

Charity and Conflict: Poor Relief in Mid Seventeenth Century Dundee

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Introduction

Research on poverty and welfare in early modern Scotland is in its infancy. In contrast to a highly-developed literature on England and mainland Europe, the range and scope of Scottish studies remains narrow.¹ Rosalind Mitchison's *The Old Poor Law in Scotland* is, as the title suggests, focused primarily on legislation and its implementation, and most of its more detailed discussion focuses on the late seventeenth century onwards when numerous communities experienced statutory relief on a more regular basis.² Some localised studies of poor relief have also been undertaken, focusing in particular on Edinburgh during the crisis periods of the early 1620s and 1690s.³ In broad terms, it has been established that the legislation which provided for compulsory, statutory payments to fund a system of relief based on the English model was not widely or thoroughly enforced. The poor relief which was provided by the church through its parochial kirk sessions on a primarily voluntary basis, in the absence of compulsory contributions mandated by law, is generally assumed to have been very ineffective and limited, although it has rarely been studied directly or in detail.⁴ There have been some brief studies of individual rural parishes during the seventeenth century, and some more recent attempts to assess aspects of ecclesiastical relief.⁵ But the

¹ P. A. Fideler, 'Symposium: The Study of the Early Modern Poor and Poverty Relief', *Albion* 32 (2000) 381-407; T. M. Safley (ed.), *The Reformation of Charity: The Secular and the Religious in Early Modern Poor Relief* (Boston, 2003); S. Hindle, *On the Parish? The Micro-Politics of Poor Relief in Rural England, c. 1550-1750* (Oxford, 2004); A. M. Scott (ed.), *Experiences of Poverty in Late-Medieval and Early Modern England and France* (Farnham, 2012); J. Olson, 'Continuity or Radical Change? Care of the Poor, Medieval and Early Modern', in J. Muldoon (ed.), *Bridging the Medieval-Modern Divide: Medieval Themes in the World of the Reformation* (Farnham, 2013).

² R. Mitchison, *The Old Poor Law in Scotland: The Experience of Poverty, 1575-1845* (Edinburgh, 2000).

³ L. Stewart, 'Poor Relief in Edinburgh and the Famine of 1621-24', *International Review of Scottish Studies* 30 (2005) 5-41; H. Dingwall, *Late 17th-Century Edinburgh: A Demographic Study* (Aldershot, 1994), 247-71. For further discussion of responses to famine across Scotland in the 1690s see K. Cullen, *Famine in Scotland: The 'ill Years' of the 1690s* (Edinburgh, 2010).

⁴ T. C. Smout, *A History of the Scottish People, 1560-1830* (London, 1969), 87; R. Jutte, *Poverty and Deviance in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge, 1994), 124; D.A. Symonds, 'Death, Birth and Marriage in EM Scotland' in E. Foyster and C. Whatley (eds), *A History of Everyday Life in Scotland, 1600 to 1800* (Edinburgh, 2010), 97-8; I. Whyte, *Scotland Before the Industrial Revolution: An Economic and Social History, c. 1050-c.1750* (London, 1995), 108-9.

⁵ John di Folco, 'Discipline and Welfare in the Mid-Seventeenth Century Scots Parish', *Records of the Scottish Church History Society* 19 (1977) 169-83; W. R. Foster, *The Church before the Covenants: The Church of Scotland, 1596-1638* (Edinburgh, 1975), 80-3; J. McCallum, 'Charity Doesn't Begin at Home: Ecclesiastical Poor Relief Beyond the Parish, 1560-1650', *Journal of Scottish Historical Studies* 32 (2012) 107-26; J.

lacunae in this historiography are numerous and large, and one of the most striking is the limited knowledge about poverty and its relief in urban settings beyond Scotland's capital.

This article assesses the evidence on poor relief from Dundee during the 1640s and 1650s. There are a number of reasons for this selection. Dundee entered the seventeenth century as Scotland's second burgh, partly on account of its strengths in the North Sea and Baltic trades.⁶ It was also an early stronghold of Scottish Protestantism during the sixteenth century.⁷ But its importance in the social and religious history of pre-modern Scotland has not been reflected in modern academic research: as the editors of a recent survey volume have suggested, 'in many respects, pre-Jute Dundee has become invisible'.⁸ This is despite the recent growth in Scottish urban history.⁹ Dundee is the only one of Scotland's four main burghs during this period not to have had at least one monograph published on its religious, social or political history in the last decade; in fact its early modern history has not been the subject of a single modern academic monograph.¹⁰ It is sometimes suggested that Dundee's historiographical neglect is a consequence of a lack of available records; however, although it is true that much has been lost (including as a result of the upheavals mentioned in this article), there is also much that survives and has not been used.¹¹ An excellent example of this is the Kirk Treasurer's Accounts, which survive from 1640 onwards, and provide an unparalleled level of detail on the poor relief operated by the church. These enable us to learn a great deal about the provision of welfare in early modern urban Scotland. Such sources can also contribute significantly to the wider aims of urban history, by allowing us to continue to move beyond traditional debates around the origins and functions of the burgh, towards

McCallum, "'Nurseries of the Poore': Hospitals and Almshouses in Early Modern Scotland', *Journal of Social History* 48 (2014) 427-449.

⁶ E. Torrie, *Medieval Dundee: A Town and Its People* (Dundee, 1990), 36; K. Cullen, C. Whatley and M. Young, 'Battered but Unbowed: Dundee during the Seventeenth Century', in C. McKean, B. Harris and C. Whatley (eds), *Dundee: Renaissance to Enlightenment* (Dundee, 2009), 57-8.

⁷ I. B. Cowan, *Regional Aspects of the Scottish Reformation* (London, 1978), 24-5; A. Ryrie, 'Britain and Ireland' in A. Ryrie (ed.), *Palgrave Advances in the European Reformations* (Basingstoke, 2006), 133.

⁸ C. McKean, B. Harris and C. Whatley, 'Introduction' in *Dundee: Renaissance to Enlightenment*, xxi.

⁹ For a useful survey see J. R. Falconer, 'Surveying Scotland's Urban Past: The Pre-Modern Burgh', *History Compass* 9 (2011) 34-44.

¹⁰ L. Stewart, *Urban Politics and the British Civil Wars: Edinburgh 1617-53* (Leiden, 2006), M. Verschuur, *Politics or Religion? The Reformation in Perth 1540-70* (Edinburgh, 2006); J. R. Falconer, *Crime and Community in Reformation Scotland: Negotiating Power in a Burgh Society* (London, 2013) [on Aberdeen]. For research on early modern Dundee, in addition to McKean, Harris and Whatley (eds), *Dundee: Renaissance to Enlightenment*, see A. M. Smith, *The Guildry of Dundee: A History of the Merchant Guild of Dundee up to the 19th Century* (Aberay Historical Society Publications, no. 45, Dundee, 2005); J. Robertson, 'The Storming of Dundee', *History Scotland* 3 (2003); J. Robertson, *Dundee and the Civil Wars, 1639-1660* (Friends of Dundee City Archives Publications, no. 7, Dundee, 2007); I. Flett, 'The conflict of the Reformation and democracy in the Geneva of Scotland, 1443-1610: an introduction to edited texts of documents relating to the Burgh of Dundee', unpublished M.Phil. thesis (University of St Andrews, 1981).

¹¹ Torrie, *Medieval Dundee*, 11.

‘questions that consider burghs as centres of broader human activities’.¹² They also shed valuable light on the experiences of groups and individuals below burgh level, and on humble townfolk beyond the merchants and craftsmen who have sometimes been the focus of research on sixteenth and seventeenth-century Scottish towns.¹³

The Kirk Treasurer’s Accounts contain rich evidence not only on the collections and fundraising carried out by the church, but also on the relief actually provided to Dundee’s poor. Each year’s sources of income, and relief recipients, are recorded by their quarter within the town, and with impressive care over accounting accuracy, at the level of individual payments on individual days.¹⁴ The Accounts are complemented by the Town Council Minutes, and the records of Dundee’s Hospital during the 1640s and 1650s, which enables us to contextualise the ecclesiastical relief system.¹⁵ Consequently, it is possible to assess the significance and effectiveness of the church’s welfare provision, and also its resilience in the face of exceptionally challenging circumstances during the years of mid-century conflict which are generally seen as ‘disastrous’ for many Scottish burghs, and the Scottish economy in general.¹⁶ The Accounts also offer an opportunity to examine some of the experiences of Dundee’s poorest inhabitants. Of course, poor relief records provide an undeniably prejudiced and partial insight into their world, but it is one of the only glimpses that we are likely to achieve, and certainly one of the most direct.

Dundee in the mid seventeenth century was a relatively compact town of approximately ten thousand to twelve thousand inhabitants, divided into four main quarters: the Nethergate, Overgate, Murraygate and Seagate.¹⁷ It was a difficult century for the town’s economy, as it was challenged for the status of Scotland’s second town by Glasgow, whose

¹² Falconer, ‘Surveying Scotland’s Urban Past’, 34-5.

¹³ M. Lynch, ‘Introduction: Scottish Towns 1500-1700’, in M. Lynch (ed.), *The Early Modern Town in Scotland* (London, 1987), 3, 26 (see also, for example, the chapters by M. Verschuur, J. Brown and W. Coutts); J. Thomas, ‘The Craftsmen of Elgin, 1540-1660’, in T. Brotherstone and D. Ditchburn (eds), *Freedom and Authority: Scotland c. 1050-c. 1650* (East Linton, 2000). It has been suggested that most of the recent advances in the study of ordinary Scots’ lives have been in the period after 1660, and especially in the eighteenth century: K. M. Brown, ‘Early Modern Scottish History – a Survey’, *Scottish Historical Review* 92 Issue Supplement (2013) 5-24, at 15-16, 19n.

¹⁴ Dundee, Dundee City Archives [DCA], CH2/1218/16, Kirk Session Minutes, Kirk Treasurer’s Accounts, [KTA]. Cf. Mitchison, *Old Poor Law*, 25.

