvert the New Poor Law, and that those involved understood it in these terms. For the workhouses of Preston union were certainly not operating as orthodox less eligible institutions as defined by the central authority during the 1840s and 1850s, and for leading opponents like Livesey this was precisely why they had to be retained. It is worth repeating the view Livesey expressed on the old parish workhouses in 1864, when the Preston Guardians were considering whether to build a new workhouse: that they were places where inmates could 'gaze upon green fields; can have a reasonable amount of liberty to see others not so unfortunate as themselves...and obtain many indulgencies...which they cannot where rigid regulation, routine, and red tapism rule.' There are two points to make here. First, Livesey clearly feared that the erection of a union workhouse would lead to the full implementation of a deterrent workhouse system. Second, and by extension, that the existing system was something quite different. There is ample evidence to support this second point. The Guardian's failure to apply the central authority's official dietaries, the allowance of tobacco and snuff, occasional treats of roast beef and plum pudding (which probably would have been beyond the resources of outdoor paupers, and indeed many poor people living independent of the Poor Law) and trips to resorts such as Fleetwood and Blackpool, hardly served to inculcate a less eligible workhouse system. Nor did the absence of deterrent labour for women, and the generally lax regulations which allowed friends and family to visit inmates almost at will for most of our period. Within all this we must remember that policy could vary between workhouses because much was left to the workhouse master's, but this in itself is indicative of the Guardian's aloofness to implementing formal central regulations. In our period the workhouses operated in a way which cannot have been far removed from how they had under the Old Poor Law.

Significantly, the Guardians active resistance to aspects of the orthodox workhouse system appears to have had direct implications on the profile of indoor pauperism as analysis of the CEBs indicates. We refer here specifically to the workhouse classification orders issued to the Preston union in 1841 and 1851. Despite strong initial resistance, the orders ensured the workhouses evolved from general mixed buildings in 1841 to institutions operating under orthodox principles of pauper

separation thereafter. Yet, while the Guardians had to conform to these orders by separating inmates according to age and sex, it seems that the more they were forced to classify the workhouses the less likely they were to send certain classes of pauper to them. Most notably, the almost entire absence of nuclear family units in the workhouses after 1841, and married couples after 1851, was a direct consequence of the classification orders issued by the central board in each of these years.

The general composition of the indoor pauper host in Preston union, in terms of age, sex and marital status, mirrors the general pattern found in previous CEB based studies. A predominance of the young and the old has been shown in every such study thus far regardless of region and period, as has the bias towards males among inmates over 60. The unmarried were typically the dominant group among younger adults, with widowed persons replacing them in old age. Those who were married always formed the lowest proportion, testament to both their greater capacity to avoid destitution and reluctance on the part of the Guardians to separate them. These patterns evidently reflect basic life-cycle circumstances, but they were also influenced by ideas regarding entitlement as discussed in the previous chapter, and which appear to have been commonly held across the country. The large proportion of unmarried adult women in workhouses, for example, is a conspicuous indication of the stigma surrounding the bearing of illegitimate children which left them less likely to be provided with outdoor relief. Similarly, Guardians were more inclined to admit aged men to the workhouse than aged women, which presumably reflected their more compassionate view of the former as Goose had argued, although the domestic advantages for working families of co-residing with aged female relatives must also have been important here. There were, however, some clear differences in the composition of indoor pauperism which also points to the importance of local policy measures. A particularly notable example from Preston union is the comparatively very high number of able-bodied inmates which clearly distinguishes it from other unions, including those in Lancashire where we might expect to find a degree of regional uniformity. This appears to reflect a stringently applied policy of discrimination against applicants deemed to be of bad character, which was not applied to the same extent elsewhere.

Yet, despite all the controversy surrounding able-bodied pauperism, and whether to build a single union workhouse and apply a workhouse test, it is important to remember that these places were also home to some of the most vulnerable members of society. In Preston union, as nationally, far more than a quarter of all inmates in the workhouses at any one time either had been, or would go on to be, in the institution for a period of at least five years, many of whom would never leave. The majority of these long term inmates were old persons whose destitution was related to natural



physical decline, and they were not subjected in any doctrinaire sense to the principle of 'less eligibility' in the Preston union during this period. At the Woodplumpton workhouse the old men did not have to work and held certain privileges unavailable to their able-bodied indoor counterparts, and from the extremely low turnover of inmates it has all the appearance of a quasi-retirement home.

## Chapter 5

### Pauperism and the able-bodied male

#### Introduction

The notion that most healthy able-bodied males of working age in Lancashire should, during 'normal' times, have a job and the means to maintain themselves, their families and, in many cases, their wider kin, underpinned the development of Poor Law policy in the county during the nineteenth century. We have seen that it led to a system which played a particularly marginal role in the makeshift economies of the poor, with Guardians emphasising the importance of independence and kinship support as *the* primary means of mitigating poverty. However, what we have yet to examine is how Poor Law officials in Lancashire responded to those able-bodied males who, rather than remaining independent and supporting their families as they were expected to, came before them for support. The question is an important one, even though Karel Williams has argued that the New Poor Law had succeeded in excluding healthy able-bodied males from outdoor relief by 1850.<sup>1</sup> While Williams' contention, reached using the central authority's annual pauperism statistics we examined in Chapter 3, is persuasive at the national level, his failure to include dependents in his calculations and to consider regional variation constitutes a notable oversight. For the picture was very different in Lancashire, where families headed by able-bodied males accounted for, on average, 26 per cent of outdoor paupers at any one time between 1848 and 1859. Of this group almost half were relieved for work related reasons, i.e. unemployment or low wages. Healthy able-bodied males therefore, far from excluded from relief, remained a not insignificant pauper group in Lancashire throughout our period.

The continued provision of relief to healthy able-bodied men and their families in Lancashire was facilitated by the absence of the Prohibitory Order, which was fiercely and successfully resisted during the organised anti-Poor Law campaign of the late-1830s.<sup>2</sup> A question here arises: why, if Guardians in Lancashire operated a particularly marginal system which strongly emphasised independence among the working population, were they resolutely opposed to regulations prohibiting outdoor relief to able-bodied men? The answer in part lies in their simple desire to retain autonomy, but far more important was the view that it was unnecessary, cruel and, above

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<sup>1</sup> K. Williams, *From pauperism to poverty* (1980), pp.59-90.

<sup>2</sup> N. C. Edsall, *The anti-Poor Law movement, 1834-1844* (1971).

all, totally impractical to ban outdoor relief to men in a manufacturing district.<sup>3</sup> This brings to the fore a unique aspect of pauperism in an industrial community. While the working-class of Lancashire were, on the whole, comparatively well off in financial terms, the fact includes crucial caveats. First, industrial prosperity was created at the expense of traditional handicraft industries which, nonetheless, survived in areas of Lancashire beyond mid-century despite the increasingly desperate condition of some of its workforce.<sup>4</sup> Second, most able-bodied males were only well off as long as they avoided protracted life-cycle crises which included sickness, childbirth, the death of a spouse and, of particular interest here, unemployment.<sup>5</sup> Few working men in Lancashire were able to withstand a long period of time without work, particularly when they had families to support, and many during periods of intense industrial depression were in receipt of relief as we have seen. It shall be shown that the decline (but survival) of handicraft industries, and the boom and bust nature of the industrial economy, led to the development of relief policies in Lancashire which extended entitlement to outdoor relief to many healthy able-bodied male hand loom weavers and cyclically unemployed operatives, and that the right to give relief to these groups was vehemently defended.

Against this backdrop, the introduction of the Outdoor Relief Regulation Order into Lancashire in 1852 is of particular interest. The Order sought to prohibit outdoor relief to healthy able-bodied men unless they undertook a task of outdoor labour, and was similar in design to the Outdoor Labour Test Order introduced into some industrial midlands unions in 1842.<sup>6</sup> Driver has argued that the 1852 Order marked an important concession on the part of the PLB, who recognised the futility of trying to apply the Prohibitory Order in Lancashire, but this was of little conciliation to many local Guardians who saw it as an affront to established local practice.<sup>7</sup> The response to the Relief Regulation Order in Lancashire has received only passing attention by historians, who have noted

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<sup>3</sup> D. Ashforth, 'The Urban Poor Law', in D. Fraser (ed.) *The New Poor Law in the nineteenth century* (1976), pp.95-115; R. Boyson, *The history of Poor Law administration in north east Lancashire, 1837-1871* (1960), M.A thesis, p.249; Driver, *Power and pauperism*, pp.147-163; E. C. Midwinter, *Social administration in Lancashire: Poor Law, public health, police, 1830-1860* (1969), p.49; A. Miller, *Poverty deserved? relieving the poor in Victorian Liverpool* (1988), pp.3-4.

<sup>4</sup> D. Bythell, *The handloom weavers: a study in the English cotton industry during the Industrial Revolution* (1969); J. S. Lyons, *The Lancashire cotton industry and the introduction of the power-loom, 1815-50* (1977), PhD thesis, pp.34-100; G. Timmins, *The last shift: the decline of handloom weaving in nineteenth century Lancashire* (1993).

<sup>5</sup> M. Anderson, *Family structure in nineteenth century Lancashire* (1971), pp.136-137.

<sup>6</sup> Parliamentary Papers (P.P.) 1852-53 (1625) *Fifth Annual Report of the Poor Law Board*, pp.17-23; Driver, *Power and pauperism*, pp.32-57; E. T. Hurren, *Protesting about pauperism: politics and poor relief in late Victorian England, 1870-1900*, (2007), pp.18-20.

<sup>7</sup> Driver, *Power and pauperism*, p.32-35; also M. E. Rose, 'The allowance system under the New Poor Law', *Economic History Review*, 19 (1966), pp.61-62.

but barely examined in any detail what became a regionally organised opposition campaign during the winter of 1852-53.<sup>8</sup> Moreover, its long term implications on the provision of relief at local and regional level have received only scant attention. This chapter seeks to address these lacunae. Further, and more broadly, analysis of the 1852 Order provides an opportunity to examine attitudes towards the New Poor Law in Lancashire more than a decade after the organised anti-Poor Law movement had effectively ended.

At the heart of local opposition to the 1852 Order in Lancashire was the issue of 'testing' poverty. The question of whether able-bodied males should be tested, and how, also caused considerable discord within Preston union as we have seen in relation to the workhouse test. We begin this chapter by looking at how the dispute developed and played out at local level during the 1840s, when the Guardians were able to form relief policy without direct central interference and the workhouse question dominated local debate. It will be argued that the partial resolution of this question – the introduction of an outdoor labour test by the Guardians in 1848 - was a politically motivated act designed to undermine attempts to introduce a workhouse test. The chapter then moves on to assess the response to and implications of the 1852 Order as discussed above, and ends with a case study of the 1857-58 depression, which marked the first time the Preston Board of Guardians was forced to apply the Order during a period of mass unemployment.

### **5 (i) The nature and politics of 'testing' poverty in Preston union**

The idea of 'testing' poverty as a means of determining whether able-bodied relief applicants were really in need of support formed a crucial strand of official policy after 1834. Initially, the PLC made the union workhouse the place of testing, but strong protestations meant the workhouse test was never enforced nationally. Indeed, as Driver has shown, from the early 1840s, when the PLC began permitting the use of an outdoor labour test, the long term trend was for the number of unions operating under the Prohibitory Order to decline.<sup>9</sup> Nonetheless, the central authority remained committed to its workhouse based policy, and of course the 1870s saw its rigorous application in some Lancashire unions like Preston as we have seen.<sup>10</sup> However, it was argued in chapter 2 that the workhouse test was not stringently employed in either Preston union specifically, or Lancashire

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<sup>8</sup> Boyson, *Poor Law administration*, pp.156-162; M. J. Brennan, *Civil and municipal leadership: a study of three northern towns between 1832 and 1867* (2013), PhD thesis, pp.178-179; Driver, *Power and pauperism*, pp.51-52; N. C. Edsall, *The anti-Poor Law movement, 1834-44* (1971), pp.256-259; E. Evans, *The shaping of modern Britain: identity, industry and Empire, 1780-1914* (2011), p.289; M. Ramsbottom, *Christopher Waddington's peers: a study of the workings of the Poor Law in townships of the Fylde of Lancashire, 1803 to 1865* (2011), PhD thesis, pp.249-250.

<sup>9</sup> Driver, *Power and pauperism*, p.137.

<sup>10</sup> See Chapter 2 and Williams, *From pauperism to poverty*, pp.91-135.

more broadly, in our period, and this interpretation supports Poor Law historiography. In reaching this conclusion, historians typically argue that the greater costs associated with indoor pauperism, and the impracticability of applying a workhouse test during periods of temporary mass unemployment, meant local officials preferred to give outdoor relief.<sup>11</sup> Both are convincing, but there is another important reason. As Chapter 3 demonstrated, the vast majority of able-bodied males in receipt of outdoor relief in Lancashire - around 80 per cent - were married, and the overwhelming majority had children. Thus, what we are discussing here, and what the Guardians were discussing at the time, is not simply relief to able-bodied men but relief to families. The distinction is an important one. The Preston Guardians were generally unwilling to offer the workhouse to nuclear families, where the husband, his wife and their children would have had to be separated according to the 1841 classification order. This was quite evident in our analysis of the CEBs in Chapter 4. The workhouse was therefore considered to be inapplicable to most able-bodied paupers, and those who did not conform to this view could find themselves condemned for their inhumanity, or 'humane inhumanity', as the Rev. John Owen Parr memorably described Thomas Batty Addison's approach to relief administration in 1848 (Chapter 1).

However, opposition to the workhouse test did not mean the Preston Board of Guardians rejected testing able-bodied men *en toto*. They were quite happy to put single able-bodied males and females in the workhouse as we saw in the previous chapter, and many certainly felt that unemployed men should be tested with some form of outdoor labour to deter the idle and encourage thrift and independence. This was nothing new. The idea of testing able-bodied males did not belong to the framers of the New Poor Law, and many townships in Lancashire had used outdoor labour tests (usually stone breaking or field labour) prior to 1837 as responses to the Poor Law Report's 'Town Queries' indicate.<sup>12</sup> One major inducement to outdoor testing was that it allowed local administrators to test able-bodied males without separating them from their families in workhouses. Joseph Livesey expressed this point in an off topic statement to a Select Committee in 1846, when he stated that the workhouse test was 'too severe' on 'persons with families', arguing that an outdoor test should consequently be 'the condition of relief' to married able-bodied men.<sup>13</sup> This was a common view, and research on the testing of poverty in Lancashire, though limited, suggests that outdoor rather than indoor tests were applied in at least some unions. In Chorlton

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<sup>11</sup> Ashforth, 'The urban Poor Law', pp.135-139; Midwinter, *Social administration*, p.49; Rose, 'The Allowance System', pp.612-613; Boyson, *Poor Law administration*, pp.249-258.

<sup>12</sup> P.P. 1834 (44) *Report from his Majesty's commissioners for inquiring into the administration and practical operation of the Poor Laws*, pp.5798-5809.

<sup>13</sup> P.P. 1847 (409) *Sixth report from the Select Committee on Settlement, and Poor Removal; together with minutes of evidence and appendix*, p.188.

union near Manchester, for example, an outdoor field labour test was in operation on an expansive tract of land near the workhouse from the late 1830s, and several unions in north east Lancashire also tested the able-bodied through field labour or stone breaking at various times during the 1840s and 1850s.<sup>14</sup> However, it is also apparent that outdoor testing was by no means universally applied across time or space in all of Lancashire's unions. A number of the north-east Lancashire unions studied by Boyson did not test the poor at all for most of our period, nor did the Guardians of Fylde union studied by Ramsbottom; only in the late 1850s did these unions begin testing able-bodied men with outdoor labour, and only after being compelled to do so by the PLB.<sup>15</sup> Why some unions tested able-bodied men while other did not is unclear (presumably cost and/or inertia on the part of the latter), and Boyson and Ramsbottom offer no substantive answers, but the experience of Preston union where the Guardians did – eventually – implement an outdoor test can shed some light on the issue. It shall become clear that to understand the question fully we must consider not only the utility of testing the poor, but also the broader political and ideological context within which policy formation took place at local level.

The first mention of an outdoor labour test in Preston union appears in the Guardians' minutes in 1839, when an *ad hoc* committee, which included Joseph Livesey, was formed to find employment for 'the able-bodied paupers who may apply for outdoor relief.'<sup>16</sup> It was decided to hire the 'Brow field', a ten acre tract of land adjacent to the four acre 'Bull Field' already in the Guardians' possession at the Preston workhouse. The land was to grow oats, potatoes and other vegetables for general sale, and was to be cultivated by the outdoor male paupers.<sup>17</sup> How rigorously this labour test was applied is unclear, but it appears to have been a very small scale operation. An account placed before the Board of Guardians at the end of June 1840 showed that between 26<sup>th</sup> March and 20<sup>th</sup> June £13.15s had been paid to 'pauper labourers'.<sup>18</sup> Pauper labourers were paid a standard sum of 1s per day, and assuming that additional payments to men with families were not included in the accounts this amounted to 275 days work in total, the equivalent of just over 3 people working on the land each day. In any case, the Guardians' enthusiasm for the test appears to have quickly waned. The first labour master, 58 year old Henry Jackson, left the post in 1842 to take the presumably less labour intensive role of workhouse porter, and the two subsequent labour masters were both dismissed for general negligence and intoxication while on duty. Upon the second being

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<sup>14</sup> Boyson, *Poor Law administration*, pp.201-202; Midwinter, *Social administration*, p.49.

<sup>15</sup> Boyson, *Poor Law administration*, pp.201-202; Ramsbottom, *Christopher Waddington's peers*, pp.249-250.

<sup>16</sup> Lancashire Archives (L.A.) PUT/1/4, 29<sup>th</sup> October, 1839.

<sup>17</sup> L.A. PUT/1/4, 26<sup>th</sup> November, 1839.

<sup>18</sup> L.A. PUT/1/5, 26<sup>th</sup> June, 1840.

discharged in 1845, the Guardians decided to give up the labour test altogether.<sup>19</sup> When asked by the PLC why they had not appointed a new labour master, the Guardians simply told them they 'do not think it necessary...as there are no labourers to superintend on the land.'<sup>20</sup>

This did not, however, mark the last word on the outdoor labour test in Preston union, largely because it became tied inextricably to the workhouse question. The issue was revived in 1848 when Addison's reputedly harsh workhouse based response to industrial depression led to a successful campaign, headed by Joseph Livesey in his *Preston Guardian* newspaper, to remove him from the chair as we saw in Chapter 1. His replacement, strongly backed by the *Guardian*, was Thomas Birchall, the mayor of Preston, who had agreed to initiate an outdoor labour test if successfully elected to the post. Birchall was a shrewd choice, for his position of mayor meant he was peculiarly well placed to lease land owned by Preston Corporation on terms favourable to the union. The new Board immediately set about this task. A 'Labour committee' was formed before the end of April which included Joseph Livesey's son John and John Noble, who had stood against Addison for the chair on an anti-New Poor Law platform in 1838, and by the end of July a comprehensive report was presented to the Board.<sup>21</sup> The report proposed a system of farming much like the earlier test but on a larger scale, and the food grown was chiefly to be used in the workhouses with only the surplus sold. The plan was to take a large tract of land in the town of Preston for able-bodied male outdoor paupers, and a field at each of the Ribchester and Woodplumpton workhouses (the two able-bodied male workhouses at this time) for the indoor paupers. The scheme, stated the report, was to serve a dual purpose. It would simultaneously provide paupers with 'Active, useful and instructive employment', and would also deter,

the idle and unworthy...from applying to the parish unless they were really destitute; and thus the rate payers would have the satisfaction of knowing that the heavy and oppressive rates which they are called upon to pay for the relief of the poor, are not expended in supporting the dissolute and unworthy in a state of idleness, but in the wholesome and judicious maintenance of those unfortunate beings who, by the state of trade, by sickness, infirmity, old age, or other unavoidable sources of distress, are rendered unable to maintain themselves.<sup>22</sup>

The Board accepted the report with only Addison and one or two other *ex-officio* Guardians expressing any opposition.<sup>23</sup> Addison had long derided an outdoor test based on farming, believing

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<sup>19</sup> L.A. PUT/1/10, 12<sup>th</sup> November, 1844; PUT/1/10, 15<sup>th</sup> July, 1845.

<sup>20</sup> L.A. PUT/1/10, 12<sup>th</sup> August, 1845.

<sup>21</sup> L.A. PUT/1/13, 25<sup>th</sup> April, 1848.

<sup>22</sup> *Preston Chronicle (P.C.)*, 22<sup>nd</sup> July, 1848.

<sup>23</sup> *P.C.* 22<sup>nd</sup> July, 1848.

it would not act as a sufficient deterrent, and argued that if outdoor labour must be provided at all it should be the 'hard labour' of stone breaking.<sup>24</sup> Ultimately, though, the Guardians agreed to lease 32 acres of land at Preston workhouse (Figure 1) and 48 acres in total at an annual cost of over £100.

The introduction of a long term, and by no means inexpensive, outdoor labour test in 1848 marked an important point in the development of the workhouse question in Preston union. It undermined hopes that opinion might shift in favour of the workhouse system which Addison and other ex-officio Guardians, and of course the central authority, were still encouraging the Guardians to adopt. Moreover, the involvement of the Liveseys, and other opponents of the workhouse test such as John Noble, strongly indicates that this was the chief intention. Interestingly, such a move was not without precedent elsewhere. Ashforth makes reference to a similar aim in Bradford union in 1842, when an influential member of the Board of Guardians told his fellow members that the PLC 'would soon want either the labour test or a workhouse test' and 'that it be the workhouse test, God forbid.'<sup>25</sup> The labour test, in this context, could be and was used as a political tool through which to oppose its indoor counterpart and, by extension, to blunt what were perceived by men like Livesey to be the harsher aspects of the New Poor Law. Fortunately for Livesey and his anti-Poor Law colleagues, they could always pull much harder than their opponents in the tug-of-war over local policy in our period.

It would, however, be misleading to suggest that this was purely a political act for a couple of reasons. First of all, the notion that in the absence of a labour test some people were applying for relief disingenuously was strongly felt in Preston union, and it was introduced partly with this in mind. Indeed, a report by the Preston Labour Committee in 1850 claimed that during the first year of the outdoor test at Preston 'not fewer than 30 to 40 paupers who have been unwilling to work on the land have got labour more congenial to them elsewhere.'<sup>26</sup> The test therefore had a practical economic benefit to the union, saving the rates from people who were not felt to be deserving of support. Secondly, we must not overlook the perception that work was simply 'good'. Preston Guardian John Noble, who as an advocate of Chartism in the 1840s was hardly a grinder of the

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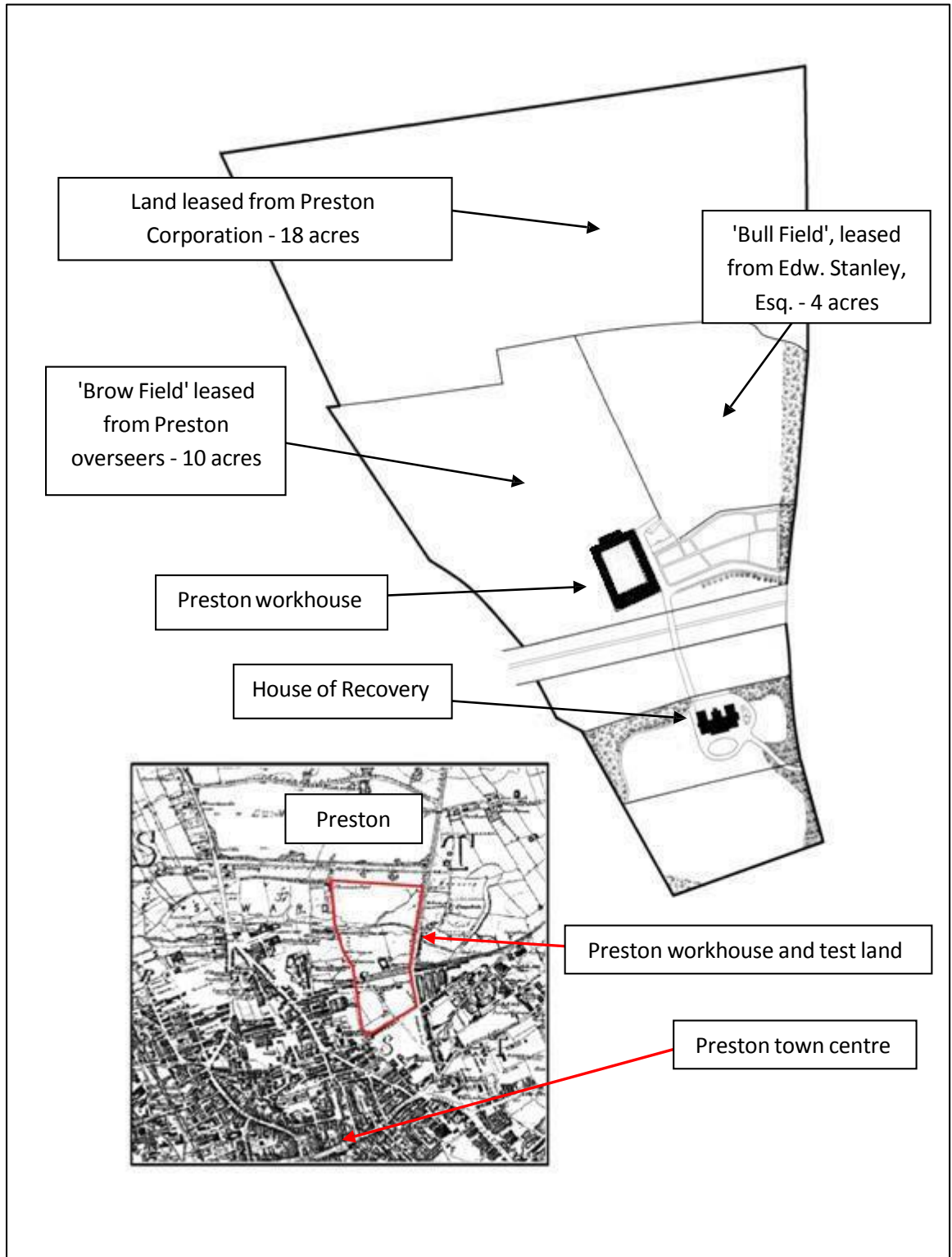
<sup>24</sup> P.C. 22<sup>nd</sup> July, 1848.

<sup>25</sup> D. Ashforth, *The Poor Law in Bradford, c.1834-1871* (1979), PhD thesis, p.164.

<sup>26</sup> L.A. PUT/1/15: 28<sup>th</sup> June, 1850.



**Figure 1: The 32 acres of land at the Preston workhouse leased for the outdoor labour test in 1848**



**Sources:** Main image drawn by author from an original image found in: The National Archives (T.N.A) MH12/6112. Small map of Preston taken from [www.digimap.edine.ac.uk/ancientroam/historic](http://www.digimap.edine.ac.uk/ancientroam/historic).

poor, argued for setting paupers to work on the grounds that when deprived of 'employment, the poor become demoralised; and there was that old adage 'where there is much leisure, mischief follows.'<sup>27</sup> From this perspective, even when the applicant was in genuine need it was right that they worked for their relief. This brings us back to the dual role of the labour test as stated by the Labour Committee in their July 1848 report quoted above: the test was to provide 'active', 'useful' and 'instructive' employment as well as deterring the undeserving. Spade husbandry and other general farming duties obviously would not have offered *useful* or *instructive* labour to a pauper living in urban Preston in any practical sense, but it would in the sense that it provided a degree of independence and instilled good habits. The *role* of spade husbandry is important here. This was categorically not less eligible labour in orthodox terms, as Addison complained. It was probably enough to deter those who came before the Guardians for an easy handout, but it did not unduly punish those who accepted the work. What spade husbandry did offer, from a contemporary point of view, was moral improvement. During the nineteenth century the moral virtues of spade husbandry were espoused by social reformers such as Robert Owen, and influenced (or were considered an important element within) schemes as varied as the Chartist Land Plan and the allotment movement.<sup>28</sup> Local Poor Law officials did not operate in a vacuum, and it seems reasonable to assume that the implementation of an outdoor test based on spade husbandry in Preston union reflected broader contemporary ideas regarding its utility. While Addison could not see past the strict discipline of the workhouse, opponents of his punitive approach found other means of reforming the poor.

The implementation the outdoor test by the Preston Guardians in the 1840s brings us to an apparent anomaly: if the Guardians were applying such a test of their own accord, why would they later oppose the enforcement of a labour test in the 1852 Outdoor Relief Regulation Order? The reason was relatively straightforward. The outdoor labour test as established in Preston in 1848 was, as a rule, only for *unemployed* men. Exempt were those 'wholly or partially in work', who it was not considered 'desirable to withdraw from their ordinary employments.'<sup>29</sup> In other words, local policy was to top up the wages of men in employment when their earnings were insufficient rather than pull them from the labour market altogether and subject them to the test. It was the

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<sup>27</sup> P.C. 12<sup>th</sup> February, 1848.

