

**THE HUMAN ECOLOGY OF NEED AND RELIEF ON THE
LINCOLN HEATH, C.1790-1850**

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requirements of Nottingham Trent University for the
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Abstract

This thesis examines the extent of change and continuity in experiences of need and relief at the local scale within the transitional period between the Old and New Poor Laws. In doing so, it tests the impact of the 1834 Poor Law Amendment Act against both the dynamic nature of welfare in the waning period of the Old Poor Law and the importance of localised socio-economic factors. Methodologically, the thesis moves away from common framings currently adopted by the literature. Instead, it grounds analysis in a human ecological methodology which aims to examine relationships and impacts between people and their local environment. Research is embedded within Lincolnshire, an understudied area in the context of English and Welsh welfare historiography, and focusses on ten proximate parishes on the Lincoln Heath, a distinct geological region of the county.

Change and continuity between poor laws was mixed. The main aims of the New Poor Law were generally administrative and restrictive in nature, aiming to restructure the management of the poor law and curtail outdoor relief for the able-bodied. This thesis argues that these goals were broadly met within the area of study. The administrative variation evident under the Old Poor Law was largely erased through unionisation and the formation of New Poor Law salaried staff. In addition, this thesis suggests a reduction in outdoor relief given to able-bodied males under the New Poor Law, with this cohort being a key target of the Poor Law Amendment Act itself and later special and general orders issued by the Poor Law Commission. The creation of union workhouses multiplied the potential for indoor relief to be a composite factor of relief outcomes under the New Poor Law, generally standardising the experience of the workhouse within the poor law union area in comparison to a mixed indoor relief expression evident under the Old Poor Law within the area of study.

However, dominant parish ratepayers staffed key administrative positions under both poor laws, leading to broad demographic persistence in some aspects of administration. Despite the growth of poor law staffing under the New Poor Law, salaried positions within poor law unions were filled by local choice, meaning such staff became part of a rearticulated forum of poor law management which exhibited elements of continuation. Additionally, periods of increased need and levels of poor law receipt remained temporally variable across the period of study, with the New Poor Law not negating the

fact that these often relied on localised economic conditions. Similarly, there was a broad continuity in the demography of receipt under both poor laws, with cohorts such as women, children and the elderly being dominant. Outdoor relief remained the primary poor law relief outcome into the New Poor Law, seeing continuation with previous practice, particularly from the 1820s onwards as outdoor relief seemingly became the dominant relief outcome in the parish selection. Moreover, the poor law itself always sat in relation to other avenues of relief within a broader mixed economy of welfare, with individuals amalgamating differing strands of support within personal relief strategies. As such, the impact of the 1834 Poor Law Amendment Act was nuanced, with conclusions on the extent of change and continuity often dependent on the framing of questions asked. What is clear, however, is that the poor law in its localised expression was embedded in an underlying socio-economic locale, impacting how it was conceived, managed and utilised.

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Abbreviations

- LA- The Lincolnshire Archives
- SJCCA- St. John's College Archives, University of Cambridge
- NA- The National Archives

Chapter One: Introduction

1.1 Overview

In 1834, the Poor Law Amendment Act was passed, issuing in the era of the New Poor Law. This legislatively replaced over two centuries of practice founded on the Poor Relief Act of 1601, commonly known as the Old Poor Law. Driver has stated that the New Poor Law ‘provided a radically new framework for the management of pauperism’¹ in contrast to previous practice, aiming to reform the poor law in both England and Wales. Here, the overarching aims of the New Poor Law can generally be categorised within two broad groupings: administrative and restrictive, limiting certain types of relief outcomes for specifically defined cohorts of paupers.

Administratively, the New Poor Law moved away from relief regimes pivoting primarily on the individual parish, as had mainly been the case before 1834, towards the poor law union, a larger geo-administrative area consisting of a several incorporated parishes. Practice within unions was to be overseen by a board of guardians with new salaried staffing positions created, aiming to professionalise the administration of the poor law. At the national level, the Poor Law Commission, replaced by the Poor Law Board in 1847, was established to monitor the actions of unions, with Assistant Commissioners and later Poor Law Inspectors acting on behalf of these national bodies within localities. Such centralisation has been seen by many as a key feature of the New Poor Law and a theoretical departure from the legislatively disunified national relief landscape of pre-1834.² Thus, standardisation in administrative structures, which was anticipated to lead to a similar standardisation of relief outcomes, was a central aim of the New Poor Law.³ According to Jones and King, ‘the architects of 1834 hoped [administrative changes] would generate a tightening of relief levels and attitudes

¹ Felix Driver, *Power and Pauperism: The Workhouse System, 1834-1884* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), p.165

² Anthony Brundage, *The Making of the New Poor Law: The Politics of Inquiry, Enactment and Implementation, 1832-1839* (London: Hutchinson, 1978), p.14; Felix Driver, *Power and Pauperism: The Workhouse System, 1834-1884* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), p.28; Peter Dunkley, ‘The ‘Hungry Forties’ and the New Poor Law: A Case Study’, *The Historical Journal*, 17 (1974), pp.329-346; Philip Harling, ‘The Power of Persuasion: Central Authority, Local Bureaucracy and the New Poor Law’, *The English Historical Review*, 107 (1992), pp.30-53; Eric Midwinter, ‘State Intervention at the Local Level: The New Poor Law in Lancashire’, *The Historical Journal*, 10 (1967), pp.106-112;

³ Steven King, *Poverty and Welfare in England, 1700-1850: A Regional Perspective* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000), p.228

towards eligibility.⁴ The reasons why this was thought necessary can be traced back to the immediate decades prior to 1834, with Brundage defining the period between 1800 and the 1830s as one of ‘debates, experiments and reforms’ in the poor law.⁵ In the face of rising relief costs, growing levels of pauperism, rural social unrest and changing notions towards a more economical and restrictive view of poor law relief, it was acknowledged that reform of the poor law was necessary. The 1832 to 1834 Royal Commission on the Poor Laws collected evidence on practice from across the country, with its final recommendations advocating for administrative centralisation and the ceasing of outdoor relief to the able-bodied.⁶ Despite the shortcoming of the 1832 Commission, with its scope limited to a minority of parishes nationally and conclusions founded on choice anecdotal evidence of poor practice, its focus on constraining relief for the able-bodied formed the foundation of the restrictive nature of the New Poor Law.⁷ Outdoor relief was to stop for the able-bodied and their dependent family outside of clearly proscribed circumstances. Instead, relief for this cohort was to be primarily within the workhouse, with the principle of ‘less eligibility’ applied which meant that life indoors should not be of a higher standard than that experienced by the poorest independent labourer.⁸

A commitment to limiting outdoor relief for the able-bodied was reiterated by special orders given to individual poor law unions and, throughout the 1840s and 1850s, via a series of general orders released by the Poor Law Commission and later Poor Law Board.⁹ The Outdoor Labour Test Order was issued in 1842 to specific unions primarily in northern England, offering outdoor relief in return for manual labour. In 1844, the Outdoor Relief Prohibitory Order was issued across the country to rural unions which again reiterated that relief to the able-bodied and their dependents should primarily be within the workhouse, followed in 1852 by the Outdoor Relief Regulation Order which

⁴ Peter Jones and Steven King, *Pauper Voices, Public Opinion and Workhouse Reform in Mid-Victorian England- Bearing Witness* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2020), p.3

⁵ Anthony Brundage, *The English Poor Laws, 1700-1930* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2002), pp.37-60

⁶ Robert Humphreys, *Sin, Organized Charity and the Poor Law in Victorian England* (Basingstoke and London: Macmillan, 1995), pp.14-17

⁷ Brundage, *The English Poor Laws*, pp.64-65; Karel Williams, *From Pauperism to Poverty* (London: Routledge, 1981), pp.52-53

⁸ Jones and King, *Pauper Voices, Public Opinion and Workhouse Reform in Mid-Victorian England*, p.3

⁹ Humphreys, *Sin, Organized Charity and the Poor Law in Victorian England*, pp.17-18; Keith Snell, *Parish and Belonging: Community, Identity and Welfare in England and Wales, 1700-1950* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), pp.207-338; Williams, *From Pauperism to Poverty*, pp.51-75

in its revised form dealt primarily with the relief of able-bodied men. The details and impact of such orders will be explored in depth within chapters two, four and five, it is only necessary here to reiterate that a policy of restricting outdoor relief for the able-bodied held a central place within the New Poor Law.

However, how far such administrative and restrictive aims played out in practice has remained a contentious issue, with Hurren stating that ‘legal stipulations were seldom realised.’¹⁰ Indeed, both King and Hollen Lees have warned of a lack in adequate understandings of the initial impact of the New Poor Law on the local scale, examining how the stipulations of the 1834 Poor Law Amendment Act were conceived, embedded and implemented with localities.¹¹ Contemporary work has begun to readdress this gap within the historiography, with studies on the localised impact of the Poor Law Amendment Act having been conducted and important research having been carried out in the MH12 and MH32 New Poor Law collections at the National Archives.¹² Consequently, this thesis sits within the vanguard of the current literature into the English and Welsh poor law and aims to explore the impact of the 1834 Poor Law Amendment Act on the experience of need and relief within a localised area.

However, where it differs and builds on current studies is in the extent and breadth of its focus regarding periodisation and foundational units of analysis. Most other explorations of the New Poor Law begin in the 1830s, discussing implementation and practice within a single poor law union. Although such studies are clearly important and go far in answering King’s call for further work to be done regarding the New Poor Law at the local level, this thesis suggests a new approach which will move away from an analysis of implementation towards one focussed on the extent of change and continuity in a broader transitional period between poor laws. Firstly, although a periodisation initiating in the 1830s is reasonable in the context of legislative chronology, it inadvertently assumes a dichotomy between the Old and New Poor Laws which paints

¹⁰ Elizabeth Hurren, *Protesting About Pauperism: Poverty, Politics and Poor Relief in Late-Victorian England, 1870-1900* (Woodbridge: the Boydell Press, 2007), p.17

¹¹ King, *Poverty and Welfare in England*, p.70; Lynn Hollen-Lees, *The Solidarities of Strangers: The English Poor Law and the People, 1700-1948* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), p.177

¹² Lewis Darwen, ‘Implementing and Administrating the New Poor Law in the Industrial North: A Case Study of Preston Union in Regional Context, 1837-1861’ (Unpublished Doctoral Thesis, Nottingham Trent University, 2015); Geoffrey Hooker, ‘Llandilofawr Poor Law Union 1836-1886: The Most Difficult Union in Wales’ (Unpublished Doctoral Thesis, The University of Leicester, 2013); Karen Rothery, ‘The Implementation and Administration of the New Poor Law in Hertfordshire c.1830-1847’ (Unpublished Doctoral Thesis, The University of Hertfordshire, 2017); Jones and King, *Pauper Voices, Public Opinion and Workhouse Reform in Mid-Victorian England*

practice before 1834 as essentially homogenous, ignoring the wide-ranging changes in poor law practice via the adoption of enabling legislation which stretch back into the eighteenth century.¹³ Such have been known to have affected expressions in relief systems up until the eve of the Poor Law Amendment Act, meaning the Old Poor Law cannot necessarily be seen as a static entity when it comes to comparison with the New.¹⁴ Secondly, by focussing on implementation in a single poor law union, many current studies have unintentionally correlated administrative borders with conceptions of the local, negating the fact that administrative boundaries were superimposed on pre-existing localised socio-economic landscapes. Thus, there is generally still a historiographical gap regarding the extent of change and continuity within local experiences of need and relief between poor laws. It is the purpose of this thesis to try to close this gap and in doing so, test the radicality of the New Poor Law.

1.2 Methodology

In approaching these issues, a methodological shift with the ways the poor law has been analysed in the past is needed. The literature has largely been temporally packaged around legislative breaks such as the passing of the Poor Law Amendment Act in 1834. Although important in longitudinal understandings, such a framing is often devoid of any real grounding in local socio-economic contexts. It assumes a national homogeneity in the implementation of the New Poor Law which is plainly false. In many areas, the archetypal New Poor Law system of a poor law union with associated workhouse happened decades after 1834, particularly in northern England where local opposition to reform was strongest.¹⁵ What is needed is a grounding away from a legislative framing towards local realities.