¹⁵ DCA, Dundee Town Council Minutes, Volume 4 (1613-53) [TCM]; DCA, Hospital Accounts, 1642-76 [HA].

¹⁶ T.M. Devine, ‘Scotland’, in P. Clark (ed.), *The Cambridge Urban History of Britain, Volume II 1540-1840* (Cambridge, 2000), 155; Whyte, *Scotland Before the Industrial Revolution*, 281. Existing assessments of the burghs’ resilience during the 1640s and 1650s are primarily focused on trade: see for example T.M. Devine, ‘The Cromwellian Union and the Scottish Burghs: The Case of Aberdeen and Glasgow, 1652-1660’, in T.M. Devine, *Exploring the Scottish Past: Themes in the History of Scottish Society* (East Linton, 1995), 7-9.

¹⁷ Population estimates are around 10,000-12,000 at ca. 1640, 11,200 at 1645, and 8,000-10,000 after the sacking of the town in 1651. Torrie, *Medieval Dundee*, 59; S. G. E. Lythe, *Life and Labour in Dundee from the Reformation to the Civil War* (Dundee, 1958), 5; Cullen, Whatley and Young, ‘Battered but Unbowed’, 64-5.

west-coast position gave it access to Atlantic trade.¹⁸ Like many parts of Scotland, it was hit by outbreaks of plague (for example in 1606) and the dearths of the early 1620s.¹⁹ Although it was relatively unscathed by the early stages of civil war, the first major blow came in 1644 when the Marquis of Montrose's forces attacked the city and devastated the hospital and other properties. In subsequent years, the council was forced to seek assistance from Parliament. In 1648-9 the plague which had threatened nearby areas reached the town, leading merchants to shut up their booths in the market square. And most famously of all, in 1651 General Monck sacked the town with disastrous consequences, and mortality estimates of up to one-fifth of the population.²⁰ Thus the records from 1645 to the early 1650s offer an opportunity to compare the relief system during times of major distress with the (relatively) normal conditions of the early 1640s. This article argues that the provision of relief throughout the 1640s and 1650s was not only substantial and effective, but also impressively stable under the circumstances.

The Development of the Relief System

The Kirk Treasurer's Accounts begin in 1640, but their existence and survival in their particular format has its origins in the church and town council's concerns about poor relief in the mid-1630s. In the absence of the kirk session's own records it is unclear what poor relief activity was being undertaken, but concern about the poor was reflected in a council act of 1635. This stated that the portion of the hospital's income which was used to contribute to the stipends of the Bishop of Brechin and Dundee's ministers, reader, schoolmaster, and clock-keeper should instead be returned to the use of the hospital and its poor. The act was made with the agreement of both the council and the stipend-holders named,

most zelouslie thinking that the said actes [transferring incomes] have bene made verie prejudiciall to the poore of their said hospitall and lendis to the evill exempill of invertig of all pious donationes and mortificationes to other uses nor they wor intended to contraire to all law equitie and conscience.²¹

¹⁸ Cullen, Whatley and Young, 'Battered but Unbowed', 58.

¹⁹ A. Maxwell, *The History of Old Dundee* (Edinburgh and Dundee, 1884), 374; Cullen, Whatley and Young, 'Battered but Unbowed', 61.

²⁰ Lythe, *Life and Labour*, 27-8; Torrie, *Medieval Dundee*, 105-7; Cullen, Whatley and Young, 'Battered but Unbowed', 61-3. For discussion of the impact on Scottish burghs in general, see D. Stevenson, 'The Burghs and the Scottish Revolution', in M. Lynch (ed.), *The Early Modern Town in Scotland* (London, 1987), 180-82.

²¹ TCM, fos 112r-v. The sums paid by the hospital to the clergy and office-holders were as follows: £100 to the Bishop of Brechin, £133 6s 8d to Mr Colin Campbell, minister of Dundee, £77 6s 8d to his colleague Mr John

The wording, as well as the content, clearly suggests the influence of the 1633 Act of Parliament against the subversion of legacies, mortifications and other charitable funds, although the bad harvest and weather conditions of 1634-5 may also have influenced the ministers and council more directly.²² However, the act was not subscribed by the stipend-holders, and a note indicates that ‘this act was never condischendit to be the ministeris and therefoir was left unperfytit’.²³ Whatever the reason for the eventual climbdown, the proposal shows some joint concern by both ministers and magistrates about the funds available for the poor.

This concern continued in the late 1630s. On 23 February 1636, feeling that they had a greater problem with foreign beggars than other towns, the council decided there should be ‘ane voluntarie contributione demanded frome all the frie hearted burgesses and inhabitants of the said burgh for expelling of the said strange beggeris and interteaneing of their own native beggeris’.²⁴ Later that year they appointed treasurers and collectors of this voluntary contribution.²⁵ It may not be coincidental that this was a time of great concern about the threat of plague, which would have no doubt hardened attitudes to beggars from beyond the town.²⁶ In the spring of 1637 there came a more formal response to the need for more funds for the relief of poverty, with the council’s decision on 30 March 1637 ‘to stent all the inhabitantes of this burghe proportionally in ane monethlie contributione for mainteining the poore decayed persounes within the same’.²⁷ After a few months’ work on this it was decided to accept the sums offered by those who volunteered to contribute, and to enforce payments on everyone else ‘according to their conscience knowledge and habilitie’.²⁸ In October, crucially, they decided that a kirk treasurer was to be appointed, who would oversee not only the stent, but also the funds which were already paid to the kirk session for poor relief, such as collections at church door, annual rents dedicated to charitable purposes and offerings made at sea.²⁹ While further work was clearly carried out on the idea of compulsory contribution, by 1640, when the Accounts begin, there was no sign of income from stenting.

Duncanson, £66 13s 4d to Mr James Gleg, the grammar school master, £8 to the reader, Robert Stibbills, and £12 to John Ramsay, the clock-keeper.

²² K. M. Brown et al (eds), *The Records of the Parliaments of Scotland to 1707* (St Andrews, 2007-2014), 1633/6/21 (<http://www.rps.ac.uk/>). Date accessed: 16 July 2014); Maxwell, *History of Old Dundee*, 423-4.

²³ TCM, fo. 112r.

²⁴ TCM, fo. 116r.

²⁵ TCM, fo. 118v.

²⁶ TCM, fo. 118r.

²⁷ TCM, fo. 121v.

²⁸ TCM, fo. 123r.

²⁹ TCM, fo. 125v.

However, it was in the office of kirk treasurer itself that the council's ambition for the stent had its lasting impact.

Originally this office was a purely town appointment, made for 6 months at a time rather than the usual year-long appointments of more senior burgh officials.³⁰ But in May 1638 the approach changed somewhat, apparently as a result of the difficulties in getting individuals to carry out service as kirk treasurer. On 8 May, the council passed an act barring anyone who refused any office in the burgh from becoming a magistrate. Later that day, they met together with the ministers, in the 'revestrie of the litill eist kirk', and

being thereanent ryplie and weill advysed all of ane mynd and consent nominat and elected James Cochrane merchand burges of the said burghe to bear and exerce the said office for the said space of ane yeire immediatlie heirefter and to intromet with the whole kirk rentis during the said space.³¹

The change of location (from the usual meeting-place in the council house), the presence of the clergy and the increased formality of both language and description of responsibilities all suggest the desire to make the post a more significant (and attractive) one, and one with a jointly ecclesiastical and secular nature. As Maxwell has noted, Cochrane had been reluctant to serve, but desired to become a bailie and was indeed successful in this later the same year.³²

In subsequent years, the kirk treasurer continued to be elected on a yearly basis, and the election is almost always described as taking place with the ministers, in the revestry rather than the council house, and separately from the election of other burgh officers.³³ Unlike the traditional offices of pier master, hospital master, and even the kirk master (the burgh official in charge of funds relating to the physical upkeep of the church buildings), the kirk treasurer was an official whose appointment was as much part of the business of the church as of the town council.³⁴ His records were kept separate, even if they were audited by

³⁰ TCM, fos 125v, 127v.

³¹ TCM, fo. 128v.

³² TCM, fo. 131v; Maxwell, *History of Old Dundee*, 298-99. In a manner frustratingly typical of traditional historiography in this area, Maxwell's interest in poor relief wanes once it moves into ecclesiastical rather than secular hands, despite the rich trail left in the archives by the church's relief: indeed the years between 1640 and the new Poor Law of the nineteenth century are skipped over in less than a sentence (p. 299).

³³ TCM, fos 136r, 138v, 141r. On a few occasions in the 1640s, the revestry and presence of ministers are not mentioned, but only for a year at a time, and sometimes during periods when the minutes tend to be briefer on other matters as well: for example 1642 (fo. 147r) and 1646 (fo. 194v) (in the latter case the revestry was mentioned but not the ministers' presence).

³⁴ For much earlier appointments of these other officials, see TCM, fos 18r-19r (27 September 1614 and 11 October 1614). The lack of overlap between the business of the kirk treasurer and the kirk master is apparent from the accounts of the latter, which are concerned solely with church maintenance: DCA, Dundee Kirk Master's Account Book, 1651-1723.

the burgh, and despite the council's ambition in the late 1630s, the vast majority of income by the time of the first surviving accounts in 1640 came from church door collections and other ecclesiastical and/or voluntary sources. The secular ambitions for compulsory contribution had failed, and by the 1640s the town council had many other pressing problems on its plate, leaving the concern for the poor now primarily in the hands of the church, but as we shall see, this certainly did not mean that the poor were neglected.³⁵ Indeed, while we cannot be certain about this in the absence of pre-1640 church records, it seems most likely that much of what the kirk treasurers oversaw in the 1640s was a continuation of previous kirk session poor relief: the secular experiments and innovations had a greater impact on personnel and on the record-keeping of relief than on the sources of income or the recipients of relief. The existence of the relatively prestigious office of kirk treasurer added strength to the church's efforts, and it certainly explains the unusually rich and detailed accounts which inform the rest of this article.