<sup>28</sup> J. L. Bronstein, *Land reform and the working-class experience in Britain and the United States, 1800-1862* (1999), p.194; J. Burchardt, *The allotment movement in England, 1793-1873* (2002); J. F. C. Harrison, *Robert Owen and the Owenites in Britain and America: the quest for the new moral world* (2009), p.19; E. R. Norman, F. D. Maurice, *The Victorian Christian socialists* (1987), p.19.

<sup>29</sup> P.C. 22<sup>nd</sup> July, 1848.

PLBs attempt to end such practice in 1852 which caused uproar in Preston and across much of Lancashire.

### **5 (ii) The 1852 Outdoor Relief Regulation Order: its reception and implementation in Lancashire and Preston union**

The Outdoor Relief Regulation Order was issued to unions in Lancashire, parts of the West Riding of Yorkshire and Cheshire in August 1852.<sup>30</sup> It contained ten 'articles' relating to various aspects of relief administration, but the two most important were articles five and six which prohibited the provision of outdoor relief to all able-bodied males (article five) unless they undertook a task of labour (article six).<sup>31</sup> Exceptions were made for cases of sickness and 'sudden and urgent necessity', the latter being a vague term which, in any case, was statistically insignificant as we saw in Chapter 3. The introduction of the Order marked an attempt by the PLB to extend their control over relief administration into territory which had strongly and successfully resisted it during the anti-Poor Law years of c.1837-1840.<sup>32</sup> The local response in 1852 would demonstrate that the desire resist interference was still very much alive twelve or thirteen years later. Opposition was in part a desire to retain autonomy, but this was ancillary to more immediate, and for our purposes more important, causes of the controversy. First, by threatening to put an end to wage subsidies the PLB were infringing upon a long established practice in Lancashire of relieving low income male headed families, particularly those engaged in hand loom weaving.<sup>33</sup> Second, the Order would prohibit relief commonly provided to men working short-time during periods of industrial depression.<sup>34</sup> In both cases, the regulations required Guardians to pull relief applicants from the labour market, set them to work and provide their entire maintenance, a policy which they considered altogether harsh, unnecessary and impractical.

Some indication as to why an attempt to abolish wage subsidies would be strongly opposed in Lancashire is apparent in Table 1. In this county the vast majority of healthy able-bodied men in

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<sup>30</sup> The only union in Lancashire to which the 1852 Outdoor Relief Regulation Order did not apply was Ormskirk, which was already operating under the 1842 Outdoor Labour Test Order: P.P. 1852-53 (1625) *Fifth Annual Report of the Poor Law Board*, pp.17-23.

<sup>31</sup> P.P. 1852-53 (1625) *Fifth Annual Report of the Poor Law Board*, pp.17-23.

<sup>32</sup> Driver, *Power and pauperism*; Edsall, *The anti-Poor Law movement*; J. Knott, *Popular opposition to the 1834 New Poor Law* (1986).

<sup>33</sup> P.P. 1834 (44) *Report from His Majesty's commissioners for inquiring into the administration and practical operation of the Poor Laws*, p.909; Midwinter, *Social administration*, p.12.

<sup>34</sup> For the relief of short time workers during a period of industrial depression in Lancashire see: H. M. Boot, 'Unemployment and poor relief in Manchester, 1845-50', *Social History*, 2 (1990), pp.217-228.

**Table 1: Able-bodied male paupers in receipt of relief for 'want of work' and 'insufficient earnings', Lancashire, quarter ended Lady Day, 1839-1845**

| Quarter ended<br>L. Day | Want of work       | Insufficient earnings | Total<br>N. | Insufficient earnings              |
|-------------------------|--------------------|-----------------------|-------------|------------------------------------|
|                         | (unemployed)<br>N. | N.                    |             | as proportion of total<br>Per cent |
| 1839                    | 380                | 1,499                 | 1,879       | 80                                 |
| 1840                    | 1,040              | 2,771                 | 3,811       | 73                                 |
| 1841                    | 1,139              | 3,038                 | 4,177       | 73                                 |
| 1841                    | 4,653              | 4,797                 | 9,450       | 51                                 |
| 1843                    | 5,137              | 5,296                 | 10,433      | 51                                 |
| 1844                    | 2,342              | 3,572                 | 5,914       | 60                                 |
| 1845                    | 1,041              | 2,402                 | 3,443       | 70                                 |

**Sources and notes:** P.P. 6<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> annual report of the Poor Law Commissioners. N. = number.

**Table 2: Married, widowed and single able-bodied men in receipt of outdoor relief, England and Wales and Lancashire, quarter ended Lady Day, 1839-1845**

| Quarter ended L.Day | Want of work |        |                                 | Insufficient earnings |        |                                 |
|---------------------|--------------|--------|---------------------------------|-----------------------|--------|---------------------------------|
|                     | Lancs.       | E+W    | Lancs. as per cent of E+W total | Lancs.                | E+W    | Lancs. as per cent of E+W total |
|                     | N.           | N.     |                                 | N.                    | N.     |                                 |
| 1839                | 380          | 5,669  | 7                               | 1,499                 | 8,372  | 18                              |
| 1840                | 1,040        | 10,467 | 10                              | 2,771                 | 9,290  | 30                              |
| 1841                | 1,139        | 16,008 | 7                               | 3,038                 | 8,814  | 34                              |
| 1841                | 4,653        | 20,828 | 22                              | 4,797                 | 12,378 | 39                              |
| 1843                | 5,137        | 28,305 | 18                              | 5,297                 | 12,808 | 41                              |
| 1844                | 2,342        | 13,520 | 17                              | 3,572                 | 8,539  | 42                              |
| 1845                | 1,041        | 11,242 | 9                               | 2,402                 | 7,850  | 31                              |

**Sources and notes:** P.P. 6<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> annual report of the Poor Law Commissioners. L.Day = Lady Day. N. = number. Lancs. = Lancashire. E+W = England and Wales.

receipt of outdoor relief were low income workers in employment. This was the case during good times and bad, but particularly so in the former. During the quarter ended Lady Day 1839, for example, 'insufficient earnings' was a principal cause of pauperism for 80 per cent of healthy able-bodied males. The statistical significance of this becomes clearer through comparison with the country at large. As Table 2 demonstrates, in England and Wales as a whole there were numerically far fewer men in receipt of relief because of 'insufficient earning' than 'want of work'. One assumes this was at least in part the result of the Prohibitory Order. The disparity is such that by the mid-1840s as much as 42 per cent of all able-bodied male paupers relieved because of insufficient earnings were based in Lancashire, and if we include the neighbouring West Riding of Yorkshire the figure reaches 62 per cent. The endurance of handicraft trades, the absence of prohibitory

regulations and unwillingness amongst some Guardians to fully implement the tenets of the New Poor Law, led to the allowance system being most prominent in the northern manufacturing districts by the 1840s. While the number of handicraft workers declined over the next decade, Lancashire still accounted for 26 per cent of all relief paid in aid of wages during the December quarter of 1852.<sup>35</sup> Thus, the allowance system remained important enough during the early part of the 1850s for its prohibition to be considered a serious affront to established local practice.<sup>36</sup>

It was the condition of the hand loom weaver which dominated discussion when the Preston Board of Guardians considered how to respond to the Outdoor Relief Regulation Order in September 1852. Most took the view, expressed by Preston township Guardian Christopher Ward, that banning outdoor relief to able-bodied men in employment was a harsh and injurious measure. '[T]here were numerous cases', Ward told the Board,

where the head of the family only earned, by handloom weaving, five, six, or seven shillings a week, out of which he had to maintain four, five or six children, none of whom could work. If no relief was to be given to that man, what was he to do? He could not keep his family without some assistance, and he [Ward] contended that they were bound to assist him to bring up his family. On the other hand, what was to become of the poor ratepayers if the union was to be burdened with the maintenance of the whole of that family? He contended that [the Order] would press very hardly upon the poor people.<sup>37</sup>

Ward's statement was grounded in a humane and pragmatic approach to relief administration. In his view banning wage subsidies to hand loom weavers would only serve to cause them misery and, by bringing the entire family upon the Poor Law, would increase the rates. Walton le Dale Guardian Richard Ashworth, a mill owner of that town, made the same point in relation to periods of economic distress. '[W]ith the factories running only four days in the week' he asked the Board, 'was it fair to the man or to the ratepayers that he should be perforce taken from his work and put into the workhouse, with his family, rather than have extended to him a little aid?'<sup>38</sup> The question was rhetorical, but most Guardians agreed with the sentiment. The Order was, stated one Guardian, 'most cruel and inhuman.'<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> Rose, 'The Allowance system', p.615.

<sup>36</sup> For handloom weaving numbers see Timmins, *The last shift*, p.110.

<sup>37</sup> P.C. 2<sup>nd</sup> October, 1852.

<sup>38</sup> P.C. 12<sup>th</sup> October, 1852.

<sup>39</sup> P.C. 16<sup>th</sup> October, 1852.

Yet, opinion was not entirely unanimous. A small number of Guardians welcomed the Order because they saw it as a means of speeding up the death of hand loom weaving. The question of whether the Poor Law should, in effect, aid the survival of hand loom weaving by supporting those engaged in it was an old one. Gilbert Henderson, Assistant Commissioner for Lancashire, had commented on the practice of providing relief in aid of wages to hand loom weavers in his 1832 report, and while he noted 'material distinctions' between the effects of northern industrial and southern agricultural wage supplements, and was by no means overtly critical of the former, he felt hand loom weaving should be abandoned 'with all possible despatch.'<sup>40</sup> Thomas Batty Addison had echoed this sentiment in 1841 when he argued, in line with the economic principles which underpinned the Commissioners' theory on wage subsidies, that providing relief to weavers was 'lowering the rate of wages...and sinking the whole class into misery.'<sup>41</sup> He reiterated this point at the meetings to consider the Order in 1852, stating that it was wrong for the Poor Law to pay one-half of a weaving family's maintenance, 'and thereby keep up a system by which the people can only obtain one-half of their support'.<sup>42</sup> His remedy lay in 'annihilating' hand loom weaving by encouraging weavers into the mills. William Ainsworth, a chief mill owner in Preston, supported this view, asserting that the factories required more operatives and that the Order, consequently, could not have been issued at 'a better time'.<sup>43</sup> Addison and Ainsworth were in a minority though, and the Board voted 22 against four to memorialise the PLB for the abolition of articles five and six.<sup>44</sup> The decision had echoes of 1848 when Addison's removal from the chair was described as the triumph of 'judicious humanity' over 'cold hearted political economy'.<sup>45</sup> Indeed, as Addison responded when Christopher Ward claimed the 1852 Order was 'punishing the poor': 'Now you are coming to it. It is the feelings of the poor which worry you.'<sup>46</sup>

Similar discussions were taking place in boardrooms across Lancashire at this time. Most Boards of Guardians, as minute books and newspaper reports of their meetings indicate, were strongly opposed to the principles of the Order, but opinion was by no means uniformly hostile. The

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<sup>40</sup> P.P. 1834 (44) *Report from His Majesty's commissioners*, p.909; Midwinter, *Social administration*, p.12.

<sup>41</sup> P.C. December 11<sup>th</sup>, 1841.

<sup>42</sup> P.C. 2<sup>nd</sup> October, 1852

<sup>43</sup> P.C. 28<sup>th</sup> September, 1852. Numerous contemporary observers stated that hand loom weavers were often unwilling to leave their relatively independent (though poorly remunerated) occupations for the rigours of the factory system. Ainsworth evidently felt the Poor Law was allowing them to avoid the factory. See: P.P. 1834 (500) *First annual report of the Poor Law Commissioners for England and Wales*, Appendix B, pp.308-309; F. M. L. Thompson, *The rise of respectable society: a social history of Victorian Britain, 1830-1900* (1988), pp.31-32; Timmins, *The last shift?*, p.153; A. Redford, *Labour migration in England, 1800-1850* (1968), p.35.

<sup>44</sup> P.C. 12<sup>th</sup> October, 1852.

<sup>45</sup> See Chapter 1.

<sup>46</sup> P.C. 2<sup>nd</sup> October, 1852

Guardians of Manchester and Barton-upon-Irwell, for example, approved of the Order's general tone and resolved to carry it out despite some reservations over applying article five during periods of economic distress. In Lancaster too, where the New Poor Law appears to have been enthusiastically carried out when it was introduced in 1840, the Guardians welcomed the Order, resolving immediately to 'act upon it.'<sup>47</sup> Few other unions, however, appear to have been so approving, and some were resolutely opposed. The Guardians of Prescott union were so against the regulations that they threatened to resign their office if forced to apply them, and the Haslingden Guardians simply 'decline[d] to comply' altogether.<sup>48</sup> Other unions took a more constitutional approach to resistance, petitioning (like Preston) for its repeal or amendment.<sup>49</sup> The nature and extent of opposition became apparent at a series of large meetings, attended by delegates from unions across Lancashire, the West Riding of Yorkshire and Cheshire in late 1852 and early 1853, which had been arranged by the Oldham Guardians as a means of discussing how to oppose the regulations; it marked the first time unions had come together in this way. The first took place in Manchester in October 1852, and was reported in the local press across the north of England. According to a particularly detailed report by the *Manchester Times*, over 100 union delegates and several M.P.s attended; this was a considerable show of strength.<sup>50</sup> Usefully, their report featured the name of each delegate in attendance and the union they represented, allowing the make-up of the meeting to be ascertained. In total, 26 unions sent delegates - around half of the 51 unions to receive an invitational letter - 23 of which were from Lancashire and the West Riding of Yorkshire. Looking at Lancashire specifically, fifteen of the county's 26 unions (including Preston) were represented, although this figure underestimates the extent of opposition as letters were read at the meeting from four absent Lancashire unions expressing support for the campaign. Thus, it appears that no less than nineteen unions in Lancashire, 73 per cent of the total, were opposed to the Outdoor Relief Regulation Order.

Reports of the meeting itself reveal that the main objections were commonly held among delegates. Two key objections emerge. First, that it robbed Guardians of their local discretion, that 'old English custom of local self-government' as one delegate put it.<sup>51</sup> This had been a common cause of opposition to the New Poor Law during the anti-Poor Law movement and had never gone away. The second main objection was article five, and complaints echoed those heard against it in

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<sup>47</sup> L.A. PUL/1/5, 25<sup>th</sup> September, 1852.

<sup>48</sup> L.A. PUH/1/3, 8<sup>th</sup> October, 1852; PUP/1/4, 30<sup>th</sup> September, 1852.

<sup>49</sup> L.A. PUK/1/5, 9<sup>th</sup> October, 1852; PUX/1/7, 28<sup>th</sup> September, 1852; PUC/1/4, 21<sup>st</sup> September, 1852; PUF/1/4, 21<sup>st</sup> September, 1852; PUT/1/16, 28<sup>th</sup> September, 1852; PUV/1/7, 27<sup>th</sup> October, 1852.

<sup>50</sup> *M.T.* 27<sup>th</sup> October, 1852.

<sup>51</sup> *M.T.* 27<sup>th</sup> October, 1852.

Preston union. The general view was clear: abolishing outdoor relief to able-bodied men in employment in a manufacturing district, where many were 'in receipt of inadequate earnings, from causes over which they had no control', simply served to punish the 'industrious poor'.<sup>52</sup> Thus, article five was variously described as 'cruel', 'unjust', 'impracticable', 'preposterous' and 'nonsensical'.<sup>53</sup> The strength of feeling brought the very legitimacy of the PLB into question. James Heywood, M.P. for North Lancashire, asserted the Order showed that the PLB were 'very ignorant of the state of affairs in Lancashire'. Others, for this very reason, called for the powers of the PLB to be reduced or repealed entirely.<sup>54</sup> Joseph Livesey, who was present at the meeting as a representative of Preston despite not being a Guardian, argued for the latter so as to rid the country of their 'intolerable power'.<sup>55</sup> To Guardians and other local figures, relief administration was fundamentally a local concern, and they used powerful, emotive language in their demands for it to be kept that way.

The meeting resolved to send a deputation of fifteen men, including Joseph Livesey, to London to meet with the President of the PLB to ask for 'a total and immediate repeal of the Order.'<sup>56</sup> Each Poor Law union also sent their own delegates. The London meeting took place at the end of November 1852 and, in the face of such pressure, the PLB made some important concessions, though they did not repeal it entirely.<sup>57</sup> In a revised version of the Order, issued on the 14<sup>th</sup> December, article five remained unchanged but came with an important clarification which significantly altered its meaning. 'What it is intended actually to prohibit', stated the PLB's instructional letter:

is the giving of relief at the same identical time as that at which the person receiving it is in actual employment, and in the receipt of wages...and that relief given in any other case, for instance, in that of a man working for wages on one day and being without work the next, or working half the week and being unemployed during the remainder...is not prohibited.<sup>58</sup>

It is quite certain that this interpretation was not what the PLB had first intended. As Rose argues, they had given way to 'Boards of Guardians who wanted to continue outdoor relief to casual labourers, factory workers on short time, and handicraft workers with insufficient demand for their

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<sup>52</sup> M.T. 27<sup>th</sup> October, 1852.

<sup>53</sup> M.T. 27<sup>th</sup> October, 1852.

<sup>54</sup> M.T. 27<sup>th</sup> October, 1852.

<sup>55</sup> M.T. 27<sup>th</sup> October, 1852.

<sup>56</sup> P.C. 30<sup>th</sup> October, 1852.

<sup>57</sup> P.C. 30<sup>th</sup> October, 1852.

<sup>58</sup> P.P. 1852-53 (1625) *Fifth Annual Report of the Poor Law Board*, pp.30-31.



products to keep them fully employed.<sup>59</sup> Moreover, in a further important amendment Guardians were allowed to deviate entirely from the Order as long as the PLB were informed of each individual case within 21 days. This modification gave local administrators, the PLB claimed, 'full unfettered discretion.'<sup>60</sup> Yet, these concessions were not enough to please opponents who continued to demand a full repeal. Delegates met again in Manchester in January 1853 to discuss petitioning Parliament, and this was followed by another meeting with the President of the PLB in February.<sup>61</sup> Preston union sent delegates to both meetings, as did most of those involved in the pre-amendment campaign, but their efforts proved fruitless.<sup>62</sup> The PLB was unwilling to make further concessions.

Very little research has been done on the long term implications of the 1852 Order in Lancashire. Only Boyson and Ramsbottom have considered its effects at local level, and both found that the regulations were frequently violated for most of the 1850s.<sup>63</sup> Only at the end of the decade, when the PLB began threatening to disallow illegal payments, did Guardians start to conform. However, it is perhaps significant that the focus of their research (which with the exception of one of Boyson's seven north-east Lancashire unions, Bolton) was exclusively on unions which had been actively involved in the opposition campaign and were, presumably, more likely to resist implementing it. Indeed, Bolton union applied the 1852 Order from the beginning, and we can assume that the other six Lancashire unions which did not actively or expressively support the opposition movement did the same.<sup>64</sup> This certainly appears true of Manchester and Barton-upon-Irwell as we have seen, and we can probably add to them the neighbouring Prestwich and Chorlton unions which also failed to send delegates to the meeting. It is interesting to consider this in light of the sharp decline in the proportion of able-bodied males relieved for 'want of work or other causes' in Lancashire after the 1852 Order was introduced, which we saw in Chapter 3.<sup>65</sup> Our analysis here would suggest that the decline must have been caused largely by the enthusiastic implementation of the Order in a handful of compliant unions. Less clear is how it was achieved: the rigorous application of article five? The deterrent effect of an outdoor labour test as required by article six? These questions must unfortunately remain unanswered.

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<sup>59</sup> Rose, 'The Allowance System', pp.61-62.

<sup>60</sup> P.P. 1852-53 (1625) *Fifth Annual Report*, pp.30-31.

<sup>61</sup> P.C. 15<sup>th</sup> January, 1853.

<sup>62</sup> It appears that 19 of the 26 unions originally involved in the opposition campaign were still involved after the amendment: P.C. 19<sup>th</sup> February, 1853.

<sup>63</sup> Boyson, *Poor Law administration*, pp.201-237; Ramsbottom, *Christopher Waddington's peers*, pp.249-250.

<sup>64</sup> Boyson, *Poor Law administration*, pp.201-202.

<sup>65</sup> Chapter 3, Table 3, page 101.

Evidence from Preston union can develop some of these points though. Preston was actively involved in the opposition campaign, and it appears that articles five and six also had little practical effect on relief administration in our period. However, this was not necessarily because they were ignored or evaded, but probably because in their amended form the regulations could be applied - in normal times - without drastic changes to existing policy. If we begin by looking at article five, the PLBs reinterpretation of its meaning effectively allowed outdoor relief to all men except those consistently in employment, but even men in consistent employment could be given outdoor relief as long as the PLB was notified of each case. Guardians unwilling to apply article five could therefore easily work around it, and this was at times the case in Preston union. Between January 1853 and the end of 1860 the Preston Guardians informed the PLB of paupers relieved in contravention of article five on no fewer than 132 occasions.<sup>66</sup> Each case involved men with large families, and the total number of people involved (i.e. with dependents included) was 423. From this perspective one begins to understand why Guardians considered it so important to retain their right to provide outdoor relief to able-bodied males with discretion. Indeed, analysis of the occupational status of the cohort is instructive, and brings us back to the local debate over the Outdoor Relief Regulation Order in Preston union. The single largest group among these families, some forty-eight per cent, were hand loom weavers. They included men like James Barton, a 35 year old widower with four children who was in receipt of poor relief continuously between May 1857 and October 1861.<sup>67</sup> Two others, widowed hand loom weaver Thomas Hodgson and married hand loom weaver John Cottam, with five and six children respectively, were relieved every week for the best part of two years.<sup>68</sup> These were just the sort of men that most Guardians considered it more humane and economical to relieve with small outdoor doles, a policy which so frustrated Thomas Batty Addison.

It is impossible to determine with any precision the extent to which article six (the outdoor test) was complied with in Preston union. The district auditor did not flag up flagrant violations as he did in places like Blackburn, Burnley and the Fylde suggesting it was broadly followed, and Preston union, of course, was in a different position to many unions having used outdoor labour as a test since 1848.<sup>69</sup> However, it is also clear that the 1852 Order did not cause a huge increase in the number of pauper field labourers, as the Guardians continued to struggle to find men to test. Notably, in 1853 and 1856 the Board considered giving up the 18 acre field at Preston workhouse when the lease ran out, there being 'more land than hands to cultivate it', although on both

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<sup>66</sup> L.A. PUT/1/16-25; The National Archives (T.N.A.) MH12/6114-6117.

<sup>67</sup> T.N.A. MH12/6114-6117; L.A. PUT/1/21-25.

<sup>68</sup> T.N.A. MH12/6114-6117; L.A. PUT/1/21-25.

<sup>69</sup> Boyson, *Poor Law administration*, pp.201-237; Ramsbottom, *Christopher Waddington's peers*, pp.249-250.

occasions the lease was extended.<sup>70</sup> But all this was only during 'normal' times. The nature of the industrial economy meant the general paucity of able-bodied male paupers could quickly be replaced with a deluge when depression struck, and under article six the Guardians would have to find work for all of them. The implications of this are considered in the next section within a broader assessment of pauperism and industrial depression.

### **5 (iii) Unemployment and the 1852 Order: a case study of the 1857-58 trade downturn in Preston union**

The frequency and effect of economic depression was examined in chapters two and three, but a brief recap would be useful here. Depression hit the cotton districts of Lancashire three times during our period, in 1841-43, 1847-49 and 1857-1858, and each occasion pauperism among families headed by able-bodied males rose considerably. In Preston union on 1<sup>st</sup> July 1848 able-bodied males in receipt of outdoor relief numbered 1,522, and in Lancashire 12,064. With their wives and children included the figure was 7,799 in Preston, accounting for some 72 per cent of outdoor paupers in the union. Almost nine in ten able-bodied male paupers were married. Thus, during periods of economic depression, when the cotton mills were only operating 'short time' (fewer than six days a week or only daylight hours) or closed altogether, poor relief was predominantly directed towards the many families whose domestic economies were thrown into turmoil as a result. This section considers how the Preston Board of Guardians responded to industrial distress and the consequent surge in able-bodied male applications with a detailed analysis of the 1857-58 downturn. It will be shown, in view of our assessment of the 1852 Outdoor Relief Regulation Order, that there were serious problems associated with applying articles five and six in times of trade depression. On a broader front, some of Boyer's arguments regarding the economic motivations behind the provision of outdoor relief to able-bodied men during depressions will be challenged.<sup>71</sup>

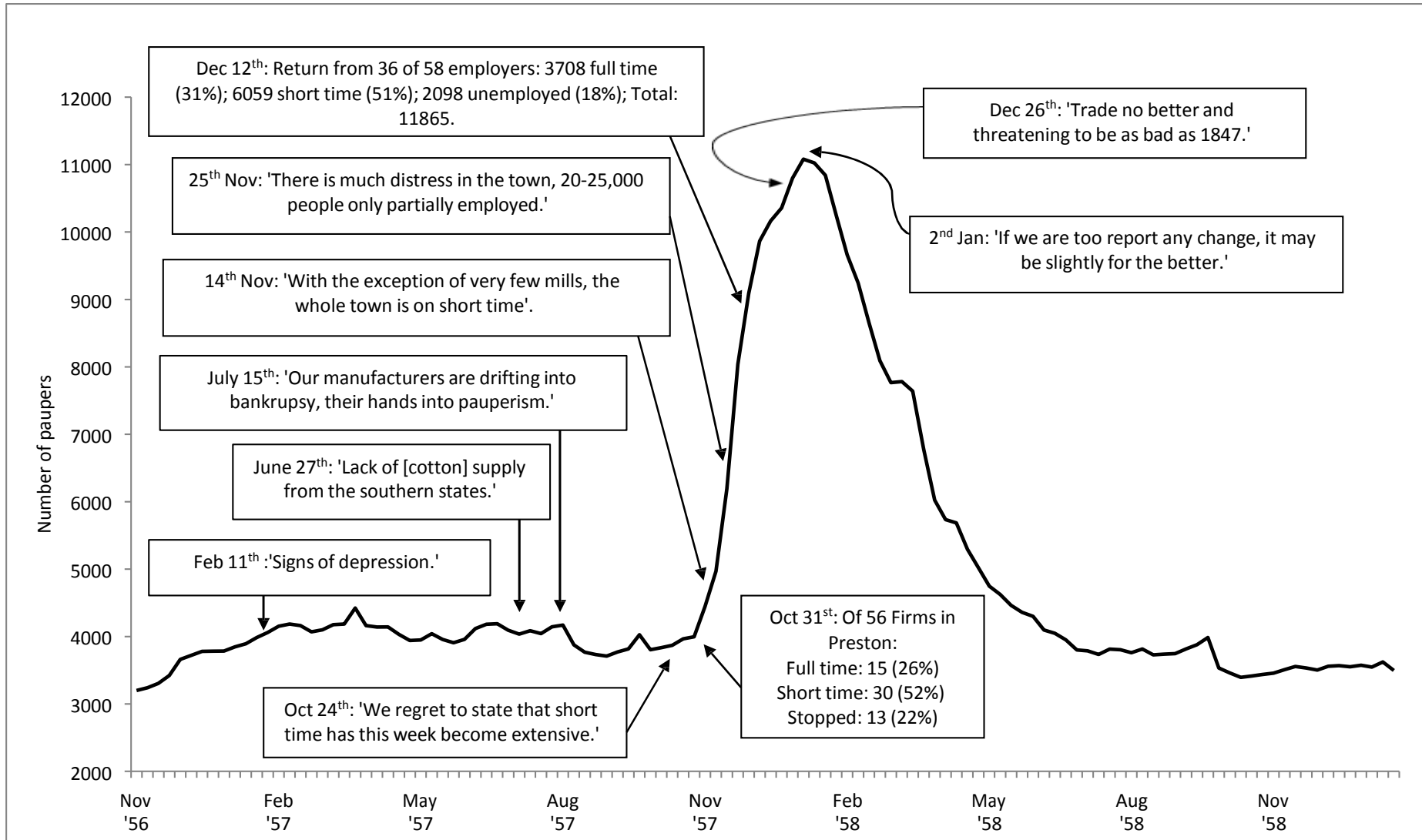
Trade depressions did not occur out of the blue.<sup>72</sup> While depression in 1857-58 lasted, at its worst, around six months, it had lingered ominously over the cotton districts of Lancashire for much longer. We can gain some impression of how depression developed, and how it impacted upon the Poor Law, by plotting excerpts from a series of reports titled 'State of Trade', which featured weekly

<sup>70</sup> L.A. PUT/1/17: 26<sup>th</sup> July, 1853; PUT/1/21: 11<sup>th</sup> November, 1856.