¹³ For an overview see Samantha Shave, *Pauper Policies: Poor Law Practice in England, 1780-1850* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2017), pp.56-150

¹⁴ Anne Digby, *Pauper Palaces* (Boston: Routledge, 1978); Samantha Shave, 'The Impact of Sturges Bourne's Acts in Rural England', *The Historical Journal*, 56 (2013), pp.399-429; John Shaw, *The Loes and Wilford Poor Law Incorporation 1765-1826: A Prison with a Milder Name* (Suffolk: The Boydell Press, 2019); Roger Wells, 'Poor-law Reform in the Rural South-east: The Impact of the Sturges Bourne Acts During the Agricultural Depression, 1815-1835', *Southern History*, 23 (2001), pp.51-115

¹⁵ John Beckett, 'Politics and the Implementation of the New Poor Law: the Nottingham Workhouse Controversy, 1834-43', *Midland History*, 31 (2016), pp.201-223; Lewis Darwen, 'Workhouse Populations of the Preston Union, 1841-61', *Local Population Studies*, 93 (2015), pp.33-53; Darwen, 'Implementing and Administrating the New Poor Law in the Industrial North: A Case Study of Preston Union in Regional Context, 1837-1861'

However, defining the boundaries of the local has proven contentious. Spatial framings adopted by the literature, predominantly the parish, county and poor law union, were often administrative in nature and have had their foundational nature as units of analysis assumed rather than discerned. Internal socio-economic variety within these units, often linked to underlying geographical differences, and the effects such had on need and relief has largely been ignored within most studies. For example, Langton, in his study of relief in Oxfordshire, has shown that geographical distinctions within counties were fundamental to diversity in experiences of relief due to variety in associated farming practice and thus the socio-economic expressions poverty and relief were embedded in.¹⁶ In a rural context, Langton has defined intra-county soil types linked to particular farming systems as ‘the spatial units that defined the human ecosystems according to which we would expect poor relief to vary.’¹⁷ Thus, there is an acknowledgment that historic experiences of need and relief operated within localised ecosystems whose boundaries did not necessarily correlate with the spatial units of analysis adopted within the literature.

Approaching the poor law through the language of ecology has already been used in the literature to attempt to make sense of localised variation in relief practice and policy.¹⁸ King has argued that analysis of the poor law must ‘focus on the nature and longevity of local welfare practice as it was constructed and experienced,’¹⁹ arguing that ‘historians must recover the overarching ‘human ecology’ of poor relief.’²⁰ What King claims such a human ecology constituted of is worth quoting in full as it generally underscores the analytical foci of this thesis:

‘This includes...the subjective experience of being poor; pauper agency; the words and sentiments of the poor and their advocates; the micro-politics...that drove both sides of the interaction between officials and

¹⁶ John Langton, ‘The Geography of Poor Relief in Rural Oxfordshire’, in Peter Jones and Steven King (eds), *Obligation, Entitlement and Dispute Under the English Poor Laws* (Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2015), pp.194-195

¹⁷ *Ibid*, p.195

¹⁸ See for example Steve Hindle, *On the Parish? The Micro-Politics of Poor Relief in Rural England c.1550-1750* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), pp.282-295

¹⁹ Steven King, *Sickness, Medical Welfare and the English Poor 1750-1834* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2018), p.6

²⁰*Ibid*, p.20

paupers...; and...the impact of underlying socio-economic, topographical and cultural systems on policy.²¹

Human ecology, as a consciously named entity, has its origins within the sociology of Park and Burgess.²² How far it can be codified as a distinctive discipline has been debated.²³ However, at its core is a multi-disciplinary approach that aims to understand factors shaping relations between people and environment, acknowledging the structural agency of human culture.²⁴ Campbell defines human ecology as ‘relationships between people and their environment’²⁵ and Steiner summarises it as ‘a study of processes involving how people interact with each other and their surroundings.’²⁶ Human ecology places people at the centre of ecological systems, characterising such systems as versatile as humans alter their environment and in turn are affected by their surroundings.²⁷

Thus, a human ecological system pivots on the reciprocal links between geography; socio-economic expression; human culture; and individual action. These are all factors known to have impacted historic relief regimes; however, within the current literature, they have largely been studied in isolation with understandings of interactions between them lacking. This thesis suggests that by acknowledging that such were embedded within a human ecological system may give scope to construct more holistic localised environments within which the realities of need and relief played out. As with Langton’s study of relief patterns in rural Oxfordshire in the waning period of the Old Poor Law, soil regions are adopted to layout the boundaries of the area of study, focussing on the Lincoln Heath area of Lincolnshire with the reasons given for such a

²¹Ibid

²² Robert Park, ‘Human Ecology: from American Journal of Sociology (1936)’, in Jan Lin and Christopher Mele (eds), *The Urban Sociology Reader* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2005), p.83-91; Robert Park and Ernest Burgess, *Introduction to the Science of Sociology* (Chicago: the University of Chicago Press, 1921); Robert Park, *Human Communities: The City and Human Ecology* (Free Press: New York, 1952)

²³ Carleton Christensen, ‘Human Ecology as Philosophy’, *Human Ecology Review*, 20 (2014), pp.31-32 and pp.47-48; Robert Dyball, ‘Human Ecology and Open Transdisciplinary Inquiry’, in Valerie Brown, John Harris and Jacqueline Russell (eds), *Tackling Wicked Problems Through Transdisciplinary Imagination* (London and New York: Earthscan, 2010), p.273

²⁴ Park, ‘Human Ecology: from American Journal of Sociology (1936)’, p.89-90; Frederick Steiner, *Human Ecology: How Nature and Culture Shape Our World*, (Washington, Covelo and London: Island Press, 2016), pp.19-38

²⁵ Bernard Campbell, *Human Ecology: The Story of Our Place in Nature from pre-History to the Present* (London: Heinemann Educational Books, 1983), p.6

²⁶ Steiner, *Human Ecology*, p.31

²⁷ Ibid, p.15; Gerald Marten, *Human Ecology: Basic Concepts for Sustainable Development* (London: Earthscan, 2001), pp.42-43

choice outlined in detail below when examining the focus of study and in chapter three.²⁸ It uses such an area to form a stage for human ecological integration where ‘parts are combined to form a whole.’²⁹ In doing so, it is hoped that a more authentic localised setting can be constructed within which need and relief were experienced and through such, a study of change and continuity in experiences of need and relief can be conducted across the waning period of the Old Poor Law and the initial decades of the New.

Within human ecological systems, prevalent influencing factors are perhaps best approached through the observational tools of landscapes, defined as interdependent and interlocking attributes.³⁰ These landscapes then become tools through which ‘various components lock together to produce...observable relationships.’³¹ This thesis suggests using three landscapes of observation for analysis: habitat, niche and culture. A foundational stratum of a human ecological system is habitat. At its most basic level, this can be defined as the place people live with Dansereau defining it as the ‘part of the environment at which exchanges...occur between...organisms and the resources which they utilize.’³² Habitat is grounded in physical geography and may be seen as an organisational stakeholder within an ecological system.³³ In this thesis, the observational landscape of habitat is defined as encompassing geology; settlement distribution and typology; population distribution and trends; the built environment; and physical infrastructure. The landscape of niche is closely linked to habitat and has been defined by Sears as ‘the opportunity afforded...by environment.’³⁴ As such, it is linked to work and economic activity.³⁵ Within this thesis, the landscape of niche includes economic output via changing agricultural practice, farm types and sizes; employment systems, job types and access to work; and wage trends and levels. The third landscape of observation adopted in this thesis is culture. Sutton and Anderson define culture within

²⁸ Langton, ‘The Geography of Poor Relief in Rural Oxfordshire’, pp.193-235

²⁹ Steiner, *Human Ecology*, p.31

³⁰ Ibid, p.77

³¹ Denis Cosgrove, *Social Formations and Symbolic Landscape* (Wisconsin: The University of Wisconsin Press,1998), p.16

³² Steiner, *Human Ecology*, p.39; Pierre Dansereau, *Biogeography: An Ecological Perspective* (New York: Ronald Press, 1957), p.325

³³ Nardia Haigh and Andrew Griffiths, ‘The Natural Environment as a Primary Stakeholder: the Case of Climate Change’, *Business Strategy and Environment*, 18 (2009), p.347-359

³⁴ Paul Sears, ‘The Process of Environmental Change by Man’, in William Thomas (ed), *Man’s Role in Changing the Face of the Earth* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1956), p.472

³⁵ Steiner, *Human Ecology*, p.42

a human ecological system as political, religious and social expressions.³⁶ The literature has seen culture as linked to human adaption to and organisation of their surrounding environment.³⁷ As such, culture can be seen as the way people traverse and systematise their environments. Marten has stressed the importance of culture via social structures in impacting wider environment and moulding notions of acceptable human behaviour.³⁸ Culture can also encompass individual perceptions towards self, communal place and natural environment, with an acknowledgment that ‘complex social or economic patterns rest on individual decisions.’³⁹ Thus, individual agency moulded by culture are integral to a human ecological system. Now, having defined its methodology, this thesis will move on to unpack its focus of study.

1.3 Focus of Study

Research will be nestled within Lincolnshire. Thorold’s assertion that it is ‘the least known, the least appreciated county’⁴⁰ is entirely apt in describing the county’s place within poor law historiography. At the local level, the journals *Lincoln History* and *Archaeology* and *The Lincolnshire Historian* have provided some relevant work, albeit with most of this being well over forty years old.⁴¹ More generally, limited discussions of the poor law have appeared within wider histories of the county.⁴² Despite this absence in welfare-focussed studies, Lincolnshire offers abundant source material from which to pursue a study of the transition into the New Poor Law, the details of which

³⁶ Mark Sutton and Eugene Anderson, *Introduction to Cultural Ecology* (Lanham, New York, Toronto and Plymouth: Altamira Press, 2010), p.98

³⁷ Ibid, p.97; Yehudi Cohen, *Man in Adaption: The Cultural Present* (Chicago: Aldine, 1974), p.1; Steiner, *Human Ecology*, p.20

³⁸ Gerald Marten, *Human Ecology: Basic Concepts for Sustainable Development* (London: Earthscan, 2001), pp.1-2

³⁹ Daniel Bates and Judith Tucker (eds), *Human Ecology: Contemporary Research and Practice* (New York: Springer, 2011) p.12

⁴⁰ Henry Thorold, *Treasure Beyond Measure: Lincolnshire Churches* (Lincolnshire Old Churches Trust, 1981), p.1

⁴¹ Jack Perkins, ‘Unmarried Mothers and the Poor Law in Lincolnshire 1800-1850’, *Lincolnshire History Archaeology*, 20 (1985), pp.21-33; Jack Perkins, ‘The Parish and the Housing of the Working Class in Lindsey, 1790-1850’, *Lincolnshire History and Archaeology*, 12 (1977), pp.65-69; Jack Johnston, ‘The Family and Kin of the Lincolnshire Labourer in the Eighteenth Century’, *Lincolnshire History and Archaeology*, 14 (1979), pp.47-52; John Brocklebank, ‘The New Poor Law in Lincolnshire’, *The Lincolnshire Historian*, 11 (1962), pp.21-33

⁴² Francis Hill, *Georgian Lincoln* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1966); Francis Hill, *Victorian Lincoln* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1974); Joan Thirsk, *English Peasant Farming: The Agrarian History of Lincolnshire from Tudor to Recent Times* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1957); Neil Wright, *Lincolnshire Towns and Industry, 1700-1914* (Lincoln: the Society for Lincolnshire History and Archaeology, 1982); Tom Beastall, *The Agricultural Revolution in Lincolnshire* (Lincoln: the Society for Lincolnshire History and Archaeology, 1978)

are given in this thesis' bibliography. The Lincolnshire Archives holds wide-ranging material in regards parishes and poor law unions, as well as other relevant catalogues such as estate, ecclesiastical and charity records which can be utilised for an examination of historic welfare. The Lincolnshire Family History Society has published several transcriptions of poor law material, including magisterial records; settlement certificates and examinations; bastardy documentation; and workhouse minute books. In addition, the MH12 and MH32 collections at the National Archives hold important administrative and correspondent material for the unions of study. Other primary publications include works by local antiquarians and county directories.⁴³ Journalistic archives have also been approached, as well as government documentation such as census reports; select committee reports; and general statistical data, such as crop returns and land-tax records. Therefore, this thesis widens the scope of its source material to provide a broader focus on the realities of historic welfare which often moved far past a limited poor law framing. This approach is novel and incorporates a larger range of documentation than generally seen in current studies.

A study grounded in Lincolnshire is certainly needed. A major debate within the literature has been the extent of regionality in poor law practice. King has defined patterns in practice between the dichotomous broad regions of high-cost south-east and low cost north-west, seeing 'two distinct cultures of welfare developing in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.'⁴⁴ Importantly for this thesis, Lincolnshire presents a liminal position between these defined regions. This is something King acknowledges, stating that his dividing line passes straight through the county with the source material used stopping at the county boundary.⁴⁵ As King's work is the only systematic attempt at defining welfare in macro-regional contexts, the absence of Lincolnshire, the second largest English county, leaves a large historical gap. Moreover, Lincolnshire's large size, disunified historical administrative systems and complex internal geography differentiates it from areas commonly focussed on within the literature, overwhelmingly

⁴³ Edward Trollope, *Sleaford and the Wapentakes of Flaxwell and Aswardhurn in the County of Lincoln* (Sleaford: William Fawcett, 1872); George Oliver, *The History of the Holy Trinity Guild at Sleaford* (Lincoln: Edward Bell Drury, 1837); Richard Yerburgh, *Sketches, Illustrative of the Topography and History of New and Old Sleaford, in the County of Lincoln, and of Several Places in the Surrounding Neighbourhood* (Sleaford: James Creasey, 1825); William White, *History, Gazetteer and Directory of Lincolnshire* (Exeter: David and Charles, 1856, reprint 1969)

⁴⁴ King, *Poverty and Welfare in England*, p.258

⁴⁵ *Ibid*, p.5 and Map.1.1, p.9

taken from a south-eastern context. Therefore, for any genuine analysis of English and Welsh welfare history to take place, a study focussed on Lincolnshire is necessary.