Procedures and sources of funding

From the onset of the Kirk Treasurer's Accounts in 1640, a series of treasurers served and kept accounts for a year at a time, running from June to June (later November to November). The accounts were kept continuously, with the only gap coming in 1644-5, likely as a result of the attack on Dundee that year.³⁶ In the second half of the 1640s the turnover of treasurers decreased as Gilbert Guthrie served on numerous occasions, first as deputy in 1646-7 and 1647-8, then as treasurer in 1650-1 and 1651-52. The treasurer and his deputy worked in collaboration with the kirk session, and rather than distributing pensions directly to the poor they were passed to deacons, just as church-door collections were passed to the treasurer by

³⁵ During the early 1640s the Council's extra responsibilities and problems included sending commissioners to assemblies, and the preparation of troops and defences. The financial strain on the burgh led the council to write to the Marquis of Argyll in April 1643 asking to be excused its share of a loan to fund the Scottish army in Ireland on the grounds of inability to pay. In October 1644 voluntary contributions were required for the town's fortifications, and further expenses were incurred by quartering troops. TCM, fos 160r-v, 167r-168r, 184r-185r. The Council did, however, continue to take a close interest in the administration of the hospital, particularly after the disastrous events of 1645: for more on this see below. The poor themselves suffered particularly, as was indicated by an act in 1646 providing for compensation for 'a great number poore people who had their landis brunt at the assaulting thereof be the creuell and bloodie rebellis' (fos 195v-196r).

³⁶ KTA, fo. 129r includes a heading referring to the accounts for 1644 (i.e. 1644-5), but this must be an error for 1643-44 since the named treasurer for that year's accounts, Thomas Scott, actually served in 1643-44, as recorded in TCM, fo. 162v. William Wemyss was the treasurer for 1644-45 (TCM, fo. 180v), and his accounts are not found in KTA.

each day's collectors.³⁷ The treasurer thus did not have the entire burden of collection and distribution himself. Instead, his role was to oversee poor relief operations and, crucially, to record them. The kirk treasurers of the 1640s took this latter duty very seriously indeed, and the accounts provide an unusually rich level of detail on poor relief activities, both in the recording of income and of expenditure.³⁸ They were keen to ensure absolute clarity of understanding: for example where the layout was confused in the 1640-1 accounts, the treasurer 'cancelld all this upone this leafe becaus it was not orderly sett downe and I coppied it all over againe upone the nixt sydd', even though the lack of clarity was very slight by the standards of seventeenth century local account-keeping.³⁹ The accounts were to be audited, and the meticulousness may be a consequence of the kirk treasurer's status as a burgh official accountable to the council as well as to the kirk session, and as someone who may have hoped for more prestigious office in future. A careful record is also kept of details often missed in other kirk session minutes and accounts, such as the collections on each specific sermon day, and both the rental incomes and regular expenditure of the treasurer is divided into the various quarters of the town. It is this rich attention to detail that makes the minutes so valuable to the study of poverty and its relief, but it also suggests a formal, serious and well-considered poor relief system.

The records of income indicate the nature and extent of revenue from a variety of sources. Despite the ambitions of the late 1630s, this was not a scheme funded by compulsory taxation of individuals. Instead, funds came primarily from rents on properties owed to the kirk session, legacies, voluntary offerings, fines for moral offences and, above all, regular collections at the church door. The annualrents on lands within the town of Dundee and on acres and yard mails were listed first, but were not a major part of the poor relief income, consisting of numerous small annual sums of a few pounds. They were accompanied by a small, but naturally more variable income from interest on money lent by the kirk session. Each year money was received from legacies to the poor: these were of varying size but

³⁷ See for example KTA, fos 50r, 91r. In the absence of parallel kirk session minutes there is no positive indication that the treasurer was himself a member of the kirk session, and this is not mentioned in the council minutes when treasurers were appointed, but it seems very unlikely that treasurers would not have served on the kirk session.

³⁸ Some of the record-keeping is rather briefer in the 1650s, but this does not involve substantial losses of information for our purposes. In most cases, the information excluded is relatively extraneous both for most historical analysis and for contemporary use: for example the names of individual collectors at the church door, or the dates on which fornication fines were imposed. There is no sense of less care being taken over the record-keeping. See for example KTA, fos 194r, 388r-397r.

³⁹ KTA, fo. 57r. For other examples of comments to assist the reader of the accounts or to clarify sums of money see fos 56r, 88r, 90r, 100r. In the latter case, the treasurer is very keen to ensure absolute clarity of understanding: 'my beginneing is with the Sea Gaitt quarter quhairfor itt behoves me to follow on be the month for I rather begune att the nether Gaitt bott I take this to be the cleirest orderr'.

sometimes quite substantial, such as the £166 9s 8d by Lady Teling for supporting ‘poor distressed widowes’ (although most legacies seem not to have named specific groups of recipients).⁴⁰

More significant than testamentary donations were those voluntary gifts made by the living, under the heading of ‘offerings maid to the poor by sea and land’.⁴¹ These were actually made much more often ‘by sea’ than ‘by land’, presumably since skippers, merchants, and their crews were often absent from church, and thus missed the opportunity to contribute with the rest of the congregation.⁴² These are particularly interesting since evidence of them is naturally less likely to survive than for testamentary charity (except where accounted like this), and they reflect a strong impulse to charitable giving during one’s lifetime rather than after death.⁴³ They came in a steady stream, often with several in a month. They sometimes resulted from a dangerous experience at sea (such as the £13 6s 8d ‘resceavid from John Tarvitt for ane shipp being in greatt stress goeing to Londone he offerid to the poore forr their preservatioun’), but normally simply related the voyage undertaken.⁴⁴ Sums normally ranged between a few pounds and twenty pounds, although occasionally much larger sums were given as when a skipper called James Duncan offered £100 ‘being in greatt distress att Steinhyss’.⁴⁵ Skippers and merchants naturally dominated, but there were also smaller donations by lesser individuals, such as the 8s ‘receavit frome Thomas Fothringhame fischmunger offered be him’ in 1640, suggesting a desire to be involved in the charitable work of the kirk session even if on a small scale.⁴⁶ The careful recording of names, details of voyages and individual sums (for example distinguishing who had paid what in a joint contribution⁴⁷) suggests that donors wanted to be recorded in the book, although the opposite was true for one gift of £6 13s 4d received from a donor who wished to remain anonymous.⁴⁸ Although these donations were, as the latter example suggests, very much in the tradition of voluntary philanthropy, there was still a sense that once pledged, the money was a debt as

⁴⁰ KTA, fo. 44r. This and all subsequent sums are in pounds Scots unless otherwise stated.

⁴¹ KTA, fo. 46r. These were occasionally listed amongst the legacies, for example in 1650-51 (fo. 195r).

⁴² In 1643-44 these gifts are headed ‘Offerring be sea and be thear good wills’, suggesting that the maritime element in this category of income was felt to be the key one: KTA, fo. 132r.

⁴³ Similar contributions can be found in other areas: see for example Edinburgh, National Records of Scotland, [NRS], CH2/751/1/2, Ayr Kirk Session Minutes, fo. 249v; NRS, CH2/718/1, St Cuthbert’s Kirk Session Minutes, p. 123. See also M. Todd, *The Culture of Protestantism in Early Modern Scotland* (New Haven, 2002), 352-3.

⁴⁴ KTA, fo. 89r.

⁴⁵ KTA, fo. 89r.

⁴⁶ KTA, fo. 46r.

⁴⁷ ‘I receavit frome Hendrie Moody fischmunger 6s and frome Hendrie Meall 3s is 9s’; ‘receavit frome William Kynneres beilyie and Alexander Myln given in to the poor equallie betuixt them when Hendrie Knyts bark came home £33 6s 8d’: KTA, fo. 46r.

⁴⁸ KTA, fo. 89r.

well as a gift. When Patrick Stevenson pledged £5 8s, the treasurer explained that Patrick could not pay because someone else still owed him money, suggesting that an excuse was necessary if a pledge was not fulfilled.⁴⁹ All in all, while we do not know how much pressure was exerted to encourage such contributions, they point to a considerable tradition of voluntary support for poor relief by various levels of Dundee's maritime community.

Fines paid by fornicators provided another regular income stream. Although 10s of each fine was siphoned off as a duty to the hospital, fines were typically in the region of £10.⁵⁰ Sometimes more would be received, such as when offenders of higher status were fined (like 'John Scrymgeour appeirand of didowp [Dudhope]', fined £20 13s 4d), or when a cautioner had to pay up for an offender's disobedience (such as the bailie John Blyth paying £26 13s 4d for John Strachan's disobedience).⁵¹ Fines for offences like flyting and sabbath-breach were lower in both frequency and value. There were occasionally other small miscellaneous sources of income, like the intriguing example of the 3s 4d 'receavit frome ane honnest man, that he did find upone the street': presumably it was felt that the poor were the natural recipients of unclaimed lost property.⁵²

However, by far the largest source of income was the church-door collections. These were undertaken every Friday and Sunday, with three collectors at the door on Fridays, and five at the presumably better-attended Sunday sermons. While we naturally have less detail about who contributed what to these collections, these were the core source of funding for the work of poor relief. Contributions were reasonably steady, although a disproportionate amount of money was raised during communion seasons: in 1641-42, almost half of the year's collection total of just over £2400 was collected in the two communion periods.⁵³ This partly reflects increased attendance, although it perhaps also suggests increased individual donations, presumably because of the special nature of communion celebrations, and the importance of concepts of charity and community to the meaning of the rite.⁵⁴ Collections were not only the most substantial element of the poor relief funds, they were also the most reliable since the cash was received there and then, in contrast to the occasional difficulties

⁴⁹ KTA, fo. 47r.

⁵⁰ KTA, fos 45r, 108r.

⁵¹ KTA, fo. 91r. On one occasion the treasurer was owed money by a cautioner, but had to record that 'I cannot gitt it frome him': fo. 45r.

⁵² KTA, fo. 47r. For a similar incident in Aberdeen in 1603 see NRS, CH2/448/2, Aberdeen Kirk Session Minutes, p. 47.

⁵³ KTA, fos 82r, 87r.