<sup>71</sup> Specifically, Boyer, *An economic history*, pp.233-264.

<sup>72</sup> For an examination of the causes and life-cycle of economic depression in the mid-nineteenth century see R. C. O. Matthews, *A study in trade-cycle history* (1954).

**Figure 2: The state of trade and extent of pauperism in Preston union, November 1856 - November 1858**



Sources: *Preston Guardian (P.G.)* 11<sup>th</sup> February, 1857 - 2<sup>nd</sup> January, 1858. Pauper numbers in L.A. PUT/1/21-23.

in the *Preston Guardian* newspaper for the duration of the crisis, alongside pauperism figures obtained from the Guardians minute books (Figure 2). We find that the first indication of trouble was noted around a year before pauperism peaked, in February 1857, when the *Guardian* reported 'signs of depression.' Trade remained dull thereafter and, as the supply of cotton lessened over the course of the year, manufacturers began running short time hours or closing altogether. By the beginning of November just over half (52 per cent) of the 56 firms in Preston were operating short time and a further 22 per cent had stopped entirely. It is at this point that pauperism begins its inexorable rise. At its peak, some three months later, 69 per cent of factory operatives (men, women and, presumably, children) in Preston were without full time employment based on a return from 36 firms. It is interesting to view this evidence against Boot's study of economic depression and pauperism in Manchester between 1845 and 1850, where he found a roughly six week lag between increases in unemployment and short time and increases in pauperism.<sup>73</sup> We do not have the same detailed dataset here to make such observations, but it appears clear nonetheless that many people held out for weeks and weeks without full employment before turning to the Poor Law. The very fact that pauperism increased consistently for three months before peaking, throughout a period in which full employment was scarce, is almost certainly indicative of this. The *Preston Chronicle* provided an example of how people managed to delay applying for relief under these circumstances in a December 1857 editorial. 'A man is perhaps working at Mr. A's mill' it ran,

which has been closed for a few weeks; but his wife having work at Mr. B's, and two of his children at Mr. C's, he manages by a little stint to get on. Mr. B's mill goes to half time, and at Mr. C's works he takes the opportunity of putting in a new boiler, and stops the mill altogether a few weeks. In this position the head of the family finds himself compelled to seek parochial aid.<sup>74</sup>

As a married man with two children to support, the hypothetical head of this nuclear family unit was just the sort of person who, along with his family, would dominate the outdoor relief lists when depression struck as we saw in Chapter 3. But they did not fall upon the rates immediately; they were subsumed into pauperism slowly as their networks of support ran dry.<sup>75</sup>

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<sup>73</sup> Boot, 'Unemployment and poor law relief', pp.217-228.

<sup>74</sup> P.C. 5<sup>th</sup> December, 1857.

<sup>75</sup> Contemporaries and historians have variously argued that the apparent reluctance of many of the working-class to apply for relief during depressions stemmed from their independent spirit and/or the stigmatising effects of applying. It is very difficult to determine which was more pervasive, and must have largely depended on individual circumstances. For contemporary perspectives see E. Waugh *Among the Preston operatives* (1962); P.P. 1842 (158) *Population of Stockport. Copy of evidence taken, and report made, by the Assistant Poor Law Commissioners sent to enquire into the state of the population of Stockport*, p.6. For historians see: Anderson, *Family structure*, p.137-138; Boot, 'Unemployment and Poor Law relief', p.225.

Boyer has argued that the huge increase of able-bodied pauperism in times of depression in northern industrial towns was chiefly the result of employers (factory owners) dismissing employees or placing them on short-time hours and using 'the Poor Law as an unemployment insurance system'.<sup>76</sup> This insurance system acted, claims Boyer, as part of an 'implicit contract' between employer and employee which guaranteed them a certain 'amount of employment, hours per employed worker, wages while employed, and *relief benefits while unemployed...*'<sup>77</sup> In making this point it is Boyer's intention to show that employers manipulated Poor Law administration in order to shift part of the cost of maintaining their labour force onto non-labour hiring ratepayers by giving indiscriminate outdoor relief to unemployed and short-time operatives. This would, in turn, keep workers in the community as a ready supply of labour (by stopping people moving in search of work elsewhere) when trade improved at a minimal cost to the employers. It is worth considering Boyer's argument because these are big claims and have not yet received critical attention for our period.

The claim that manufacturers explicitly manipulated the Poor Law for their own personal gain by guaranteeing an unemployment benefit to employees is perfectly reasonable in theory, and Boyer's complex econometric calculations provide mathematical support for such an interpretation, but there is little evidence for it in practice at ground level in Preston union. The claim is immediately problematic as not a single member of the 1857-58 Board of Guardians, in either the town or the country districts, was of the cotton manufacturing interest.<sup>78</sup> The Board, as usual, comprised not of factory owners but shopkeepers, provisions merchants, wholesalers, the odd professional and, most of all, farmers. Moreover, while the chief cotton manufacturers (most being magistrates) could attend the Board of Guardians as *ex-officio* members they very seldom did, most never at all.<sup>79</sup> Of course, the absence of a cotton manufacturing interest at meetings does not necessarily preclude them from having an influence on Poor Law administration. They could, as Boyer suggests, exert pressure from behind the scenes. However, it is unlikely that the non-labour hiring elected members of the Board of Guardians would have accepted, and been implicitly involved in, a scheme

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<sup>76</sup> Boyer, *An economic history*, p.234.

<sup>77</sup> Boyer, *An economic history*, p.239. Italics not in original. Implicit contract theory in relation to the labour market was first developed in C. Azariadis, 'Implicit contracts and underemployment equilibria', *Journal of Political Economy*, 83 (1975), 1183-1202.

<sup>78</sup> L. A. PUT/1/21.

<sup>79</sup> The 24 *ex-officio* members of the 1857-58 Preston Board of Guardians attended collectively 117 times, fewer than five meetings each. Only five *ex-officio* Guardians attended more than ten meetings, none of them cotton employers.

designed in part to ease the rate burden of manufacturers as Boyer suggests, particularly when the poor rate was being stretched to and beyond its limits.<sup>80</sup>

There are other problems with Boyer's argument as evidence presented in Figure 2 and by Boot's study of Manchester indicates. If the Poor Law was acting, as Boyer asserts, as an unemployment insurance system in times of economic crisis, then why such a long gap between unemployment and pauperism? Why, indeed, did the hypothetical ex-employee of 'Mr A's' mill, having as he did a family to support, not get help from the Poor Law sooner? Boot argues that the average six week gap between unemployment and pauperism in Manchester reflected 'the depth of communal resources [the poor] could resort to in times of distress, their hostility to the poor law, and the depth of poverty reached before they obtained relief from the poor law authorities.'<sup>81</sup> Michael Anderson has made a similar claim in relation to Lancashire more generally.<sup>82</sup> This hardly sits comfortably alongside the notion that the Poor Law was manipulated by cotton manufacturers in such a way as to entitle the unemployed and short time operatives to outdoor relief, less still that it formed part of an 'implicit contract' between employer and employee.<sup>83</sup> More plausibly, Guardians, when faced with an unemployed operative, judged the case on its individual merit. When a case was approved they gave outdoor relief not because of an 'implicit contract', but because nuclear families (most of the cases they approved were nuclear families) were not as a rule sent to the workhouse. It may be true that the issue of preventing migration did enter the equation – after all, there were economic and humane reasons for it to do so - and the provision of outdoor relief no doubt did stop some people from moving away, but to argue that manufacturers manipulated the Poor Law in the way Boyer suggests appears to lack credibility.<sup>84</sup> The response was pragmatic, and largely out of the hands of the mill owners.

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<sup>80</sup> The financial base of a Poor Law union was far from exhaustive. In Preston union the money held by the union treasurer often went into the red during periods of deep industrial distress. In 1847 the union spent the best part of the year indebted to the treasurer – by over £6000 at one point - and on three occasions in 1858 the union came within £100 of going into the red. At these times the Guardians had to be very careful with the poor rate, and would hardly have been willing to pursue a policy of shifting the burden of payment from the manufacturers onto the general non-labour hiring ratepayers. L.A. PUT/1/12-13; PUT/1/22.

<sup>81</sup> Boot, 'Unemployment and poor relief', p.225.

<sup>82</sup> Anderson, *Family structure*, pp.137-138.

<sup>83</sup> Dutton and King discredit entirely the notion that an implicit contract existed between cotton master and employee in Preston during our period. They argue that masters were too concerned with the maximisation of short term profits, as 'competition was too fierce, the market too volatile, to permit a longer view': H. I. Dutton and J. E. King, 'The limits of paternalism: the cotton tyrants of north Lancashire, 1836-54', *Social History*, 7 (1982), pp.59-74. Kiesling has also disputed the existence of an implicit contract which guaranteed unemployed operatives Poor Law assistance during the Lancashire Cotton Famine: L. L. Kiesling, 'Institutional choice matters: the poor law and implicit labour contracts in Victorian Lancashire', *Explorations in Economic History*, 31 (1996), pp.65-85.

<sup>84</sup> It could well be argued that the elected Guardians of Preston union, many having an interest to sell their goods, equally had an economic motivation to keep people in the local community.

It was their desire to operate pragmatically that frustrated the Guardians when they first discussed the depression on 3<sup>rd</sup> November 1857, just as 'large bod[ies]' of able-bodied males began applying for relief.<sup>85</sup> This presented them with two immediate problems. First, some of the applicants were working short-time hours but remained in employment, meaning the Guardians could not legally relieve them under article five of the Outdoor Relief Regulation Order.<sup>86</sup> Second, and more problematically, under article six they could not give outdoor relief to any able-bodied males at all unless they undertook a task of labour. During the two previous periods of depression (1841-43 and 1847-49) most able-bodied males had not been tested, as the Guardians lacked the facilities to provide work to any but a fraction of them on the land at the workhouse. From a legalistic point of view this had not been a problem, as the Guardians were then administering relief free from central regulations. In 1857, however, they faced the possibility of having all payments made in contravention of article six surcharged by the auditor. The Guardians therefore decided to ask the PLB to temporarily suspend articles five and six, a perfectly reasonable request given that the PLB had agreed to do just that during periods of high unemployment following opposition to their Order in 1852.<sup>87</sup> However, the PLB refused. Instead, they told the Guardians that they would have to inform them of each case relieved contrary to the regulations, and asked them to 'consider providing increased and suitable accommodation to meet such an emergency, by the erection of a new workhouse.'<sup>88</sup> The latter suggestion met with 'great laughter', so far off the radar was a union workhouse at this time, but the former caused serious complaint. The sheer number of paupers falling foul of articles five and six, it was stated, meant 'It would take a quarter of a person's time at the least' each week to send them all to the PLB.<sup>89</sup> Another said it would take 'two or three extra bookkeepers.' The episode exposed old wounds. This 'interference', stated Preston Guardian Thomas Dixon, was an 'insult to Englishmen...it seemed that [the Guardians] had not hairs grey enough or wise enough to manage the affairs of the union, without interference from London - (Hear, hear.)'<sup>90</sup>

While Dixon's statement may have been imbued with that popular distaste for central interference, the Guardian's grievances were legitimate and understandable. With the number of able-bodied males requiring relief numbering many hundreds and rising weekly, it is unsurprising that they were unwilling to send details of each case to the PLB every week. It is of course possible that, in making

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<sup>85</sup> P.C. 14<sup>th</sup> November, 1857.

<sup>86</sup> P.C. 5<sup>th</sup> December, 1857.

<sup>87</sup> P.P. 1852-53 (1625) *Fifth Annual Report of the Poor Law Board*, pp.28-30.

<sup>88</sup> P.C. 21<sup>st</sup> November, 1857.

<sup>89</sup> P.C. 5<sup>th</sup> December, 1857.

<sup>90</sup> P.C. 5<sup>th</sup> December, 1857.



their request, the PLB knew full well that it would be considered impractical, and if so the Guardians' next move would have pleased them. Rather than refuse to comply, a risky option given the powers of the auditor to surcharge, they made an arrangement with the Preston Corporation in December to employ the able-bodied male applicants in building a road adjacent to the Preston workhouse and levelling some 'hilly land' on an expansive tract of wasteland named the 'Moor'.<sup>91</sup> The Moor land, upon which the vast majority of pauper labourers would be set to work, was just behind the existing 32 acre plot of union test land at the Preston workhouse. This was not entirely without precedent in Preston, as the Guardians had briefly set some unemployed paupers to work on the Moor in 1842, and similar schemes were put in place during periods of distress in other northern unions as studies have shown.<sup>92</sup> Yet, the sheer scale of the operation arranged in Preston at the end of 1857 was quite different to anything that preceded it in the union, mirroring in both form and function the large public works schemes introduced in response to the Lancashire Cotton Famine of 1861-65.<sup>93</sup>

As during the 'Famine', huge numbers of paupers were set to work on the Moor in 1857-58. The Guardians appear to have employed a policy of offering the labour test to just about every healthy able-bodied male applicant in accordance with articles five and six of the 1852 Order, an approach quite different to previous depressions when only unemployed men had been set to work, and then at the Guardians' own discretion. Indeed, Guardian Thomas Dixon's claim that 'the most difficult cases' (i.e. unfair) were those in which a man 'works one-half of the time in the mill, and then he is sent the other half upon the land' certainly points to a rigorous application of the Order.<sup>94</sup> Some men of course, as was always the case, were considered worthy only of the workhouse, and there was a notable rise in the population of the (able-bodied male) Ribchester workhouse over the course of the distress (Figure 3). In September 1857 there were around 140 males at Ribchester,

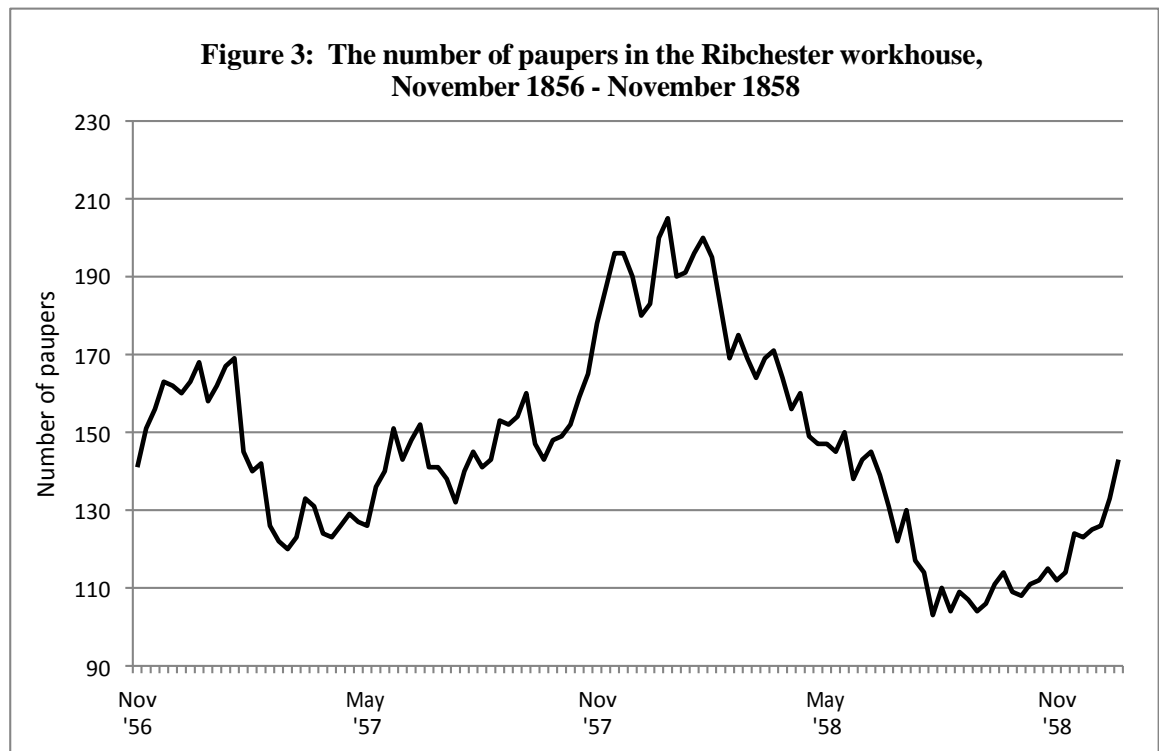
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<sup>91</sup> L.A. PUT/1/22, 18<sup>th</sup> December, 1857; P.C. 19<sup>th</sup> December, 1857. The 'Moor' referred to here is the expanse of land in Preston now known as 'Moor Park'. The park was created by pauper labourers during the Cotton Famine.

<sup>92</sup> L.A. PUT/1/8: 20<sup>th</sup> December, 1842; Boyson, 'Poor Law administration', pp.201-237; Ashforth, *The Poor Law in Bradford*, pp.157-192.

<sup>93</sup> P.P. 1863 (293) *Cotton districts. Copy of a report on public works required in the cotton districts, and the employment of operatives thereon; and also a report from H.B. Farnall, Esq., on the same subject*; P.P. 1863 (361) *Cotton manufacturing districts. Copies of two reports...on the public works required in the cotton manufacturing districts, and the employment of operatives thereon*; P.P. 1864 (486) *Public works (manufacturing districts) Act, 1863, Copy of a report...on the subject of public works*; P.P. 1865 (5) P.P. *Copy of a report...on the subject of public works*; See also: D. Hunt, *A history of Preston* (2009), p.237-239; 246-247; W. O. Henderson (1934) *The Lancashire Cotton Famine, 1861-65*, pp.52-67; Waugh, *Among the Preston operatives*.

<sup>94</sup> P.C. December 5<sup>th</sup>, 1857.



**Source:** L.A. PUT/1/20-23.

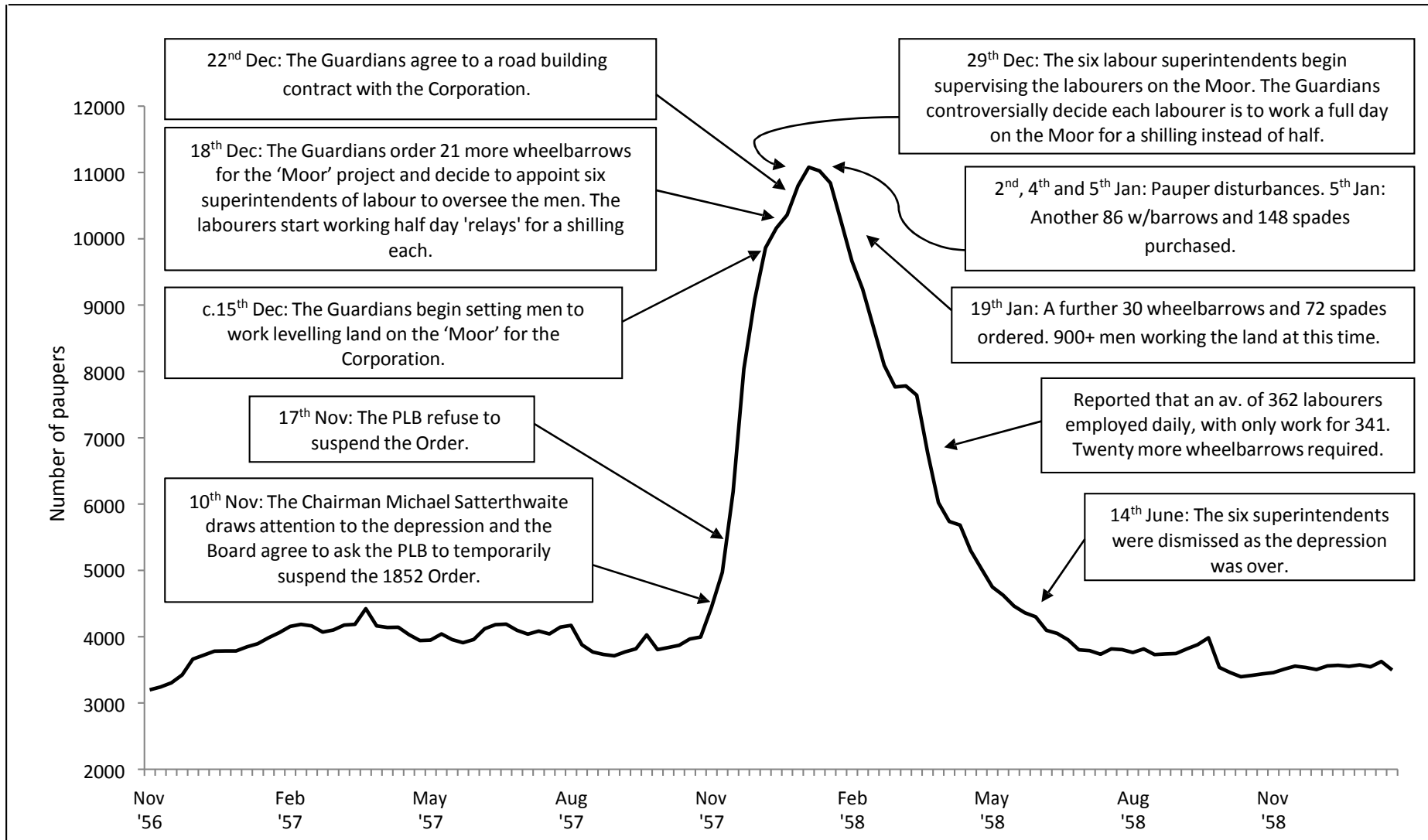
but this had risen to around 200 by the beginning of January when aggregate outdoor pauperism was at its highest.<sup>95</sup> This increase of 60, however, is of little significance when around 1000 men were working on the Moor each day during the same period. Joseph Livesey's *Preston Guardian* newspaper claimed in December 1857 that the *Preston Guardians* 'frequently evaded' the 1852 Order, and while this may have been true the sheer number of paupers labouring on the Moor indicates that evasion must have occurred as the exception rather than the rule.<sup>96</sup> Such numbers, indeed, necessitated the employment of 'Labour Superintendents' to oversee them, a move which also mirrored the 'Famine'. Six were hired on temporary contracts at 16 shillings per week, and a 'Head Labour Superintendent' was appointed to manage the whole project for 35 shillings per week.<sup>97</sup> This marked the first time additional officers had been employed for this purpose in Preston union.

<sup>95</sup> It should be noted that not all men in the Ribchester workhouse were 'able-bodied' as we saw in Chapter 4. Many had various ailments which meant they could not work, and the institution was also doubling as the male mental ward at this time. Nonetheless, the increased number of inmates over the depression certainly reflected some able-bodied men being offered 'the house.'

<sup>96</sup> *P.G.* 12<sup>th</sup> December, 1857.

<sup>97</sup> PUT/1/22, 22<sup>nd</sup> December, 1857.

**Figure 4: The employment of paupers on the Moor during the economic depression of 1857-1858**



Source: L.A.PUT/1/21-23. The number of paupers is an aggregate figure, not just able-bodied males.

The process of implementing an outdoor labour test on this scale was by no means smooth. A timeline of events is provided in Figure 4 which, using the same baseline as Figure 2, acts as a framework for the following discussion. The cause of the Guardian's problems was simple: having never before set so many men to work, they did not possess nearly enough tools (chiefly spades and wheelbarrows) to provide employment for all of them when the test was introduced. Moreover, presumably because they were cautious to avoid unnecessary expenditure during a period of depression, and because they did not know how long it would last, they were reluctant to spend vast sums on the necessary implements. Spades and wheelbarrows were ordered but only intermittently and, ultimately, in insufficient numbers.<sup>98</sup> By February 1858, as Figure 4 demonstrates, 148 spades and 137 wheelbarrows had been procured, but still the Guardians could only provide work to 341 men, around a third of the number that had been sent to the Moor each day over December and January. The Guardians initially mitigated this problem by employing a 'relay' system, whereby half the pauper labourers worked in the morning and the other half in the afternoon.<sup>99</sup> Their daily pay was to remain at one shilling, the amount previously given for a full day's labour.<sup>100</sup> However, as a means of providing work this only partially solved the problem. With the number of pauper labourers reaching four figures, there were still many more men than tools. It also appears that the relay policy, when coupled with equipment shortage and, before December 29<sup>th</sup>, the absence of adequate supervision (Figure 4), actually made the Moor labour test an attractive proposition to at least some people. This was certainly the opinion of a critical local press. The *Chronicle* was particularly condemnatory, claiming the labour test operated 'as an actual premium to idleness. So easy a means of obtaining money attracted to the Moor scores of idlers, and the "labour list" ...became a frightful one, both from the number of its names and its cost.'<sup>101</sup>

The Preston Guardians also appear to have quickly recognised problems with the relay system, for they had decided to reverse the policy before the end of December.<sup>102</sup> However, the decision proved a controversial one and would cause a series of very serious disturbances - a 'Paupers' Rebellion' as the local press termed it - in Preston at the start of 1858.<sup>103</sup> The disturbances received extensive attention in the Preston newspapers, and while their reports were jaundiced by a view

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<sup>98</sup> L.A. PUT/1/22: 15<sup>th</sup> December; 5<sup>th</sup> January; 2<sup>nd</sup> February.

<sup>99</sup> PUT/1/22: 18<sup>th</sup> December, 1857.

<sup>100</sup> One shilling per day was the standard rate paid by the Preston Guardians throughout this period to men working on the outdoor test. It was a miserable sum, providing a man working 6 days a week with an income similar to that of the hand loom weavers examined in Chapter 3, but additional relief was provided in food and money to men with families.

<sup>101</sup> P.C. 9<sup>th</sup> January, 1858.

<sup>102</sup> P.C. December 29<sup>th</sup>, 1857.

<sup>103</sup> P.C. 9<sup>th</sup> January, 1858.

that most of those involved were 'idlers' and 'rascals', they offer the only detailed insight into this unique moment in the history of the Preston Poor Law union.<sup>104</sup> Trouble began when the Guardian's decided, on Friday 1<sup>st</sup> January 1858, to enforce the resolution that the Moor labourers had to work a full day for their shilling.<sup>105</sup> This met with fierce opposition, and the ruling was temporarily withdrawn to avoid tensions escalating into violence. But the following day, Saturday 2<sup>nd</sup> January, the Guardians tried again, this time determined not to back down. The Relieving Officers were ordered to pay just 6d. (half a shilling) to the men as they had only worked half a day, news of which resulted in 'scenes of violence and disorder...almost impossible to describe.' At the union offices in Saul Street (Figure 5) where the pauper labourers were paid, a huge body of men, upwards of 1000 according to the *Guardian* and the *Chronicle*, refused the sum offered and 'loudly demanded their full pay.' The threat presented by the crowd was such that the Mayor and other authority figures including the superintendent of police and twenty officers were summoned to the union offices. Attempts to quell the men failed. By eight o'clock in the evening, more than two hours after the incident began, the authorities, having considered reading the Riot Act, decided to withdraw the resolution and the shilling was paid. Threats from the crowd to attack the provision shops if the shilling was refused reputedly influenced this decision.