However, a whole-county framing is too broad to make real sense of the realities of local relief practice. Indeed, Mills has concluded that the county is a 'course a unit of analysis in such obvious cases as Yorkshire and Lincolnshire.'⁴⁶ Within Lincolnshire, diverse internal geography resulted in distinct farming regions which went far in defining socio-economic expression.⁴⁷ Thus, it is a suitable county within which to test the historical geographical hypotheses proposed by Langton which, as we have seen, suggest that internal geographical diversity within counties led to variety in relief systems.⁴⁸ Analysis will focus on the Lincoln Heath area of the county, a distinct upland region of Lincolnshire embedded in a clear physical geography. The period between the later eighteenth and mid nineteenth centuries saw distinct socio-economic changes within the area, pivoting on the adoption of mixed-agrarian farming. It is therefore a strong localised area in which to test the human ecological methodology stressed in this thesis and to explore need and relief within the waning decades of the Old Poor Law and the transitional period of the New. The thesis focusses on ten proximate parishes which were chosen after an extensive scoping process due to their extant source collections; geographical spread across the Lincoln Heath; differing parish typologies between open and closed villages; and the fact that they were split between two poor law unions under the New Poor Law (the Sleaford and Lincoln unions), meaning that the thesis moves away from purely singular poor law union studies prevalent in the literature. The details of these are given below in table 1.1 and explained in detail in chapter three.

⁴⁶ Dennis Mills, *Lord and Peasant in Nineteenth Century Britain* (London: Croom Helm, 1980), p.137

⁴⁷ David Grigg, 'Changing Regional Values during the Agricultural Revolution in South Lincolnshire', *Transactions and Papers of the British Geographers*, 30 (1962), pp.91-103; David Grigg, *The Agricultural Revolution in South Lincolnshire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1966); Dennis Mills, 'Regions of Kesteven Devised for the Purposes of Agricultural History', *Lincolnshire Architectural and Archaeological Society: Reports and Papers*, 17 (1957), pp.80-82; Dennis Mills, 'Enclosure in Kesteven', *The Agricultural History Review*, 7 (1959), pp.82-97; King, *Poverty and Welfare in England*, pp.122-127

⁴⁸ Langton, 'The Geography of Poor Relief in Rural Oxfordshire', pp.194-195

Parish	Parish Typology	Soil Region	Poor Law Union
Ashby de la Launde	Closed (estate)	Central Limestone Heath	Sleaford
Branston	Open (wide)	North Fen Margin	Lincoln
Cranwell	Closed (absentee)	Central Limestone Heath	Sleaford
Digby	Closed (absentee)	Fen Skirtlands	Sleaford
Leadenham	Open (divided)	Cliff and Heath	Sleaford
Leasingham	Open (divided)	Sleaford District	Sleaford
Metheringham	Open (wide)	North Fen Margin	Lincoln
Navenby	Open (wide)	Cliff and Heath	Lincoln
Ruskington	Open (wide)	Fen Skirtlands	Sleaford
Waddington	Open (divided)	Cliff and Heath	Lincoln

Table 1.1: The Parish Selection. Defining parish typology and soil regions was based on the following sources: Andrew Jackson, ‘The ‘Open-Closed’ Settlement Model and the Interdisciplinary Formulations of Dennis Mills: Conceptualising Local and Rural Change, *Rural History*, 23 (2012), pp.121-136; Dennis Mills, ‘Regions of Kesteven Devised for the Purposes of Agricultural History’, *Lincolnshire Architectural and Archaeological Society: Reports and Papers*, 17 (1957), pp.80-82; Dennis Mills, ‘Canwick (Lincolnshire) and Melbourn (Cambridgeshire) in Comparative Perspective within the Open-closed Village Model’, *Rural History*, 17 (2006), pp.1-22; Polly Bird, ‘Open’ and ‘Closed’ Villages: A New Methodology for Assessing Landownership Concentration, *Local Historian*. 44 (2007), pp.35-50; Polly Bird, ‘Landownership, Planning and Settlement Development in South-West Cheshire, 1750-2000’, *Transactions of the Historic Society of Lancashire and Cheshire*, 162 (2013), pp.71-106

Permeating this thesis will be four key questions:

- 1) How far and in what context did variation exist in experiences of need and policy reactions within the study area?
- 2) How far did the New Poor Law change experiences of need and policy reactions in the study area?
- 3) How far did wider human ecological environment affect experiences of need and policy reactions in the study area?
- 4) How important was human ecological environment in affecting experiences of need and policy reactions in comparison to the New Poor Law?

This chapter will now turn to giving an overview of the thesis structure and main findings in relation to its aims and key questions.

1.4 Main Findings

Expressions of relief were far from static under the Old Poor Law within the parish selection. From the 1790s into the first decades of the nineteenth century, a general policy emphasis on indoor relief may be discerned in many parishes, evidenced by a high proportion of workhouses in the parish selection and the use of the Lincoln House of Industry to provide indoor relief within the context of the Lincoln Incorporation, a multi-parish Incorporation formed by Act of Parliament in 1796 with additional parishes joining via an amendment in 1821.⁴⁹ Indeed, the presence of the Lincoln Incorporation meant that unionisation after the 1834 Poor Law Amendment Act was not the first time a multiple parish administrative system had been experienced in the parish selection. Despite only one parish of study having been officially incorporated into the Incorporation, with Ashby de la Launde joining in 1821, frequent localised labour migration within the context of economic niche, particularly from the post-1815 period,

⁴⁹ *An Act for the better Relief and Employment of the Poor of the several Parishes within the City of Lincoln, and County of the same City, and of the Parish of Saint Margaret, Part whereof lies within the said City and the other Part in the Close of Lincoln, in the County of Lincoln* (36 Geo 3 c.102. London: House of Commons, 1796); *An Act to Amend and Render more effectual an Act passed in the Thirty-sixth Year of the Reign of His late Majesty King George the Third, intituled An Act for the better Relief and Employment of the Poor of the several Parishes within the City of Lincoln, and County of the same City, and of the Parish of Saint Margaret, Part whereof lies within the said City and the other Part in the Close of Lincoln, in the County of Lincoln* (Act 1 & 2 Geo 4 c.49. London: House of Commons, 1821)

meant that individuals holding settlement within incorporated parishes lived across the parish selection, meaning non-resident relief was common and thus the Lincoln Incorporation had a larger impact on experiences of need and relief than allowed for when just concentrating on member-parishes.

In addition, this thesis may question the literature's focus on overseers and vestries as the main organs of relief management under the Old Poor Law. Within the context of the Lincoln Incorporation, relief was ostensibly delivered by the Incorporation's directors, with parish overseers limited to granting relief at times of emergency, with this directive semantically mirroring administrative rules seen within poor law unions under the New Poor Law. Outside of the Lincoln Incorporation, the concentration of parish workhouses under the Old Poor Law within the area of study meant important sub-stratums in the administration of relief were present alongside overseers and vestries via workhouse masters. In parishes with workhouses under the Old Poor Law, overseer involvement with the day-to-day mechanics of relief could be seemingly light in the period up until the 1820s, with workhouse masters also having a more pronounced presence in parishes, often staying in their positions for decades, in contrast to the annual or biannual turnover of overseer positions which typified the parish selection from the 1790s to 1820s.

The 1820s was a decade of considerable change within the context of the Old Poor Law in the parish selection. An emphasis on indoor relief seemingly waned in the face of increasing relief expenditure and recipient numbers in many parishes, with recourse to the poor law also ostensibly increasing in the last decade or so of the Old Poor Law. Explicit poor law outcomes turned overwhelmingly towards outdoor relief, seeing a movement to an almost exclusive reliance on cash allowances by the eve of unionisation in the 1830s, noticeably less generous than seen in earlier periods. The 1820s also saw new ways of managing the poor law. As stated, Ashby de la Launde joined the Lincoln Incorporation in 1821 alongside other rural parishes in the Lincoln Heath area, with this decision seemingly underpinned with high levels of relief spending in the late 1810s and early 1820s. Many parishes of study adopted select vestries or salaried overseer positions via the Sturges Bourne's Acts of 1818 and 1819, issuing in a general trend across much of the parish selection of increased overseer involvement in the day-to-day management of poor law alongside a wider stability and professionalisation in the staffing of parish offices.

Paralleling these changes were important human ecological trends, pivoting on the consolidation of mixed-agrarian agricultural in the immediate decades after 1815 in comparison to largely pastoral farming systems as seen before. Explicitly for a study of need and relief, such seemingly redefined ratepaying hierarchies within much of the parish selection as new farmers moved into the area and with an increased resident gentry presence noted, in turn impacting who staffed the administrative offices of the poor law. Such moves largely formulated landscapes of niche and culture expressed via hierarchical socio-economic relationships between landowners, dominant tenant farmers and agrarian agricultural labourers, going far in defining relief policy and outcomes for the rest of the period as well as setting down a bedrock of administrative demography which persisted to some extent into the New Poor Law.

Thus, moving into the New Poor Law there was clear demographic continuity regarding administrators, especially at parish, union guardian and magisterial level, with such closely embedded within the human ecological environment of study. This played a somewhat cohesive element to the disparate administrative organs of the New Poor Law system at the local level, intensified by the fact that the same individuals could hold simultaneous positions across these, for example, as union guardians and magistrates. Here, the parish continued to see its presence felt, being the source of union guardian staffing via ratepaying and proprietorship hierarchies; playing an important legislative role in regard to settlement and financing the poor law; and generally being the main stage on which relief outcomes were experienced, as outdoor relief continued to be the dominant form of explicit poor law aid experienced during the 1830s and 1840s for most relief recipients.⁵⁰

However, continuity can be overplayed.⁵¹ The expansion of staffing under the New Poor Law, with the creation of multiple salaried positions, impacted the mechanics of poor law administration and policy processes by multiplying the number of agents involved in managing relief. Although new union staffing positions were appointed at the discretion of union boards, which as stated were bodies which saw broad continuity with administrative demographics noted before unionisation, the expansion of agents involved in the mechanics of the poor law had real effects on the day-to-day experience

⁵⁰ Keith Snell, *Parish and Belonging: Community, Identity and Welfare in England and Wales, 1700-1950* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), p.17

⁵¹ Ibid, p.337; William Apfel and Peter Dunkley, 'English Rural Society and the New Poor Law: Bedfordshire, 1834-47', *Social History*, 10 (1985), p.38

of relief, with the process of acquisition often being more drawn-out than previously seen. Relieving and medical officers were central to this change, with their districts providing important sub-union loci for the administration of relief. Moreover, these officers were a much more pronounced union presence within parishes than guardians, who were often the same individuals who had been overseers under the Old Poor Law and were generally intimately tied to the socio-economic expression of their respective parishes. Corporately, union boards played a largely supervisory and punitive role which was somewhat detached from the everyday process of relief, exasperated by the limited times boards met with non-attendance common. In addition, roles and responsibilities regarding the maintenance of relief in the expanded New Poor Law system were often confused at the local level, with differing agents having the potential to block or restructure pre-agreed outcomes within an extended chain of management. This meant that the New Poor Law was often managed pragmatically dependent on pauper case, being conducted by a multitude of differing agents within spheres of communication which permeated defined administrative units.

Therefore, the importance of relief seekers presenting a rhetoric of deservingness and belonging was ever-present under both poor laws, particularly considering that the parish was still a central forum for the negotiated process of relief. Such sat in relation to a potential genealogical aspect to authority within the parish selection across the period, with evidence taken from nominal surname linkages, parish records and census data suggesting the possibility that members of leading farming families continually served as relief administrators under both poor laws. Despite the presence of new union staff, parish officers and guardians still advocated for lenient treatment for the poor they personally knew, denoting a disconnect between the poor per se as a cognitive entity and the known parish needy. Importantly, genealogical linkages are also potentially identifiable amongst poor law relief recipients across the period, suggesting that certain families were perhaps more likely to apply for or receive poor law relief. This is a novel observation that must be approached with caution but calls for further analysis; however, such feeds into the importance of notions of belonging for eligibility to the poor law as noted by commentators.⁵² Where identifiable, such families had longer

⁵² Joanna Innes, Steven King and Anne Winter, 'Introduction: Settlement and Belonging in Europe, 1500-1930s: Structures, Negotiations and Experiences', in Steven King and Anne Winter (eds), *Migration, Settlement and Belonging in Europe, 1500s-1930s: Comparative Perspectives* (New York and Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2013), pp.1-28

residency periods within parishes with many members born in their parish of residence. When both the potential administrative and recipient strands of genealogical linkage are compared, such engendered long-lasting interactions which in many instances permeated the divide between poor laws, influencing sentiments and policy towards relief seekers under the New Poor Law. Indeed, at the individual level, many recipients in the early decades of the New Poor Law had been in receipt of relief under the Old, particularly true of elderly recipients in the 1830s and 1840s.