⁵⁴ Cf. F. Bardgett, *Scotland Reformed: The Reformation in Angus and the Mearns* (Edinburgh, 1989), 158-60, which suggests that increases in collection sizes straightforwardly reflected increases in attendance at church in sixteenth-century Monifieth. On the significance of communion celebrations, see Todd, *Culture of Protestantism*, 98-119.

which treasurers had in extracting monies owed to them.⁵⁵ Having surveyed the nature of the funding sources available for poor relief, it is now necessary to evaluate the sums raised throughout the 1640s.

Poor Relief Income

Chart 1 shows the total funds raised by the church for regular poor relief during the 1640s and 1650s, including the totals raised in church collections, which formed easily the largest category of income.⁵⁶ There are some notable fluctuations, with income increasing slightly in the later 1640s, despite the attack by Montrose which must explain the lack of accounts for 1644-45 (although of course this does not mean that nothing was raised during the year). Unsurprisingly, income dropped sharply around the time of Monck's storming of Dundee, but as the 1650s progressed totals gradually began to increase again. Although the fluctuations should not be ignored, they are comparably minor, and when one considers the upheavals faced by Dundee during this period the salient feature appears to be continuity rather than chaos. The annual total raised was almost always between £2500 and £4000, with a mean of around £3200 and a median of just over £3500. Collection totals were a little more volatile, but still clustered roughly around the £2000 mark. Other sources of income, although individually variable, helped to even out the overall totals.

Chart 1: Annual Poor Relief Income and Collection Totals⁵⁷

[Insert Chart Here]

The more detailed figures on individual income types in Table 1 suggest a similar picture of relatively variable individual sources of revenue adding up to a more stable whole. Income from legacies was particularly unpredictable, reflecting a handful of reasonably large

⁵⁵ KTA, fo. 35r.

⁵⁶ All figures in the following discussions of overall income and expenditure levels are rounded to the nearest pound Scots.

⁵⁷ Funds received from previous treasurers during the year have been excluded from this, since they do not reflect actual fundraising levels during each year (although see Table 1 below). Also excluded are various one-off special collections which might distort comparisons. No accounts are available for 1644-5 (see above). The years 1651-53 were treated in the accounts as a single year: some elements of income were not fully divided up by year, making a precise delineation of the two years' revenues impossible. Therefore, here and in all that follows, the total for 1651-3 has been divided by two, although fundraising would not have been evenly spread; see also the qualitative discussion of 1651-3 below. In 1655-6 there was a switch from June-June accounting to November-November accounting: hence figures for June-November 1655 are excluded here and in subsequent tables and charts.

bequests rather than a large number of people leaving small sums to the poor in wills each year. Similarly the voluntary gifts by the living could be boosted by a small number of very large gifts. The second-highest source of income was often monies raised from the various rents and duties, plus interest on loans, although income from rents predictably tended to drop in the aftermath of the attacks on the town. For example, although the total for 1645-6 was inflated by the receipt of several hundred pounds owed on a bond, the income from duties on town lands plunged from the normal £160-£200 to just £33 6s 8d, because so many properties were ‘brunt and throun doune’.⁵⁸ Finally, the variable but sometimes large sums received from previous treasurers can be read both positively and negatively: on the one hand they point to some monies owed to the session being rather slow to collect, but equally they do suggest that the total relief funds really available were sometimes higher than implied in Chart 1.

Table 1: Poor Relief Income by Source

[Insert Table Here]

The storming of Dundee in 1651 requires further comment, both because of its complicating effect on the accounts, and its potential impact on fundraising as a major disaster affecting the town.⁵⁹ Leaving aside the physical damage, its financial impact can be seen in the town council’s records: although routine business did continue, the fortification of the town had to be attended to, and after the attack the new burgh treasurer had to be granted security for any of his own monies which he might need to spend, since the English had taken control of the common good of the town. This measure was followed next March by a levy of 13s 4d on each boll of malt, which would be paid directly to the town’s creditors, giving an indication of the financial difficulties still faced in Dundee.⁶⁰ That the session’s poor relief activities continued seems impressive, given the circumstances. It may have helped that the background to this event, in terms of poor relief, had been a major increase in income in 1649-50 and 1650-51, which as Table 1 indicates, was the result of a large increase in church collection totals, rather than any other income category. This could be a consequence of increased attendance at church, and/or increased generosity as a result of the tumultuous times,

⁵⁸ KTA, fo. 151r.

⁵⁹ TCM, fos 224v, 236r.

⁶⁰ TCM, fos 241r, 247r.

and Sunday collections do seem to have increased noticeably by early 1650.⁶¹ There were some sizeable collections of around £60-£70 on fast days in 1650-51, but these alone do not explain the spike in collection totals for that year; there was a general increase in regular collections around the turn of the decade.⁶² This may have, in part, resulted from the presence in Dundee of wealthy refugees from Lothian with ‘merchandise, guides, and much uther provisioun of gold and silver’, although we can not be certain that they would have given substantial parts of this to the Dundee relief fund.⁶³ Whether or not the increased collections of 1649-51 reflect a greater sense of charitability during times of tension, it certainly contributed to the relief system’s weathering of the storming of 1651.

As we would expect, in the aftermath of the storming, collection totals plummeted. In the summer months of the accounting year 1651-52 prior to the storming, just over £980 was collected on Sunday mornings, afternoons, and at weekday services. When collections resumed in late October 1651, there was no weekday preaching, and hence no weekday collection, and Sunday collection totals had dropped considerably to below £10 for both afternoon and morning for the first month or so, then around £20 for a long time thereafter.⁶⁴ Quite apart from the social and economic dislocation, the town’s population had been reduced by the attack, so the lower collection totals are predictable, and it actually seems rather impressive that the fundraising continued with any substance at all. There would also, of course, have been a drop in personal prosperity, and an increase in demand for relief. Weekday collections resumed in March 1653, but the nineteen months after Sunday collections resumed in late October 1651, only witnessed the gathering of £1523 12s 4d, at a rate of less than £1000 per annum, around half the rate collected in most other years.⁶⁵ Voluntary gifts continued, although the total raised over 1651-3 was rather lower than the norm. Income from legacies helped to balance the decline in other sources of revenue, although as they still came from a small number of large bequests this was not necessarily a direct result of the increased mortality of the storming and its aftermath. Revenue from fines continued, suggesting that the disciplinary work of the kirk session also survived the storming.⁶⁶

⁶¹ KTA, fo. 187v.

⁶² KTA, fos 194v-195r.

⁶³ J. Nicoll, *A Diary of Public Transactions and other Occurrences chiefly in Scotland, from January 1650 to June 1667* (Edinburgh, 1836), 57. I am indebted to Dr Chris Langley for this suggestion.

⁶⁴ KTA, fo 205r.

⁶⁵ KTA, fo. 205v. There was also a one-off collection of £120 3s 10d for the ‘prisoners’ in the aftermath of the storming, which as a special and separate collection has not been included in the figures above.

⁶⁶ KTA, fo. 206r.

As Table 1 demonstrated, while the poor relief revenues were affected by military action, recovery was reasonably swift, and the relief system continued to operate in the same manner as before. In the 1650s, revenues were not as high as the level attained in the late 1640s, and increased levels of necessity no doubt exacerbated this problem. But the accounts show that as well as operating a substantial relief system in times of (relative) calm, church and people in Dundee were able (and willing) to continue to raise significant funds for the poor during some of the most troubled times in the town's history. Despite the overall negative impact of conflict on the Scottish urban economy, surprising resilience was evident in Dundee.⁶⁷

Poor Relief Expenditure

The Church's expenditure on poor relief fell into three main categories: weekly payments to individuals (weekly 'ordinars'), monthly payments to individuals (monthly 'ordinars') and 'extraordinary' or one-off payments to individuals or groups in need from within or beyond the town (which could include extra payments to individuals on the roll of weekly or monthly 'ordinars').⁶⁸ For the sake of consistency, the figures below only include these three categories, but there were also occasional special distributions for distressed or needy groups and contributions to specific expenses (such as clothing for poor grammar scholars), as well as regular contributions to the burial expenses of the poor.⁶⁹ There were also some miscellaneous expenses not directly relating to the poor, including church-repair and payments for service done for the kirk. Some of these sections of the accounts, especially payments for service, include sums given to individuals who were in receipt of relief payments, or for clothes for a poor person, blurring the line between welfare and other expenditure. However, the bulk of the kirk session's money was spent on the regular business of weekly, monthly, and 'extraordinary' payments to poor people (Table 2).

Table 2: Poor Relief Expenditure by Category⁷⁰

⁶⁷ Stevenson, 'Burghs and the Scottish Revolution', 187; Devine, 'Cromwellian Union', 11.

⁶⁸ This was in contrast to Edinburgh in the 1690s, where there were weekly and quarterly recipients instead: Dingwall, *Late 17th-Century Edinburgh*, 251.

⁶⁹ See for example KTA, fos 108v, 110r. Also excluded, despite their inclusion in some sections of the accounts, are revenues 'defalced', that is, deducted from the sums to be paid by those owing rents to the kirk session, especially where property had been damaged by attacks to the town.

⁷⁰ All sums, including totals, are rounded to the nearest pound. Accounts missing for 1644-5. 'Extraordinary' includes payments to 'strangers' and special distributions of communion money, in cases where these are accounted separately. n.s = figure for quarter not specified in accounts.

[Insert Table Here]

Table 2 shows the expenditure on these categories, and the total annual expenditure, for each accounting year. The weekly recipients generally received the largest part of the available funds, while monthly expenditure was generally substantially lower, presumably because those who were only paid monthly were in less dire need than the weekly ‘ordinars’. As the Table demonstrates, there was only minimal fluctuation in the proportion of expenditure going to each quarter, while the variation in total spending was much more significant. As Chart 2 indicates, ‘extraordinary’ spending was the most variable category of expenditure, probably because it was both a mechanism through which unexpected short-term needs could be met, and a type of spending which was more amenable to reductions if funds were limited. It would presumably be preferable to make fewer such payments than to reduce weekly payments to long-term poor individuals in each quarter.

Chart 2: Poor Relief Expenditure by Category.