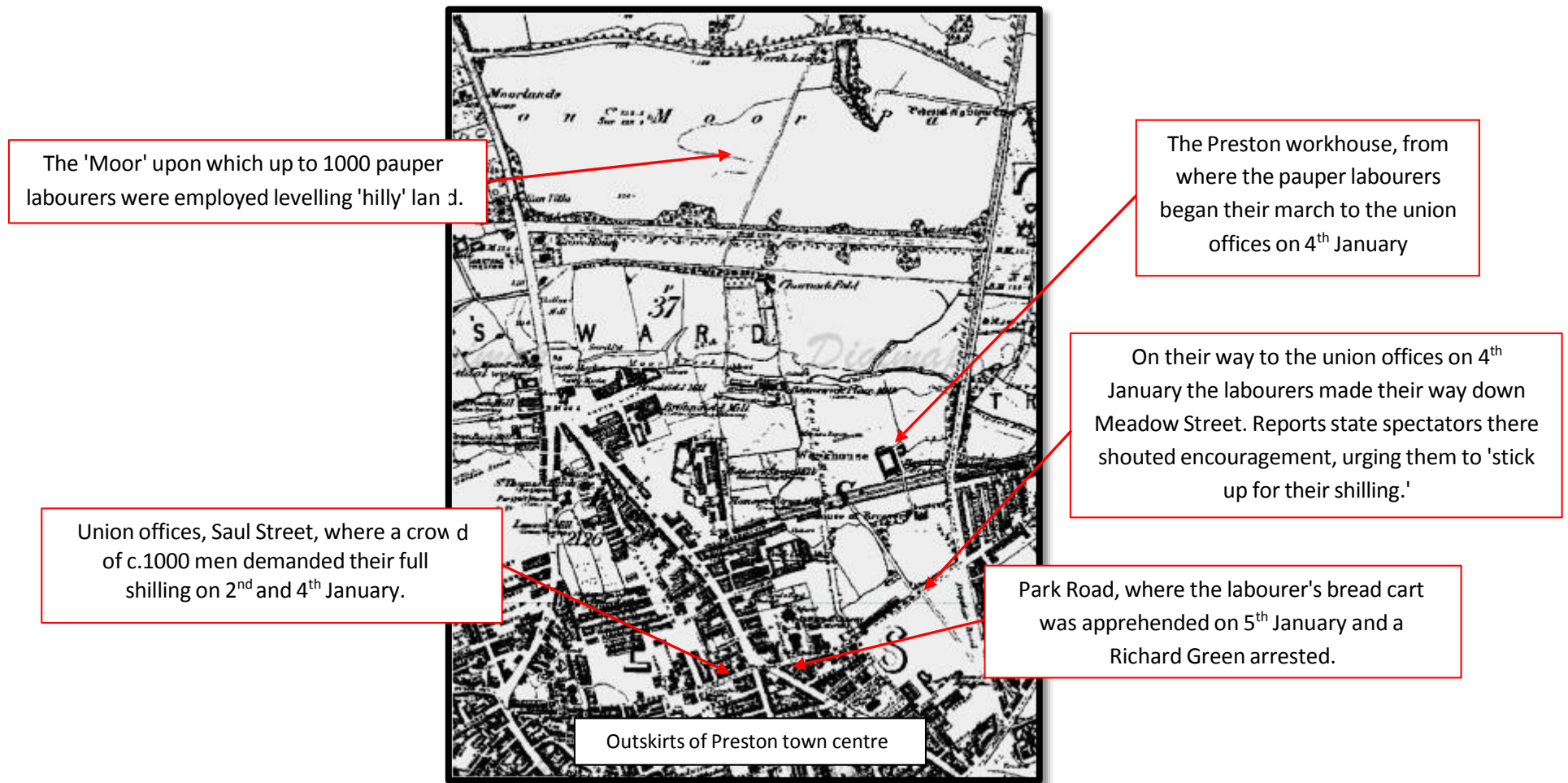
With Sunday a day of rest, the authorities issued a proclamation warning that a repeat of the events of the previous day would meet with 'severe punishment'. It was not heeded, and on Monday 4<sup>th</sup> January the pauper labourers again refused to work a full day. Anticipating more trouble, the authorities had met on Monday afternoon and arranged for the labourers to be paid in two different places, half at the Saul Street offices and half at the Preston workhouse, in order to reduce the threat of the crowd (Figure 5). Police officers were also sworn in, and thirty were positioned at each pay station. However, at the end of the day the labourers being paid at the Preston workhouse decided *en masse* to join their colleagues at the Saul Street offices to demand a shilling, and after making their way there they forced open guarded gates and 'entered the yard cheering and making the most discordant noises.' Thereupon began a two or three hour standoff much like that of Saturday 2<sup>nd</sup>, but this time the authorities came out on top. The Guardians steadfastly refused to pay more than 6d. and, with a strong police presence, the men slowly and reluctantly began to file out of the yard. According to the *Preston Chronicle*, only eighteen of around 800

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<sup>104</sup> P.C. 9<sup>th</sup> January, 1858. The following description of the 'Rebellion' is taken from a report in the *Preston Chronicle* of the 9<sup>th</sup> January 1858. Reports in the *Preston Guardian* and *Pilot* were almost identical.

<sup>105</sup> P.C. 9<sup>th</sup> January, 1858.

Figure 5: Events of the 'Paupers' Rebellion' of 2<sup>nd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> January, Preston, 1858



Sources: Map from: [www.digimap.edine.ac.uk/ancientroam/historic](http://www.digimap.edine.ac.uk/ancientroam/historic). Information on the events from *P.C.* 9<sup>th</sup> January, 1858.

men accepted the 6d relief. The following morning, Tuesday 5<sup>th</sup>, the 'great majority' of paupers refused to work on the Moor at all, most instead congregating around the Saul Street offices as the Guardians were having their weekly meeting at eleven o'clock. The newspaper reports indicate that the men were hungry and weary by this time, most having not received any poor relief for two days (Sunday and Monday). The crowd obtained a cart - where from is not stated - as a means of collecting alms, and it seems that quantities of bread and money were donated by provision shops and passersby and distributed among the people. This charitable pursuit ended abruptly, however, when the cart was seized by the police, who arrested one Richard Green on the charge of 'riotous conduct, in going through the town with a cart begging bread and money, by which a large crowd was assembled' (Figure 5). This episode marked the end of the 'Paupers' Rebellion'. The mass of labourers, presumably lacking the strength to continue their resistance, went back to work on Tuesday afternoon, and at the end of the working day they accepted 6d. as well as the 6d. they had rejected the day before.

The labourers' return to the Moor coincided with the high point of the 1857-58 depression, or at least the high point of pauperism in Preston union. On 2nd January the *Preston Guardian* reported 'slightly' improved trade (Figure 2) and thereafter the aggregate number of paupers begins its long descent as the mills slowly began reopening and working longer hours. The 'Rebellion' of 2<sup>nd</sup> – 5<sup>th</sup> January would not be repeated during the remainder of the depression. It was an isolated episode and an anomaly in the broader history of the Preston union during our period. But it was also much more. The event is a conspicuous example of 'pauper protest' which Green has recently identified as common in his study of workhouses in London.<sup>106</sup> Green found that paupers frequently defied authority through acts such as window breaking or letter writing, and he argued that such protests were tied into ideas regarding 'working-class respectability and self-esteem, coupled with notions

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<sup>106</sup> D. Green, 'Pauper protests: power and resistance in early nineteenth-century London workhouse', *Social History*, 31, 2 (2006), pp.137-159; D. Green, *Pauper Capital: London and the Poor Law, 1790-1870* (2013), pp.157-188. Thompson makes reference to a pauper riot by outdoor stone breakers in Leicester, very similar to the disturbances in Preston union, during the depression of 1837 after the Guardians had tried to lower the amount of relief paid per ton of broken stone: K. M. Thompson, *The Leicester Poor Law union, 1836-1871* (1988), p.77-78. These protests, identified by Green in London, and in the actions of the Preston and Leicester pauper labourers, links to a wider and very current canon of literature which using pauper letters has emphasised the importance of negotiation between pauper and local official in the administration of relief. It is becoming increasingly evident that paupers knew their rights and were, at times, prepared to exert those rights in strong terms. See: S. King, 'Negotiating the law of poor relief in England, 1800-1840', *History*, 96 (2011), pp.410-435; S. King, 'The English protoindustrial family: old and new perspectives', *The history of the family*, 8 (2003), pp.21-43; 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* (2006), pp.91-112. S. Williams, *Poverty, gender and the life-cycle under the English Poor Law, 1760-1834* (2011), p.87.

of social justice.<sup>107</sup> Paupers were by no means deferential and voiceless: they frequently 'challenge[d] the legitimacy and authority of the poor law itself.'<sup>108</sup> We see the same in the Preston Moor labourers. These men, chiefly unemployed and short-time cotton factory operatives, collectively refused to accept what they perceived to be inadequate poor relief over the course of three days because they had a legitimate grievance with the system of administration being employed by the Guardians. There is no evidence to suggest that the men resented working on the Moor *per se*, although some might have done, but they certainly resented being forced to work for the whole day when there was not enough for them to do. Working for relief was one thing, standing in a field doing nothing all day quite another. They consequently challenged the authority of the Guardians, demanding to work half days for their shilling as they had previously been allowed to. Only desperation brought the mass of men back to the Moor on the Guardian's terms.

## **Conclusion**

In 1980 Karel Williams' influential *From pauperism to poverty* essentially ended the debate on relief to healthy able-bodied males after 1834. Contrary to the then prevailing continuation theory, William's convincingly argued through analysis of the PLB's annual statistical reports that healthy able-bodied men had in fact been all but cleared from the outdoor relief lists by 1850. However, his statistical survey failed to take into account regional variation, and this marks a notable oversight as in the northern manufacturing districts the provision of outdoor relief to able-bodied men for employment related reasons remained common well after 1850. During the mid-1840s, one assumes largely as a result of the absence of the Prohibitory Order, as much as 40 per cent of able-bodied males in receipt of outdoor relief in England and Wales because their earnings were insufficient were living in Lancashire, and a further 20 per cent were living in neighbouring West Riding of Yorkshire. This figure remained over 25 per cent in Lancashire well into the 1850s. Moreover, statistics aside, the sheer anger provoked in Lancashire by the introduction of the Outdoor Relief Regulation Order in 1852 demonstrates that the question of relief to able-bodied men was far from a dead letter by mid-century. It remained an issue capable of arousing considerable discord among Boards of Guardians as it had in 1837. For many decades welfare officials in Lancashire had provided relief to men with families in certain sectors of the economy when they were unemployed or in receipt of inadequate wages, and they were loath to accept that their right to do so should be curtailed by a central authority whose legitimacy to make such decisions continued to be questioned and challenged by Boards of Guardians.

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<sup>107</sup> Green, 'Pauper protests', p.139.

<sup>108</sup> Green, 'Pauper protests', p.159.



The outcry against the 1852 Order in Lancashire, indeed, exposed the enduring hostility to central interference and to the perception that the New Poor Law and its principles were incompatible in a manufacturing region. Interestingly, though, opinion was by no means unanimous, instead falling on lines almost identical to the organised anti-Poor Law years of c.1837-1840. In parts of south east Lancashire, and in Lancaster union, where the New Poor Law had been largely welcomed upon its introduction a decade or so earlier, the Outdoor Relief Regulation Order was enthusiastically received. Most Lancashire unions, however, reflecting the strength of organised anti-Poor Law agitation during the late 1830s, immediately engaged in active opposition. The passage of time, then, did not mitigate antipathy to this controversial aspect of the New Poor Law. Significantly, one of the practical results of this enduring antipathy, the preservation of outdoor relief to able-bodied men, offers some support to the continuation theorists who argue that very little changed during the years following the introduction of the Poor Law Amendment Act in Lancashire. Yet, we must not emphasise this point too forcefully. The absence of universal disapproval of the Order in Lancashire points very clearly to the existence of different approaches to the relief of poverty which, like variation in the use of workhouses, adds a layer of complexity to the regional patterns of pauperism discussed in Chapter 2. While most unions had emphatically not embraced the principles underpinning the New Poor Law by the early 1850s, continuing instead to administer relief according to established practices which had developed under the Old Poor Law, a small but not insignificant (in terms of population) number of unions appear to have been willing to conform to central regulations.

The Preston Board of Guardians fell alongside those unions which actively opposed both the New Poor Law in 1837-41 and the Outdoor Relief Regulation Order in 1852-53. In the case of the latter, they did so for the same reasons as their Lancashire counterparts. The regulations prohibiting outdoor relief to able-bodied men unless they undertook a task of labour, which provoked particular antipathy across Lancashire, were opposed by the Preston Guardians not because they disagreed with testing pauperism in principle, but because of the stringency with which the PLB expected them to be applied. The Preston Guardians had under the chairmanship of Thomas Birchall, influenced by Joseph Livesey, implemented an extensive outdoor labour test in 1848, but local policy dictated that men in employment were to be exempt because they did not wish to pull families entirely from their own resources for humane and economic reasons. Similarly, while unemployed men were prime candidates for testing, it had been considered impractical to test the majority during periods of intense industrial depression when many thousands were out of work. The Guardians could, and did, work around the regulation prohibiting outdoor relief to men in

employment without testing them with labour by informing the PLB of each case relieved contrary to it. Such exemptions were relatively small in number, and largely restricted to the heads of large hand loom weaving families. In normal times, then, probably very little changed in Preston union after 1852. It was during the depression of 1857-58 that the practical implications of the 1852 Order can be conspicuously observed. The warning signs of depression were first heard almost a year before it struck, and the Guardians had presumably hoped in the intervening period that it would be avoided. When it came and the mills began operating short-time or closing altogether, it was not long before pauperism began to augment. However, it did not peak until the end of December, two months after three quarters of Preston's mills had ceased working full time, suggesting that, as Boot found of Manchester, many people only applied to the Guardians for relief when other resources in the makeshift economy had been exhausted. When they finally did apply they would, if they were male, have been set to work levelling land on the Moor. This marked a new policy in Preston union, applied in response to the PLB's refusal to suspend the 1852 Order, and the Guardian's lack of experience operating a test on this scale quickly became apparent. Lacking the tools to employ even half of the men on the land, the management of the outdoor test was shambolic. The relay system reputedly attracted idlers and vagrants keen for an easy handout, and the Guardian's consequential reversion back to demanding full time work on the land despite being unable to provide full employment led the genuine pauper labourers to 'rebel'. The pauper labourers, for their part, challenged the authority of the Guardians, demanding to be treated in a way which they considered equitable to their unfortunate position.

## Chapter 6

### Pauperism and the non-settled poor

#### Introduction

By the middle of the nineteenth century the towns of Lancashire shared one significant feature: most of the adults living in them had been born elsewhere.<sup>1</sup> The region's industrial centres attracted huge numbers of young adult migrants during the nineteenth century, drawn as they were by employment opportunities and the urban environment.<sup>2</sup> Most English migrants travelled only short distances, the majority coming from rural settlements within around ten miles, but increasingly they came from Ireland.<sup>3</sup> The large proportion of migrants in Lancashire's towns had significant consequences for the Poor Law, as people were only entitled to relief from the township in which they were legally 'settled' and many migrants had not acquired such status in the place they were living. The Law of Settlement, introduced in 1662 but modified frequently thereafter, established in law the principle that every person in England and Wales had a parish or township of settlement which alone was responsible for their maintenance. If a person was residing other than where they were settled and applied for relief, they could be forcibly removed back home. The law was, in practice, extraordinarily complex, and it is not necessary for our purposes here to discuss the legalistic aspects of the legislation, particularly as it has been done so many times elsewhere.<sup>4</sup> We must, however, briefly consider one important legislative amendment as it forms the basis of analysis in the second part of this chapter: the Poor Removal Act of 1846. This Act granted 'irremovable' status to all non-settled people who had been living in the same parish or township for a period of five years or more. Once irremovable status was achieved, people were entitled to relief in the place they were living but only as long as they remained there; if they moved to another parish or township, even temporarily, their status was lost and they could again be removed.<sup>5</sup> The Poor Removal Act had considerable implications on Poor Law administration in manufacturing

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<sup>1</sup> M. Anderson, *Family structure in nineteenth century Lancashire* (1971), pp.34-39; D. G. Feldman, 'Migration', in M. Daunton (ed.) *The Cambridge urban history of Britain, 1840-1950* (2000), p.185.

<sup>2</sup> J. D. Williamson, *Coping with city growth during the British Industrial Revolution* (1990), chapter 2.

<sup>3</sup> Anderson, *Family structure*, pp.34-39; D. B. Grigg, *Population growth and agrarian change: an historical perspective* (1980), p.184; P. Deane, *The first Industrial Revolution* (1965), p.153-154; J. K. Walton, *Lancashire: a social history, 1558-1939* (1987), p.165.

<sup>4</sup> For useful summaries of the legislation see: J. S. Taylor, 'A different kind of Speenhamland: non-resident relief in the Industrial Revolution', *Journal of British Studies*, 2 (1991), pp.183-208; K. D. M. Snell, *Parish and Belonging: community, identity and welfare in England and Wales* (2006), pp.81-86. For a detailed legalistic account see: L. Charlesworth, *Welfare's forgotten past: a socio legal history of the Poor Law* (2010).

<sup>5</sup> D. Ashforth, 'Settlement and removal in urban areas: Bradford, 1834-71' in M. E. Rose (ed.) *The poor and the city: the English Poor Law in its urban context, 1834-1914* (1985), pp.57-88; Snell, *Parish and belonging*, p.86.

centres, as the large migrant population meant a high concentration of irremovable paupers. However, it has received very little historical attention in Lancashire and indeed the north of England more broadly, and addressing this lacunae is the intention of this chapter. In so doing, we are able to develop our understanding of the nature of pauperism in industrial regions.

### **6 (i) The treatment of the non-settled poor: an overview of policy and practice before the 1846 Poor Removal Act**

As the 1851 census made clear, by the mid-nineteenth century most adults (defined in the census as men and women over the age of 20) living in the towns of Lancashire were not native to the place where they resided. In Preston, seven in ten adults had not been born in the town, and this was matched in towns as diverse in size and economic base as Manchester and Lancaster.<sup>6</sup> Not that this was unique to Lancashire or even the more urbanised regions of northern England. It was equally true of many moderately sized towns right across the country. Yet, what separated Lancashire from almost everywhere else was the size and composition of the county's adult migrant population. Only London had a higher number of migrants, but Lancashire had a higher proportion.<sup>7</sup> Moreover, Lancashire had by some way both the highest number and proportion of Irish immigrants in the country. The Irish came over to Lancashire in increasing numbers during the second half of the 1840s as the Great Famine took hold, and they continued to arrive in large numbers during the 1850s.<sup>8</sup> Between 1841 and 1851 the number of Irish born living in Lancashire grew from 105,916 to 191,506, and they made up some 9.2 per cent of the county population by the latter year.<sup>9</sup> In London, which held the second largest Irish born population, the corresponding figure was 4.6 per cent.<sup>10</sup> These county figures, however, obscure important local differences (Table 1). The vast majority of Irish immigrants were living in the heavily urbanised districts of Manchester and Salford, and, in even greater numbers, the port town of Liverpool where they made up almost 30 per cent of the population. Smaller industrial towns such as Preston and Bolton, on the other hand, had hardly been swamped by the Irish at mid-century.<sup>11</sup> In Preston, most adult migrants were local. Nearly half of the adult population had been born in other Lancashire towns and villages, and the proportion of Preston's population born in the county stood at 79 per cent.

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<sup>6</sup> Parliamentary Papers (P.P.) 1852-53 (1691) *Census of Great Britain, 1851. Population Tables, Volume II*, p.659.

<sup>7</sup> P.P. 2851-52, *Census population tables, Vol. I + II*.

<sup>8</sup> Walton, *Lancashire*, p.165.

<sup>9</sup> P.P. *Census population tables, Vol. II*, p.659.

<sup>10</sup> P.P. *Census population tables, Vol. I + II*.

<sup>11</sup> F. Neal, 'Lancashire, the famine Irish and the Poor Laws: a study in crisis management' (1994), p.7.

**Table 1: The composition of the adult (over 20) population in Lancashire towns, 1851**

|                      | Born in the town | Born out of the town but in the county | Born out of the county but in England | Born in Ireland | Born in Scotland | Total population |
|----------------------|------------------|--|---------------------------------------|-----------------|------------------|------------------|
| Town                 | Per cent         | Per cent                               | Per cent                              | Per cent        | Per cent         | N.               |
| Manchester / Salford | 28               | 22                                     | 30                                    | 17              | 2                | 225,767          |
| Preston              | 30               | 49                                     | 12                                    | 9               | 1                | 37,233           |
| Liverpool            | 23               | 10                                     | 34                                    | 29              | 5                | 213,767          |
| Lancaster            | 30               | 40                                     | 24                                    | 4               | 2                | 9,217            |
| Bolton               | 44               | 35                                     | 10                                    | 9               | 1                | 32,810           |

**Sources and notes:** P.P. 1852-53 (1691) *Census of Great Britain, 1851. Population tables, volume II.*

The presence of a large migrant population in the northern manufacturing districts had important implications. Some people born outside of the parish or township in which they were living would have subsequently acquired legal settlement rights in their new place of residence. However, many did not, partly because by the middle of the nineteenth century it had become difficult for the poorest people in society to obtain a new settlement. This was particularly true for the Irish, who had no legal settlement rights in England at all.<sup>12</sup> There consequently existed in towns a great number of people who the local Board of Guardians were not legally required to maintain. Guardians were acutely aware of their responsibility to protect the rates, and naturally sought to avoid where possible paying to maintain people not legally belonging to the township they represented.<sup>13</sup> The power to remove non-settled paupers to their legal place of settlement was therefore considered to be an important 'weapon', to quote Boyer, in the armoury of local officials.<sup>14</sup> Joseph Livesey made this clear in testimony before a Select Committee enquiring into settlement and removal in 1847:

[Mr. C. Villiers]: Is that the first question put to a man who applies for relief, what parish he belongs to?

<sup>12</sup> D. Ashforth, 'Settlement and removal', pp.57-88; F. Neal, *Sectarian violence: the Liverpool experience, 1819-1914*, p.86.

<sup>13</sup> Boards of Guardians were not actually responsible for removal. The process itself was in the hands of the township overseers and the final decision when cases went to court rested with the magistrates. Nonetheless, Guardians had a central role in deciding who should and should not be pursued for removal, and it was they who made recommendations to the overseers.

<sup>14</sup> G. Boyer, *An economic history of the English Poor Law, 1750-1850* (1990), p.257; D. Englander, *Poverty and Poor Law reform in nineteenth century Britain, 1834-1914: from Chadwick to Booth* (1998), p.44; L. H. Lees, *The solidarities of strangers: the English Poor Laws and the people, 1700-1948* (1998), p.51; M. E. Rose, 'Settlement, removal and the New Poor Law' in D. Fraser (ed.) *The New Poor Law in the nineteenth century* (1976), pp.25-44; Snell, *Parish and Belonging*, p.269.

[Livesey] Excepting he is well known, it is the first question; if he is quite well known to the officer or the Board, it is unnecessary; but if he be at all a stranger, it is generally the first question.

[Mr C. Villiers]: If he belongs to another parish not included in the union, what is the step that is taken?

[Livesey] The step very often taken is to say "You must go to your own town," trying to get clear of the application by sending a person to a place where he says he belongs; that is one of the hardships that the poor have to endure.<sup>15</sup>

Livesey's responses offer an insight into the sort of questioning an unknown poor relief applicant could expect to face from Poor Law officials. Yet, this brings us to an apparent anomaly: while Guardians were concerned to avoid supporting people not legally settled in their township, only a minority of non-settled paupers were ever actually removed.<sup>16</sup> The best information we have of the number of people removed in the northern manufacturing districts before the 1846 Removal Act is found in an official return which provides data for most unions in Lancashire, Yorkshire and Cheshire for the years 1841-43. The data for Lancashire is featured in Table 2, which divides unions by settlement type as in previous chapters. It is immediately apparent that the greatest number of removals took place, as we might expect, in the large conurbation district of Manchester and Salford. In Manchester, more than one pauper family was removed on average every day in 1842 and 1843. Removal numbers were very much lower elsewhere though.<sup>17</sup> In smaller rural unions such as Lancaster, Chorley and Clitheroe, and even some larger industrial centres like Wigan and Burnley, they were almost irrelevant in numerical terms. It is worth pointing out that the period under consideration here was one during which the manufacturing districts were suffering the effects of economic distress, and it is interesting to note that the number of removals generally increased as the depression intensified over the course of 1842-43. Therefore, these figures presumably reflect an upper limit. In most years removal numbers would probably have been closer to those of 1841 than 1843.

The generally small number of removals taking place each year was not unique to Lancashire or the manufacturing districts, and historians have put forward a number of convincing explanations

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<sup>15</sup> P.P. 1847 (409) *Sixth report from the Select Committee on settlement, and poor removal, with the minutes of evidence and appendix*, p.182.

<sup>16</sup> Ashforth, 'Settlement and removal', pp.57-88; Boyer, *An economic history of the English Poor Law*, p.245.

<sup>17</sup> The figures submitted by Preston include removals made 'by consent', i.e. without a formal legal order. These accounted around half of the removals each year, which explains the comparatively large number of removals taking place. It does not appear that any other union included removals made 'by consent'.

**Table 2: The number of paupers removed to their places of settlement, Lancashire unions, 1841 - 1843**

| Union                   | Number of families |      |      | Number of persons |      |      |
|-------------------------|--------------------|------|------|-------------------|------|------|
|                         | 1841               | 1842 | 1843 | 1841              | 1842 | 1843 |
| <b>Conurbation</b>      |                    |      |      |                   |      |      |
| Chorlton-Upon-Medlock   | 32                 | 65   | 60   | 90                | 166  | 186  |
| Manchester              |                    | 414  | 587  |                   | 928  | 1153 |
| Salford                 | 156                | 183  | 229  | 419               | 470  | 614  |
| <b>Urban industrial</b> |                    |      |      |                   |      |      |
| Ashton-under-Lyne       | 70                 | 91   | 138  | 163               | 254  | 390  |
| Bolton                  | 40                 | 58   | 55   | 143               | 218  | 200  |
| Burnley                 | 6                  | 14   | 28   | 73                | 111  | 148  |
| Chorley                 | 5                  | 4    | 27   | 11                | 22   | 117  |
| Oldham                  | 35                 | 51   | 20   | 128               | 224  | 76   |
| Preston                 | 24                 | 107  | 188  | 73                | 242  | 476  |
| Rochdale                | 14                 | 24   | 16   | 29                | 72   | 55   |
| Warrington              | 40                 | 24   | 43   | 142               | 93   | 127  |
| Wigan                   | 13                 | 17   | 8    | 48                | 60   | 20   |
| <b>Rural</b>            |                    |      |      |                   |      |      |
| Clitheroe               | 2                  | 3    | 3    | 9                 | 6    | 8    |
| Lancaster               | 9                  | 4    | 1    | 22                | 8    | 1    |

**Source:** P.P. 1846 (209) *Poor Removal: Further return of the number of persons removed, by any local order, &c. from each manufacturing town in Yorkshire, Lancashire and Cheshire, in 1841, 1842 and 1843.*

as to why they did not occur more frequently. It has been recognised that the sheer complexity, not to say expense, of removing people put local administrators off pursuing many cases.<sup>18</sup> Ascertaining the settlement of an individual and going through the legal process to remove them was far from simple, particularly when, as was not unusual, a dispute arose between the place of residence and the reputed place of settlement.<sup>19</sup> It was therefore often more convenient and cheaper to provide a non-settled applicant with a small sum of outdoor relief, and in cases where the pauper was only expected to require aid in the very short term this was not uncommon. Perhaps a more important and pervasive approach, however, was to avoid any cost at all by employing removal legislation as a deterrent. Contemporaries acknowledged that non-settled people frequently refrained from applying to Boards of Guardians for support for fear of being removed, and historians have argued that local officials exploited that fear in order to rid themselves of relief applicants.<sup>20</sup> Livesey's testimony quoted above clearly alludes to such practices. It is, indeed, quite

<sup>18</sup> Ashforth, 'Settlement and removal', pp.57-92; D. Green, *Pauper Capital: London and the Poor Law, 1790-1870* (2010), p.46; M. E. Rose, 'Settlement, removal and the New Poor Law', pp.25-44.

<sup>19</sup> Ashforth, 'Settlement and removal', pp.57-92; Rose, 'Settlement, removal and the New Poor Law', pp.25-44.

<sup>20</sup> Englander, *Poverty and Poor Law reform*, p.15; Green, *Pauper Capital*, p.214; Lees, *The solidarities of strangers*, p.51; A. Redford, *Labour migration in England, 1800-1850* (1968), p.126; Snell, *Parish and belonging*, pp.267-270.

evident that many people pulled out of the application process when removal orders were issued against them. The disparity between the number of removals ordered by local magistrates and the number actually taking place is quite striking. In the town of Stockport, near Manchester, between the years 1840 and 1846 the total number of families ordered to be removed was 2190 of which only 656 (30 per cent) were actually removed.<sup>21</sup> The other 1434 families, from 'fear of removal', pulled out of the application process and were 'obliged to shift for themselves.'<sup>22</sup> Similar figures are extant for Manchester, and it is clear that we must not give too much attention to official removal numbers as they are misleading. They provide no indication of the importance of removal legislation to local administrators. Ashforth's claim that the threat of removal acted as a more 'formidable deterrent than the workhouse test' certainly finds validity here.<sup>23</sup>

It is evident, then, that the power to remove people, even if removal itself was on the whole uncommon, was important to Poor Law officials at local level. However, it was by no means the only way of dealing with the *English* non-settled poor. There was also the system of non-resident relief which had developed extensively - and most prominently - in the northern manufacturing districts from at least the early nineteenth century.<sup>24</sup> This system involved arrangements being made between the township of a pauper's legal settlement and the union in which they were living for relief to be paid by the latter and reimbursed by the former, thus obviating the need to go down the removal route. The system applied almost exclusively to the English poor for logistical reasons; it was obviously not possible to make such arrangements for the relief of non-settled Irish immigrants. Indeed, it was more specifically a regional scheme. In the Bradford and Leicester unions most accounts for non-resident relief were held with townships in and around their immediate area, and the same is true of Preston union.<sup>25</sup> In 1845, for example, Preston union held non-resident relief accounts with townships in every union in Lancashire and four in Yorkshire, but only two elsewhere, both of them in the neighbouring county of Westmorland.<sup>26</sup>

The importance of non-resident relief has been recognised by Taylor, who using local records found evidence to suggest it was operating as a 'system of parochially funded labour migration.'<sup>27</sup> His central thesis is that non-resident relief allowed temporarily sick or unemployed able-bodied

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<sup>21</sup> Boyer, *An economic history*, p.255.