In regard to the demography of receipt, there were observable changes within the parish selection between poor laws. Males in general and able-bodied men in particular were identifiable as outdoor poor law relief recipients under the Old Poor Law, with this cohort seeing a marked decrease in explicit outdoor relief under the New Poor Law. However, levels of male need and relief remained temporally variable under both poor laws, with rises generally seen in periods of agrarian depression linked to fluctuating corn pricing, thus causing falling wage levels and rising under or unemployment.

Although the number and proportion of males fell as outdoor relief recipients under the New Poor Law, potentially suggesting that Poor Law Commission special and general orders were respected, such conclusions need to be approached cautiously. Firstly, exemption clauses enshrined in special and general orders may have been used to provide outdoor relief to able-bodied males at times of economic depression, citing sharp rises in relief given for able-bodied male sickness in the middle years of the 1840s, a period of rising need within the context of the parish selection. In part, such could be utilised by local interpretations of the terms sickness and urgent need, terminology never properly codified by the Poor Law Commission. Secondly, the provision of able-bodied men with parish work, most notably on roadwork, is identifiable under both poor laws. However, payment for such work was generally sourced from the poor rates under the Old Poor Law, meaning that men were registered as explicit poor law recipients. Under the New Poor Law, financing parish work was often taken from other sources such as the highway rate, leading to the able-bodied man often being absent from official poor law returns and potentially nullifying what purely poor law documentation can say about levels of need and relief overall. There was clearly an appetite within the parish selection to aid the able-bodied man, in part due to the often short-term and episodic nature of able-bodied need. However, under the New Poor Law such a drive had to contend with Poor Law Commission orders limiting

outdoor relief for the able-bodied, necessitating other ways of relieving able-bodied men.

Other cohorts of recipients remained broadly consistent between poor laws, particularly groups such as women, children and the elderly. Lincolnshire as a whole saw lower levels of poor law receipt than in other areas of the country, with the proportion of populations within the parish selection in receipt of poor law relief generally being less than 10% across the period. However, proportions of receipt could fluctuate at differing temporal points across the period of study with these, spending levels and overall total numbers of recipients rising at periods of economic downturn. Such periods can be identified within the context of study as the mid-1790s; the early years of the 1800s; the immediate post-1815 period; various points across the 1820s; the early 1830s; and mid-1840s. Although a reduction in spending and recipient numbers was identifiable in much of the parish selection in the immediate wake of unionisation in 1836, it was still the case that levels of need could vary temporally under the New Poor Law, with the middle years of the 1840s being a period of high poor law receipt. Moreover, proximate parishes could share similarities in periods of increased need, circumstantially evidenced by expenditure trends and pauper numbers. This went far in defining internal poor law union variations in experiences of need under the New Poor Law but is also observable in proximate parishes split between unions, explicit within the Lincoln Heath as the area sat at a liminal position between three poor law unions and with the parish selection split between two under the New Poor Law. Here, a study focussed on comparison between poor law unions, instead of framing analysis within one as commonly seen, has proven beneficial, emphasising that administrative boundaries were superimposed on pre-existing socio-economic landscapes embedded in human ecology which went far in defining the dynamics of need.

As already stated, the parish selection had experiences of indoor relief well before the New Poor Law, with 70% of parishes of study having an identifiable workhouse and with Ashby de la Launde providing indoor relief within the Lincoln House of Industry, the workhouse for the Lincoln Incorporation. However, indoor relief within union workhouses under the New Poor Law was on a much larger scale than seen under the Old, with union workhouses being purpose built institutions which acted as a clear symbol for the New Poor Law system. Indoor relief after 1834 was consciously embedded in the deterring principles of the Poor Law Amendment Act with inmate

experiences focussed around classification and separation; restrictions on diet and clothing; work and moral betterment. Although there were some cognates between workhouses experiences between poor laws, particularly in regard to larger Old Poor Law institutions such as the Lincoln House of Industry, the New Poor Law generally standardised indoor relief within the geo-administrative union area in contrast to a highly divergent Old Poor Law experience, extending the potential for workhouse provision for a larger proportion of relief seekers than had been the case under the Old Poor Law. However, under both poor laws, workhouses rarely reached full capacity outside of periods of economic downturn, with experiences of life indoors generally being transitory and short-term for most individuals. Under the New Poor Law, workhouse populations were dominated by children and the non-able-bodied such as the elderly, sick and disabled, with these cohorts staying within workhouses for longer periods. For most, outdoor relief remained the dominant form of explicit poor law relief given across the period, being experienced within a parish framing.

By the eve of unionisation of the parish selection in 1836, poor law relief was dominated by monetary outdoor aid, with levels of out relief given in kind decreasing across much of the parish selection throughout the first decades of the nineteenth century. Although the New Poor Law brought relief in kind back to the forefront of outdoor relief, primarily through bread allowances within the parish selection, this generally sat in minority to monetary relief within the unions of study, with outdoor support overall generally being cheaper than providing indoor relief. Under the Old Poor Law, amounts of monetary outdoor relief were seemingly smaller by the 1830s than had been the case at the start of the period of study, perhaps influenced by the fact that more people were receiving outdoor relief as an emphasis on indoor relief waned by the 1820s, with increasing numbers of relief recipients also identifiable from this decade. Although the advent of the New Poor Law seemingly limited the range of outdoor relief payments, at the individual level levels of monetary outdoor relief remained temporally variable, seemingly being less generous when more people were in receipt of relief. However, levels of outdoor relief given under both poor laws were never enough to engender holistic support, necessitating interaction with wider strategies of aid categorised by the mixed economy of welfare. A broad continuity in the economy of makeshifts was observable within the parish selection across both poor laws, pivoting on familial and household support; communal resources such as charity

and philanthropy; parish given work and resources like land and housing; and membership to benefit clubs and Friendly Societies. Generally, such avenues were engaged with by a larger proportion of parish populations than explicit poor law receipt, often aggregated to form individualised support strategies across a life cycle of need.

Thus, the extent of change and continuity in experiences of need and relief within the parish selection between poor laws was clearly complex. Firstly, policy, practice and outcomes under the Old Poor Law were not homogenous entities within the parishes of study, seeing variation between parishes and with the 1820s seemingly being an important decade of change. The largest developments noted under the New Poor Law were in administration and the demography of receipt, perhaps suggesting that the core aims of the 1834 Poor Law Amendment Act were achieved to a certain extent.

Administrative changes, namely the expansion of the geo-administrative area into the poor law union and the multiplication of staff involved in relief administration, always sat against a backdrop of local administrative continuity meaning the mechanics of poor law management were rearticulated at the local level but not necessarily completely transformed. Similarly, the explicit reduction of able-bodied males as outdoor relief recipients under the New Poor Law did not dissolve support for this cohort, with evidence suggesting that this primarily turned to other non-poor law means. In other areas, there were strands of continuity between poor laws, with levels of receipt and relief spending remaining temporally variable and dependent on local socio-economic factors. The core demography of receipt largely stayed the same either side of unionisation, as did explicit modes of poor law relief which pivoted on outdoor aid, largely amalgamated with other strands of non-poor law support within the mixed economy of makeshifts. Overall, change and continuity in experiences of need and relief within the parish selection over the period of study was a multi-faceted issue.

1.5 Structure

In sum, this chapter has identified several issues with current approaches to study of the New Poor Law. Methodologically, it moves away from a legislatively defined chronology which is devoid of context within localised settings, also redefining conceptions of the local away from administratively defined units towards a geographical embedding. The thesis is a holistic attempt to embed experiences of need and relief within their lived historical realities and in doing so, make judgments on the

claimed radicality of the New Poor Law vis a vis its impact on the day-to-day experience of need and relief within a locality. As such, it deviates structurally from previous studies. The internal chapter structure gets rid of chronological boundaries to focus on change and continuity in the lived experience of relief over the period thematically. Although each chapter focuses on a specific aspect of need and relief, there is a necessarily amount of repetition because each was a linked avenue within the overall experience in the locality of study. Therefore, this thesis is inevitably long as it examines multiple thematic aspects in detail across both poor laws.

The structure of the thesis will now continue through the following chapters. Firstly, a literature review will be conducted in chapter two, exploring the importance of the periodisation of study alongside the key historiography relevant to this thesis. Next, chapter three will outline the human ecological environment of study, utilising the observational landscapes of habitat, niche and culture to do so and providing a fulcrum on which to pivot the rest of this thesis. The remaining chapters will explicitly engage with the experience of need and relief within the area of study, embedding this within the human ecological environment constructed in chapter three. Chapter four will explore the administration of relief via the two broad interconnected loci of administrative demography and the geo-administrative area. Afterwards, a study of the dynamics of need will be conducted in chapter five via analysis of expenditure trends; relief recipient composition; dominant cohorts of receipt; and lifecycles of need. Chapter six will evaluate the pathways of relief acquisition, structured around the themes of identity, custom and negotiation. Next, the mixed economy of welfare will be dealt with in chapter seven, clustered around household and familial; poor law; and communal support options. Finally, chapter eight will draw conclusions about the key questions of this thesis, examining the extent of change and continuity in the transitional period between poor laws and stress new observations applicable to the literature brought about by the adoption of a human ecological methodology.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

2.1 Overview

The scope of material written about the English poor laws is mammoth, with a historiography dating back to the late eighteenth century.¹ However, there is an unequal focus within this, largely weighted towards the Old Poor Law.² This imbalance is reflected within this chapter's structure and content, with a larger volume of literature available for the Old Poor Law and thus a wider field of debate. Firstly, the chapter moves first to a consideration of the choice of periodisation. It will then examine an overview of the key historiographical focusses in regards the waning period of the Old Poor Law, particularly welfare processes and practices as well as debates about the nature and purpose of the poor law leading up to national reform in 1834. After this, arguments for the extent of change and continuity within the poor law vis a vis the impact of the Poor Law Amendment Act will be examined before a summary of the main historiographical arguments relevant to this thesis will be given in conclusion.

2.2 Periodisation, c.1790-1850

The thesis deliberately focuses on a period in which the logistical, infrastructural and legal underpinning of the poor law was fundamentally changed. The 1790s has been defined as a watershed decade in the history of English and Welsh relief provision, fuelling arguments regarding the purpose and practice of the poor law.³ Particularly important was the year 1795, which saw food shortages and price rises due to war with revolutionary France and poor harvests; stagnant wage levels; and general economic decline. The year also saw changes in settlement law, moving financial responsibility to evicting rather than receiving parish; and the creation of the Speenhamland system, seeing implementation of wage supplements throughout areas of the country which altered support strategies on offer to the needy. Eastwood has also located a break in

¹ For an overview see Paul Fideler, 'Impressions of a Century of Historiography', *Albion: A Quarterly Journal Concerned with British Studies*, 32 (2000), pp.381-407

² Steven King, *Poverty and Welfare in England, 1700-1850: A Regional Perspective* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000), p.70

³ Ibid, p.126; Peter Dunkley, 'Paternalism, the Magistracy and Poor Relief in England, 1795-1834', *The International Review of Social History*, 24 (1979), pp.371-397; David Eastwood, *Governing Rural England: Tradition and Transformation in Local Government, 1780-1840* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), pp.107-121; Richard Connors, 'Parliament and Poverty in Mid-Eighteenth Century England', *Parliamentary History*, 2 (2002), pp.207-231

sentiment towards the needy within the 1790s, seeing a negative shift characterised by the ‘newer concept of pauperism.’⁴ Poverty came to be viewed as a permanent condition, moving away from transient notions of need prevalent in earlier periods. By 1800, the literature has seen ‘the development of a distinct underclass of...chronically poor.’⁵ The 1790s was therefore the decade that early nineteenth century concerns around the nature and purpose of the poor law pivoted on, fuelled by an increasingly ballooning national poor law expenditure. Such debates were exacerbated by economic depression after the end of the Napoleonic Wars in 1815, particularly prevalent in southern agrarian areas. Moreover, Hollen-Lees has seen the 1810s and 1820s as key decades in changes in attitude and policy towards the poor with commentators such as Shave highlighting the importance of enabling legislation, particularly the 1818 and 1819 Sturges Bourne’s Acts, to developments in the administration of the poor law.⁶ More generally, the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century were times of intense and wide-ranging socio-economic developments, with King suggesting that these resulted in considerable changes to the nature of poverty itself as well as policy and attitudes towards it.⁷