[Insert Chart Here]

Chart 3: Poor Relief Income and Expenditure

[Insert Chart Here]

Chart 3 compares income and expenditure on poor relief: naturally there is a close correlation between the two.⁷¹ Spending on poor relief followed the same pattern of relative stability, albeit with a drop in spending levels in the 1650s: it was still typically between £2000 and £3500 p.a. for most of the period.⁷² The spikes in spending in 1643-4 and 1650-51 arose more from an increase in extraordinary rather than weekly or monthly expenditure, as Table 2 indicated. This involved an increased number of payments rather than a significant increase in payment sizes. Some of these, predictably, were to people who had been forced into need by the events of the 1640s and 1650s, like a distressed Irish minister in 1643-4, but such

⁷¹ The apparently anomalous case of 1643-4, where annual income is exceeded by spending, arises from a boost to the funds available by monies received from a previous treasurer, but not raised directly during the year. Surpluses were relatively small: taking into account the spending on business not related (or not directly related) to poor relief there was rarely a significant portion unspent at the end of each year.

⁷² By the late seventeenth century rather more, in proportional terms, was being spent in Edinburgh, where in 1693 £21,341 was spent on relief: Dingwall, *Late 17th-Century Edinburgh*, 251.

cases do not dominate the list of extraordinary payments.⁷³ The increase therefore probably mainly reflects tougher economic circumstances, necessitating more frequent provision of financial assistance to Dundonians.

Inevitably, the storming of the town in 1651 had an impact on the provision of poor relief payments. The accounting year began normally, with no sign of any unusual patterns from June to late August 1651.⁷⁴ There follows a gap of two months before figures are next available, no doubt reflecting a hiatus in the operation of the kirk session's relief following the attack and occupation of the town. Normal weekly payments began again at the end of October, but on a rather smaller scale than previously: only £614 was paid for the remaining 7 months of the accounting year 1651-52, in comparison to recent totals of over £1700 p.a. Monthly payments appear to have ceased and only resumed in the summer of 1653. However, by 1652-3 the weekly payments were larger than they had been in recent years, perhaps suggesting that those who had been helped on a monthly basis now required more frequent assistance.⁷⁵ Extraordinary payments were also hit by the storming, although there were some immediate emergency payments made in its aftermath: £26 3s 8d to various unnamed individuals, plus £100 to pay for meal to be distributed among the poor. £230 was spent on repair costs for properties pertaining to the poor. Stranger poor received the larger than usual sum of almost £200 during the rest of 1651-52: interestingly there was no attempt to restrict relief to the town's native poor during this emergency.⁷⁶ Equally, the church also contributed to various other town expenses in the aftermath of the storming, such as the £258 14s paid to prisoners at the instruction of the provost and bailies.⁷⁷

As with the fundraising side of the session's activities, although there is a noticeable negative impact, there was a fairly impressive response to the disaster, in the sense that relief was disrupted but continued to operate along normal patterns. Of course, as a result of the attack itself, the need for assistance must have increased. The precise impact on levels of necessity is impossible to calculate: the increased mortality reduced the town's population, and thus the body of both potential contributors to and recipients of relief. The storming also likely produced a greater number of individuals without means of support (or with reduced means) through physical damage to the town, personal injury, and the injury or deaths of relatives. This should also be taken into account when considering the rest of the decade's

⁷³ KTA, fo. 144v.

⁷⁴ KTA, fos 206v- 208v.

⁷⁵ KTA, fos 208v-209v.

⁷⁶ For similar responses to stranger poor elsewhere, see McCallum, 'Charity Doesn't Begin at Home', 113-14, 117.

⁷⁷ KTA, fos 210r-213r.

figures, as the town gradually began to recover from the disaster. There was, however, as Table 2 demonstrated, a sense of stability from 1653 onwards, with payments of all kinds at a lower but relatively consistent level each year.

The Recipients of Relief

Having considered the broad patterns of fundraising and spending, it is time to examine the distribution of poor relief funds at the individual level. Accounting years have been sampled at five-yearly intervals, in order to provide insight into the composition of the body of recipients, and the patterns of payment they received.⁷⁸ The kirk session divided its regular recipients of relief into weekly ‘ordinars’ and monthly ‘ordinars’ to reflect the frequency of payments received, although there was some overlap and interchange between categories as individuals might receive extra relief from the monthly fund, or move between parts of the town. Tables 3 and 4 demonstrate the patterns of distribution to each of these categories of recipient.⁷⁹

Table 3: Weekly Recipients

[Insert Table Here]

The weekly recipients represent the core beneficiaries of the session’s relief work, and as Table 3 indicates there were typically between 60 and 100 of these individuals. On average they could expect to receive around 8-10s per week throughout the period, although this average masks a fairly wide variation in weekly payments. Payments could be as low as just a couple of shillings per week, although on the whole 6s was the typical smaller sum. The upper end of the range was generally around 13s 4d, although there are examples of individuals receiving up to 20s, and occasionally more. This demonstrates that the session was careful to take into account individual circumstances and requirements when allocating funds, something also reflected in the willingness to increase (or decrease) payment sizes

⁷⁸ For the following discussion of recipients, all figures are rounded to the nearest shilling. The following figures and discussion are based on the treasurers’ lists of the recipients for each quarter/category, effectively providing a snapshot of all those who received payments in any given year. Where there are two lists for a year, due to a visitation part way through the accounting year, the list covering the larger portion of the year has been used. The figures exclude the occasional listing amongst the regular recipients of a child of unknown gender or a pair of individuals (such as siblings): there were one or two such cases each year. On occasion payment is linked to service for the kirk: these cases have been included since they apparently involve poor individuals, and were certainly considered as part of the poor relief payments in the treasurers’ view.

⁷⁹ KTA, fos 49r-75r (1640-1); fos 152v-156v (1645-6); fos 195v-201v (1650-1); fos 227v-229v (1655-6).

during the year.⁸⁰ These figures are reasonably close to the average weekly pension of 8s paid to Edinburgh's poor a few decades later in 1683.⁸¹

The majority of weekly recipients was consistently female, although interestingly the male recipients, while far fewer in number, typically received higher payments. A good example of this pattern is the weekly recipients in the Nethergate quarter in 1645-6: there were 33 female and 6 male recipients, but while the female weekly payments were all within the range 6s to 13s 4d, the 6 men received sums ranging from 6s to 20s. And in the Seagate quarter in 1640-1, two men received weekly payments of 18s each, while 12 women received sums between 2s 6d and 10s 8d.⁸² This may reflect greater levels of serious necessity among Dundee's women, perhaps especially among widows and elderly women, though age is not usually recorded explicitly and widowhood was only mentioned for a minority of recipients.⁸³ Equally, it is possible that male recipients were more likely to have dependents and therefore received larger sums: certainly the lack of explicitly designated married couples hints that the male alone may have been named in such cases.

Table 4: Monthly Recipients

[Insert Table Here]

As with weekly payments, there was some fluctuation in the overall numbers of monthly recipients, but there was a similar pattern of larger numbers of female recipients. However the discrepancy in typical payment sizes was much less significant or persistent for monthly recipients, presumably because these payments were intended to supplement the limited incomes of those who were not entirely destitute or dependent on kirk session support, rather than to provide the only or primary income. Monthly recipients were more likely to be listed alongside the apparent cause of their necessity, such as the need to support several children, further suggesting that a shortfall in the income required to meet extensive needs was the real problem.⁸⁴ In the early stages of the relief system, the scale of monthly payments was relatively small, but average sums had increased substantially by the mid-1640s. By 1655-6,

⁸⁰ See KTA, fo. 50r for examples of additions to and removals from the list, and changes to payment size such as the 6s 'of augmentation' added to John Fotheringham's 10s 4d weekly.

⁸¹ Dingwall, *Late 17th-Century Edinburgh*, 254.

⁸² KTA, fo. 55r.

⁸³ This would be in keeping with other studies of early modern poverty: see for example N. Brodie, "'The Names of All the Poore People': Corporate and Parish Relief in Exeter, 1560s-1570s", in Scott (ed.), *Experiences of Poverty*, 122-3; Jutte, *Poverty and Deviance*, 40-1.

⁸⁴ See for example Isobel Laird, who received 10s monthly in 1640-1, 'having the burden of four bairns', KTA, fo. 58r.

the number of monthly recipients had increased greatly, though their average payment had dropped from the 1645-1650 period. This may well reflect a relief system stretched by the aftermath of the sacking of Dundee, with higher numbers in need of monthly support, perhaps through lost employment opportunities and other problems, and with less funding available to support them. As already noted, however, there was no collapse in the operation of poor relief.

In broad terms, what these figures reveal is that, in general, well over 100, and sometimes around 150 of Dundee's poor folk received regular assistance from the session.⁸⁵ Weekly recipients normally, but not always, made up the majority of these. Monthly recipients tended to receive considerably less than weekly recipients, although at the upper end of their scale (around 24-28s per month) they were receiving as much as some of the lower-paid weekly recipients, who got around 6s per week, or even less.⁸⁶ In addition to these regular recipients, there were also significant numbers receiving irregular or 'extraordinary' support. By definition these payments and recipients were much more variable, since they represented charitable responses to individual circumstances rather than an individual's acceptance into the ranks of the long-term poor. The gender balance tended to be rather more even (although the recipients from outside of Dundee, or 'strangers', were far more likely to be male), and payments ranged hugely from a few shillings to several pounds, as required.⁸⁷ The extraordinary payments take the typical number likely to receive some support from the session in a given year to the 150-200 range, although of course a small proportion of these would be from beyond the town.