<sup>22</sup> Boyer, *An economic history*, p.255.

<sup>23</sup> D. Ashforth, *The Poor Law in Bradford, c.1834-71* (1980), PhD thesis, p.313.

<sup>24</sup> Taylor, 'A different kind of Speenhamland', pp.183-208.

<sup>25</sup> Ashforth, *The Poor Law in Bradford*, p.320; K. Thompson, *The Leicester Poor Law union, 1836-1871* (1989) PhD thesis, p.115.

<sup>26</sup> Lancashire Archives (L.A.) PUT/1/10-11.

<sup>27</sup> Taylor, 'A different kind of Speenhamland', p.185.



paupers living but not legally settled in manufacturing towns to remain there, rather than being removed back to a place where there might not be work for them. This, he argues, promoted migration, was beneficial to the manufacturing towns where labour was required, and benefitted the township of settlement which avoided being burdened with their pauper's entire maintenance.<sup>28</sup> This is convincing, although it contrasts with Boyer's interpretation of the chief role of non-resident relief. Boyer claims that the non-resident system, rather than aiding the able-bodied, was reserved almost exclusively for the aged and infirm and other vulnerable groups likely to be removed such as widows with children.<sup>29</sup> His assertion ties into his wider argument (discussed in the previous chapter) regarding the role of chief employers (cotton masters) in the administration of relief in northern industrial towns. Boyer argues that employers were usually unwilling to remove skilled and semi-skilled able-bodied workers who they would need when trade improved, and that the legal townships of settlement, knowing this, would refuse to accept non-resident terms as they knew the individual would not be removed anyway. In reaching this conclusion Boyer looked specifically at periods of economic depression, and while he is right in claiming that few skilled able-bodied workers were removed at these times there were other sound practical reasons why beyond the influence of cotton manufacturers, who in any case hardly dominated Boards of Guardians if Preston union is typical. For one, it would have been impossible in a practical sense to employ a policy of indiscriminate removal in times of depression, when so many people required relief.<sup>30</sup> It is, nonetheless, true that many aged and infirm paupers were in receipt of non-resident relief. From patchy evidence in the minute books of Preston union we find cases such as Isabella Eccles, a 95 year old 'blind and deserving object' living in Blackburn who the Preston Guardians agreed to provide with 2s per week non-resident relief in 1844.<sup>31</sup> In the case of someone like Eccles, the township of settlement, Preston in this instance, would have been keen to pay non-resident relief as it allowed her to stay in a place where she presumably had relatives able to offer support. Without such networks of support, and without the non-resident system, Eccles would have inevitably ended her days in the Preston workhouse, an outcome one assumes neither she nor the Preston Guardians would have wanted.

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<sup>28</sup> Taylor, 'A different kind of Speenhamland', p.184.

<sup>29</sup> Boyer, *An economic history*, pp.257-259.

<sup>30</sup> Boot has shown that in Manchester union during the depression of 1847-49 the number of outdoor casual paupers, i.e. paupers legally settled outside the union, peaked at over 2000 (exclusive of Irish, who peaked at over 3000): H. M. Boot, 'Unemployment and poor relief in Manchester, 1845-50', *Social History*, 2, (1990), pp.217-228.

<sup>31</sup> L.A. PUT/1/10, 15<sup>th</sup> October, 1854.

## **6 (ii) The 1846 Poor Removal Act and the ‘irremovable’ poor: implications in England, Lancashire and Preston union**

The intention thus far has been to give an impression of how the Poor Law responded to relief applications from non-settled people in the northern manufacturing districts where there were a comparatively large proportion of them. Much more could be said, and more emotively. Removals may have been relatively few in number, but they no doubt caused tremendous hardship to many people who experienced them. There are numerous cases in the return referred to earlier of people across the northern manufacturing districts being removed after many years residence, some as long as three decades.<sup>32</sup> Moreover, other people must have experienced considerable hardship when, though in need of support, they felt unable to apply for relief for fear of being removed.<sup>33</sup> The system of non-resident relief offered some protection from removal, but as we have seen it was only available to people settled in the region and, in any case, such arrangements were always uncertain. They depended upon the township of settlement and the township of residence operating on agreeable terms, which was never guaranteed. It was in part to mitigate some of these problems that the Removal Act and subsequent related legislation (discussed below) were introduced nationally from 1846. The Act granted ‘irremovable’ status to anyone who had lived continually in the same township or parish for a period of five years.<sup>34</sup> It also prevented the removal of widows during the first twelve months following a husband’s death and of paupers receiving relief on account of temporary sickness or accident. What the 1846 Act did not do, however, is grant settlement. If an irremovable person moved out of the township they were living in for whatever reason, they relinquished their status and could be removed.

Few studies have examined in any detail the 1846 Poor Removal Act and its practical effects on the administration of poor relief.<sup>35</sup> This is a significant oversight, for the Act had considerable and demonstrable implications at local and regional level. For the north of England, Ashforth's study

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<sup>32</sup> P.P. 1846 (209) *Poor Removal*.

<sup>33</sup> P.P. 1846 (209) *Poor Removal*.

<sup>34</sup> P.P. 1845 (636) *Poor Removal. A Bill to amend the laws relating to orders for the removal of the poor to their places of settlement, and to appeals against such orders*. The five years residency clause was reduced to three years in 1861 and to one year in 1865.

<sup>35</sup> There are some notable exceptions. Green's *Pauper capital* includes one of the best studies of the Removal Act and its consequences at local level, in this case in London. Snell's *Parish and Belonging* asks different questions, examining the concept of ‘irremovability’ within wider notions of parish belonging to interesting effect. Surveys of the Removal Act within broader studies of settlement and removal after 1834 can be found in Rose, ‘Settlement, removal’ and Ashforth, ‘Settlement and removal’. Feldman has examined the Removal Act within a longitudinal study of welfare provision to immigrants, but while he notes the importance of the 1846 Act the nature of his study means his analysis does not develop beyond broad generalisations: D. Feldman, ‘Immigrants and welfare from the Old Poor Law to the Welfare State’, *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 13 (2003), pp.79-104.

of Bradford remains the most detailed local examination, although it is just that - a local examination - largely isolated from the regional and national context.<sup>36</sup> The same is true of Boyson's work on north-east Lancashire.<sup>37</sup> Yet, the wider context is important because the Removal Act did not affect all places equally. From 1855 the PLB began including in the appendices to their annual reports statistical information which allows us to work out what proportion of aggregate expenditure went to the irremovable poor for every union in England and Wales. The 1855 data has been mapped for every county in England in Figure 1. It is immediately clear that it was in the more urbanised and industrialised northern half of England that the Removal Act was of greatest significance. Indeed, a line drawn from the Wash across to the Severn generally distinguish counties with a high proportion of expenditure going to the irremovable poor from those with a comparatively low proportion, just like the pauperism figures examined in Chapter 2. It was in the industrial heartlands of England – Lancashire, West Riding of Yorkshire and Durham in the north, and Staffordshire, Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire in the midlands – that the proportion of irremovable expenditure was at its highest, being on average around double that of the country's agricultural regions.

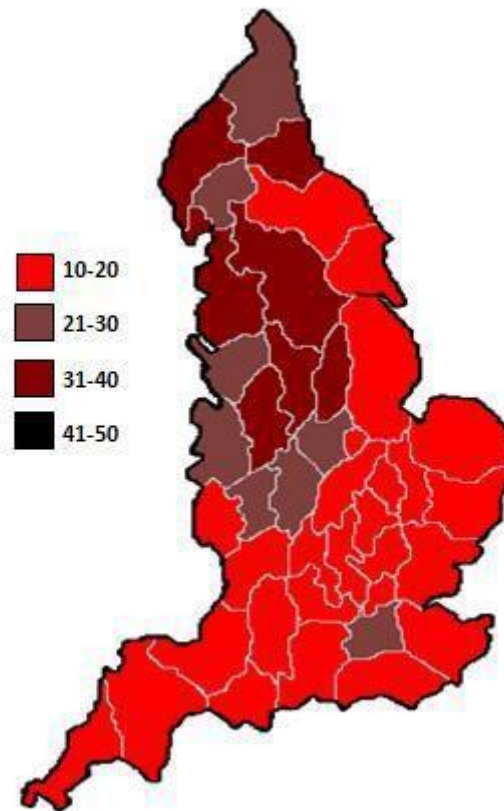
These patterns reflect the varying densities of migrants across the regions. The largest migrant populations were always found in towns and cities, which rural born men and women were drawn to in their thousands. Thus, the more urbanised counties which incorporated numerous large towns and cities had higher proportions of irremovable paupers. There is, however, one notable anomaly here: London (Middlesex division), the most urbanised part of the country, had among the lowest proportional rates of expenditure on irremovable paupers. There are two probable explanations for this. The first relates to the spatial distribution of urban parishes. In most counties, Lancashire being a good example, the urban centres were usually separated by some distance. The town of Preston was divided from its nearest urban industrial neighbour, Blackburn, by some 10 miles of farmland, and Blackburn from Burnley by around eleven miles and so on. These were essentially isolated towns surrounded by miles of countryside. London was different. In the centre of the city, across an area covering around three miles, there were fifteen very small though densely populated urban unions adjacent to one another. The city as a whole contained some twenty-eight unions as

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<sup>36</sup> Ashforth, *The Poor Law in Bradford*, pp.296-330 and 663-587.

<sup>37</sup> R. Boyson, 'The history of Poor Law administration in North-East Lancashire, 1837-1871', M.A. thesis (1960).

**Figure 1: Irremovable paupers (per cent) as proportion of aggregate poor relief expenditure, England, 1855**



Source: P.P. 1856 (2088) *Eighth Annual Report of the Poor Law Board*.

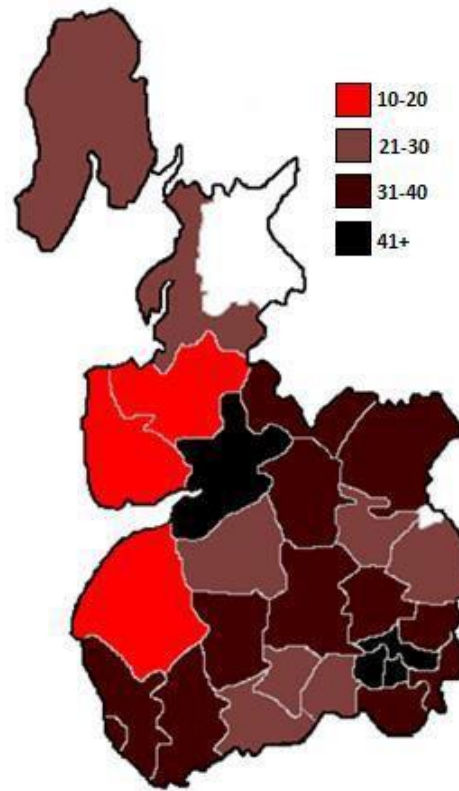
well as a number of independent parishes. In this environment people must have more frequently crossed union boundaries when, as the working-class frequently did, they moved house, and in doing so their period of residency was reset to zero; if they had been irremovable, then they were no longer. Snell argues that one result of the Removal Act was to make people wary of moving from one union to another 'in case they lost their irremovable status', but this must have been more difficult to avoid in London than elsewhere.<sup>38</sup> Green does not consider the consequences of urban parish distribution on irremovability, but his analysis does reveal the second explanation - local variation. Thus, while the proportion of expenditure on irremovable paupers averaged less than twenty per cent in London as a whole, the proportion stood at a third or more in some unions, and in the East London union it was over forty per cent.<sup>39</sup> This discrepancy reflected the demographic distribution of the working-class. In the wealthier parishes, and those where working-class housing was in short supply, irremovable expenditure was lower than in the poorer parishes where the working-class were heavily concentrated.<sup>40</sup>

<sup>38</sup> Snell, *Parish and belonging*, p.125.

<sup>39</sup> Green, *Pauper Capital*, pp.226-228.

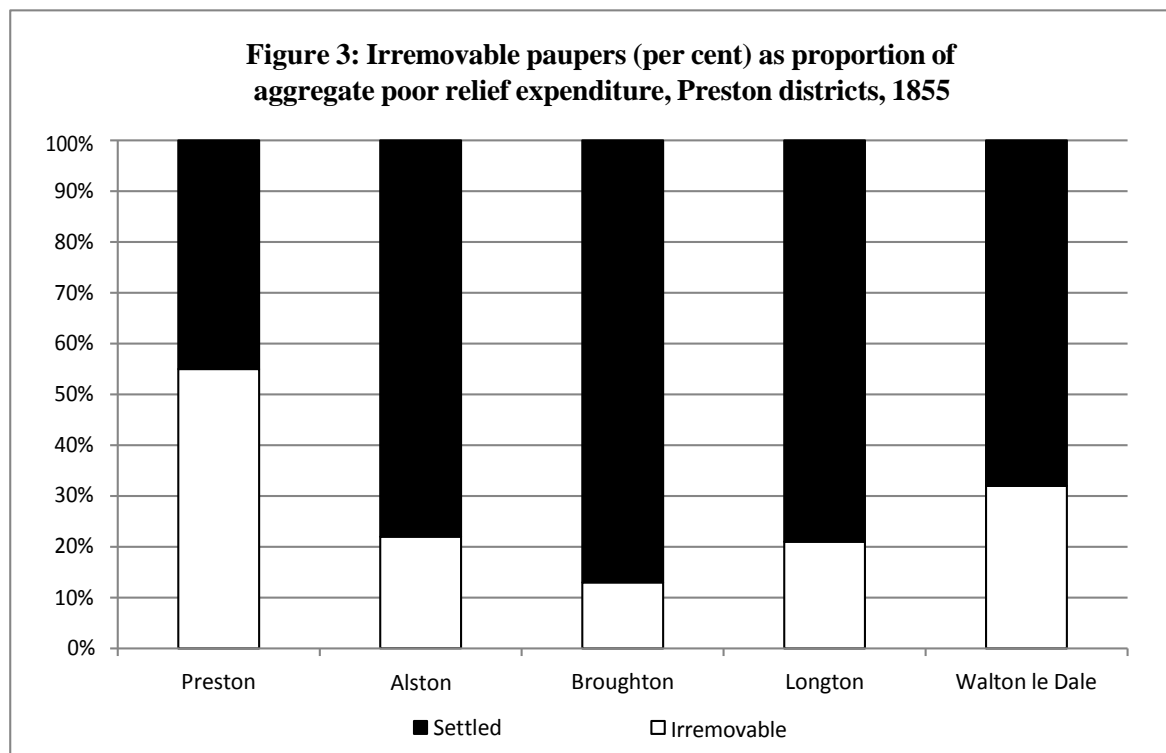
<sup>40</sup> Green, *Pauper Capital*, pp.226-228.

**Figure 2: Irremovable paupers (per cent) as proportion of aggregate poor relief expenditure, Lancashire, 1855**



**Source:** P.P. 1856 (2088) *Eighth Annual Report of the Poor Law Board.*

Similarly diverse patterns are found in the counties. Using the same dataset as Figure 1, the situation in Lancashire is revealed in Figure 2. The county average in Lancashire stood at 38 per cent in 1855, which was the highest in the country, but within this figure proportions could vary significantly and the difference between urban industrial and rural unions is immediately striking. Mirroring the national trend, the proportion of relief expenditure going to irremovable paupers was much lower in the latter. The Fylde, Garstang and Ormskirk unions, large in area but small in population and lacking an industrial base, were closer to the agricultural counties of the south and east of England than they were their Lancashire neighbours. At the other end of the scale were three unions, Preston, Manchester and Salford, each spending more than forty per cent on the irremovable poor. Moreover, a further four urban industrial unions, Bolton, Bury, Chorlton and Wigan, all came within three per cent of the highest (41 per cent) bracket. Of all these unions Manchester stands out, with 58 per cent of relief expenditure going to irremovable paupers. This high proportion appears to have chiefly reflected the absence of a rural element in the union's structure, as becomes clear when we look more closely at Preston union. Figure 3 uses data from the Preston Board of Guardian's minute books to show what proportion of poor relief went to



**Source:** L.A. PUT/1/19-20.

settled and irremovable paupers in each of the five relief districts during the same period covered by figures 1 and 2. The urban/rural dichotomy, so apparent in the national and county figures, is equally present here. In the urban industrial district of Preston over half, 53 per cent, was spent on the irremovable poor, which was not far from the Manchester level. In the Walton-le-Dale district, which included the industrial village of the same name, the figure was over thirty per cent. Elsewhere, however, in the largely rural districts of Alston, Broughton and Longton, the proportion was less than half that of Preston.

Against this backdrop, let us turn our attention to how Boards of Guardians responded to the 1846 Act and subsequent related legislation. By subsequent legislation we refer specifically to further changes in 1847 and 1848, which threw the relief of irremovable paupers onto the union common fund rather than the individual townships as previously.<sup>41</sup> Ashforth has shown that in the Bradford union the shift from township to union in the charging of irremovable paupers drove a wedge between the urban and rural Guardians which, ultimately, led to the decision to split the union into two in 1848.<sup>42</sup> At the root of the dispute was the fact that as most of the union's irremovable

<sup>41</sup> The 1847 legislation made the irremovable poor a common charge for one year. The 1848 legislation made this a permanent feature.

<sup>42</sup> Ashforth, *Poor Law in Bradford*, pp.329-330.

paupers were residing in the urban centre of Bradford, the out-townships were essentially subsidising the relief of Bradford's poor. Resenting this, the out-township Guardians successfully campaigned for separation. Hostility on these lines also emerged in Preston union, and was probably felt to a greater or lesser extent in most unions where the irremovable poor were heavily concentrated in one or two urban townships. Initially in Preston union, at least as far as can be determined from the Guardians' minute books and the local press, the moving of irremovable pauperism to the common fund did not provoke conspicuous discord as it evidently did in Bradford. There were no angry discussions in the boardroom, no motions to oppose it; the changes of 1847-8 met, it seems, a muted response. However, appearances were deceiving. It became quite apparent in the early 1850s that many out-township Guardians were deeply unsatisfied with being tied into a union with Preston. The spark which brought such feeling to a head was a Bill, brought before Parliament in February 1854, which proposed abolishing removals and making all paupers chargeable to the union common fund.<sup>43</sup> By the end of February, just two weeks after the Bill had been submitted, Whittingham Guardian John Abraham, a gentleman and landowner of that township who actually lived on Winckley Square in Preston, gave notice of a motion that 'inconsequence of the bill now before parliament...the union should be divided into three.'<sup>44</sup>

The proposed separation was based on the existing districts. The two northerly out-districts, Broughton and Alston, were to merge together to form an independent union while the two southerly out-districts, Longton and Walton-le-Dale, were to form another. This would leave the central Preston district alone as a single union. In making his proposal, Abraham emphasised the administrative improvement separation would engender.<sup>45</sup> A smaller number of Guardians at meetings would, he claimed, improve business, while smaller unions would allow the Guardians to judge the relief cases more thoroughly and from knowledge of the individual. These issues had long been sources of debate in Preston union, tying in to the enduring desire to revert back to the system of administration as it existed under the Old Poor Law, and had led to the formation of district relief committees during the early 1840s as we saw in Chapter 2. However, the crux of the issue was financial. Abraham drew the Board's attention to the higher than average rates in the Preston district which, should the Bill before Parliament be passed, would have the effect of raising rates in the out-districts. This was a perfectly reasonable concern even if, as a number of Guardians pointed

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<sup>43</sup> P.P. 1854 (11) *Settlement and removal. A bill to abolish in England and Wales the compulsory removal of the poor on the ground of settlement, and to make provision for the more equitable distribution of the charge of relief in unions.*

<sup>44</sup> *Preston Chronicle (P.C.)*. 25<sup>th</sup> February, 1854.

<sup>45</sup> *P.C.* 7<sup>th</sup> March, 1854.

out, any increase would be minimal when averaged out across the union. But some Guardians appear to have thought there was more to his motion than just this. The Rev. Parr, *ex-officio*, suspicious perhaps of Abraham's motives, pointed out that separation on the lines proposed would leave 'the poor belonging to the out-townships, but resident in Preston...chargeable to Preston.'<sup>46</sup> He might also have added that separation would remove from the out-townships the burden of contributing towards the relief of irremovable paupers resident in Preston. A financial statement read out by the Clerk at the meeting showed that, during the previous six months, the four out districts had collectively spent £286 on their own irremovable paupers but contributed £390 to the common fund, while Preston had spent £881 but contributed just £778.<sup>47</sup> The disparity was noted by the Rev. Brickel, Rector and Guardian of Much Hoole and a supporter in principle of separation, who highlighted the frustration surrounding contributions to the common fund in a statement which probably accurately reflected the real issue at hand. Under the current union arrangement, argued Brickel,

there were too many interests brought together - the interests of the town and the interests of the country, which were opposed, or supposed to be opposed, to each other...The country guardians supposed, whether rightly or wrongly, and acted upon the supposition, that they paid more than their fair proportion...[They] had a strong opinion on the subject, and thought they were much overburdened by the irremovable poor.<sup>48</sup>

In the event the out-township Guardians' numerical advantage meant the Board voted in favour of Abraham's motion fifteen votes to eleven, but this was not enough to trigger separation as the Poor Law Amendment Act required the concurrence of two-thirds of the Board. The union therefore stayed as one. The episode, however, underlines the enduring hostility to unionisation which had existed among the Preston Board of Guardians, and particularly its out-township members, from 1837. Such tensions were evidently augmented by changes to the chargeability of irremovable paupers in 1847-8, and by later efforts to bring all paupers under the union common fund.

Concerns over the financial aspects of irremovability also had direct practical implications on the administration of relief to the poor. The 1846 Removal Act did not eradicate the threat of removal for non-settled people resident for less than five years, and even migrants who had achieved irremovable status could find themselves removable again if they moved parish boundaries as we have seen. It has been argued that the 1846 legislation may even have increased the threat of

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<sup>46</sup> P.C. 7<sup>th</sup> March, 1854.

<sup>47</sup> P.C. 14<sup>th</sup> march, 1854.

<sup>48</sup> P.C. 14<sup>th</sup> march, 1854.



removal as Guardians sought to stop non-settled paupers becoming chargeable.<sup>49</sup> Evidence again provided by Joseph Livesey before the 1847 Select Committee offers support for such a contention. Livesey was asked by the Committee to give his opinion on the 'effect of the Poor Removal Act of last year?' He told them that the result was 'a great number of removals from our union [Preston] to other unions' because:

the Board of Guardians was afraid of persons making up their five years whose term of five years was nearly expired, and they took the first opportunity they could of removing them. In giving relief before the Bill, they generally would write to the township they belonged to, to see if they would take them or pay their relief. After this Bill came into effect instead of doing that, the first time they had to relieve them, they took out an order and removed them.<sup>50</sup>

It is impossible to verify Livesey's claim quantitatively. The aggregate number of removals did increase significantly in Lancashire after the Act was introduced, but the rise was largely caused by the tremendous number of Irish paupers removed from the parish of Liverpool following a legal amendment in 1847 which made the process simpler.<sup>51</sup> Liverpool was shipping hundreds of Irish back home every week from 1847. In the year ending March 1853, for example, of 4484 removal orders issued in Lancashire, 86 per cent involved the removal of Irish from Liverpool.<sup>52</sup> Elsewhere in Lancashire, there does not appear to have been a notable long term increase in the number of removals. In any case, it has already been stated that we must not read too much into official removal numbers, and Livesey's testimony alludes to an important and related consequence of the 1846 Act. He stated that prior to its introduction the Preston Guardians, when dealing with a non-settled applicant, had typically written to their township of settlement to see if they would repay relief. This was a direct reference to the system of non-resident relief, and his suggestion that it broke down following the removal legislation of 1846 is, though inaccurate, not entirely devoid of truth. Evidence indicates that the system did begin to decline from 1846 across industrial Lancashire, largely because the legislative changes created strong financial reasons to discontinue or restrict the practice. While the period during which a person was in receipt of relief did not count towards calculating their irremovability, it did not reset their years of residency back to zero either. As a result, Guardians appear to have been reluctant to give relief to non-settled paupers on behalf

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<sup>49</sup> M. Handley, 'Settlement, disease, poverty and conflict: the Irish in Birkenhead, 1841-51', *Transactions of the Historic Society of Lancashire and Cheshire*, 163 (2014), pp.73-93; Snell, *Parish and belonging*, p.151.

<sup>50</sup> P.P. 1847 (409) *Sixth report*, p.193.

<sup>51</sup> Neal, 'Lancashire, the Famine Irish and the Poor Laws', pp.13-15.

<sup>52</sup> P.P. 1854 (374) *Poor Removals. Return of the number of Irish poor removed from the parish of Liverpool to Ireland*; P.P. 1854 (87) *Poor Law (orders of removal), Returns showing the number of orders of removal from parishes, signed by justices, and executed in England and Wales, during the year ending 25 March, 1853*, p.7.

of other unions as it allowed a person to remain in the township where they might later become irremovable. Equally, they seem to have been more cautious about paying relief to their paupers residing elsewhere as they could not become irremovable while in receipt of relief.

In the north of England the system of non-resident relief did not breakdown everywhere. It has been shown by Rose and Ashforth that some unions in the West Riding of Yorkshire continued the practice quite extensively for many decades after 1846, and a Select Committee enquiry into settlement and removal in 1878-9 indicated that the system was still operating in places.<sup>53</sup> Nonetheless, an inextricable link between the introduction of the 1846 Removal Act and a decline in non-resident relief seems certain. Between 19<sup>th</sup> September (the month the Act was introduced) and 25<sup>th</sup> December 1846, the Preston Board of Guardians received letters from forty-two mainly northern unions and parishes asking for information regarding the length of residency of their non-resident paupers living in Preston, and providing regulations for the future relief of their removable poor.<sup>54</sup> Their main intention was to ensure that they were no longer being charged for the relief of non-resident paupers who were now irremovable, but most (thirty-two of the forty-two) also refused to allow relief to their removable poor residing in Preston without their written consent.<sup>55</sup> Guardians evidently wanted greater control over the provision of relief to their non-resident poor, but once restrictions of this nature were put in place the whole non-resident relief network began to unravel. The Guardians of Manchester union decided in November 1846 to stop non-resident relief altogether, and by the early 1850s the unions of Wigan, Liverpool, Bolton and Preston had followed suit.<sup>56</sup> When Preston decided to stop the practice in 1854 it had been in decline for some years. During the year ended Lady Day 1846, non-resident relief accounted for twenty per cent of annual outdoor expenditure in Preston union.<sup>57</sup> Over the same period in 1853-54, the year before the practice was abolished, it accounted for less than five per cent.<sup>58</sup> Michael Rose has argued that 'the concept of irremovability' reduced but 'did not end the practice of non-resident relief.'<sup>59</sup> This is true, but his conclusion requires qualification for parts of industrial Lancashire where

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<sup>53</sup> Ashforth, 'Settlement and removal', pp.71-85; Rose, 'Settlement, removal and the New Poor law', pp.35-37; P.P. 1878-79 (282) *Report from the Select Committee on poor removal*, pp.18, 20, 22, 40.

<sup>54</sup> L.A. PUT/1/11.

<sup>55</sup> It appears to have been common practice for Guardians to give relief to a non-settled pauper without prior approval and to bill the township to which they belonged at a later date. Before 1846, when the system of non-resident relief was pervasive, repayment was usually made with little fuss. However, this 'relieve first ask later' approach essentially ended when the Removal Act was introduced as Guardians sought to tighten their control of relief to their non-resident poor.

<sup>56</sup> Manchester Times, 6th November, 1846; L.A. PUT/1/12, 21<sup>st</sup> September, 1847; P.C. 19<sup>th</sup> August, 1854.

<sup>57</sup> L.A. PUT/1/10-11.

<sup>58</sup> L.A. PUT/1/17-18.

<sup>59</sup> Rose, 'Settlement, removal and the New Poor Law', p.36.

discontinuity and change were conspicuous features of non-resident relief practices after the Removal Act was introduced.