The Poor Law Amendment Act was passed in 1834; however, the New Poor Law was not a static entity in the first decades of its existence. As with the 1790s, changes in attitudes and policy towards the poor have been discerned in the mid-nineteenth century. In particular, the 1840s was a key decade for new ways in the management of the poor law seeing the creation of the Outdoor Labour Test Order in 1842; Outdoor Relief Prohibitory Order 1844; and the 1847 Consolidated General Order. There were also changes in overarching administrative structure of the New Poor Law with the creation of the Poor Law Board in 1847, in part due to national reactions to workhouse scandals.⁸ These developments led to a renewed emphasis on reinstating the tenets of 1834 throughout the 1850s and 1860s, particularly the focus on indoor as opposed to

⁴ Eastwood, *Governing Rural England*, p.121

⁵ King, *Poverty and Welfare in England*, p.133

⁶ Lynn Hollen-Lees, *The Solidarities of Strangers: The English Poor Law and the People, 1700-1948* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), pp.82-113; Samantha Shave, ‘The Impact of Sturges Bourne’s Acts in Rural England’, *The Historical Journal*, 56 (2013), pp.399-429

⁷ King, *Poverty and Welfare in England*, p.124

⁸ Samantha Shave, ‘Great Inhumanity: Scandal, Child Punishment and Policymaking in the Early Years of the New Poor Law Workhouse System’, *Continuity and Change*, 33 (2018), pp.339-363; Ian Anstruther, *The Scandal of the Andover Workhouse* (London: Geoffrey Bles, 1973)

outdoor relief. Therefore, to test the initial impact of the New Poor Law in comparison to previous relief practice it is necessary to look closely at the actualities of policy and outcomes during the rough half century between 1790 and 1850, when local administration had to weld wide reaching legislative changes with the pragmatic reality of alleviating increasing need.

2.3 The Old Poor Law

Daunton has noted that the Old Poor Law was administered within national power networks which drew ‘upon...existing community structures of authority.’⁹ At its most fundamental, the Old Poor Law was administered in the parish by overseers of the poor and vestries. Demographically, Sokoll has seen overseers as the ‘middling sort of society at large,’¹⁰ usually staffed by leading ratepayers within parishes.¹¹ King has viewed overseer practice as exhibiting ‘a complex amalgam of action, inaction, overreaction and negotiation’¹² taking place in a context of direct contact between needy and administration. The personal familiarity between relief applicants and parish administrators under the Old Poor Law is a point made by Sokoll who concludes that overseers would have generally been known by applicants and that this re-enforced the direct in-person nature of the pre-1834 system.¹³ Until the Sturges Bourne’s Acts of 1818 and 1819, which allowed for a salary and the appointment of assistant overseers, the position of overseer was unpaid with a usual annual or biannual turnover. However, from the 1820s the position became increasingly professionalised meaning overseers ‘would stay in office for years, their personal familiarity to the poor [becoming]...more pronounced.’¹⁴ The Sturges Bourne’s Acts also allowed for the creation of select vestries elected by ratepayers whose allocated voting allowance was based on a scale of rateable property value. Select vestries consisted of between five and twenty individuals which were to control relief at parish level and to whose decision overseers were bound to carry out.¹⁵ In part, the Sturges Bourne’s Acts were a reaction to ballooning relief

⁹ Martin Daunton, *Progress and Poverty: An Economic and Social History of Britain, 1700-1850* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), p.450

¹⁰ Thomas Sokoll, *Essex Pauper Letters, 1731-1837* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), p.11

¹¹ Eastwood, *Governing Rural England*, p.166

¹² Steven King, *Writing the Lives of the English Poor, 1750s- 1830s* (Quebec: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2019), p.6

¹³ Sokoll, *Essex Pauper Letters*, p.11

¹⁴ King, *Writing the Lives of the English Poor*, p.6

¹⁵ Shave, ‘The Impact of Sturges Bourne’s Acts in Rural England’, p.403

expenditure throughout the opening decades of the nineteenth century, aiming to curtail spending by promoting professionalism in administration, the perceived lack of which was a continuing anxiety amongst many throughout the waning period of the Old Poor Law.

The other main administrative organ under the Old Poor Law was the magistracy. Dunkley has been instrumental in placing magistrates within their appropriate poor law framing.¹⁶ He argues for discrepancies between sentiments held by local magistrates and parish officers, often presenting the magistrate as a foil to parish attempts to limit expenditure which would endanger the provision of acceptable levels of relief. This is supported by Daunton, who reports similar conclusions in regards magistrates supervisory role in approaching rates and hearing petitions against decisions.¹⁷ Peter King has looked closely at the process of pauper appeals before magistrates over the last eighty years or so of the Old Poor Law.¹⁸ His analysis has shown that two thirds of appeals were successful in the records examined and that, consequently, a re-appraisal of the magistracy's poor law role must take place with assumptions made about interactions between the administrative organs of poor law questioned.¹⁹ However, Dunkley and King's conclusions are weighted heavily towards south-east England, where acute agrarian depression and such magisterial strategies as the Speenhamland system perhaps presented a poor law system which may not have been representational for England as a whole. There is still much work to be done in framing magisterial roles within a wider national context, particularly when the intense variation of poor law landscapes which has been seen to define the Old Poor Law is acknowledged. Indeed, Peter King has made the point that by the time of the 1832 Poor Law Commission, the legislative understanding of the role of the magistracy and its relationship with parish organs of administration was often vague, confused and underpinned by local custom.²⁰ Therefore, magisterial decisions were often presupposed by both applicants and

¹⁶ Dunkley, 'Paternalism, the Magistracy and Poor Relief in England, 1795-1834', pp.371-397; Peter Dunkley, 'The Landed Interest and the New Poor Law: A Critical Note', *English Historical Review*, 88 (1973), pp.836-841

¹⁷ Daunton, *Progress and Poverty*, p.450

¹⁸ Peter King, 'The Rights of the Poor and the Role of the Law: The Impact of Pauper Appeals to the Summary Courts, 1750-1834', in Peter Jones and Steven King (eds), *Obligation, Entitlement and Dispute under the English Poor Laws* (Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2015), pp.235-263

¹⁹ *Ibid*, p.258

²⁰ *Ibid*, p.259

administrators alike within a framework of customary behaviour, with relief outcomes reached via a process of negotiation between all stakeholders, predominately taking place within parishes.

Until 1834, the parish was the fundamental administrative unit of poor law across most of England and Wales. Wrightson has argued for the parish to be seen as an inherently political forum, comprised of ‘overlapping and intersecting social networks...which extended beyond its boundaries outwards and upwards into larger society.’²¹ More than this, the parish must be seen as an entity which was defined by an ‘ongoing process of re-articulation in local social relations.’²² Hindle, in his study of Lincolnshire’s Holland Fen, nestles his analysis in the ‘social implications of local power configurations,’²³ contesting the literature for failing to conduct studies which acknowledged such networks of authority. Historiography developing out of the New Social History of the 1960s tended to see such authority as establishing oppressive, latitudinal lines of power. The focus here was on the administration of welfare.²⁴ Reflecting the school’s political roots, research pivoted on networks of social control, focussing on ‘ideological edifices of the propertied.’²⁵ Much work was done on the collective action of the poor, seeing social relations in generally dichotomic terms. Critics of this approach, led by Hitchcock and Jones, focussed on its tendency to portray the poor as passive recipients with no agency in defining relief processes and outcomes.²⁶ This led to an experiential break in the mid-1990s, with a new focus on ‘history from below’ aiming to put the experiences of the poor themselves firmly within the historical exploration of relief, a key existential break, in Shave’s opinion, for welfare historiography.²⁷

²¹ Keith Wrightson, ‘The Politics of the Parish in Early Modern England’, in Paul Griffiths, Adam Fox and Steve Hindle (eds), *The Experience of Authority in Early Modern England* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1996), p.11

²² *Ibid*, p.32

²³ Steve Hindle, ‘Power, Poor Relief and Social relations in Holland Fen, 1600-1800’, *The Historical Journal*, 41 (1998), p.69

²⁴ Samantha Shave, *Pauper Policies: Poor Law Practice in England, 1780-1850* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2017), pp.17-55

²⁵ Tim Hitchcock, Peter King and Pam Sharpe (eds), *Chronicling Poverty: The Voices and Strategies of the Poor, 1640-1840* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 1996)

²⁶ Tim Hitchcock, ‘A New History from Below’, *History Workshop Journal*, 57 (2004), pp.294-298; Peter Jones, ‘I Cannot Keep My Place Without Being Deascent: Pauper Letters, Parish Clothing and Pragmatism in the South of England, 1750-1830’, *Rural History*, 20 (2009), pp.31-49

²⁷ Shave, *Pauper Policies*, p.22

A focus on the welfare process, in which the parish operated as a forum of negotiation, supports Wrightson's claims for limits upon arbitrary powers of parochial authority holders, who were often constrained by accountability defined by culture and custom.²⁸ Such a forum of accountability was the area in which social negotiation between the needy and relief administrators took place. Here, for the poor 'advantageous patterns of subordination had to be negotiated and defended; disadvantageous ones resisted or evaded.'²⁹ Negotiation was a multi-faceted process, utilising a 'language of negotiation,' to use King's terminology.³⁰ The source material of the poor themselves, such as pauper narratives and correspondence, often adopt deferential and discreet rhetorical devices throughout their interactions with poor law administrators, evidenced by Sokoll's and King's analysis of pauper letters.³¹ The needy widely invoked the needs of a dependent family; illness; unforeseen circumstances and the urgency of relief; often framing negotiation within deference, shame and apology. Attitudes to poor individuals were often founded on variable definitions of deserving and undeserving, definitions which were never legally codified and thus which were principally based on personal interactions between administrator and relief seeker. Indeed, Shave argues that definitions widely rested on an assessment of the claimants behaviour and conduct, primarily focussing on notions of 'church attendance, industriousness, sobriety and deference.'³² Those whose condition made it unable to work, such as the elderly, long-term sick and disabled, were also generally included in the ranks of the deserving poor, as were children as it was widely deemed that they were in need of relief through no fault of their own. Hindle argues that the practice of badging the deserving poor during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries was in part a reaction to this and 'implied...belonging to...community.'³³ A necessary cultivation of a sense of shame amongst those applying for relief was underpinned by the paradox that to seek welfare was deplorable; therefore, the deserving poor could be identified 'by their manifest reluctance to seek alms.'³⁴ The poor had to make their needs known to officials but to

²⁸ Wrightson, 'The Politics of the Parish in Early Modern England', pp.10-46

²⁹ Ibid, p.31

³⁰ Steven King, 'Negotiating the Law of Poor Relief in England 1800-1840', *History*, 96 (2011), pp.410-435

³¹ Sokoll, *Essex Pauper Letters*; King, *Writing the Lives of the English Poor*

³² Shave, *Pauper Policies*, pp.127-128

³³ Steve Hindle, 'Dependency, Shame and Belonging: Badging the Deserving Poor, c.1550-1750', *The Journal of the Social History Society*, 1 (2004), p. 6

³⁴ Ibid, p.8

qualify as deserving had to cultivate a ‘humble reluctance to advertise their plight.’³⁵ Both Shave and Hindle have noted that access to relief was often based on characterised modes of behaviour.³⁶ Therefore, there was a surprising regularity from the seventeenth to the nineteenth centuries in how the deserving were discerned; often deferential to authority and exhibiting a necessary rhetoric of deservingness.

Running parallel to categorisation as deserving or undeserving was eligibility to the poor law relief via settlement status. Snell has seen settlement as central to the operation of the Old Poor Law and legal settlement within a parish was broadly defined by birth, length of stay and type of residency.³⁷ Initiated in 1662, the legislative definition of settlement was modified throughout the course of the Old Poor Law and beyond, narrowing the scope of eligibility.³⁸ Hindle has noted the severity of administrative decisions against those who did not hold settlement status, seeing a vigour in ‘attempts to defend the parish from poor migrants.’³⁹ Ultimately, settlement legislation was deemed necessary in order to control rate expenditure by limiting those who would become chargeable to the parish and worked within a dynamic revaluation of community by discerning who belonged as well as who was deserving and undeserving. Rushton has argued that to those excluded, the parish system could be harsh and unyielding whilst to the deserving, and therefore the belonging, it could be sensitive to need.⁴⁰ However, King has refuted this, arguing instead for a view of settlement legislation use that was less rigid and applied only in cases of extremity, particularly in regards spiralling expenditure.⁴¹ The practice of out-parish relief, where funds were sent to paupers who resided outside of their place of settlement, may support this, as do examples of other policies such as a refusal to grant relief or aid in insignificant amounts, rather than appeals to settlement laws, to remove paupers from the parish.