It is unfortunately beyond the scope of this article to offer a fuller prosopographical analysis of Dundee's poor folk as reflected in the accounts, but the presence in the records of

⁸⁵ This equates to roughly 1-2% of Dundee's population: roughly equivalent to Edinburgh for much of the 1620s and 1690s though lower than many other European locations, where 5% was not unusual. The 'exceptionally comprehensive' system of Hadleigh in England catered for 4-5% of the population directly, while Aberdeen also supported a higher than usual percentage of the population by the 1680s and 1690s. Stewart, 'Poor Relief in Edinburgh', 11; Dingwall, *Late 17th-Century Edinburgh*, 257-58; R. W. Herlan, 'Poor Relief in London During the English Revolution', *Journal of British Studies* 18 (1979) 30-51, at 41-2; Jutte, *Poverty and Deviance*, 53-4; McIntosh, *Poor Relief and Community*, 1, 3; G. DesBrisay, E. Ewan and H.L. Diack, 'Life in the Two Towns' in P. Dennison, D. Ditchburn and M. Lynch (eds), *Aberdeen Before 1800: A New History* (East Linton, 2002), 62.

⁸⁶ Calculating equivalent values and prices for this period is notoriously difficult, but we might expect oatbread to cost around 12d per pound and ale around 1s-2s per pint in the mid-seventeenth-century, while daily wages in towns might be around 6s-8s. Significant caution is needed with such estimates, but they do suggest that while payments could amount to a significant proportion of likely earning equivalents, few of the recipients were relying on the relief payments as their sole income (just as Gibson and Smout have noted the 'puzzle' of how even those in employment survived). A. J. S. Gibson and T. C. Smout, *Prices, Food and Wages in Scotland, 1550-1780* (Cambridge, 1995), 56, 62, 299, 349.

⁸⁷ For example in 1640-1, 22 men and 2 women from outside Dundee received such payments (as well as two groups of people). The mean payment was 12s for both sexes, but with sums paid ranging from 4s to a stranger called Duncane Dougall, to £8 2s to one of the groups (some shipwrecked Dutchmen). KTA, fo. 71r.

their names, changes in quarter, payment size or status offers potential for more detailed studies in future. Individuals could be followed through the accounts, and the geography of poverty and relief in Dundee could be traced through analysis of patterns in the four quarters, although it is apparent from the research undertaken here that the Nethergate was the part of town with the highest numbers of needy individuals.⁸⁸ This is perhaps the subject where the Kirk Treasurer's Accounts do the most to suggest the rich potential for further study of Dundee's social history, or of the broader question of experiences of poverty in the early modern period.⁸⁹

The Hospital and its Pensioners

The regular poor relief work of the kirk session was not the only form of welfare or charity available in seventeenth-century Dundee. The town also had a hospital, a pre-Reformation survival just outside the walls to the west, along the Nethergate.⁹⁰ We saw earlier that in 1635 there was concern about the portion of its revenues which were spent on stipends and ecclesiastical fees rather than its poor inmates or its upkeep; however the abortive attempt to redress the situation also helpfully confirms the fact that the hospital was still functioning, and had inmates, at that time.⁹¹ It is impossible to be certain how the hospital was functioning in the 1630s, beyond the annual appointment of hospital masters, who were selected alongside other burgh officials like the pier master and kirk master.⁹² However the earliest surviving volume of Hospital Accounts begins in 1642, possibly as a direct result of the visitation of the hospital in November 1642 by the council (with the ministers also present).⁹³ These accounts shed light on a significant separate arena of welfare provision in the town, albeit one on a much more limited scale than the kirk's 'outdoor' relief.

The hospital was funded entirely separately from the kirk session's poor relief, through a combination of annualrents, duties, a proportion of fornicators' fines, and

⁸⁸ The exception is monthly recipients in the Overgate, who outnumbered Nethergate monthlies in 1640-1 and 1650-1.

⁸⁹ Cf. Lynch, 'Introduction: Scottish Towns 1500-1700', 26-7, which suggests a need for compulsory rates in order for the poor to be studied adequately.

⁹⁰ Maxwell, *History of Old Dundee*, 223-4. The subject of hospitals in pre-modern Scotland has been little studied by historians, but see McCallum, "'Nurseries of the Poore'" for a recent survey; also Derek Hall, "'Unto yone hospitall at the tounis end": the Scottish medieval hospital', *Tayside and Fife Archaeological Journal* 12 (2006) 89-105; and for comparison N. Goose and H. Looijesteijn, 'Almshouses in England and the Dutch Republic circa 1350-1800: a comparative perspective', *Journal of Social History* 45 (2012) 1049-1073.

⁹¹ TCM, fos 112r-v.

⁹² See for example TCM, fos 113v, 119v, 124v, 131v.

⁹³ TCM, fo. 151r.

miscellaneous sources such as the interest on £1000 which had been lent to the town. The total charge for the three years from 1642-45 was £5375 6s 7d, a much smaller sum than the kirk treasurer was able to draw in, but substantial nonetheless.⁹⁴ The amount spent on non-hospital expenses was significant: in 1642-3 just under £300 went to the ministers, reader, schoolmaster and clock-keeper, while £54 2s was spent on bread and wine for communion. However, a larger amount was spent on the core functioning of the hospital. This included its physical maintenance (for example £26 13s 4d for new slates, and 6s 8d for a new lock and key), and new clothes or shoes for the inmates (for example John Clarkson got shoes worth £1 8s 4d on 17 November 1642, perhaps as a result of the council's visitation, while £1 4s was spent on a new hat for James Gibson on 4 March 1643). One-off purchases of relatively high-quality food were also made, such as the two barrels of beef acquired for £28 6s on 22 January 1643.⁹⁵ However the main regular expenditure was on monthly disbursements averaging around £20, presumably for incidental expenses incurred by the inmates, and the core dietary requirements of inmates: ale, at around £20-25 per month, and bread, at around £13 per month.⁹⁶

In 1645, the attack on Dundee hit the hospital, and its inhabitants badly. The hospital house had been burnt, and on 12 April 1645 the council ordered the hospital master to pay the hospitallers 20s weekly 'quhile farder course be take thereanent'.⁹⁷ This was no doubt necessary to meet the needs of residents who now had to fund their own accommodation. The accounts record an initial list of nine men who were to receive these payments, and from this we can assume that roughly this number had previously been resident in the hospital: certainly both Clarkson and Gibson were on the list. The list also sheds light on the social composition of the hospitallers: it included three baxters, two merchants, a reader, a maltman, a cooper, and one man of unspecified background.⁹⁸ The hospital seems to have catered for poor, decayed burgesses of the town, rather than a general subset of the town's poor individuals. While it would be overly cynical to suggest that this fact alone explains the council's concern that they be properly catered for following the burning of the hospital, the comparison in terms of gender and social status with those receiving relief from the kirk session is striking. However, there is nothing to suggest that they were not genuinely needy (if not necessarily the neediest), and indeed the fact that several of them had either died or

⁹⁴ HA, p. 12.

⁹⁵ HA, pp. 14-16.

⁹⁶ HA, pp. 16-18.

⁹⁷ TCM, fo. 188r.

⁹⁸ HA, p. 24.

received payments in view of sickness by April 1646 suggests that they were a group of genuinely aged and infirm individuals.⁹⁹

The payment of pensions to hospitallers in lieu of accommodation was to prove much more than a temporary measure while further action was taken. Although the hospital's income, as well as its structure, was hit by the attack, since rent had to be foregone from the holders of lands which had been also been burnt, cash payments continued to be made to the former inmates.¹⁰⁰ After a month's hiatus following the death and replacement of the hospital master in March 1646, these pensions continued to be the primary form of relief provided by the hospital for the best part of two decades.¹⁰¹ Indeed, the council admitted new entrants to the roll of hospital pensioners, a practice which was not recorded in the years before 1644-5. As before, these were almost without exception male, and often had a former occupation given, indicating some standing within the community (mariners such as James Couston and John Ker were the most common category, although craftsmen could also be found).¹⁰² The numbers fluctuated, with new entrants sometimes simply replacing deceased individuals, although by the late 1640s the number was normally above rather than below ten.¹⁰³ Alongside these payments – substantial enough in themselves at £52 each year for each pensioner – the hospital master continued to pay his share of the ministerial and other stipends, and for clothes and shoes for the pensioners. There was clearly some desire to try to limit the pensions, as one was given £12 'to be quyt of him', but the master also turned his attention to rebuilding the hospital house itself, with some expenditure on building materials from 1647 onwards.¹⁰⁴ However, this does not seem to have been completed, and the reason is hinted at by the absence of accounts for 1651-2: the sacking of the town in 1651 must have directly or indirectly set back work on repair and rebuilding. Certainly the 1650s witnessed the same form of hospital activity as 1645-50, albeit with an increasing number of pensioners (between 20 and 30 by the second half of the decade), more variation in pension size (ranging from 10s-30s per week), and some contribution to the necessities of non-pensioners, including outsiders to the town such as a company of Dutch fishermen in 1653-4, and even, on a one-off basis, to a woman in 1661-2.¹⁰⁵ It was only in 1664 that residential provision

⁹⁹ HA, pp. 28-9.

¹⁰⁰ HA, pp. 24-5.

¹⁰¹ TCM, fo. 193r.

¹⁰² TCM, fos 227v, 228v, 230v. The exception was the widow of Richard Davidson, a mariner, who is never named, and indeed was referred to in the accounts simply under her late husband's name in 1650-51, despite a clear reference to 'Richard Davidsones relict' entering the roll in 1649-50: HA, pp. 86, 100.

¹⁰³ HA, pp. 43, 58, 72, 86, 100.

¹⁰⁴ HA, pp. 58, 72, 100.

¹⁰⁵ HA, pp. 143, 155, 169, 219, 286.

returned, with subsequent accounts distinguishing between payments to ‘some weikly ordinars’ and to ‘stependiars and mantinance for the men in the housse’.¹⁰⁶

Although restoring ‘indoor’ relief to the decayed townsmen of Dundee took the best part of two decades, it is striking that the disastrous events of the 1640s and 1650s did not entirely prevent the hospital from fulfilling its functions. Indeed a wider range of men were helped by the hospital after 1644-5 than seems to have been the case before the attack on Dundee, although this may be a consequence of the town’s worsening economic situation rather than any change in attitude arising from the introduction of primarily cash-based relief. As with the kirk sessions’ relief work, difficult times did not lead to a failure to remember the needy. However, the most striking comparison with the work of the church was the far narrower remit of the hospital. Hospital provision was relatively thin in Dundee.¹⁰⁷ Even when the residential component of its care was forcibly discontinued, removing any practical necessity for an exclusive focus on one gender on grounds of decency, the town’s government of the hospital maintained the targeting of men who had formerly worked in respectable occupations but had fallen on hard times. The council did not take the opportunity to expand the social horizons of hospital welfare along the lines of the kirk session’s model. We can only guess at whether this was because their minds were on the many other problems facing the government of the town, or because they felt that the wider body of the poor was already adequately catered for by the kirk, leaving them free to focus on ensuring respectable and decent lifestyles for upstanding members of the burgh community who had fallen on hard times.