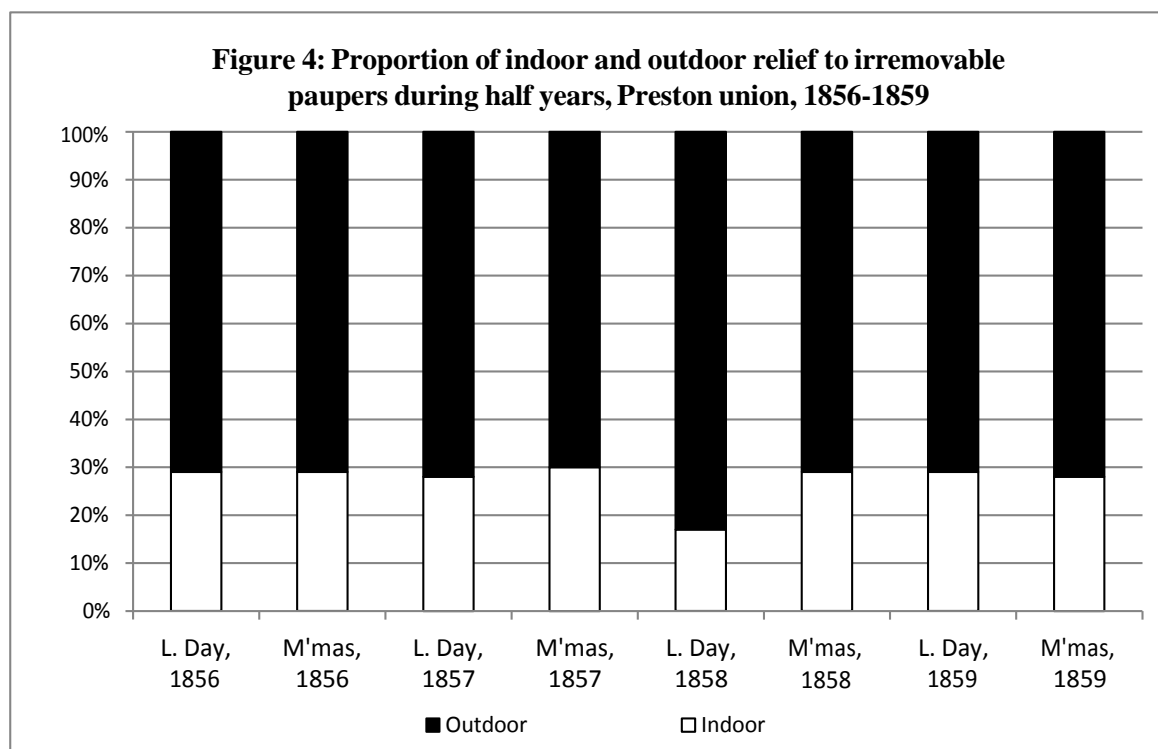
The decline of non-resident relief undoubtedly caused hardship for many people. In cases where Guardians made the decision to abolish the system altogether, the result was invariably a burst of removals as non-resident paupers were sent back to their places of settlement. Moreover, these removals were often hidden from the official statistics because, as settlements had been established when non-resident relief arrangements were made, formal removal proceedings were rarely required. For example, when the Wigan Board of Guardians decided in September 1847 to end non-resident relief, the Preston Guardians agreed to receive their removable non-resident paupers residing in Wigan 'without an order of removal.'<sup>60</sup> Even where the system continued to operate, the restrictions imposed by unions in their desire for greater scrutiny of their non-resident cases meant removable paupers in receipt of non-resident relief lived a rather precarious, uncertain existence, with the threat of removal constantly hanging over them. The case of Elizabeth Hindle, legally settled in Preston but residing in Ormskirk in the 1850s, is a typical example and Appendix 2 provides a detailed study of her experience. Yet, in spite of this, quantitative evidence indicates that the Removal Act was, on the whole, a positive change for most non-settled people, particularly for those living in the industrial centres where most were based. As much as Boards of Guardians might have tried to prevent irremovability being achieved as Snell has argued, it was impossible to effectively police settlements at the individual level in large towns where anonymity was an inherent societal condition for most people.<sup>61</sup> We have seen that prior to the Removal Act the only access the non-settled poor had to regular outdoor relief was through the non-resident relief system, and that it accounted for twenty per cent of outdoor relief expenditure in Preston union in 1845 (29 per cent in the Preston relief district). The fact that, ten years later, relief to non-settled irremovable paupers accounted for over forty per cent (55 per cent in the Preston district) of relief expenditure in the union (Figure 3, above) strongly indicates that many people who had previously been denied relief, or who would not have applied for fear of removal, were applying for and receiving relief in the 1850s.

How were irremovable paupers treated? Local evidence provides some answers. Throughout the 1850s Preston union was spending more than £3000 annually on indoor and outdoor relief to

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<sup>60</sup> L.A. PUT/1/11, 21<sup>st</sup> September, 1847.

<sup>61</sup> Snell, *Parish and belonging*, p.151.



**Source and notes:** L.A. PUT/1/20-25. L.Day = half year ended Lady Day (25th March). M'mas = half year ended Michaelmas (29th September).

irremovable paupers.<sup>62</sup> Most of this went on outdoor relief as revealed in Figure 4. In each half year between 1855 and 1859, never less than seventy per cent of relief expenditure to the irremovable poor went on outdoor support. Interestingly, this compares favourably to the settled poor, to whom outdoor relief made up just fifty-eight per cent of relief expenditure over the same period. Thus, irremovable paupers were more likely to receive outdoor relief than their settled counterparts in Preston union. This immediately raises a question which has previously been asked by Snell: did the treatment of the two groups vary? According to Snell it did. In his analysis of an 1859 statistical return pertaining to relief expenditure in a number of midlands and southern counties, Snell consistently found a higher proportion of outdoor relief going to the irremovable poor.<sup>63</sup> By way of explanation, he states that this was largely an issue of chargeability. The argument goes as follows: as the irremovable poor were a union charge, Guardians were more liberal with the rates, having less motivation to save money. By extension, they tended to be more stringent with their own poor because such paupers were a direct charge on their township. Further, as the township 'averages', used to determine contributions to the common fund, were based on relief expenditure, it was in the interest of townships to reduce relief to their settled poor so as to lower their contribution towards the relief of irremovable paupers. They were therefore more likely to

<sup>62</sup> L.A. PUT/1/20-24.

<sup>63</sup> Snell, *Parish and belonging*, pp.310-318.

offer the workhouse to settled paupers as a means of deterring them from soliciting relief. Snell's explanation is convincing and is supported by Table 4 for Preston union, although we would require a detailed breakdown of the different pauper groups within the settled and irremovable categories to reach a more conclusive answer. It might simply be the case that irremovable paupers, many perhaps having arrived only five or so years previously for work, were on average younger than their settled counterparts and therefore less likely to be offered the workhouse.<sup>64</sup>

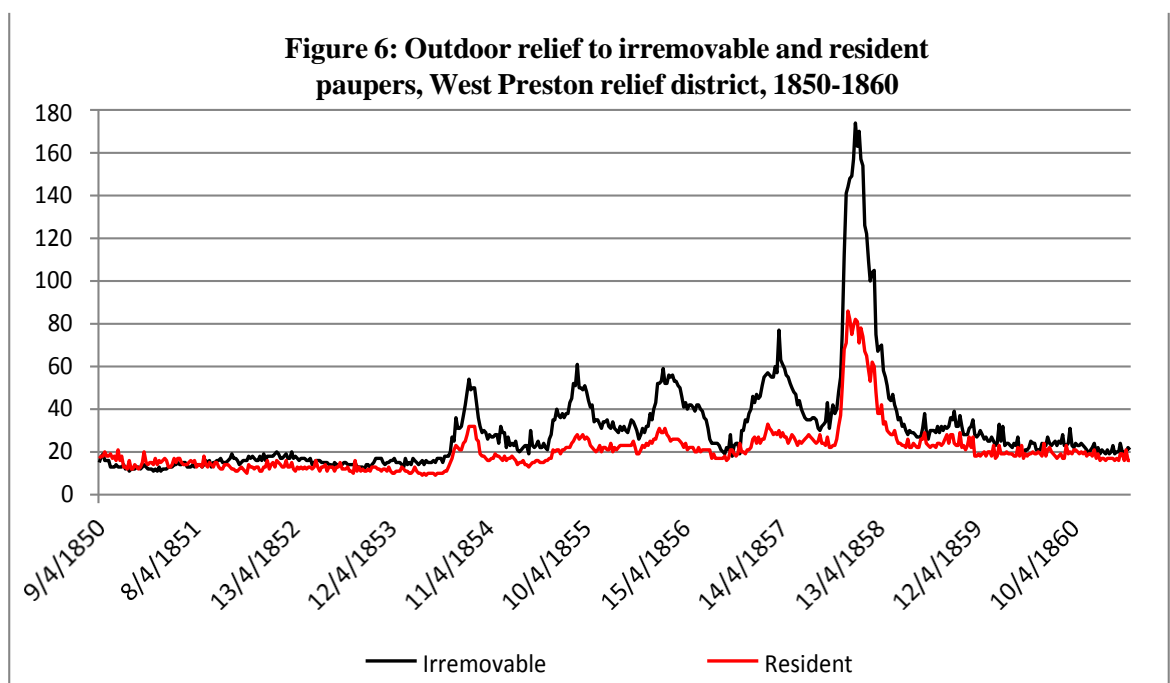
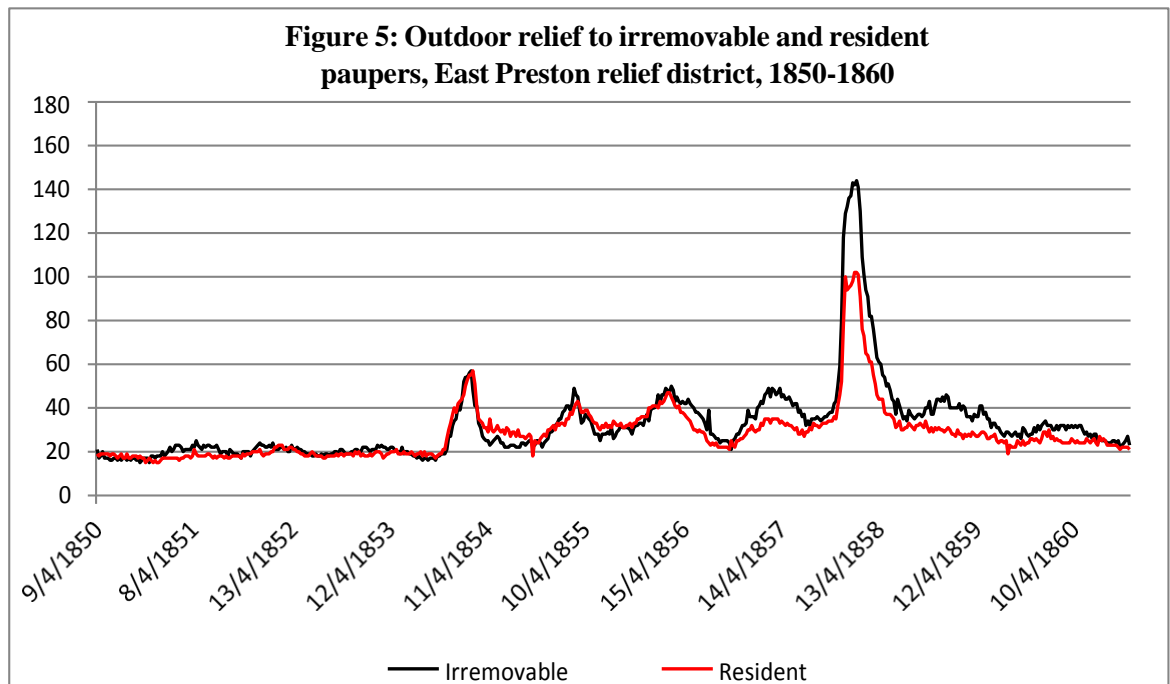
The experience of settled and irremovable paupers in Preston can be discussed further through weekly expenditure data taken from the Board of Guardians minute books. From April 1850 the Clerk, Joseph Thackeray, began disaggregating his weekly outdoor relief expenditure accounts in the minutes under three headings: 'non-settled', which was relief to paupers on account of, and to be repaid by, other unions as non-resident relief; 'irremovable', which was relief to non-settled paupers resident for five years or more; and 'resident', which was relief to settled paupers and non-settled 'casual' paupers.<sup>65</sup> Thackeray presented the accounts in this way every week for over a decade, providing what appears to be a unique dataset. As non-resident relief had declined by 1850 to the point of statistical insignificance it can be ignored, so we are interested here only in irremovable and resident expenditure. Further, as the vast majority of irremovable paupers were based in the town of Preston, we are interested specifically in this urban centre's two relief districts; East Preston and West Preston. Figures 5 and 6 show the amount of outdoor relief expended on irremovable and settled paupers each week in the two relief districts between April 1850 and August 1860. It is immediately apparent that the two figures display strikingly similar patterns. As the districts were managed by separate relief committees operating in different rooms,

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<sup>64</sup> D. E. Baines, 'The use of census data in migration studies', in E. A. Wrigley, *Nineteenth century society: essays in the use of quantitative methods for the study of social data* (1972), pp.311-335.

<sup>65</sup> L.A. PUT/1/14-25. 'Casual' paupers were officially defined by the Preston Guardians in 1847 as 'all those cases who shall have slept in the town the previous night, and intend to sleep the following night, after their application for relief.' Some of these would have been tramps, although tramps tended to be sent to the workhouse. Tramps that were given outdoor relief received so little that they can be discounted from our discussion of Table 9. In the year ended Jan. 22<sup>nd</sup> 1850, for example, relief to tramps cost less than £1 a week. It is unclear what proportion of 'resident' paupers were non-settled people living in the town, but outside of periods of economic depression their numbers were probably very low. Indeed, evidence provided by Boot indicates that they were generally a much smaller group than the resident settled poor in Manchester during the depression of 1847: Boot, 'Unemployment and Poor Law relief in Manchester', pp.217-228.

<sup>66</sup> Throughout most the 1850s the four out-districts were each spending somewhere between £1 and £4 each per week on irremovable paupers. Only during periods of economic distress did this increase, but nowhere near the scale of the Preston district.



**Source (figures 5 and 6):** L.A. PUT/1/19-25.

the centrality of socio-economic conditions as a determinant of relief expenditure is quite clear here. This is, of course, something we are already aware of. The broad pattern shown in these figures is almost identical to that displaying the *number* of paupers in receipt of relief featured in Chapter 2, where it was explained that the conspicuous seasonal fluctuations between 1854 and 1857, which followed a period of stability, were caused chiefly by high food prices as well as war in

the Crimea and the Lock-Out of 1853-54. The huge upsurge over 1857-58 was, as we know from Chapter 5, a result of economic distress.

Against this backdrop, what do these figures tell us? The fact that the irremovable and resident lines in both districts follow very similar trends indicates that the non-settled but irremovable poor of Preston had since moving to the town been absorbed into the local economy. Their need for poor relief was shaped directly by economic conditions just as it was for their settled counterparts. It is notable, however, that in both districts expenditure on the irremovable poor rose far above that of the resident poor during the 1857-58 depression. There are two possible explanations for this. First, it might reflect the indoor/outdoor relief expenditure disparity that existed between the settled and irremovable poor as noted above. The irremovable poor were more likely to receive outdoor relief than their settled counterparts, possibly because they were on the whole younger and the Preston Guardians did not send young families to the workhouse as we have seen. However, an alternative explanation is that some migrants, particularly those who had travelled long distances, were simply more vulnerable to destitution than the native born because they lacked the supporting structures of those who had lived in the same place all their lives.<sup>66</sup> The absence of strong kinship or friendship groups in particular may have brought some migrants before the Guardians sooner into a period of life-cycle crisis than those who had access to such networks of support, although how much this would apply to a migrant resident for five years is unclear.

The other notable trend worthy of some consideration is the consistently much higher seasonal peaks in the irremovable line of West Preston district over the resident line, which was not mirrored in East Preston. This might, and to some extent probably did, reflect policy variation between the two relief committees. However, an additional cause relating to demographic characteristics can be proffered. West Preston district consisted of three 'wards': Christ Church, St. Peter's and St. George's. Christ Church ward included the most affluent part of the town, encompassing Winckley Square and the genteel streets in the surrounding area where many members of the Board of Guardians lived.<sup>67</sup> The other two wards, on the other hand, incorporated the very poorest and most notorious areas in Preston. Places like the ironically named Hope Street in St. Peter's ward, and nearby Queen Street in the same ward, were singled out in sanitary reports on the town as being

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<sup>66</sup> Anderson, *Family structure*, pp.152-161. This is not to say that migrants lacked kinship networks, for evidence suggests that such supporting structures were necessary if one was to adapt to urban life, but that kinship density would have naturally been on the whole lower amongst migrants. See also Boot, 'Unemployment and poor relief in Manchester', p.228.

<sup>67</sup> The wards were created for electoral purposes, and had nothing to do with the administration of poor relief.

particularly bad examples of the dirt, disease and general squalor associated with the worst of working-class slum housing.<sup>68</sup> It was in this part of town that the Irish were most heavily concentrated, and this must at least partially explain the consistent pattern of high irremovable pauperism in West Preston district.<sup>69</sup> The Famine had increased the number of Irish natives living in Preston from 1,703 in 1841 to 5,122 in 1851, and their proportion in the population rose from 3.4 per cent to 7.4 per cent over the period.<sup>70</sup> In parts of the West Preston district the Irish made up forty per cent of the population and by 1854, when notable fluctuations in relief expenditure first emerge, many of them would have been in the town long enough to have become irremovable.<sup>71</sup> In Liverpool and Manchester the Poor Removal Act was of greatest benefit to the Irish, who far outnumbered the irremovable English.<sup>72</sup> The same is probably not true of Preston union, or indeed most other parts of Lancashire, as Irish pauperism was proportionally much lower. Consistent figures pertaining to Irish pauperism are frustratingly thin on the ground for Preston (partly because it was not considered to be a big problem), but on 1<sup>st</sup> April 1854 Irish paupers numbered 381 and constituted 9 per cent of aggregate pauperism.<sup>73</sup> Yet, most of these were probably concentrated in the West Preston district, which would raise their proportion in that area considerably.<sup>74</sup> Moreover, it was during the winter months rather than April that the Irish were particularly vulnerable to poverty. Irish natives residing in manufacturing towns were typically engaged not in relatively well paid factory occupations but poorly remunerated casual labour. Some 60 per cent in Preston were general labourers, chiefly builders, an occupation which was highly susceptible to the elements.<sup>75</sup> Thus, in the months of December to February the Irish were prime candidates for poor relief, and it seems reasonable to assume, though impossible to prove, that they were at least partly responsible for the winter peaks in the irremovable line of Figure 6.

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<sup>68</sup> P.P. 1844 (572) *First Report of the Commissioners for enquiring into the state of large towns and populous districts*, pp.33-55. See also N. Morgan, *Deadly dwellings: housing and health in a Lancashire cotton town - Preston from 1840-1914* (1993).

<sup>69</sup> D. Holding, 'Conflict and assimilation: Irish communities in Bolton and Preston', Manchester Metropolitan University (2002), p.75.

<sup>70</sup> Holding, 'Conflict and assimilation', p.53.

<sup>71</sup> Holding, 'Conflict and assimilation', pp.74-76.

<sup>72</sup> F. Neal, 'The English Poor Law, the Irish migrant and the laws of settlement and removal, 1819-1879

<sup>73</sup> P.C. 2<sup>nd</sup> December, 1854.

<sup>74</sup> Hardly any Irish paupers were based in the out-districts. Figures presented before the Board in 1851 showed that, of 1079 'resident and casual' Irish (vagrants excluded) relieved in Preston during the year ending 18<sup>th</sup> February 1851, 99 per cent were relieved in either of the two Preston districts. Of these, 58 per cent were in the West Preston district. L.A. PUT/1/15: 18<sup>th</sup> February, 1851.

<sup>75</sup> Holding, 'Conflict and assimilation', p.133; D. MacRaild, *Culture, conflict and migration: the Irish in Victorian Cumbria* (1998), p.66; M. Rose, *The Poor and the city: the English Poor Law in its urban context* (1985), p.3.



## Conclusion

The Law of Settlement and the records it created have attracted a great deal of historical interest over the last half century. Most of it, however, has focussed on the years before the Poor Law Amendment Act of 1834, partly because the survival rate of local records (removal orders, settlement certificates etc.) is much better for the earlier period. This general pre-1834 focus has meant that the Poor Removal Act of 1846 and subsequent related legislation of 1847-48, which marked the most important changes to the settlement laws for decades, have been on the whole neglected. Only recently have studies, notably by Snell and Green, given the legislation the attention it deserves.<sup>76</sup> Moreover, Lancashire - the county affected most by the 1846-48 irremovability legislation - has been ignored almost entirely. The paucity of historical research here marks a significant oversight. The 1846 Act was a controversial piece of legislation which had significant short and long term implications for the way the Poor Law operated and, by extension, for the poorest members of society. In Preston union, like Bradford in Yorkshire, it deepened existing discord between the urban Guardians and their rural counterparts and threatened the future of the union. It presumably had a similar effect in most Lancashire unions which centred upon a large urban town. More significantly, the changes also precipitated the end of the long established non-resident relief system in a number of urban industrial Lancashire unions, which certainly in the short term must have had the effect of causing a great deal of hardship to large numbers of paupers who relied on the transfer of small sums of out relief from their place of settlement to the place they were living. In the absence of such support, migrants residing in a particular town for fewer than five years would often have had little choice but to accept their removal 'home' if they required relief, wherever that happened to be.

The irremovability legislation should also be of interest to historians as it generated local and national records which offer a window into the nature of rural and urban poverty at a time when the demographic structure of the country was in the long process of dramatic and irreversible transformation. The gradual shift from a predominantly rural population to one mainly of town dwellers, achieved by 1851 largely through migration, is clearly evidenced in pauperism figures pertaining to the irremovable poor after 1846. For irremovability was, at national and regional level, an urban phenomenon. In large Lancashire towns around half of poor relief expenditure, and in places such as Manchester considerably more, was going to irremovable paupers during the 1850s. This is in itself instructive. While well over half the adult population in towns were migrants, the short term nature of much migration meant many would not have been in resident in the town for

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<sup>76</sup> Green, *Pauper capital*, pp.213-246; Snell, *Parish and belonging*, pp.81-161.

five years, and other would have acquired a new settlement in the town where they were living.<sup>77</sup> Thus, the irremovable poor - those who had resided more than five years without acquiring settlement – must have been a proportional minority within the population as a whole. Their dominant position in the relief rolls is therefore testimony to their particular vulnerability to destitution. This is, of course, why the 1846 Removal legislation was such a boon. The irremovable poor may have been a minority but they still existed in large (though impossible to determine accurately) numbers, and the legislation provided them with a formal safety net which previously did not exist. While local authorities had provided their own solution through non-resident relief, the poor had no legal right to welfare under this system and whether an application would be accepted was always uncertain, depending as it did on the place of settlement and place of residency making arrangements on agreeable terms. While the gradual dissolution of the non-resident relief system in certain Lancashire unions such as Preston after 1846 no doubt disadvantaged some people, in Preston union the sums of money spent on irremovable paupers was far above the amount that had been spent on non-resident paupers before the introduction of the legislation. Moreover, the non-resident system did not apply at all to the Irish, who had no formal safety net at all in England before 1846. Thus, to the Irish in particular the Act was probably seen as a blessing. In Manchester and Liverpool they took advantage of their new irremovable status in huge numbers, and there is evidence that, though to a lesser extent, the same is true of the parts of Preston where the Irish were most heavily concentrated. As such, it can be safely concluded that the 1846 Act benefitted more people than it impaired. It must in many cases have stopped local officials from abusing removal legislation in order to deter relief applicants, which Lees has recognised as an all too common part of what she perceptively terms the 'rules of the welfare game'.<sup>78</sup>

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<sup>77</sup> Anderson, *Family structure*, pp.34-38.

<sup>78</sup> Lees, *The solidarities of strangers*, p.22.

## Conclusion

In his study of Poor Law administration in the Fylde region of Lancashire, Ramsbottom posed the following question: 'was there', he asked, 'uniformity at regional, sub-regional or county level, or did the divergence penetrate to parish or even township level'? He concluded that even the 'smallest townships' adopted their own approach to the relief of poverty, and that there was consequently 'no overarching parish policy, let alone one at county or sub-region.'<sup>1</sup> We quote Ramsbottom here not only because his study focussed on an area within our broader study region of Lancashire, but because it is one of the latest in a series of studies which, while examining how the Poor Law operated at local level, have questioned the extent to which administration varied from one place to another. His conclusion implicitly refutes King's claim that there was a clear 'spatial flavour' to Poor Law administration which fell on distinctly regional lines, and thus provides a backdrop against which to discuss the principal lines of enquiry followed in this thesis.<sup>2</sup> Those lines of enquiry have been twofold. First, to empirically examine how policy was formed and relief administered at local level by focussing on a single Poor Law union, Preston in Lancashire. Second, to frame the local study within a wider contextual framework in order to draw broader, and more significant, conclusions. The thesis has therefore simultaneously answered calls for more studies of Poor Law administration at local level, and calls for such local studies to begin recognising the wider context in their analyses.

### A regional system?

It is worth beginning by focussing specifically, for the sake of clarity, on the apparently contradictory positions of Ramsbottom and King. The first point to make is that, fundamentally, neither of these conflicting interpretations are incorrect. Conclusions will depend on where we look and the questions we ask. Ramsbottom's was a purely local study, largely devoid empirically of broader context, and his detailed research allowed him to show irrefutably that policy and practice did vary between the townships of the Fylde region in terms of the amount and type of outdoor relief provided and, more particularly, the use of workhouses. Ramsbottom focussed primarily on the Old Poor Law (his single chapter on the New Poor Law did not consider the potential for sub-union variation). However, our analysis in Chapter 2 showed clearly that an absence of administrative uniformity endured well into the second half of the nineteenth century at sub-regional and sub-union level, and this is discussed later. But before we do so, we must consider the broader picture; little can be learnt from local studies if all we are able say at the end

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<sup>1</sup> M. Ramsbottom, *Christopher Waddington's peers: Poor Law administration in the Fylde*, PhD thesis (2011), p.ii.

<sup>2</sup> S. King, *Poverty and welfare in England, 1700-1850: a regional perspective*, (2000), p.256.

is that each township or union operated differently. What we must look out for is the existence of general patterns or characteristics common to either a region or the country as a whole. This brings us to King's claim for regional variation. While King might be guilty of underplaying the significance of sub-regional differences, and while his view of a 'generous' south and east and a 'harsh' north and west is open to dispute, there undoubtedly was a distinct 'spatial flavour' to Poor Law administration because the *extent* of pauperism consistently conformed to clear geographical patterns. Thus, while policy and practice in townships of the Fylde was diverse, it is significant that the ratio of pauperism in the Fylde union was consistent with the Lancashire single day average of around 3 per cent in our period as Chapter 2 of this thesis demonstrated. This figure was considerably below that of southern and eastern agricultural regions, but mirrored neighbouring West Riding and other counties north of the Wash and the Severn with a strong urban industrial base. Thus, while local variation was an inherent and significant characteristic of Poor Law administration, from at least the late eighteenth century it existed within a markedly regionalised framework.

Against this backdrop, this thesis has also questioned whether discernible regional variations were equally marked in others areas of Poor Law administration. Conclusions here can, in some cases, only be tentative with the methodology employed, and must be confined specifically to the period under analysis. Poor Law policy and practice evolved both locally and nationally over the course of the system's long history, and so conclusions for our period may not be relevant to, say, a century earlier or half a century later. Three key themes explored in this thesis, however, are worthy of reflection: the role of the workhouse; the composition of the pauper host; the adequacy of outdoor relief. First, the role of the workhouse. The less eligible union workhouse was central to the PLC's ideological orthodoxy in 1834, but during our period outdoor relief – even to the able-bodied - remained the overwhelmingly dominant form of welfare provision across England and Wales. In our period no county except Middlesex (London division) had more than two in ten paupers in a workhouse at any one time. Interestingly, there was no correlation between the spatial distribution of the Prohibitory Order and the proportion of paupers in a workhouse at regional level, although this is perhaps to be expected given that the PLC's regulations banning outdoor relief applied only to healthy able-bodied persons and stipulated the exception of widows. More significantly, there was an absence of any observable correlation between workhouse use and the extent of pauperism at regional level. Thus, while indoor relief saw a proportional increase in some regions such as Lancashire during the period covered by this thesis, there was no corresponding decrease in the proportion of Lancashire's population in receipt of relief, and some regions such as the West Riding of Yorkshire shared Lancashire's low ratio of

pauperism despite much lower workhouse usage.