³⁵ Ibid

³⁶ Shave, *Pauper Policies*, p. 256; Steve Hindle, ‘Civility, Honesty and Identification of the Deserving Poor in Seventeenth Century England’, in Henry French and Jonathan Barry (eds), *Identity and Agency in England, 1500-1800* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), pp.38-59

³⁷ Keith Snell, ‘Settlement, Poor Law and the Rural Historian: New Approaches and Opportunities’, *Rural History*, 3 (1992), p.146

³⁸ See Appendix Two: A Legal Chronology of the Poor Law in King, *Poverty and Welfare in England*, pp. 272-274

³⁹ Hindle, ‘Dependency, Shame and Belonging’, p. 87

⁴⁰ Peter Rushton, ‘The Poor Law, the Parish and the Community in North-East England, 1600-1800’, *Northern History*, 25 (1989), pp.135-152

⁴¹ King, *Poverty and Welfare in England*, p.23

Both legislation and the negotiated process of relief may therefore be grounded in the notion of localised custom, with Hindle stating that ‘parishes...were underpinned by a value system.’⁴² Indeed, King has framed custom into a network of face-to-face negotiations between poor and administration and that ‘the issue of custom was a powerful one,’⁴³ albeit one that was dynamic and versatile. Custom has been defined by Sharpe as ‘that bundle of social norms and conventions, often imperfectly grasped...which constituted...the ‘authority’ within which people lived their everyday...lives.’⁴⁴ Wrightson sees custom as an overarching authority permeating parish interaction, albeit with such interactions often holding vertical orientations which with key social postures expected to be adopted by those at various levels of hierarchy.⁴⁵ Such interactions led overtime to the development of concepts of custom which, in the eyes of subordinate groups, were viewed as concrete rights to relief. As Wrightson concludes, these customs ‘acquired compelling force to those whose interests they enshrined...they...were defended in negotiation.’⁴⁶ Whether paupers had such rights in any objective sense is subject to historiographical debate. Commentators such as Marshall, Charlesworth and Mitchison have argued that such rights were enshrined in settlement legislation which allowed for a legal basis to belonging to a parish and the subsequent obligation of the parish to provide for those who had settlement.⁴⁷ Indeed, Hollen-Lees concludes that ‘citizens with parish settlements had a right to relief, and they knew it.’⁴⁸ However, King, looking closely at the language of pauper appeals, has moved away from the language of legalised rights towards dynamic negotiation, seeing careful interactions between pauper and official as the nuanced reality which defined eligibility to relief, its type and its longevity. Here, King has argued that this led to ‘a

⁴² Hindle, ‘Dependency, Shame and Belonging’, pp.94-95

⁴³ King, *Poverty and Welfare in England*, p.31

⁴⁴ James Sharpe, ‘Disruption in the Well-ordered Household: Age, Authority and Possessed Young People’, in Paul Griffiths, Adam Fox and Steve Hindle (eds), *The Experience of Authority in Early Modern England* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1996), p.187

⁴⁵ Wrightson, ‘The Politics of the Parish in Early Modern England’, p.20

⁴⁶ *Ibid*, p.25

⁴⁷ Dorothy Marshall, *The English Poor in the Eighteenth Century* (London: Longman, 1926); Lorie Charlesworth, *Welfare’s Forgotten Past: A Socio-Legal History of the Poor Law* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2010); Rosalind Mitchison, *Coping With Destitution: Poverty and Relief in Western Europe* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1991)

⁴⁸ Hollen-Lees, *The Solidarities of Strangers*, p.39

very considerable grey area in the minds of both officials and paupers over eligibility'⁴⁹ with this ultimately deriving from local custom rather than any overarching legalised ideas of rights.

This has led to the assertion that England and Wales had 'several poor law systems'⁵⁰ under the Old Poor Law. A major debate within the literature has been the extent of identifiable regionalism in poor law relief in a welfare landscape that was fractional and variable. King has consistently argued for a regional dimension to the poor law. Drawing on European scholarship in regards welfare regionalism, he has used expenditure ratios to suggest 'similarities of process, ideology and outcome'⁵¹ in regards policy and relief within England. King has defined patterns in poor law practice between the dichotomous broad regions of high-cost south-east and low-cost north-west, seeing 'two distinct cultures of welfare developing in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.'⁵² However, others have disagreed. Hindle's concept of 'welfare republics'⁵³ sees parish policy as so divergent under the Old Poor Law, in part due to 'widely divergent economic contexts',⁵⁴ to make any talk of regionalism redundant. Similarly, Eastwood has described the parish as a 'ratepayers republic'⁵⁵ viewing the domination of parish government by leading ratepayers as resulting in a situation where policy and process was so moulded to the specific concerns of the parish that regionalism in these respects was severely deterred. Recent work by Shave seeks to bridge this gap by suggesting policy networks of similarity within localities, concluding that there were 'islands of parishes dotted throughout England that were providing relief in similar ways.'⁵⁶ However, she is reluctant to offer these conclusions as evidence for regionalism, seeing instead the importance of individualistic interactions, such as visits and correspondence, in defining these policy networks which did not necessarily correlate to geographical regions. In approaching the issue of regionalism, Darwen has

⁴⁹ Steven King, *Sickness, Medical Welfare and the English Poor, 1750-1834* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2018), p.5

⁵⁰ King, *Poverty and Welfare in England*, p.19

⁵¹ Steven King, 'Welfare Regimes and Welfare Regions in Britain and Europe, c.1750s-1860', *Journal of Modern European History*, 9 (2011), p.42

⁵² King, *Poverty and Welfare in England*, p.5 and p.258

⁵³ Steve Hindle, *On the Parish? The Micro-Politics of Poor Relief in Rural England c.1550-1750* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004)

⁵⁴ *Ibid* p.229

⁵⁵ David Eastwood, *Government and Community in the English Provinces, 1700-1870* (London: Palgrave, 1997), p.43

⁵⁶ Shave, *Pauper Policies*, p.250.

tried to answer the debate by emphasising that differing methodologies utilised by commentators, alongside source material used and temporal periodisation, effects any conclusions reached regarding geographical regionalism in poor law practice and that ‘neither of these conflicting interpretations are incorrect. Conclusions will depend on where we look and the questions we ask.’⁵⁷ Ultimately, the debate continues but this thesis suggests that the adoption of a human ecological methodology may add something new to these arguments by framing units of analysis within a geological and topographical setting, allowing for a comparison to be made between similar physical geographies in a more nuanced way than just focussing on proximate areas.

No matter the extent of regionalism, what is clear is that local custom, however this is defined semantically, played a role in the interpretation of legislation. The complexity of welfare legislation before 1834 is staggering but was overarchingly unified in its enabling rather than compelling nature.⁵⁸ Indeed, the framework of legislation which gave the Old Poor Law its national scope was always discretionary and de-centralised, allowing an ‘ambiguity of the law [which] created an absolute necessity for negotiation.’⁵⁹ Ultimately this meant a network of legal procedure which was opted into with varying degrees across England, resulting in intense variation and indeed confusion in the minds of contemporaries at what exactly legal and best practice constituted of. The refocussing on Old Poor Law enabling legislation has been viewed as a key development in recent historiography by both Jones and King.⁶⁰ The debate within this is the exact balance between central and localised authority in defining policy within localities. Innes has focussed extensively on systems of political authority between the late eighteenth century and the reforming decade of the 1830s, concluding that the relationship between the national and the local was often inverted, with parliamentary debate and associated statute having to catch-up with pragmatically

⁵⁷ Lewis Darwen, ‘Implementing and Administrating the New Poor Law in the Industrial North: A Case Study of Preston Union in Regional Context, 1837-1861’ (Unpublished Doctoral Thesis, Nottingham Trent University, 2015), p.218

⁵⁸ King, *Poverty and Welfare in England*, p.18

⁵⁹ King, *Writing the Lives of the English Poor*, p. 3

⁶⁰ Peter Jones and Steven King, ‘Obligation, Entitlement and Dispute: Navigating the English Poor Laws, 1600-1900’, in Peter Jones and Steven King (eds), *Obligation, Entitlement and Dispute under the English Poor Laws* (Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2015), p.3; King, *Poverty and Welfare in England*, pp.18-48

guided policy within localities.⁶¹ This reflected wider anxieties about interference from centralised government with the argument being that ‘society was most likely to flourish and develop...through the efforts of freely associated individuals.’⁶² From the 1740s to 1780s, over a hundred localised acts were passed in Parliament to allow localities to adapt their provision of poor relief.⁶³ However, Innes has stressed that although in eighteenth century parliamentary tradition ‘government kept a low profile in local affairs,’⁶⁴ the central legislative role was still ‘crucially involved in sanctioning or refusing...local projects.’⁶⁵ Therefore, the framing of Old Poor Law enabling legislation within its proper context of acceptable extents and concepts of authority is crucial here. This should not be negated by perceived notions of weak central control or clouded by the contemporary debates in favour of centralisation of the poor law. What must be acknowledged, however, was the non-compelling nature of such legislation which meant that ‘enabling legislation was adopted at different times and implemented in diverse ways,’⁶⁶ presenting a wide divergency in process and approach due to ‘parishes...adherence to only some of their provisions.’⁶⁷ Many have argued that in local contexts the adoption of Old Poor Law enabling legislation led to more radical changes than the imposition of the New Poor Law in 1834. Digby, looking at Old Poor Law rural incorporations in Suffolk, has suggested that ‘the incorporation movement of the eighteenth century...not...1834...made a decisive break with the...basis of the Old Poor Law.’⁶⁸ Shaw’s detailed study of the Loes and Wilford Poor Law Incorporation between 1765 and 1826 has placed the results of such legislation in context. Again, looking at Suffolk, Shaw sees a distinction intra-county in where and how legislation was adopted, seeing a concentration of incorporations in the eastern half of the region.⁶⁹

⁶¹ Joanna Innes, ‘The Local Acts of a National Parliament: Parliament’s Role in Sanctioning Local Action in Eighteenth-Century Britain’, *Parliamentary History*, 17 (1998), pp.23-47; Joanna Innes, *Inferior Politics: Social Problems and Social Policies in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009); Joanna Innes, ‘Central Government ‘Interference’: Changing Conceptions, Practices and Concerns, c.1700-1850’, in Jose Harris (ed), *Civil Society in British History: Ideas, Identities, Institutions* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), pp.39-60

⁶² Innes, ‘Central Government ‘Interference’, p.39

⁶³ Connors, ‘Parliament and Poverty in Mid-Eighteenth Century England’, p.213

⁶⁴ Innes, *Inferior Politics*, p.78

⁶⁵ *Ibid*

⁶⁶ Shave, *Pauper Policies*, p.248

⁶⁷ *Ibid*, p.256

⁶⁸ Anne Digby, *Pauper Palaces* (Boston: Routledge, 1978)

⁶⁹ John Shaw, *The Loes and Wilford Poor Law Incorporation 1765-1826: A Prison with a Milder Name* (Suffolk: The Boydell Press, 2019), p.xi

Here, one sees a varied welfare landscape, where legislative provision was ultimately moulded into practical change at the discretion of localities, often located at the sub-county level. King has argued that such a variety not only derived from the enabling character of legislation but was also deeply influenced by the ‘ambiguity and limited coverage’⁷⁰ of the statutes themselves, leading to a need for local administrative interpretation as part of a multifaceted foundation of rationale behind relief which also incorporated such things as custom and common rights. Therefore, legislation was distilled and filtered ‘through...local practice’⁷¹ displaying, as Kidd states, ‘organised diversity of practice.’⁷²

However, such assertions outlined above have been strongly criticised by Charlesworth who sees a clear legal framing to the poor law, based on a supervisory magisterial role and settlement status, often overlooked by historians who she accuses of ‘law-blindness.’⁷³ Therefore, ‘poor law was not simply legal custom...it constituted a...fixed legal reference point,’⁷⁴ albeit expressed differently dependent on local perspective. Despite these claims, Charlesworth’s conclusions are limited in what can be said about experiences of need within localities because, in a very real sense which was acknowledged by contemporaries, such legalised cornerstones were at the discretion of localised authority to interpret. Both magisterial and settlement practice was highly divergent across the country and, although such foundations did exist in statute, their meaning in practice was purposely open. Here, Eastwood argues for a grounding of legalisation within local authority systems where ‘policy patterns of authority emerged from a process of negotiation between social groups and political institutions.’⁷⁵ Therefore, ‘poor law policy...was grounded in statute’⁷⁶ but shaped by custom and attitudes within localities. By 1800 the poor law has been described as ‘a complex

⁷⁰ King, *Poverty and Welfare in England*, p.40

⁷¹ Ibid, p.39

⁷² Alan Kidd, *State, Society and the Poor in Nineteenth Century England* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1999), p.32

⁷³ Charlesworth, *Welfare’s Forgotten Past*, p.3

⁷⁴ Ibid, p.1

⁷⁵ Eastwood, *Governing Rural England*, p.99

⁷⁶ Ibid

constellation of obligatory legislation...enabling Acts and case law'⁷⁷ which was increasingly viewed by some as unsatisfactory.