Conclusion

The relief which was provided to Dundee’s poor folk in the mid-seventeenth-century was primarily voluntary, and organised by the church, and therefore does not sit comfortably within narratives of progress towards modern, taxation-funded welfare states and the secularisation of charity.¹⁰⁸ However, taken on its own terms, the evidence suggests that the relief system provided extensive and significant support to a modest but significant group of

¹⁰⁶ HA, pp. 318, 333.

¹⁰⁷ More extensive hospital provision during the seventeenth century could be found in Edinburgh and Aberdeen, for example: Stewart, ‘Poor Relief in Edinburgh’, 10-11; Dingwall, *Late 17th-Century Edinburgh*, 263; DesBrisay, Ewan and Diack, ‘Life in the Two Towns’, 64-7.

¹⁰⁸ See for example O. Hufton, *The Poor of Eighteenth Century France, 1750-1789* (Oxford, 1974), 131; Jutte, *Poverty and Deviance*, 101-2.

needy individuals and families.¹⁰⁹ Predictably, it faced disruption and some contraction in scale when Dundee underwent a major crisis. Yet the overall picture which emerges is one of remarkable resilience: the provision of relief survived the worst years of the century in Dundee. Relief was consistently well-organised and diligently implemented, it was flexible and responsive to the needs of individuals, and it was underpinned by steady contributions from Dundee's better-off inhabitants. Further research in this area is needed to develop our knowledge of this highly-neglected aspect of early modern Scottish social history: the Kirk Treasurer's Accounts would repay prosopographical study, and equally importantly the contemporary relief records of other burghs would need to be examined in order to assess how representative Dundee may or may not have been. But, this article has argued, Scottish historians and scholars of early modern poor relief need to be much more alert to the welfare which could be provided by churches such as Dundee's, and to the opportunities which such relief systems offer to provide a more rounded and inclusive history of the early modern town.

¹⁰⁹ This echoes some of the implications of an important recent case-study of an English town, finding a very comprehensive relief system operating without 'legal authority' (albeit with some compulsory rating contributing a significant minority of the overall relief funding), and significantly influenced by religious zeal: Hadleigh, *Poor Relief and Community*, 5, 57, 119-20, 143-7

Charity and Conflict: Poor Relief in Mid Seventeenth-Century Dundee

Tables and Charts

Chart 1: Annual Poor Relief Income and Collection Totals

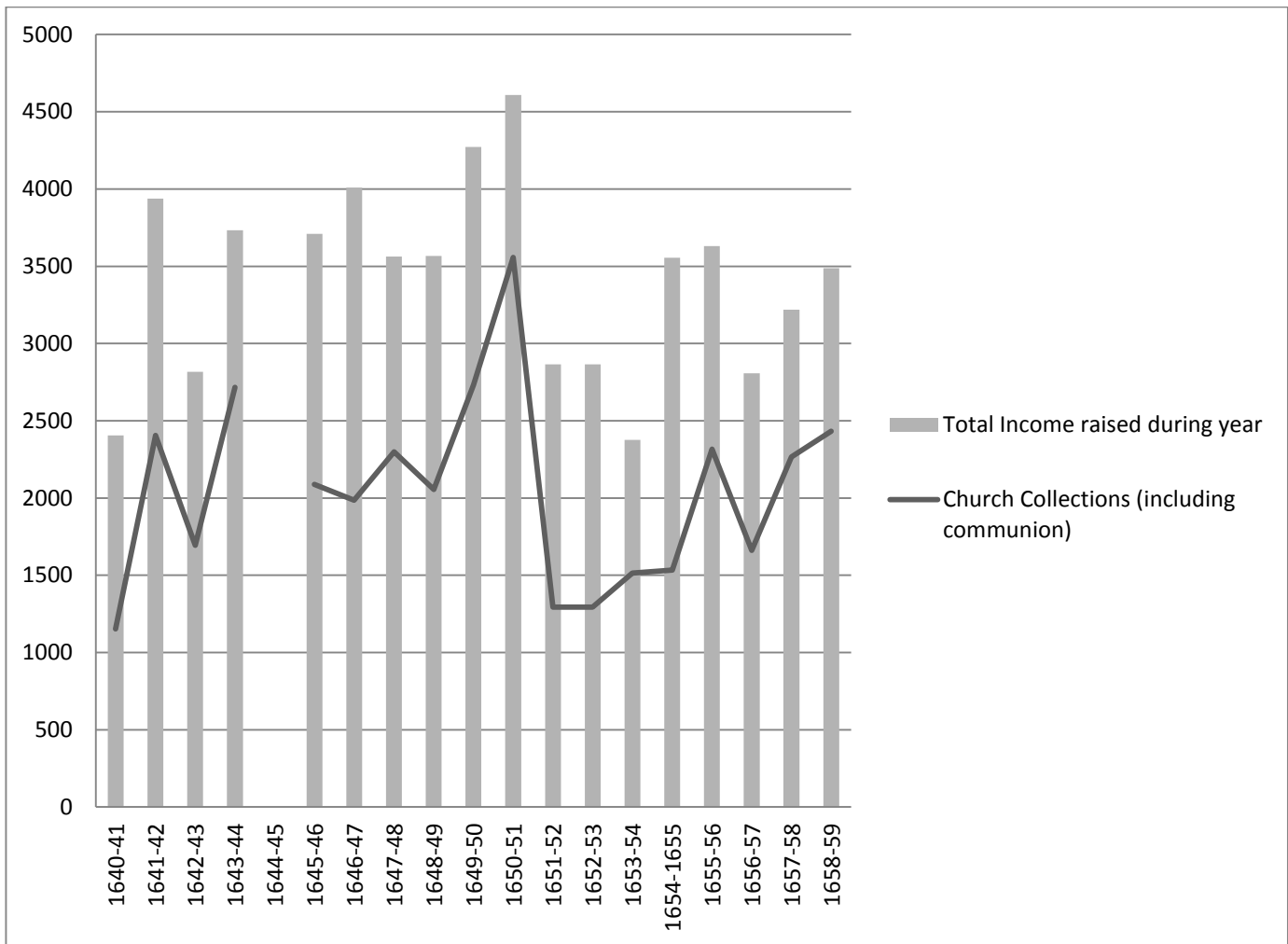


Table 1: Poor Relief Income by Source

	1640-41	1641-42	1642-43	1643-44	1644-45	1645-46	1646-47	1647-48	1648-49	1649-50
<i>Received from previous treasurer(s)</i>	1067	1191	1492	1130	-	0	0	0	0	101
Rents, interest, duties etc	483	510	469	390	-	705	946	570	574	317
Church Collections	1152	2406	1694	2717	-	2089	1986	2298	2055	2731
Legacies	256	207	108	0	-	40	454	0	279	333
Fines (including consignations)	242	268	185	168	-	234	218	139	290	102
Sea/land offerings and other voluntary donations	272	543	361	448	-	641	405	376	369	790
Miscellaneous	0	4	0	10	-	0	0	0	0	0
Total raised during year	2405	3938	2817	3733	-	3709	4009	3563	3567	4273
<i>Total Including Funds from previous treasurer</i>	3472	5129	4309	4863	-	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	4374
	1650-51	(1651-52)	(1652-53)	1653-54	1654-55	1655-56	1656-57	1657-58	1658-59	
<i>Received from previous treasurer(s)</i>	836	(914)	(914)	319	343	0	375	59	0	
Rents, interest, duties etc	324	(581)	(581)	435	469	530	550	517	454	
Church Collections	3558	(1293)	(1293)	1515	1534	2316	1661	2266	2433	
Legacies	267	(513)	(513)	0	1333	211	135	67	133	
Fines (including consignations)	127	(212)	(212)	150	112	98	120	73	177	
Sea/land offerings and other voluntary donations	333	(267)	(267)	277	107	426	342	296	238	
Miscellaneous	0	(0)	(0)	0	0	50	0	0	53	
Total raised during year	4609	(2866)	(2866)	2377	3555	3631	2808	3219	3488	

<i>Total Including Funds from previous treasurer</i>	5445	(3780)	(3780)	2696	3898	N/A	3183	3278	N/A
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Table 2: Poor Relief Expenditure by Category

	1640-41	1641-42	1642-43	1643-44	1644-45	1645-46	1646-47	1647-48	1648-49	1649-50
Nethergate Weekly	656	670	656	1006	-	891	1009	709	688	697
Overgate Weekly	375	452	485	689	-	691	653	535	537	549
Murraygate Weekly	337	321	292	300	-	250	274	217	245	223
Seagate Weekly	303	366	346	431	-	353	414	249	262	267
Weekly Total	1671	1809	1779	2426	-	2185	2350	1710	1732	1736
Nethergate Monthly	82	97	127	n.s.	-	136	130	102	93	75
Overgate Monthly	127	146	182	n.s.	-	119	137	94	85	61
Murraygate Monthly	65	73	121	n.s.	-	92	118	91	97	103
Seagate Monthly	73	90	176	n.s.	-	119	139	124	94	69
Monthly Total	347	406	606	801	-	466	524	411	369	308
Extraordinary	272	660	453	1382	-	354	563	512	535	806
Overall Poor Expenditure	2290	2875	2838	4609	-	3005	3437	2633	2636	2850
	1650-51	1651-52	1652-53	1653-54	1654-55	1655-56	1656-57	1657-58	1658-59	
Nethergate Weekly	736	383	645	422	n.s.	403	396	409	429	
Overgate Weekly	543	317	469	398	n.s.	347	354	357	411	

Murraygate Weekly	182	171	459	300	n.s.	244	280	268	294
Seagate Weekly	279	216	557	318	n.s.	342	357	391	406
Weekly Total	1740	1087	2130	1438	1296	1336	1387	1483 <small>¹¹⁰</small>	1540 <small>¹¹¹</small>
Nethergate Monthly	57	24	0	174	152	138	135	181	180
Overgate Monthly	123	29	0	151	143	141	140	230	268
Murraygate Monthly	114	26	0	128	151	137	150	161	146
Seagate Monthly	153	43	0	175	157	162	133	134	132
Monthly Total	447	122	0	628	603	578	558	706	726
Extraordinary	1631	479	257	281	238	557	578	871	1231
Overall Poor Expenditure	3818	1688	2387	2347	2137	2471	2523	3060	3497

¹¹⁰ In addition to the four quarters' weekly payments, totalling £1425, there were also payments to two individuals not clearly linked to a quarter, which amounted to £57 18s, thus taking the rounded annual total to £1483.