The second theme, the composition of the pauper host, was assessed in chapters 3 and 4. Chapter 3 looked at outdoor pauperism by comparing figures for Lancashire with those of England and Wales, and Chapter 4 compared Preston union's workhouse populations with those of other studies based on CEBs. It is clear from our analysis that, at the aggregate level, there was a great deal of uniformity in the profile of pauperism across the country. Most paupers were the very young, the very old, the widowed, the sick and the disabled. In this sense the composition of the pauper host reflected relative levels of need; these people, for the most part, could not work and were therefore more likely to require support from other sources. However, explicit throughout the analysis was also the notion of *entitlement*, as elaborated by Goose who argued that Poor Law Guardians were more willing to provide outdoor relief to aged females than they were aged males, and that aged males were more likely to find themselves in a workhouse.<sup>3</sup> This thesis extended this concept to all paupers, and it is evident that it applied to other groups. Thus, widows of able-bodied age (16-59) were the largest female group in receipt of outdoor relief but the smallest inside the workhouse, while the reverse was true of unmarried women. Moreover, married men of able-bodied age have been hardly found at all among workhouse inmates, but they were dominant among able-bodied men in receipt of outdoor relief. Again, the reverse was true for unmarried men. The profile of pauperism was therefore shaped by need as one would expect, but whether a pauper received indoor or outdoor relief was determined by ideas regarding entitlement which appear to have been commonly held by Boards of Guardians.

The final of our three themes, the adequacy of outdoor relief, was assessed in Chapter 4. This is the most contentious of the three because empirical quantitative research in this area is thin on the ground, but the novel use of evidence in this thesis produced instructive results which appear to resonate beyond the boundaries of Preston union and even Lancashire. Paupers in mid-nineteenth century Preston union received relief at a scale which made up their aggregate income to around 2s per capita, or about 50 per cent of the sum required to exist at the right side of the poverty line according to the Anderson scale adopted in this thesis. Moreover, as typical Poor Law payments ranged from around 1s 6d to 2s 6d in England and Wales, and hardly ever more than 3s, this is probably more or less true for the whole country. King argues that relief payments varied considerably, and fell on broadly the same lines as ratios of pauperism in that they tended to be much higher in the south and east than the north and west. However, as relief rates were

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<sup>3</sup> N. Goose, 'Poverty, old age and gender in nineteenth century England: the case of Hertfordshire, *Continuity and Change*, 20 (2005), pp.351-384.

declining in the south and east during the first half of the nineteenth century, and particularly after 1834, the disparity may have been far less marked under the New Poor Law. Much more research needs to be done in this area. We would like to know not only the amount of relief provided but the length of time it was provided for, the form in which it came, and whether the amount provided varied between different groups for more conclusive results. Yet, it is unlikely that such analysis would dramatically dispute the findings of this thesis. Outdoor relief, right across the country, cannot alone have provided paupers with enough to maintain themselves, and even with additional resources they could hardly have maintained themselves comfortably.

These three themes, then, indicate not the existence of deep regional variations in the way relief was administered after 1834 but several important shared characteristics: the profile of indoor and outdoor pauperism looked much the same across England and Wales; most paupers received outdoor relief; and most got outdoor relief on a scale which would not alone have been adequate to maintain them. Within these generalisations there inevitably existed a great deal of variation, but nowhere would it have been to a degree which dramatically undermines the existence of these common experiences. It is difficult, from this perspective, to offer much support for King's view that after 1834 the Poor Law was *de facto* operating as two fundamentally different systems, harsh in the north and west and generous in the south and east. Some unions were no doubt harsher than others, but this was also true at sub-regional level, and in any case the system can hardly be described as operating generously anywhere. This brings us back to the issue regarding ratios of pauperism. Despite clear regional differences, the proportion of the population in receipt of relief was considerably below the proportion of the population living in poverty in all regions. Thus, the New Poor Law, regardless of geographical variation, could not have played more than a very marginal role in the makeshift economies of the poor right across the country. Against this backdrop, this thesis argues that regional disparities in the ratio of pauperism chiefly reflected not varying degrees of generosity but socio-economic circumstances. Two reasons stand out. First, the fact that pauperism was lowest in high wage regions, and highest in low wage regions, cannot be ignored, particularly as it was in high wage regions that the makeshift economy was most durable. That pauperism rose exponentially in the industrial north during periods of economic depression strengthens this interpretation. Second, high wage regions, particularly the industrial north and London where pauperism was generally very low, experienced extremely high levels of immigration, and the implications of this – though impossible to measure – on the size of the pauper host must have been significant as the non-settled poor were very reluctant to apply for relief for fear of removal.

Administration at sub-regional level: evidence from Lancashire

Conclusions presented thus far appear to play down the significance of variations in Poor Law administration after 1834. Yet, it would be wrong to make such an assumption. While they do preclude the notion that relief practices varied *radically* from one place to another, we must when addressing broad themes through quantitative analysis at regional level recognise the danger of ignoring the importance of nuance and subtlety. Like the econometric historian who argues from macro data that Britain did not experience an Industrial Revolution because indicators such as industrial output grew at a slower than revolutionary rate, we risk ignoring the lived experience of those on the ground. Evidence from Lancashire clearly demonstrates that the size of the pauper host, the amount of outdoor relief offered and the form and function of the workhouse could, and did, vary between unions, in some cases very considerably.

First, though, and just as significantly, some common characteristics of Poor Law administration in Lancashire. Pauperism in the county was, outside of periods of industrial depression, consistently amongst the lowest in the country, and this had been the case for decades before the New Poor Law was introduced in 1837. By the time Boards of Guardians took over relief duties in the late-1830s, Poor Law administration operated within what might be termed a welfare 'culture' in which the primacy of self-help and kinship support were placed at forefront of the response to poverty. It was an approach which encouraged that 'spirit of independence' which commentators noted as a strong characteristic of the northern industrial working-class. Thane's view – and we should like to know more about this – that the sentiment was shared by Poor Law administrators everywhere but was unenforceable in low wage regions clearly supports the socio-economic argument outlined above. It also brings us to one of the reasons the New Poor Law was so strongly opposed, in most Lancashire unions, throughout our period. Boards of Guardians in Lancashire recognised that the Poor Law Amendment Act was passed in response to problems emanating from the south and east, not the north where the Poor Law was thought to be operating efficiently. Further, it marked an affront to the established local practice of providing relief to hand loom weavers, and to unemployed operatives in times of economic distress. Within this framework the success of, and ideas behind, the anti-Poor Law movement of 1837-41, and resistance to the Outdoor Relief regulation Order in 1852-53, demonstrate not only the strength of opposition to the New Poor Law, but also the existence of a particular approach to Poor Law administration which was shared across the county.

This opposition to the New Poor Law in Lancashire has led historians to argue that very little changed in the county during the few decades which followed its introduction. The absence of

regulations prohibiting outdoor relief, the failure of Guardians to implement a workhouse test and their refusal to build union workhouses have all been pointed to as evidence of continuity rather than change. There is much to support this interpretation, and this thesis does not offer a dramatic reinterpretation. As chapters 2 and 5 showed, Guardians in Lancashire did refuse to carry out a rigorous workhouse test, they were slower to build union workhouses, and it was in Lancashire more than any other county that outdoor relief to able-bodied men in and out of employment endured. Yet, it has argued that the situation in Lancashire was more complex than these general interpretations suggest. Too often the county has been viewed by Poor Law historians of our period homogenously, as if opposition to the New Poor Law was universally systemic and resolute. This was clearly not the case. True, most unions were, on the whole, opposed to the New Poor Law in our period, or at least to the principles which lay behind it. However, some very densely populated unions in south-east Lancashire, notably Manchester and Chorlton, supported its introduction, as did Lancaster, and if the campaign against the Outdoor Relief Regulation Order demonstrated enduring opposition to the New Poor law it also demonstrated the existence of enduring support for it in these unions. Further, workhouse construction in certain parts of Lancashire, most notably but not exclusively in and around the south-east Lancashire area, occurred quicker and was more significant than historiography has recognised. The refusal of Guardians to build workhouses in Lancashire has been interpreted historiographically as epitomising local hostility, and from this perspective the rapid, domino like spate of workhouse construction which took place in south-east Lancashire between 1848 and 1854 might have reflected a softening of opposition and an acceptance of elements of the central authority's indoor relief strategy, even though most unions still refused to comply with orthodox ideology. Further, the very fact that unions in this area embarked upon a programme of union workhouse construction around 1850, as had most other unions in the county by 1860, marks an important discontinuity with the past. Indeed, as large new workhouses were constructed the role of the institution in the welfare framework increased, and by 1860 Lancashire had amongst the highest proportion of indoor paupers in the country.

Outside of disputes over the New Poor Law and the building of a union workhouses, Guardians and their officers had to undertake the mundane day-to-day task of administering relief to the poor. In the absence of the Prohibitory Order and, from 1853, operating under a watered down version of the Outdoor Labour test Order, Guardians in Lancashire had more autonomy than their peers in most other counties when doing so. Two observable patterns of Poor Law administration in Lancashire present themselves. One is a clear distinction between predominantly urban and predominantly rural unions. The former, reflecting national patterns, generally had lower rates of



pauperism and proportionally more paupers in workhouses. Indeed, it may well be that, just as this thesis has argued for the national level, higher wages, better employment opportunities and a larger concentration of non-settled paupers in industrial unions may be responsible for these patterns. It is, presumably, no coincidence that the rural unions furthest away from industrial centres generally had the highest ratios of pauperism. But we cannot only look at socio-economic circumstances here because some unions simply do not conform. What is clear is that policy decisions made locally, inherently unique to each union, also shaped patterns of administration. For example, the extremely high levels of indoor pauperism in parts of south-east Lancashire occurred not because Guardians there *had* to offer the workhouse to so many but because they *chose* to, even if socio-economic conditions influenced the decision. In all unions the development of policy and practice depended upon local decisions, and shaped the way the Poor Law operated at union level in ways which are often impossible to detect through quantitative data. Preston union therefore acted as a case study through which to examine these processes and their practical implications; in short, to understand how policy and practice developed at local level.

#### *Administration at union level: evidence from Preston union*

In the introduction to this thesis it was stated that a number of broad 'interconnected variables' shaped Poor Law administration at local level in our period. It is worth repeating them: (a) the spatial distribution of official orders regulating relief; (b) a union's socio-economic base; (c) the influence of local figures; (d) local politics; (e) customary notions of entitlement to relief and established practices. We have already seen in the previous two sections the influence of some of these variables in practice at regional and sub-regional level. For example, the absence of the Prohibitory Order (a) in the northern manufacturing districts allowed Guardians to continue providing outdoor relief to healthy able-bodied males in accordance with customary notions of entitlement and established practices (e). These notions of entitlement and established practices were shaped in part by economic conditions (b). Many other examples could be pointed out. However, the significance of these variables on relief administration can only be properly appreciated through detailed research at local level. The roles of sections (c) and (d) in particular, which were of considerable importance in Preston union, can only be understood through local analysis. In the introduction to this thesis six questions were posed (p.35) relating to policy formation in the context of these variables. Collectively they incorporate three broad themes – politics, ideology and socio-economics – and it is with these questions and themes in mind that we discuss the experience of Preston union in this final section.

While the response to the New Poor Law in Lancashire embodied a number of common features

as discussed, the experience of each union differed in subtle and not so subtle ways. Preston's own experience hinged on the immediate formation of two factions in the boardroom in 1837; a Preston based group of radicals and liberals intent on opposing the New Poor Law, and a small but powerful cross party group of magistrates determined to see it fully enacted. This intra-union factionalism meant Preston union did not follow the model, typical among some of the most resilient of northern anti-Poor Law unions during the late 1830s, of a united Board recalcitrantly refusing to comply with PLC directives. Internal conflict, rather than conflict between the locality and the centre, was the outstanding characteristic in Preston union. Moreover, the union was probably more untypical than most in that local conflict endured for so long. In 1860, at the end of the period covered by this thesis, the Preston Guardians were still divided over the New Poor Law on the same lines as those which emerged in 1837, and over the same fundamental issues. This had tremendous consequences for Poor Law administration, but before discussing how it is necessary to consider why circumstances were such. The question brings us to point (c) of the variables listed above - the influence of local figures. For it is undoubtedly true that local conflict in Preston union was shaped, in the short and long term, by the sharply competing convictions of Thomas Batty Addison and Joseph Livesey, the *de facto* leaders of the pro and anti-Poor Law factions respectively in our period. Few unions had polarised individuals of the calibre of Addison and Livesey involved in Poor Law affairs, and the sheer tenacity of these men to see their ideas realised set the agenda for over twenty years. Had either decided not to involve himself in the affairs of the Preston Board of Guardians, the history of the union during the years 1837 to 1860 would have been very different.

How the conflict played out, and by extension how local policy on certain key issues was decided, brings us to point (d) of the variables - politics. In Preston union we refer here not to *party* politics but to the politics of ideology which infused Poor Law elections in our period. This is significant. Ashforth's study of Poor Law electoral politics in Bradford union showed that after the initial wave of anti-Poor Law agitation had ended around 1840, Guardians' elections simply descended into party political battles between Liberals and Tories. Pratt showed the same of Wigan union for the period 1880-1900. In both cases, this was put down to the existence of local consensus over how relief should be administered which left no room for either side to undermine the other on issues relating to relief policy. In Preston union this was clearly not the case. As discussed in Chapter 1, fundamental divisions over the direction of policy, notably over the 'workhouse question' during the 1840s and 1850s, meant issues relating to relief policy were at the heart of Poor Law electoral campaigning. The elections centred upon the township of Preston and were orchestrated by Livesey, whose annual campaigns – first against the New Poor Law and, following the dubious

election of Addison as chairman in 1838 which ensured its implementation, against the workhouse system – practically guaranteed the ascendancy of anti-Poor Law or anti-union workhouse Guardians in the boardroom. The importance of Livesey's influence here cannot be overstated. Through written propaganda, impassioned speeches and, from 1844, his appropriately titled *Preston Guardian* newspaper, Livesey succeeded in instilling among the population a local zeitgeist which refused to accept the legitimacy of a pro-union workhouse position. Moreover, he did so not on economic grounds, although this was always part of the question, but on humane grounds, condemning the punitive workhouse system through a potent combination of religion and morality. The nature of the speeches made at the anti-union workhouse meeting of 1851, attended by over 1000 people, where one person threatened to put a 'ball through a man's heart' if he sent his family to a union workhouse, indicates that this message had become pervasive in Preston by mid-century. This was Livesey's single greatest achievement in Poor Law terms. By placing the union workhouse at the centre of the controversy surrounding the New Poor Law, and by shaping local discourse by emphasising the inherent inhumanity (as he saw it) of the workhouse system, he was crucial to delaying the construction of the institution until the 1860s. Indeed, only in 1865 when Livesey, aged 71, had practically retired from public life, did the Guardians finally resolve to replace the five existing old township workhouses with a single union one. By that time every other urban industrial union in Lancashire, with the exception of Burnley, had built a union workhouse, many of them over a decade earlier.

It was not only by delaying the building of a union workhouse that Livesey, and others aligned to the same anti-Poor Law agenda, were able to influence how the Poor Law functioned in Preston union through the Guardian's elections. This is clearly demonstrated by the successful removal of Addison from the chair in 1841 and 1848, after he had been accused of and condemned for applying harsh relief policies during what were periods of intense industrial depression. Moreover, with an alternative chairman in control on these occasions the anti-Poor Law Guardians were able to pursue objectives which would have been very difficult to achieve had Addison been in the chair. Thus, the Board of 1841, under the chairmanship of William Melville Lomas, successfully pursued an anti-workhouse classification agenda for over a year after the PLC had introduced their classification order as shown in Chapter 1. Only the re-election of Addison following the controversial election of 1842 put an end to the campaign. Further, it was also in 1841 that the Guardians began dividing into separate committees to hear relief applications as discussed in Chapter 2, another policy which Addison was opposed to. On the face of it this was simply a convenient administrative move - dividing the cases to make them more manageable - but the issue was also a controversial one, incorporating the question of whether relief claimants should

be known to the Guardians administering relief. Addison felt that knowledge of the individual encouraged a misguided compassion, but this position was rejected by the majority of elected Guardians who thought humane feeling had a place in Poor Law administration. The most notable case, however, of those opposed to the New Poor Law or aspects of it gaining control and using it to undermine the system occurred in 1848, when the Thomas Birchall chaired Board of that year put in place an extensive outdoor labour test as shown in Chapter 5. There were sound practical reasons for implementing such a scheme, but it was above all a shrewd political move designed to weaken Addison's calls for a workhouse test. In practice, it meant Preston union was formally testing unemployed able-bodied men at a time when many other unions in Lancashire were not, and delineates the complex political and ideological imperatives which could lie behind policy formation at local level.

It is clear, then, that key individuals, through the inherently political Poor Law electoral system, were able to influence and shape relief policy on the *big issues* of the day in Preston union. However, the week-to-week administration of relief to the poor in practice existed largely outside of these grand ideological disputes. While most of the elected Guardians were opposed to the union workhouse, and while a stringent workhouse test was not applied in our period, there was no overarching union approach to how relief *should* be administered. This brings us back to the formation of separate relief committees. There was, as stated above, humane reasons behind the preference for separate committees, but allied to this was a far simpler desire to reclaim some of the local autonomy lost to unionisation. Thus, after the Guardians first began dividing the relief cases into two divisions in 1841 they continued to be split into smaller and smaller units until, by the early 1850s, each Guardian was only hearing the relief cases which belonged to the township or relief district he represented. In other words, in practical terms the Guardians quickly regressed back to the system which existed under the Old Poor Law. This, of course, leads us to the potential for sub-union variation which has received little attention in Poor Law historiography. It has been difficult, with the evidence available, to undertake detailed analysis of sub-union differentiation in Preston union, but some instructive observations can be made. As Chapter 2 demonstrated, paupers in the Preston relief district were proportionally most likely to find themselves in a workhouse, while those in the Alston district were least likely. Within this, a clear line of demarcation existed between the urban and rural districts which is equally evident at sub-regional level. Paupers belonging to the Preston district were also more likely to have their relief given as a loan as discussed in Chapter 3, although the proportion of paupers in receipt of loaned relief was only a very small part of the total in our period. Further, the Preston district paupers were the only ones to have some of their relief provided in-kind. After the Outdoor Relief Regulation Order was

issued in 1852 just under half of all outdoor relief expenditure in the Preston district went on relief in-kind, whereas the out-districts simply refused to comply with the regulations and continued to provide outdoor relief entirely in money. Probably, the out-township paupers were in a slightly more favourable position: they were less likely to be offered the workhouse, and most likely to get their outdoor relief in money which seems to have been preferred by paupers. More clearly, and more importantly, unionisation was designed to create a greater degree of administrative uniformity across the country, but this was not even achieved in Preston union up to 1860.

We end this study by returning to the last of those series of questions posed in the Introduction to the thesis, as it allows us to tie together some important final points: to what extent does Preston union conform to the historiographical consensus that very little changed in Lancashire after the introduction of the New Poor Law up to 1860? In considering the question we ask not what changed before and after 1837, for this has not been the focus, but rather how much Poor Law administration in Preston union conformed to the principles which underpinned the New Poor Law in our period. The evidence presented in this thesis leads us down a clear path, and one which was tread by many Lancashire unions during the period 1837 to 1860: that Preston union did not rigidly apply the ideological convictions advocated by the central authority in theory or practice. We should not overstate this point too forcefully. Poor Law administration in Lancashire was not, before 1837, too far removed from post-1834 central policy. Pauperism was low, and the emphasis on self-help and kinship support were core PLC values. Yet, in crucial areas central policy was clearly at odds with established practices. The Guardians refusal to apply a workhouse test against all able-bodied male applicants reflected in part the established practice of subsidising the wages of hand loom weavers, in part their unwillingness to test the mass of unemployed men during periods of industrial depression, and in part the fact that most able-bodied male paupers were family men and there was a strong local aversion to separating families in workhouses. Moreover, in Preston union, splitting the relief cases in order that each Guardian dealt only with applicants from their own area was clearly contrary to the intentions of the PLC when they unionised townships into single administrative bodies. The same is true of the union's five workhouses, which operated independently of each other and appear to have been far from the less eligible institutions necessary for the implementation of an orthodox workhouse system.

Poor Law policy, of course, was always subject to change, and the Guardian's attachment to policies which were so clearly distinct from those of the centre does appear to have eroded sometime after 1860 in Preston union. Their resolution to construct a union workhouse in 1865,

and the subsequent dramatic fall in the number of outdoor paupers from 1870 as Crusading ideology took hold, points to a significant shift in the sentiment and ideology behind local policy. This, of course, only serves to emphasise the great difference between our period and later decades. During the years 1837-1860, at least partly as a result of the protracted dispute over the workhouse question, Preston union clearly fits the model delineated by the continuation theorists in that policy and practice, and the administrative structures within which the provision of relief took place, were hardly very far removed from the Old Poor Law.

# Appendix

## Appendix 1

Part 1: Able bodied outdoor paupers relieved on 1<sup>st</sup> January and 1<sup>st</sup> July, Lancashire, 1848-1859

Part 2: Not able-bodied outdoor paupers relieved on 1<sup>st</sup> January and 1<sup>st</sup> July, Lancashire, 1848-1859

Part 3: Aggregate totals of Part 1 and Part 2

Part 4: Able bodied outdoor paupers relieved on 1<sup>st</sup> January and 1<sup>st</sup> July, England and Wales, 1848-1859

Part 5: Not able-bodied outdoor paupers relieved on 1<sup>st</sup> January and 1<sup>st</sup> July, England and Wales, 1848-1859

Part 6: Aggregate totals of Part 4 and Part 5

**Source:** Parliamentary Papers. First to eleventh annual reports of the Poor Law Board, 1849-1859.

## Appendix 2

Case study of Elizabeth Hindle, a non-settled pauper.

**Appendix 1, Part 1: Able bodied outdoor paupers relieved on 1<sup>st</sup> January and 1<sup>st</sup> July, Lancashire, 1848-1859**

|                           | Able bodied males (married + single) |                        |                                   |                              | Families of males in previous three columns |                   | Widows and their children |                                       |                           | Illegitimate children and mothers |       | Families relieved as parent in gaol |       | Soldiers and sailors |       | Families of non-resident males |       |
|---------------------------|--------------------------------------|------------------------|-----------------------------------|------------------------------|---|-------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------------------|---------------------------|-----------------------------------|-------|-------------------------------------|-------|----------------------|-------|--------------------------------|-------|
|                           | Sudden and urgent necessity          | Sickness/accident etc. | Sickness of family member/funeral | Want of work or other causes | Wives                                       | Children under 16 | Widows                    | Children under 16 dependent on widows | Single women, no children | Mothers                           | Child | Wives                               | Child | Mother               | Child | Wives                          | Child |
| 1 <sup>st</sup> July, '48 | 38                                   | 1,637                  | 860                               | 9,529                        | 10,009                                      | 32,180            | 5,395                     | 10,726                                | 1,581                     | 1,523                             | 2,381 | 505                                 | 1,143 | 123                  | 172   | 904                            | 2,039 |
| 1 <sup>st</sup> Jan, '49  | 97                                   | 1,710                  | 572                               | 7,105                        | 8,108                                       | 27,568            | 5,145                     | 11,655                                | 1,102                     | 1,404                             | 2,055 | 386                                 | 936   | 75                   | 141   | 1,097                          | 2,765 |
| 1 <sup>st</sup> July, '49 | 52                                   | 1,299                  | 450                               | 3,506                        | 4,276                                       | 14,783            | 4,564                     | 10,546                                | 693                       | 981                               | 1,763 | 227                                 | 683   | 61                   | 117   | 922                            | 2,402 |
| 1 <sup>st</sup> Jan, '50  | 31                                   | 1,449                  | 485                               | 3,345                        | 4,257                                       | 14,660            | 4,728                     | 10,932                                | 641                       | 898                               | 1,643 | 189                                 | 567   | 40                   | 112   | 802                            | 2,072 |
| 1 <sup>st</sup> July, '50 | 34                                   | 1,260                  | 371                               | 2,070                        | 3,032                                       | 10,456            | 4,504                     | 11,109                                | 523                       | 715                               | 1,351 | 215                                 | 554   | 42                   | 93    | 744                            | 2,021 |
| 1 <sup>st</sup> Jan, '51  | 18                                   | 1,260                  | 416                               | 2,175                        | 3,136                                       | 10,865            | 4,339                     | 10,845                                | 497                       | 655                               | 1,261 | 169                                 | 522   | 41                   | 97    | 716                            | 1,828 |
| 1 <sup>st</sup> July, '51 | 13                                   | 1,154                  | 358                               | 1,671                        | 2,550                                       | 9,041             | 4,277                     | 10,986                                | 605                       | 587                               | 1,077 | 177                                 | 514   | 53                   | 101   | 707                            | 1,700 |
| 1 <sup>st</sup> Jan, '52  | 12                                   | 1,272                  | 382                               | 1,757                        | 2,794                                       | 9,469             | 3,800                     | 10,413                                | 423                       | 581                               | 1,032 | 168                                 | 519   | 28                   | 68    | 621                            | 1,603 |
| 1 <sup>st</sup> July, '52 | 14                                   | 941                    | 285                               | 1,108                        | 1,927                                       | 6,872             | 3,560                     | 10,170                                | 316                       | 433                               | 833   | 167                                 | 505   | 35                   | 74    | 529                            | 1,373 |
| 1 <sup>st</sup> Jan, '53  | 19                                   | 833                    | 327                               | 482                          | 1,396                                       | 4,780             | 3,207                     | 9,622                                 | 241                       | 315                               | 600   | 127                                 | 406   | 22                   | 48    | 480                            | 1,264 |
| 1 <sup>st</sup> July, '53 | 6                                    | 899                    | 328                               | 312                          | 1,251                                       | 4,158             | 4,158                     | 12,533                                | 219                       | 282                               | 541   | 162                                 | 487   | 47                   | 162   | 506                            | 1,397 |
| 1 <sup>st</sup> Jan, '54  | 23                                   | 1,156                  | 539                               | 1,089                        | 2,466                                       | 7,970             | 4,521                     | 12,984                                | 237                       | 376                               | 651   | 167                                 | 460   | 81                   | 208   | 841                            | 2,025 |
| 1 <sup>st</sup> July, '54 | 17                                   | 1,090                  | 528                               | 632                          | 1,959                                       | 6,398             | 4,514                     | 12,407                                | 273                       | 382                               | 723   | 197                                 | 601   | 141                  | 336   | 992                            | 2,446 |
| 1 <sup>st</sup> Jan, '55  | 4                                    | 1,281                  | 652                               | 1,412                        | 2,812                                       | 8,898             | 4,653                     | 13,040                                | 242                       | 412                               | 811   | 223                                 | 648   | 255                  | 628   | 1,065                          | 2,729 |
| 1 <sup>st</sup> July, '55 | 2                                    | 1,166                  | 549                               | 785                          | 2,158                                       | 7,263             | 5,378                     | 13,026                                | 298                       | 399                               | 764   | 232                                 | 636   | 419                  | 896   | 1,134                          | 2,714 |
| 1 <sup>st</sup> Jan, '56  | 7                                    | 1,330                  | 568                               | 1,574                        | 3,112                                       | 10,109            | 5,433                     | 14,125                                | 451                       | 496                               | 943   | 243                                 | 631   | 541                  | 1360  | 1,200                          | 2,800 |
| 1 <sup>st</sup> July, '56 | 4                                    | 898                    | 339                               | 412                          | 1,479                                       | 5,195             | 4,977                     | 13,288                                | 257                       | 368                               | 735   | 211                                 | 648   | 424                  | 1098  | 919                            | 2,576 |
| 1 <sup>st</sup> Jan, '57  | 3                                    | 1,153                  | 492                               | 869                          | 2,206                                       | 7,183             | 4,857                     | 13,403                                | 298                       | 404                               | 806   | 209                                 | 608   | 230                  | 580   | 996                            | 2,710 |
| 1 <sup>st</sup> July, '57 | 7                                    | 1,219                  | 383                               | 429                          | 1,774                                       | 5,772             | 4,640                     | 12,885                                | 268                       | 388                               | 761   | 256                                 | 750   | 181                  | 411   | 883                            | 2,535 |
| 1 <sup>st</sup> Jan, '58  | 45                                   | 2,026                  | 872                               | 6,011                        | 7,330                                       | 20,656            | 6,628                     | 15,968                                | 1,125                     | 686                               | 1,217 | 374                                 | 1,059 | 443                  | 921   | 2,089                          | 5,330 |
| 1 <sup>st</sup> July, '58 | 13                                   | 1,374                  | 426                               | 876                          | 2,400                                       | 7,223             | 5,165                     | 13,996                                | 291                       | 420                               | 814   | 297                                 | 914   | 351                  | 783   | 1,074                          | 2,937 |
| 1 <sup>st</sup> Jan, '59  | 7                                    | 1,357                  | 420                               | 753                          | 2,246                                       | 6,897             | 5,096                     | 13,900                                | 282                       | 366                               | 723   | 298                                 | 749   | 394                  | 958   | 1,007                          | 2,863 |