Changing notions about the purpose and breadth of the poor law began to be more explicitly voiced during the early nineteenth century. King has noted that by the 1820s, there was an enlarging divide between those who were sometimes poor and those constantly faced with poverty, creating an emerging 'underclass of poor people.'⁷⁸ This is supported by Hollen-Lees, who argues for the 1820s as a decade of increasing differentiation in sentiments to the poor, leading her to suggest 'the poor were pushed to the margins of their communities well before...1834.'⁷⁹ The language of poverty also changed during this period, with negative connotations of pauper increasingly being used to condemn from 'moral superiority.'⁸⁰ Shave has seen a long-term shift throughout the early nineteenth century away from a charitable understanding of poor law towards an economic one in which the purpose of correct authority was to lower expenditure and administer relief in an expedient way.⁸¹ Here, preoccupation was with economics, professionalism and moral reform of the poor, clearly seen in the rationale for such enabling legislation as the Sturges Bourne's Acts of 1818 and 1819. Parallel to this was an increasing interest within localities to understand how the poor law operated within other areas, with Shave highlighting an increasing awareness by contemporaries of what the poor law looked like within other parishes through such things as information sharing between vestries, particularly in the south-east.⁸² There was also an increasing emphasis on collecting national statistics emphasised by the starting of the national census in 1801 and various national enquiries into the expense and running of the poor law from 1800 to the 1830s. Connors has also argued that the Reform Act of 1832 and changes in franchise were 'a necessary precondition for the passage of the New Poor Law of 1834'⁸³ because it allowed for a new forum of political discourse which increasingly adopted a priori the perceived inadequacies of poor law policy and

⁷⁷ Steven King, 'In These You May Trust. Numerical Information, Accounting Practices and the Poor Law, c.1790 to 1840', in Tom Crook and Glen O'Hara (eds), *Statistics and the Public Sphere: Numbers and the People in Modern Britain, c.1750-2000* (London: Routledge, 2011), pp.51-66.

⁷⁸ King, *Poverty and Welfare in England*, p.254

⁷⁹ Hollen-Lees, *The Solidarities of Strangers*, p.20

⁸⁰ *Ibid*, p.39

⁸¹ Shave, *Pauper Policies*, p.30

⁸² *Ibid*, pp.250-251

⁸³ Connors, 'Parliament and Poverty in Mid-Eighteenth Century England', p.231

practice. Therefore, Dunkley has concluded that reform of the poor law in 1834 ‘was evolutionary, rather than revolutionary’⁸⁴ and built on a longer period of concerns which became more pronounced in the early decades of the nineteenth century, in part exasperated by ballooning relief costs. In 1700, poor law expenditure stood between £600,000 and £700,000; by 1776, this had risen to £1.5 million; to £2 million in 1786; and £4.2 million in 1803.⁸⁵ By 1818, £8 million was being spent on poor relief.⁸⁶ Contemporaries acknowledged that something must be done about the poor law, particularly in southern counties where in 1802-03 16.1% of the population were receiving relief.⁸⁷ With the end of the Napoleonic Wars in 1815, economic slump meant that ‘depression was...enduring and intense’⁸⁸ in many areas of southern agrarian England. Hollen Lees argues that this post-1815 depression intensified a process where the poor law was increasingly criticised, with the late 1810s and 1820s seen as a crisis period of the Old Poor Law.⁸⁹

However, King has questioned the usefulness of using the language of crisis in examining the waning decades of the Old Poor Law, suggesting that by the 1820s relief expenditure was generally falling, albeit not in some southern agrarian areas which began to dominate debate around the perceived limitations of the poor law.⁹⁰ The reality was that ‘there was intense variation in the experience of poverty between different sorts of...community’⁹¹ and the language of crisis may not necessarily be apt for all of England and Wales, especially northern English and urban areas where the creation of multi-parish incorporations and Gilbert unions from 1782 meant that relief systems were increasingly professionalised and centralised by the 1830s. Therefore, the ultimate rationale for poor law reform cannot easily be sought only within expenditure statistics. Indeed, Brundage has questioned how far reform was a central question within government in the early 1830s, seeing the disproportionate influence of individual

⁸⁴ Dunkley, ‘Paternalism, the Magistracy and Poor Relief in England’, p.24

⁸⁵ Roy Porter, *English Society in the Eighteenth Century* (Penguin Books: London, 1991), p.129

⁸⁶ Shave, ‘The Impact of Sturges Bourne’s Poor Law Reforms in Rural England’, pp.399-429

⁸⁷ Karel Williams, *From Pauperism to Poverty* (London: Routledge, 1981), pp.149-50

⁸⁸ Shave, ‘The Impact of Sturges Bourne’s Poor Law Reforms in Rural England’, p.399

⁸⁹ Hollen-Lees, *The Solidarities of Strangers*, p.15

⁹⁰ Steven King, ‘Rights, Duties and Practice in the Transition between the Old and New Poor Laws 1820s-1860s’, in Peter Jones and Steven King (eds), *Obligation, Entitlement and Dispute under the English Poor Law* (Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2015), p.263

⁹¹ *Ibid*

politicians favourably disposed to utilitarian arguments as a main reason for the creation of the Royal Commission on the Poor Laws in 1832.⁹² The Swing Riots and increasing rural unrest in the early 1830s may be seen as increasing the desire for reform of the poor laws as it helped create an atmosphere which threatened both the economic foundation and moral sensibilities of those in authority, leading to the chiming of much local and parliamentary power towards the passing of reform. Brundage has argued that the Swing Riots of 1830 ‘were widely considered to have resulted in part from demoralizing forms of poor relief’⁹³ and Beckett has concluded that ‘the New Poor Law came to be viewed as a reaction to the breakdown of the social cohesion of rural England.’⁹⁴ The psychological effect of such social unrest caused an anxiety in regards the perceived problem and threat posed by the labouring classes and by extension, the poor. Even in areas where evidence suggests rural unrest was not pronounced, court administration show anxiety about the potential for it.⁹⁵ It was changing perceptions of the poor law from some in authority, with debate focussed heavily on the southern agrarian areas hit hardest by the post-1815 depression and which were the focus of rural unrest in the early 1830s, rather than the nuances of the national picture that caused many to press for national reform. What changes to the poor law meant in practice to the expression of relief will now be examined.

2.4 The New Poor Law

As stated in the introduction of this thesis, the aims of the New Poor Law can be categorised as essentially administrative, increasing centralisation and supervision in the maintenance of the poor law in a newly revised administrative system, or restrictive, working towards the cessation of certain types of relief for some cohorts of pauper, namely the ending of out-relief for the able-bodied. How far such aims were implemented and achieved in practice is nuanced, and has formed wide debate within the historiography, explored here within this section. Firstly, the temporal implementation of the New Poor Law varied throughout the country with this process continuing into the late 1830s and beyond. By arguing for 1834 as a genesis, the

⁹² Anthony Brundage, *The English Poor Laws, 1700-1930* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2002), pp.61-62

⁹³ *Ibid*, p.61

⁹⁴ John Beckett, ‘Politics and the Implementation of the New Poor Law: the Nottingham Workhouse Controversy, 1834-43’, *Midland History*, 31 (2016), p.202

⁹⁵ Margaret Clarke, ‘Crime in the Sleaford Division of Kesteven, 1830-1838’, *Lincolnshire History and Archaeology*, 18 (1983), pp.15-19

literature has been apt to miss that many localities continued to operate in an Old Poor Law infrastructural framing well into the post-1834 period. Thus, there is a troubling lack of certainty in regards change and continuity either side of the Poor Law Amendment Act and what, in practice, the New Poor Law meant for local relief regimes. King has suggested that the New Poor Law was a ‘carefully stage managed as to address the concerns of relatively small parts of...rate paying society.’⁹⁶ Indeed, Brundage has cast doubt on the quality of evidence presented in the 1832 to 1834 Royal Commission, arguing that it relied heavily on isolated ‘anecdotes of corruption and abuse’⁹⁷ rather than systematic overviews of national practice. The New Poor Law was criticised by contemporaries as an imposition of solutions for agrarian southern problems on complex national relief landscapes, with its suitability questioned. Beckett, in his study of the implementation of the New Poor Law in Nottinghamshire, has argued that opposition to reform was more pronounced in northern England and that relief in industrial, urbanised areas has become highly professionalised under Old Poor Law enabling legislation.⁹⁸ Similarly, Darwen’s studies of the New Poor Law in Lancashire highlights local variety in the New Poor Law system.⁹⁹ National reception to the New Poor Law was mixed, with commentators such as Edsall, Rose and Knott analysing the extent of the anti-Poor Law movement.¹⁰⁰ Sensational journalistic reporting on workhouse scandals, often in Tory publications and adopting an oppositional stance towards the Whig reforms of the 1830s within which the New Poor Law can be included, have been defined by Shave as ammunition in anti-New Poor Law political rhetoric.¹⁰¹ However, outside of journalism, King has made the point that nationally ‘few acted to oppose the new legislation as opposed to reducing its force by a programme of resistance from within.’¹⁰² Such provincial resistance was often a pragmatic reaction to specific conditions of need which localised authorities deemed the

⁹⁶ King, ‘Rights, Duties and Practice in the Transition between the Old and New Poor Laws’, p.264

⁹⁷ Brundage, *The English Poor Laws*, p.65

⁹⁸ Beckett, ‘Politics and the Implementation of the New Poor Law’, pp.201-202

⁹⁹ Lewis Darwen, ‘Workhouse Populations of the Preston Union, 1841-61’, *Local Population Studies*, 93 (2015), pp.33-53; Darwen, ‘Implementing and Administrating the New Poor Law in the Industrial North: A Case Study of Preston Union in Regional Context, 1837-1861’

¹⁰⁰ Nicholas Edsall, *The Anti-Poor Law Movement 1833-44* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1971); Michael Rose, ‘The Anti-Poor Law Movement in the North of England’, *Northern History*, 1 (1966), pp.41-73; John Knott, *Popular Opposition to the 1834 Poor Law* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1986)

¹⁰¹ Samantha Shave, ‘Great inhumanity’

¹⁰² King, ‘Rights, Duties and Practice in the Transition between the Old and New Poor Laws’, p.264

reforms as inadequate in answering. As such, the locus of debate around the perceived effectuality of the New Poor Law was still the local, presenting a broad theoretical continuity with approaches to both relations within authority structures and poor law enabling legislation noted during the long eighteenth century.

However, within an overarching administrative and legislative framing, the New Poor Law did mean change. Indeed, Nutt has warned that ‘the...degree of continuity...should not be allowed to obscure the radical changes that were wrought by the Act in its operation.’¹⁰³ King has also concluded that ‘there is...scope for arguing that the degree of continuity...has been overplayed.’¹⁰⁴ The very fact that parishes were incorporated into poor law unions changed the geo-administrative area of the poor law, integrating parishes into a larger supervisory system which theoretically put limits on their independence. This was paralleled in the expansion of staff under the New Poor Law, with new positions such as union guardians and clerks; relieving and medical officers; workhouse masters, matrons and other roles created.¹⁰⁵ Despite the continuing presence of parish officers and magistrates in the day-to-day mechanics of the poor law, new staff played important roles in policy and practice which often legislatively superseded the continuing presence of Old Poor Law administrative agents. Harling has concluded that the New Poor Law introduced wide ‘themes of professionalisation and centralization’¹⁰⁶ into the administration of the poor law with the London-based Poor Law Commission and later Poor Law Board being the epitome of such changes. These implemented a national permeation throughout the poor law network for the first time, testifying to a sharp theoretical discontinuity in administrative structure. Despite this, both the Poor Law Commission and Poor Law Board worked with limited resources and powers. Throughout its thirteen-year existence, the Poor Law Commission operated with just three Commissioners; nine clerks; one secretary; and only twenty-one Assistant Commissioners to supervise over six hundred unions in England and Wales. Crowther

¹⁰³ Thomas Nutt, ‘Illegitimacy, Paternal Financial Responsibility, and the 1834 Poor Law Commission Report: The Myth of the Old Poor Law and the Making of the New’, *The Economic History Review*. 63 (2010), p.340

¹⁰⁴ King, *Poverty and Welfare in England*, p.69

¹⁰⁵ Brundage, *The English Poor Laws*, p.52

¹⁰⁶ Philip Harling, ‘The Power of Persuasion: Central Authority, Local Bureaucracy and the New Poor Law’, *The English Historical Review*, 107 (1992), p.39

has stated, it was ‘not represented in Parliament, and had no official spokesman,’¹⁰⁷ with its existence dependent on parliamentary mandate. Annual parliamentary extensions for its existence were granted between 1839 to 1842 with a further five-year provision given until 1847.¹⁰⁸ Similarly, the Poor Law Board continued to monitor unions after 1847 with a limited staff of between ten and twenty Poor Law Inspectors, with the Board itself never meeting in person.¹⁰⁹