¹¹¹ The 1658-9 accounts amalgamate the weekly payments for all four quarters, meaning that the total for each quarter has been extrapolated from each quarter's list of weekly recipients and their sums. This means that the totals for each quarter each have a margin of error of a pound or two: the year's total is correct however.

Chart 2: Poor Relief Expenditure by Category

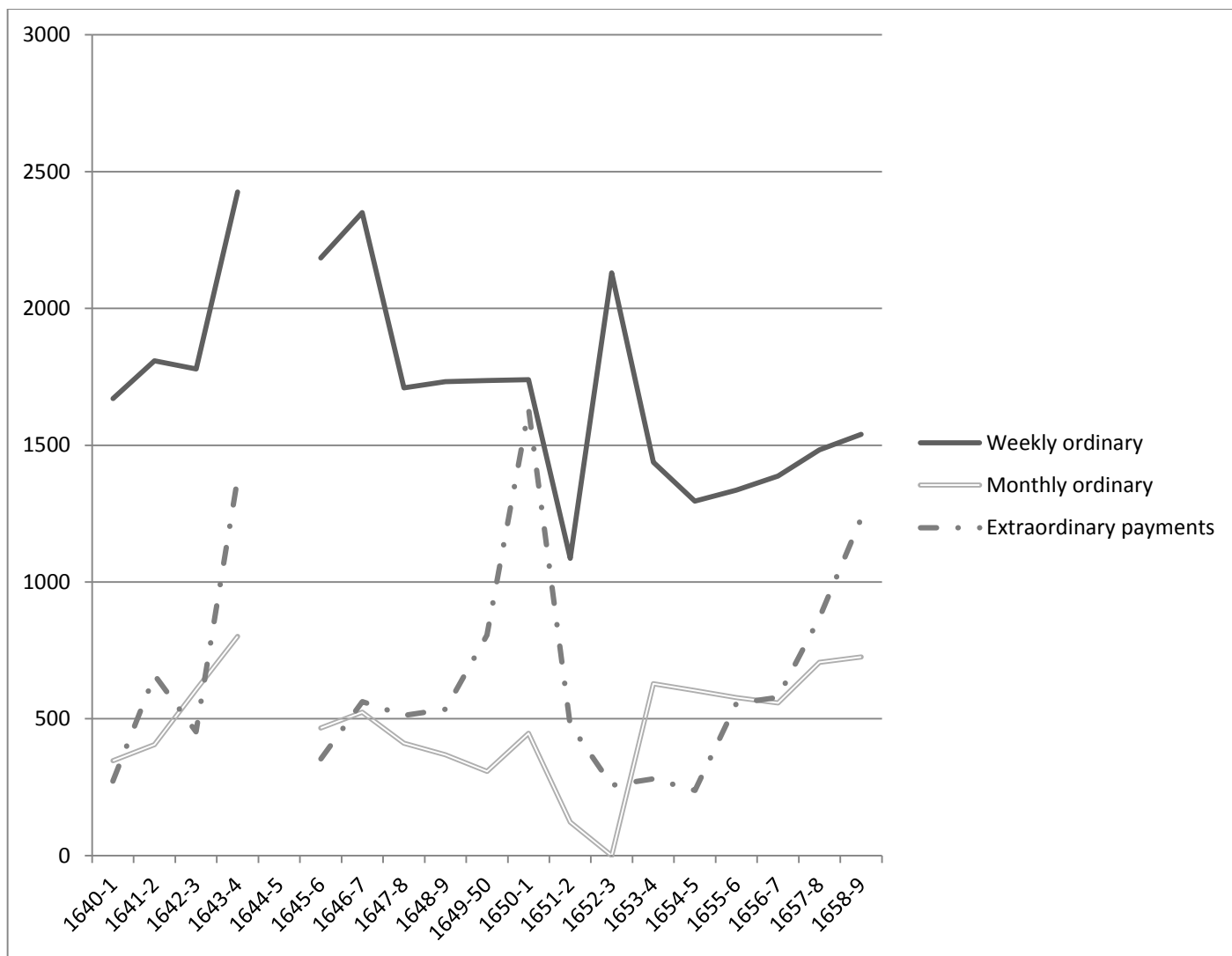


Chart 3: Poor Relief Income and Expenditure

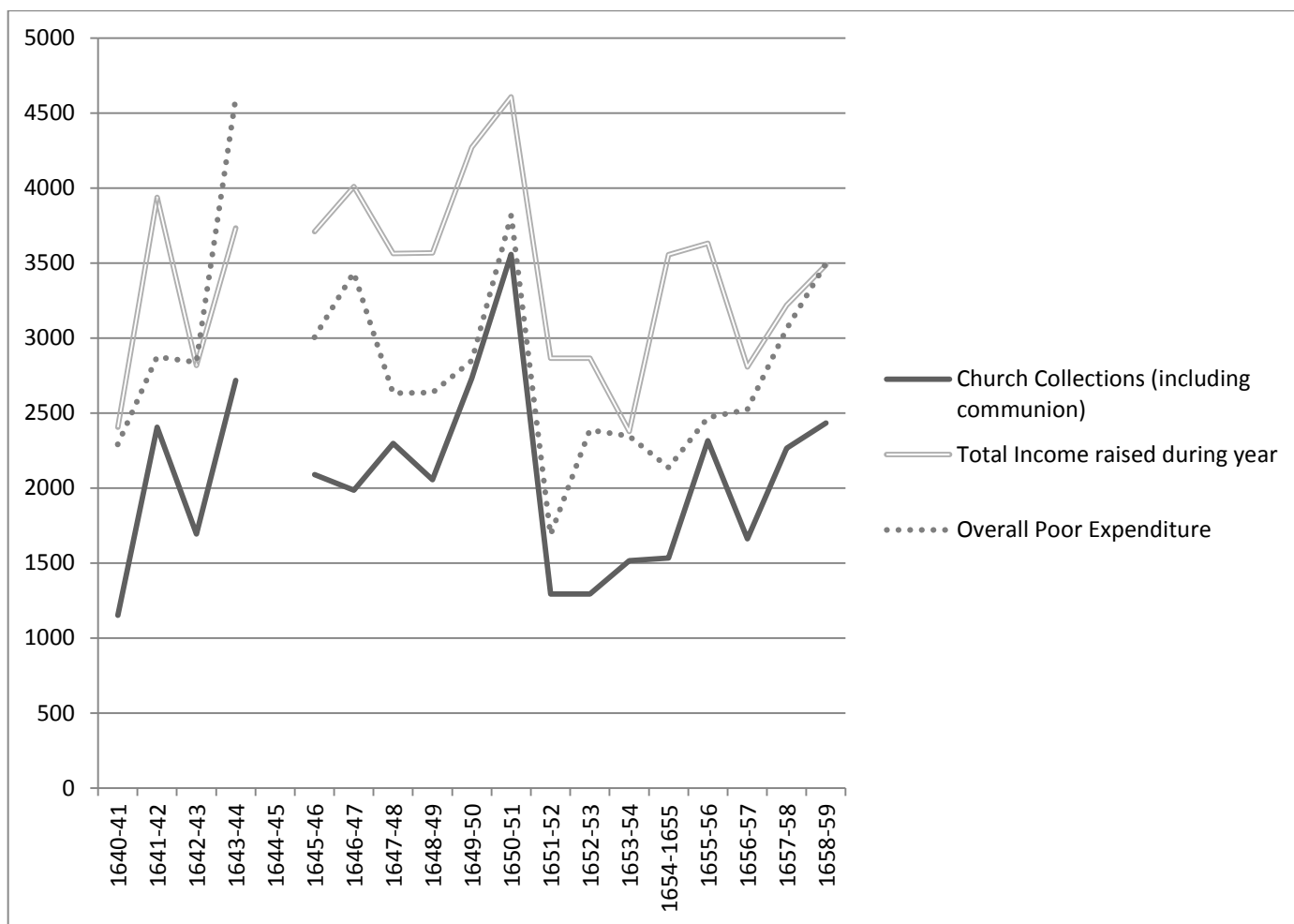


Table 3: Weekly Recipients

Year	1640-41	1645-6	1650-1	1655-6
Number of female recipients	62	77	61	52
Female mean weekly payment	8 shillings	9.5 shillings	9 shillings	8 shillings
Number of male recipients	12	20	10	9
Male mean weekly payment	12 shillings	11 shillings	12 shillings	9 shillings
Total number of recipients	74	97	71	61
Overall average weekly payment	9 shillings	10 shillings	10 shillings	8 shillings

Table 4: Monthly Recipients

Year	1640-41	1645-6	1650-1	1655-6
Number of female recipients	40	47	38	59
Female mean monthly payment	7 shillings	13 shillings	15 shillings	11.5 shillings
Number of male recipients	9	12	10	17
Male mean monthly payment	6 shillings	16 shillings	19 shillings	15 shillings
Total number of recipients	49	59	48	76
Overall average monthly payment	7 shillings	13 shillings	16 shillings	12 shillings