**Appendix 1, Part 2: Not able bodied outdoor paupers relieved on 1<sup>st</sup> January and 1<sup>st</sup> July, Lancashire, 1848-1859**

|               | Lunatics |         |                              |                      |      |        |          |
|---------------|----------|---------|------------------------------|----------------------|------|--------|----------|
|               | Males    | Females | Children u 16<br>with parent | U 16 w/out<br>parent | Male | Female | Children |
| 1st July, '48 | 5,879    | 10,845  | 1,046                        | 1,553                | 277  | 283    | 17       |
| 1st Jan '49   | 6,512    | 11,593  | 1,014                        | 1,601                | 355  | 363    | 13       |
| 1st July, '49 | 6,293    | 11,967  | 852                          | 1,802                | 355  | 348    | 15       |
| 1st Jan, '50  | 6,162    | 11,988  | 1,021                        | 1,806                | 338  | 330    | 16       |
| 1st July, '50 | 6,014    | 11,919  | 651                          | 1,704                | 329  | 345    | 14       |
| 1st Jan, '51  | 6,606    | 11,917  | 703                          | 1,537                | 348  | 376    | 14       |
| 1st July, '51 | 5,782    | 11,574  | 1,000                        | 1,600                | 345  | 368    | 12       |
| 1st Jan, '52  | 6,098    | 12,235  | 826                          | 1,474                | 340  | 432    | 17       |
| 1st July, '52 | 6,005    | 12,190  | 858                          | 1,420                | 350  | 386    | 9        |
| 1st Jan, '53  | 5,833    | 11,941  | 1,084                        | 1,289                | 347  | 384    | 9        |
| 1st July, '53 | 6,201    | 14,029  | 1,549                        | 1,208                | 495  | 535    | 7        |
| 1st Jan, '54  | 6,504    | 14,268  | 1,676                        | 1,440                | 507  | 525    | 9        |
| 1st July, '54 | 6,302    | 14,076  | 2,077                        | 1,365                | 504  | 552    | 11       |
| 1st Jan, '55  | 6,953    | 14,480  | 1,983                        | 1,329                | 616  | 663    | 21       |
| 1st July, '55 | 6,767    | 13,975  | 2,215                        | 1,457                | 553  | 627    | 10       |
| 1st Jan, '56  | 6,660    | 14,947  | 2,432                        | 1,313                | 603  | 646    | 11       |
| 1st July, '56 | 6,598    | 14,477  | 1,776                        | 1,566                | 569  | 612    | 17       |
| 1st Jan, '57  | 6,792    | 14,520  | 1,838                        | 1,446                | 593  | 693    | 16       |
| 1st July, '57 | 5,954    | 14,024  | 1,332                        | 1,435                | 626  | 736    | 40       |
| 1st Jan, '58  | 7,014    | 15,520  | 1,803                        | 1,526                | 621  | 702    | 16       |
| 1st July, '58 | 6,354    | 14,620  | 1,440                        | 1,462                | 640  | 714    | 20       |
| 1st Jan, '59  | 6,505    | 14,574  | 1,513                        | 1,525                | 767  | 844    | 16       |

**Appendix 1, Part 3: Aggregate totals of Part 1 and Part 2, Lancashire,  
1848-1859**

|               | <b>Males</b> | <b>Females</b> | <b>Children</b> | <b>Total</b> |
|---------------|--------------|----------------|-----------------|--------------|
| 1st July, '48 | 18,312       | 31,210         | 51,243          | 100,765      |
| 1st Jan '49   | 16,357       | 29,562         | 47,398          | 93,317       |
| 1st July, '49 | 11,977       | 24,038         | 33,015          | 69,030       |
| 1st Jan, '50  | 11,810       | 23,893         | 32,889          | 68,592       |
| 1st July, '50 | 10,071       | 22,022         | 27,965          | 60,058       |
| 1st Jan, '51  | 10,223       | 21,872         | 27,700          | 59,795       |
| 1st July, '51 | 9,323        | 21,050         | 25,770          | 65,148       |
| 1st Jan, '52  | 9,854        | 21,083         | 25,551          | 56,488       |
| 1st July, '52 | 8,602        | 19,564         | 22,122          | 50,278       |
| 1st Jan, '53  | 7,839        | 18,113         | 19,106          | 45,058       |
| 1st July, '53 | 8,125        | 21,041         | 22,279          | 51,463       |
| 1st Jan, '54  | 9,813        | 23,483         | 27,376          | 60,672       |
| 1st July, '54 | 9,073        | 23,077         | 26,363          | 58,513       |
| 1st Jan, '55  | 10,918       | 24,807         | 30,130          | 65,855       |
| 1st July, '55 | 9,973        | 24,477         | 28,970          | 63,422       |
| 1st Jan, '56  | 11,092       | 27,135         | 34,538          | 72,765       |
| 1st July, '56 | 8,736        | 23,731         | 26,953          | 59,420       |
| 1st Jan, '57  | 9,922        | 24,424         | 28,559          | 62,905       |
| 1st July, '57 | 8,618        | 23,149         | 25,879          | 57,646       |
| 1st Jan, '58  | 16,589       | 34,893         | 48,360          | 99,860       |
| 1st July, '58 | 9,683        | 25,332         | 29,595          | 64,610       |
| 1st Jan, '59  | 9,609        | 25,007         | 29,150          | 63,826       |

**Appendix 1, Part 4: Able bodied outdoor paupers relieved on 1st January and 1st July, England and Wales, 1848-1859**

|                           | Able bodied males (married + single) |                        |                                   |                              | Families of males in previous three columns |                   | Widows and their children |                                       |                           | Illegitimate children and mothers |       | Families relieved as parent in gaol |       | Soldiers and sailors |       | Families of non-resident males |        |
|---------------------------|--------------------------------------|------------------------|-----------------------------------|------------------------------|---|-------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------------------|---------------------------|-----------------------------------|-------|-------------------------------------|-------|----------------------|-------|--------------------------------|--------|
|                           | Sudden and urgent necessity          | Sickness/accident etc. | Sickness of family member/funeral | Want of work or other causes | Wives                                       | Children under 16 | Widows                    | Children under 16 dependent on widows | Single women, no children | wives                             | Child | Wives                               | Child | Wives                | Child | Wives                          | Child  |
| 1 <sup>st</sup> July, '48 | 888                                  | 23,812                 | 9805                              | 18085                        | 41,645                                      | 125,903           | 51,686                    | 116,712                               | 8,847                     | 5,267                             | 8,052 | 2,642                               | 7038  | 767                  | 1,457 | 3,439                          | 8,652  |
| 1 <sup>st</sup> Jan, '49  | 705                                  | 25,794                 | 11,047                            | 17,588                       | 44,043                                      | 133,233           | 52,411                    | 119,793                               | 8,993                     | 5,429                             | 8,013 | 2,650                               | 7143  | 787                  | 1,543 | 4,053                          | 10,497 |
| 1 <sup>st</sup> July, '49 | 506                                  | 22,257                 | 8,815                             | 8,719                        | 32,294                                      | 96,475            | 50,058                    | 115,851                               | 7,321                     | 4,421                             | 6,879 | 2,412                               | 6375  | 696                  | 1,462 | 3,728                          | 9,796  |
| 1 <sup>st</sup> Jan, '50  | 308                                  | 22,659                 | 9,071                             | 9,314                        | 33,062                                      | 28,616            | 53,151                    | 126,164                               | 7,603                     | 4,508                             | 7,055 | 2,269                               | 6186  | 656                  | 1,281 | 3,741                          | 9,525  |
| 1 <sup>st</sup> July, '50 | 201                                  | 18,604                 | 6,790                             | 4,440                        | 23,840                                      | 72,671            | 50,669                    | 124,122                               | 6,286                     | 3,920                             | 6,152 | 2,106                               | 5746  | 540                  | 1,079 | 3,425                          | 9,013  |
| 1 <sup>st</sup> Jan, '51  | 200                                  | 19,790                 | 7,480                             | 5,347                        | 26,399                                      | 78,356            | 50,628                    | 123,413                               | 6,385                     | 3,703                             | 5,862 | 1,910                               | 5427  | 544                  | 1,124 | 3,359                          | 8,523  |
| 1 <sup>st</sup> July, '51 | 190                                  | 17,147                 | 6,539                             | 4,356                        | 22,553                                      | 67,339            | 48,147                    | 121,639                               | 5,893                     | 3,518                             | 5,536 | 1,830                               | 5183  | 474                  | 991   | 3,379                          | 8,826  |
| 1 <sup>st</sup> Jan, '52  | 220                                  | 17,630                 | 6,801                             | 4,108                        | 23,004                                      | 69,676            | 47,068                    | 119,989                               | 5,499                     | 3,453                             | 5,478 | 1,913                               | 5271  | 461                  | 978   | 3,225                          | 8,515  |
| 1 <sup>st</sup> July, '52 | 102                                  | 17,049                 | 8,442                             | 2,077                        | 20,949                                      | 62,668            | 45,643                    | 110,751                               | 5,205                     | 3,193                             | 4,004 | 1,850                               | 5433  | 495                  | 1078  | 3,300                          | 8,400  |
| 1 <sup>st</sup> Jan, '53  | 125                                  | 17,179                 | 6,476                             | 1,611                        | 20,285                                      | 60,306            | 44,983                    | 115,221                               | 5,182                     | 2,894                             | 4,501 | 1,719                               | 5089  | 420                  | 946   | 3,093                          | 8,377  |
| 1 <sup>st</sup> July, '53 | 81                                   | 14,392                 | 5,304                             | 1,084                        | 16,781                                      | 48,410            | 45,471                    | 117,776                               | 4,847                     | 2,640                             | 4,274 | 1,728                               | 4880  | 479                  | 1,157 | 2,974                          | 8,225  |
| 1 <sup>st</sup> Jan, '54  | 225                                  | 17,600                 | 7,481                             | 3,216                        | 23,293                                      | 68,785            | 47,205                    | 113,807                               | 5,272                     | 2,811                             | 4,410 | 1,718                               | 4875  | 579                  | 1,415 | 3,567                          | 8,871  |
| 1 <sup>st</sup> July, '54 | 133                                  | 15,967                 | 6,849                             | 2,246                        | 20,500                                      | 59,584            | 47,509                    | 116,728                               | 5,188                     | 2,912                             | 4,477 | 1,916                               | 5520  | 1,232                | 2,743 | 4,075                          | 10,823 |
| 1 <sup>st</sup> Jan, '55  | 116                                  | 17,781                 | 7,597                             | 4,213                        | 24,026                                      | 70,771            | 49,378                    | 123,354                               | 5,433                     | 3,069                             | 4,993 | 1,907                               | 5701  | 2,150                | 4,487 | 4,479                          | 10,000 |
| 1 <sup>st</sup> July, 55  | 97                                   | 16,877                 | 6,644                             | 2,498                        | 21,316                                      | 61,688            | 51,351                    | 126,822                               | 5,422                     | 3,097                             | 4,930 | 2,092                               | 6103  | 2,206                | 4,787 | 4,500                          | 10,000 |
| 1 <sup>st</sup> Jan, '56  | 164                                  | 18,526                 | 7,579                             | 4,967                        | 25,595                                      | 74,903            | 52,653                    | 125,960                               | 5,820                     | 3,281                             | 5,310 | 2,182                               | 6392  | 2,794                | 6,405 | 5,135                          | 11,000 |
| 1 <sup>st</sup> July, 56  | 78                                   | 15,556                 | 6,001                             | 1,479                        | 18,735                                      | 54,080            | 30,350                    | 125,071                               | 4,885                     | 2,890                             | 4,576 | 2,038                               | 5878  | 2,264                | 5,297 | 4,325                          | 11,611 |
| 1 <sup>st</sup> Jan, 57   | 83                                   | 17,210                 | 6,835                             | 3,781                        | 22,839                                      | 65,720            | 50,332                    | 126,703                               | 5,114                     | 2,860                             | 4,632 | 2,018                               | 5938  | 1,268                | 3,006 | 4,389                          | 11,689 |
| 1 <sup>st</sup> July, '57 | 117                                  | 15,402                 | 6,053                             | 1,575                        | 18,705                                      | 53,302            | 49,380                    | 124,397                               | 5,001                     | 2,748                             | 4,458 | 2,027                               | 6030  | 995                  | 2,261 | 4,231                          | 11,243 |
| 1 <sup>st</sup> Jan, '58  | 141                                  | 19,146                 | 7,820                             | 12,155                       | 32,094                                      | 89,906            | 52,521                    | 129,423                               | 6,126                     | 3,124                             | 5,072 | 2,150                               | 6204  | 1,988                | 4,249 | 6,048                          | 13,798 |
| 1 <sup>st</sup> July, '58 | 78                                   | 15,544                 | 5,698                             | 2,402                        | 19,365                                      | 53,905            | 50,468                    | 126,658                               | 5,124                     | 2,571                             | 4,288 | 1,939                               | 3885  | 1,678                | 3,688 | 4,577                          | 12,413 |
| 1 <sup>st</sup> Jan, '59  | 85                                   | 17,239                 | 6,335                             | 2,459                        | 21,328                                      | 59,885            | 50,598                    | 126,764                               | 5,118                     | 2,478                             | 3,997 | 1970                                | 3976  | 1,826                | 4,118 | 4,563                          | 11,145 |

**Appendix 1, Part 5: Not able bodied outdoor paupers relieved on 1<sup>st</sup> January and 1<sup>st</sup> July, England and Wales, 1848-1859**

|                           | Lunatics |         |                           |                   |       |        |          |
|---------------------------|----------|---------|---------------------------|-------------------|-------|--------|----------|
|                           | Males    | Females | Children u 16 with parent | U 16 w/out parent | Male  | Female | children |
| 1 <sup>st</sup> July, '48 | 94,590   | 195,908 | 35,220                    | 16,634            | 3,689 | 4,297  | 330      |
| 1 <sup>st</sup> Jan, '49  | 96,845   | 202,700 | 35,312                    | 16,701            | 3,694 | 4,300  | 260      |
| 1 <sup>st</sup> July, '49 | 96,627   | 201,772 | 34,342                    | 16,647            | 3,841 | 4,232  | 298      |
| 1 <sup>st</sup> Jan, '50  | 100,794  | 209,142 | 37,161                    | 17,854            | 3,924 | 4,651  | 299      |
| 1 <sup>st</sup> July, '50 | 99,459   | 208,642 | 35,201                    | 17,323            | 3,927 | 4,629  | 292      |
| 1 <sup>st</sup> Jan, '51  | 102,453  | 212,160 | 35,467                    | 17,230            | 4,233 | 4,827  | 257      |
| 1 <sup>st</sup> July, '51 | 99,096   | 212,099 | 36,478                    | 16,441            | 4,162 | 4,716  | 258      |
| 1 <sup>st</sup> Jan, '52  | 101,001  | 214,596 | 44,679                    | 16,608            | 4,234 | 5,033  | 233      |
| 1 <sup>st</sup> July, '52 | 99,545   | 211,676 | 36,715                    | 15,737            | 4,113 | 4,926  | 289      |
| 1 <sup>st</sup> Jan, '53  | 98,821   | 209,993 | 36,615                    | 15,496            | 4,246 | 4,970  | 190      |
| 1 <sup>st</sup> July, '53 | 95,354   | 211,113 | 35,152                    | 14,835            | 4,649 | 3,399  | 170      |
| 1 <sup>st</sup> Jan, '54  | 99,458   | 214,477 | 37,210                    | 14,623            | 4,847 | 5,825  | 175      |
| 1 <sup>st</sup> July, '54 | 96,720   | 215,996 | 36,005                    | 14,687            | 4,828 | 5,960  | 199      |
| 1 <sup>st</sup> Jan, '55  | 96,000   | 218,204 | 36,116                    | 14,441            | 5,161 | 6,352  | 202      |
| 1 <sup>st</sup> July, '55 | 97,732   | 216,051 | 35,943                    | 15,022            | 5,123 | 6,505  | 218      |
| 1 <sup>st</sup> Jan, '56  | 99,135   | 220,804 | 37,675                    | 15,136            | 5,305 | 6,632  | 367      |
| 1 <sup>st</sup> July, '56 | 94,300   | 218,268 | 35,643                    | 15,103            | 5,149 | 6,429  | 252      |
| 1 <sup>st</sup> Jan, '57  | 98,902   | 222,193 | 37,207                    | 14,791            | 5,234 | 6,640  | 264      |
| 1 <sup>st</sup> July, '57 | 95,812   | 219,799 | 34,943                    | 14,777            | 5,534 | 6,831  | 261      |
| 1 <sup>st</sup> Jan, '58  | 99,936   | 224,449 | 36,288                    | 14,586            | 5,613 | 6,907  | 236      |
| 1 <sup>st</sup> July, '58 | 95,000   | 218,611 | 33,968                    | 14,304            | 5,624 | 7,032  | 241      |
| 1 <sup>st</sup> Jan, '59  | 97,322   | 220,924 | 34,963                    | 14,334            | 9,121 | 11,323 | 294      |

**Appendix 1, Part 6: Aggregate totals of Part 1 and Part 2, England and Wales,  
1848-1859**

|                           | <b>Males</b> | <b>Females</b> | <b>Children</b> | <b>Total</b> |
|---------------------------|--------------|----------------|-----------------|--------------|
| 1 <sup>st</sup> July, '48 | 150,457      | 314,740        | 32,0833         | 786,030      |
| 1 <sup>st</sup> Jan, '49  | 157,968      | 325,689        | 33,1387         | 815,,044     |
| 1 <sup>st</sup> July, '49 | 130,723      | 316,979        | 28,9126         | 736,828      |
| 1 <sup>st</sup> Jan, '50  | 146,288      | 319,434        | 30,3965         | 769,687      |
| 1 <sup>st</sup> July, '50 | 132,659      | 303,776        | 27,2136         | 708,,571     |
| 1 <sup>st</sup> Jan, '51  | 137,530      | 309,708        | 27,6613         | 723,613      |
| 1 <sup>st</sup> July, '51 | 131,736      | 302,897        | 20,3737         | 698,370      |
| 1 <sup>st</sup> Jan, '52  | 138,904      | 304,480        | 26,4765         | 703,149      |
| 1 <sup>st</sup> July, '52 | 130,941      | 297,143        | 25,2516         | 670,700      |
| 1 <sup>st</sup> Jan, '53  | 128,818      | 295,171        | 24,6876         | 670,660      |
| 1 <sup>st</sup> July, '53 | 121,632      | 290,911        | 23,5749         | 648,325      |
| 1 <sup>st</sup> Jan, '54  | 131,922      | 304,718        | 25,8747         | 695,387      |
| 1 <sup>st</sup> July, '54 | 127,134      | 303,147        | 23,3761         | 688,042      |
| 1 <sup>st</sup> Jan, '55  | 132,931      | 315,908        | 27,3838         | 721,611      |
| 1 <sup>st</sup> July, 55  | 128,103      | 312,233        | 26,6887         | 707,225      |
| 1 <sup>st</sup> Jan, '56  | 136,113      | 323,281        | 28,9785         | 751,179      |
| 1 <sup>st</sup> July, 56  | 124,677      | 309,794        | 25,9953         | 694,424      |
| 1 <sup>st</sup> Jan, 57   | 132,012      | 317,436        | 27,0063         | 719,451      |
| 1 <sup>st</sup> July, '57 | 121,875      | 286,991        | 24,8379         | 657,245      |
| 1 <sup>st</sup> Jan, '58  | 143,811      | 335,417        | 30,1762         | 780,930      |
| 1 <sup>st</sup> July, '58 | 121,705      | 311,365        | 25,5291         | 691,364      |
| 1 <sup>st</sup> Jan, '59  | 132,661      | 320,138        | 26,2204         | 715,023      |

## **Appendix 2:**

### **Case study of Elizabeth Hindle, a non-resident pauper.**

It was shown in Chapter 6 that during the few years following the introduction of the Poor Removal Act in 1846 the system of non-resident relief broke down in some industrial Lancashire unions, including Preston. However, the Preston Guardians were prepared to make exceptions in certain cases. In 1855, for example, the Guardians 'agreed to relax the non-resident rule' in the case of a Mrs Sumner, aged 84, who was residing in Prescott union, south Lancashire, with her daughter. The daughter was willing to support her mother but required some help to do so, and the Guardians agreed to facilitate this arrangement with outdoor relief.<sup>1</sup> Elizabeth Hindle was another case the Preston Guardians considered to be an exception to their 'non-resident rule'. Like all non-resident paupers, however, she lived precariously and with a very uncertain future, her relief depending as it did on both the union of settlement and the union in which she resided operating on agreeable terms.

Hindle was a non-resident pauper belonging to the township of Longton in the Preston union but living in Ormskirk, south-west Lancashire. We first encounter the 28 year old mother of three, whose descent into pauperism coincided with her husband's conviction and transportation to Australia, in the minutes of both the Preston and Ormskirk unions in December 1858.<sup>2</sup> The Ormskirk union had written asking if the Preston Guardians were willing to continue allowing her 3 shillings a week, she being 'too ill to be removed or do any hard work'. Two of her three children, aged 10, 8 and 5, were also sick, one of inflamed eyes and one of fever. The Preston Guardians agreed to Ormskirk's request, extending the relief for a month provided that Ormskirk sent a medical certificate in the meantime. It appears, however, that the medical certificate was never received, and when the Ormskirk union next wrote to Preston, in February 1859, again asking the Guardians to extend the duration of non-resident relief, steps were taken to bring the family home. Local magistrate and long time chairman of the Preston Board of Guardians Thomas Batty Addison moved that, rather than extend the relief, 'the family be received without of order'; that is, that they return to Preston without recourse to the expensive legal proceedings that often accompanied removal cases. However, Preston Guardian William Bond put forward an amendment that 'the family be relieved at Ormskirk with 3s per week for four weeks.' The amendment won the day, comfortably

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<sup>1</sup> Lancashire Archives (L.A.) PUT 1/19; L.A. PUS/1/4.

<sup>2</sup> L.A. PUT 1/23

defeating Addison's motion 18 votes to 7, and Hindle was allowed to, temporarily at least, remain in Ormskirk.

Following the expiration of this four week period we do not hear of Hindle for three months. Perhaps she overcame illness and regained some independence? In any case, for this single mother of three destitution was never far away. On 14th June 1859 the Preston Guardians received a letter from Ormskirk asking for non-resident relief to be resumed, and they agreed to allow the suggested sum of 2s 6d per week. This being lower than the 3 shillings previously given suggests that Elizabeth Hindle might have been in slightly improved circumstances. From this point, however, she experienced a long period of dependency on the Poor Law. Over the next three years the Preston Guardians agreed every thirteen weeks to extend her relief and allowed either 2s 6d or 3s a week, a sum which appears to have varied according to the state of the mother's health.<sup>3</sup> Yet, even with the aid of poor relief the family remained desperately poor. When Ormskirk sent their usual letter asking for relief to be extended for a further 13 weeks in January 1861, for example, they also enquired if the Preston Guardians would provide extra money for shoes so that the three children could go to school.<sup>4</sup> That the children lacked this basic item of clothing tells us a lot about the family's financial situation, their budget not extending beyond the most fundamental necessities required to survive. The Preston Guardians agreed to the procurement of shoes at their expense.

Having provided relief to Elizabeth and her children more or less continuously for three years, in May 1862 the Preston Guardians questioned their responsibility to continue doing so on the grounds of irremovability. The 1846 Removal Act was modified in 1861 to make people who had lived in the same place for *three* years irremovable, providing they had not been in receipt of poor relief during that time. Ormskirk union received a letter from Preston which stated that, under these terms, the Guardians 'question whether such union [Preston] was liable to continue relieving this case'.<sup>5</sup> The response of Ormskirk was a defensive one, immediately resolving to take out an order of removal against the Hindle family to send them back to Preston.<sup>6</sup> This was now a classic case of disputed settlement. Preston's own case rested on a rather dubious technicality, the Guardians arguing that although Hindle had been a pauper during most of her three year residence in Ormskirk, she had not actually been *chargeable to* Ormskirk and therefore had acquired irremovable status within that union. By early June evidence on the Hindle family had been gathered by officers of the Preston union and a report brought before

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<sup>3</sup> L. A. PUT 1/23-26; PUS 1/4-6.

<sup>4</sup> L.A. PUT 1/25.

<sup>5</sup> L.A. PUT 1/26.

<sup>6</sup> L.A. PUS 1/5.

the Preston Guardians. It stated:

This family it appears was chargeable to Ormskirk at different periods from 1853 to 1859 and was removed therefrom to Longton [a township within the Preston union] the legal place of settlement. Since she has returned to Ormskirk and from March 1859 has been relieved by the Preston union on account of Longton through the officers of the Ormskirk union for a period exceeding three years and -

It is now believed she is irremovable from Ormskirk on the grounds of residence therein without being chargeable thereto for a period of three years -

Statements read to the Board and proceedings taken for the family's removal - Order may be appealed against for trial of the question.<sup>7</sup>

The report itself is interesting outside its legal implications. It states that Elizabeth Hindle had been a pauper on and off in Ormskirk for almost a decade and had been legally removed to Longton, her place of settlement, in 1859. This appears to be slightly inaccurate, because the minute books of the Preston union show that Hindle was living in Ormskirk and receiving non-resident relief from Preston between December 1858 and March 1859. Nonetheless, it seems clear that shortly after her removal she made her way back to Ormskirk and, soon enough, was once again before the Poor Law authorities asking for relief. This time, rather than remove her to Longton again, arrangements were made with the Preston union for the payment of non-resident relief. Where her husband, transported sometime in 1858, fits into this story is unclear, but it is possible that Longton was his legal township of settlement and that his wife had acquired the same place of settlement upon marrying him. The 3 shillings provided to Elizabeth by the Preston Guardians was not nearly enough to maintain a family of four, and so she must have had extra income from other sources such as kin, friends, neighbours or charity. This would explain her apparent eagerness to live in Ormskirk, where these networks of support presumably existed, rather than in Longton where she might never have actually lived.

On the legal side, both the Preston and Ormskirk unions made orders to remove Elizabeth and her children, although the family do not appear to have actually been sent back to Longton. During the three months which followed the outbreak of the dispute it appears that both unions recognised that the law fell on the side of Ormskirk. In August the overseers of Longton, who were responsible

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<sup>7</sup> L.A. PUT 1/26



for township finances and legal issues, accepted responsibility for Hindle's maintenance and wrote to Ormskirk asking them to 'relieve the family as usual - as removing them would cause Longton considerable expense which it wishes to avoid and the family really belongs to Longton.'<sup>8</sup> This letter was almost certainly not authorised by the Preston Guardians, and over the following two months intermittent entries in the minute books of both unions suggests that the arrangement for the payment of non-resident relief had broken down. On 28<sup>th</sup> August, for example, the Ormskirk Guardians resolved to provide relief to the family and to write *again* to the Preston union regarding repayment.<sup>9</sup> One month later, on 23<sup>rd</sup> September, the Preston Guardians received another letter from Ormskirk telling them that Hindle 'intends attending' their next meeting, indicating that she wished to plead her case before the Guardians personally.

It is unclear whether Elizabeth did appear before the Preston Guardians, because from this point her case was dealt with by the Longton district relief committee rather than by the general Board as previously. Thus, we consequently see much less of the case in the minute books hereafter. However, it seems likely that she did attend, and that her personal solicitation worked, for the Preston Guardians resumed paying non-resident relief from October 1862.<sup>10</sup> She also appears to have continued receiving relief at Preston's expense throughout 1863, as Ormskirk union sent letters asking the Preston Guardians to extend relief for 13 weeks in January and December of that year.<sup>11</sup> The final entry relating to Elizabeth Hindle appears in the Ormskirk union minutes in November 1867, almost a decade after she first became a non-resident pauper, when they agreed to write to Preston asking them to cover the cost of brandy supplied to her. Evidently ill at this time, the Guardians also told the Ormskirk union medical officer to 'make a special report' on her case.<sup>12</sup> It has not been possible to determine what happened to Hindle after she ceases to appear in the minutes. It is possible that her children, aged 20, 18 and 15 in 1868, were by this time able to support their mother and that she consequently ceased to require poor relief. It is also possible that her husband, who was sentenced to 10 years penal servitude in 1858, returned home and the family regained independence.

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<sup>8</sup> L.A. PUT 1/26.

<sup>9</sup> L.A. PUS 1/5.

<sup>10</sup> L.A. PUT 1/27.

<sup>11</sup> L.A. PUT 1/28.

<sup>12</sup> L.A. PUS 1/7.

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