Although such a limited national infrastructure has often been interpreted as a failure for the New Poor Law to achieve an imposition of ‘standard responses to...welfare conditions at local level,’¹¹⁰ Philips has noted that staffing numbers within the Poor Law Commission and latter Poor Law Board was generally mirrored across all aspects of central government in the early nineteenth century.¹¹¹ As such, there was nothing fundamentally lacking in the infrastructural material available to the central authorities of the New Poor Law in a contemporary context. Harling has warned against dismissing the creation of the Poor Law Commission as an empty gesture, stating that it emphasised ‘a modified administrative structure in which the centre held a modicum of authority where previously it had held...none.’¹¹² Midwinter has seen the greatest innovation of the New Poor Law as ‘the establishment of a direct link between the central power and its local operation.’¹¹³ This link has been defined by Driver as ‘centrally-based inspectorates’¹¹⁴ exemplified in the persons of Assistant Commissioners and later Poor Law Inspectors. Driver has viewed their presence as a truly revolutionary move with ‘central inspection [being] the lynchpin of the post-1834 system’¹¹⁵ with this becoming more structured after the 1847 creation of the Poor Law Board. Indeed, the very presence of Assistant Commissioners and Poor Law Inspectors

¹⁰⁷ Margaret Crowther, *The Workhouse System, 1834-1929: A History of an English Social Institution* (London: Methuen, 1983), p.ix

¹⁰⁸ King, *Poverty and Welfare in England*, p.228

¹⁰⁹ Crowther, *The Workhouse System*, p.ix

¹¹⁰ King, *Poverty and Welfare in England*, p.228

¹¹¹ David Philips, ‘A ‘Weak’ State? The English State, Magistracy and the Reform of Policing in the 1830s’, *The English Historical Review*, 119 (2004), pp.878-879

¹¹² Harling, ‘The Power of Persuasion’, p.32

¹¹³ Eric Midwinter, ‘State Intervention at the Local Level: The New Poor Law in Lancashire’, *The Historical Journal*, 10 (1967), p.110

¹¹⁴ Felix Driver, *Power and Pauperism: The Workhouse System, 1834-1884* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), p.28

¹¹⁵ *Ibid*, p.34

within localities served to remind staff that ‘a central agency was monitoring their activities.’¹¹⁶

Moreover, the creation of a workhouse in every poor law union was a distinct change in the overall national framing of the poor law. Although caution should be used in linking the institution of the workhouse solely to the New Poor Law, with indoor relief being a composite feature of the Old Poor Law via local incorporations and the Knatchbull’s and Gilbert’s Acts of 1723 and 1782 respectively, the creation of a centralised workhouse within every union meant that the needy knew that ‘over a life cycle their chances of spending time in the workhouse...was significant.’¹¹⁷ King, Carter and James’ study of Southwell workhouse has also suggested an institutionalisation of welfare not generally present before 1834.¹¹⁸ This rise, within which the motif of the union workhouse runs large, has been linked to a parallel increase in institutionalism evidenced in rising asylum and prison provision by commentators such as Porter.¹¹⁹ This is further outlined by Newman, who sees a sentiment of control permeating workhouse architecture in order to deal with those deemed ‘problematic by society.’¹²⁰ Crowther’s seminal work on the New Poor Law workhouse system has laid an agenda for research that, unfortunately, has not encouraged focussed studies on a holistic impact of the new legislation, with much work instead focussing on indoor relief within institutional studies or singular unions.¹²¹ This has also underplayed the importance of the geographical locus of the poor law union, resulting in little study of policy process and outcomes which often by-passed the workhouse. Snell has concluded that the literature’s pre-occupation with the union workhouse has simultaneously hindered understanding of the continued importance of the parish as an administrative agent and distorted of the realities of relief after 1834 when ‘well over 80% of poor relief under this system was out-door relief, distributed...in parishes.’¹²² Both Snell and Darwen have emphasised the centrality of the parish within the operational procedures of the

¹¹⁶ Harling, ‘The Power of Persuasion’, p.31

¹¹⁷ Paul Carter, Jeff James and Steven King, ‘Punishing Paupers? Control, Discipline and Mental Health in the Southwell Workhouse’, *Rural History*. 30 (2019), p.163

¹¹⁸ Ibid

¹¹⁹ Roy Porter, *Madness: A Brief History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press., 2013), p.99

¹²⁰ Charlotte Newman, ‘To Punish or Protect: The New Poor Law and the English Workhouse’, *International Journal Historical Archaeology*, 18 (2013), p.122

¹²¹ Crowther, *The Workhouse System*

¹²² Keith Snell, *Parish and Belonging: Community, Identity and Welfare in England and Wales, 1700-1950* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), p.17

poor law at least until the 1880s.¹²³ The continuation of outdoor relief was often cheaper than providing indoor relief within the union workhouse, and was both explicit and increasingly problematic for contemporaries throughout the first decades of the New Poor Law. In 1840, only 14.3% of paupers were receiving indoor relief, a figure which had dropped to 12.2% by 1849.¹²⁴ Indeed, the problem of squaring the policy of outdoor relief with the key tenants of 1834 was a constant until the late 1870s, with commentators such as Humphreys and MacKinnon emphasising this.¹²⁵ The dominant role of outdoor relief under the New Poor Law has been severely understudied, due in part to larger extant archives of workhouse material which have absorbed attention.¹²⁶ When it has been, as in the case of Darwen's study of the implementation and administration of the New Poor Law in Preston, outdoor relief combined with other avenues of support such as wages and kin has been seen as the most common interaction with the poor law within the early decades of the New Poor Law.¹²⁷

These persistence of outdoor relief in the early decades of the New Poor Law was widely linked to the fact that the majority of recipients were non-able-bodied, predominantly the elderly, females and children.¹²⁸ The issuing of special and general orders by the Poor Law Commission and Poor Law Board throughout the 1830s to 1850s theoretically limited the relief of the able-bodied out-of-doors. Within a historiographical focus, the most important general orders applicable to the period and location of study were the Outdoor Prohibitory Order of 1844 and the Outdoor Relief Regulation Order of 1852, as the earlier Outdoor Labour Test Order of 1842 did not apply to the unions of study. Humphreys has seen these two orders as providing the foundation for outdoor relief practice for the rest of the nineteenth century.¹²⁹ This is a conclusion generally supported by Snell who has argued that 'the character of the new

¹²³ Ibid, p.13; Darwen, 'Implementing and Administrating the New Poor Law in the Industrial North: A Case Study of Preston Union in Regional Context, 1837-1861', pp.95-127

¹²⁴ King, *Poverty and Welfare in England*, p.67

¹²⁵ Robert Humphreys, *Sin, Organized Charity and the Poor Law in Victorian England* (Basingstoke and London: Macmillan, 1995), pp.14-49; Mary MacKinnon, 'English Poor Law Policy and the Crusade Against Outrelief', *The Journal of Economic History*. 47 (1987), pp. 603-625

¹²⁶ King, *Poverty and Welfare in England*, p.3; Steven King and Paul Carter, 'Keeping Track: Modern Methods, Administration and the Victorian Poor Law, 1834-1871', *Archives*, 60 (2014), pp. 31-52

¹²⁷ Darwen, 'Implementing and Administrating the New Poor Law in the Industrial North: A Case Study of Preston Union in Regional Context, 1837-1861', pp.95-127

¹²⁸ Alun Howkins, *Reshaping Rural England: A Social History 1850-1925* (London: Harper Collins, 1991), p.86

¹²⁹ Humphreys, *Sin, Organized Charity and the Poor Law in Victorian England*, p.17

poor law was essentially defined by the General Orders of 1836-52.¹³⁰ The Outdoor Relief Prohibitory Order of 1844 aimed to direct relief for both able-bodied males and females, as well as their dependents, to the workhouse.¹³¹ In article one of the order it was stated that ‘every able-bodied person, male or female...shall be relieved wholly in the Workhouse...together with such family...as may be resident with him or her.’¹³² The remaining ten articles of the order were concerned with how to log instances of out-relief given as well as the circumstances and mode of relief when out-relief could be given.¹³³ The 1852 Outdoor Relief Regulation Order initially tried to restrict outdoor relief for the sick, widows and elderly, cohorts who had been exempt from special and general orders before this time. However, due to protest it was revised in the winter of 1852 to deal primarily with able-bodied men. Within both orders, and generally within special orders issued to individual unions, there were numerous exemption clauses which meant outdoor relief could be given dependent on a set of specific circumstances. To return to the 1844 Outdoor Relief Prohibitory Order, eight main exemption clauses were included allowing out-relief to the able-bodied in cases of urgent necessity; sickness; burial; within the first half-a year of widowhood; and to the family of prisoners, servicemen or men living outside the bounds of the union but whose family resided within the union.¹³⁴ Moreover, article six of the general order allowed guardians to digress from the rules laid out as long as they informed the Poor Law Commission within fifteen days for the central authority to approve the digression.

How far such general orders affected the outdoor relief of the able-bodied has merited debate within the literature. Karel Williams has argued extensively that they achieved their aims, lowering relief to the able-bodied and with the exemption clauses not widely used.¹³⁵ Williams states that the main target of the general orders was primarily the unemployed able-bodied male, citing a reduction in out-relief given to this cohort under the early decades of the New Poor Law compared to high levels of it distributed to men in the period between 1802 and 1834 as evidence for success. However, other

¹³⁰ Snell, *Parish and Belonging*, p.236

¹³¹ Michael Rose, *The English Poor Law, 1780-1930* (Newton Abbott: David & Charles, 1971), pp.140-144; Snell, *Parish and Belonging*, pp.236-245

¹³² Peter Higginbotham, ‘Order Prohibiting Outdoor Relief, 1844.’ Available at: <https://www.workhouses.org.uk/gco/outdoorreliefprohibitory.shtml> [Accessed on 22nd March 2023]

¹³³ Ibid

¹³⁴ Ibid

¹³⁵ Karel Williams, *From Pauperism to Poverty* (London: Routledge, 1981), pp.40-87

commentators have disagreed with these conclusions. Driver has criticised Williams' analysis arguing that it 'rests on a...narrow definition of central policy, confining it to the abolition of...out-door relief...to able-bodied men.'¹³⁶ Here, the 1844 general order in particular was not only concerned with men but all able-bodied paupers. Moreover, Williams' argument that the exemption clauses embedded within both special and general orders were not widely used rest primarily on published Poor Law Board reports from the post-1847 period, meaning that the thirteen year era in which special and general orders were enforced after 1834 is not included in his analysis.¹³⁷ Other commentators have argued that the exemption clauses were applied in order to continue the outdoor relief of the able-bodied. As already stated, Snell has argued that one of the main reasons for why outdoor relief proliferated under the early New Poor Law was because of the use of such exemptions.¹³⁸ An issue here was one of interpretation with terminology applicable to pauper classes not generally codified within central directives, leading Snell to conclude there was a level of local clarification of who exactly was able-bodied and to whom the exemptions, particularly in the cases of sickness and urgent necessity, could be applied.¹³⁹ However, Snell's quantitative national analysis of relief to differing pauper categories relies on data collected in 1851 from 592 differing unions, with the critique levelled at Williams that detailed analysis of able-bodied out-relief is generally missing for the initial decade or so of the New Poor Law still holding.¹⁴⁰ Williams' view that outdoor relief to specifically able-bodied men was negligible by the 1850s still largely holds in Snell's tabature, albeit with Snell focussing on all categorisations of paupers which shows that a broader range of able-bodied individuals were relieved via exemption clauses at least in 1851. For example, able-bodied widows constituted 7% of out-door paupers in Snell's unions of analysis in 1851, relieved via exemption clauses.¹⁴¹ Clearly, more work needs to be done in regards relief trends to the able-bodied in the 1834 to 1851 period, particularly in light of special orders issued to unions in the pre-1844 era. This can only really be done by approaching local parish and union archives, a study of which is conducted in this thesis in chapters four and five. However, the wide spread use of outdoor relief noted above

¹³⁶ Felix Driver, *Power and Pauperism: The Workhouse System, 1834-1884* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), p.48

¹³⁷ Williams, *From Pauperism to Poverty*, p.73

¹³⁸ Snell, *Parish and Belonging*, pp.235-237 and pp.243-244

¹³⁹ *Ibid*, p.237 and pp.243-244

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid*, table 5.2, pp.307-308

¹⁴¹ *Ibid*

can be squared with the prohibitory nature of special and general orders via the fact that most relief under the New Poor Law went to the non-able-bodied to whom such orders did not apply. To return to Snell's tabulation of the 1851 data, it is clear that the vast majority of the pauper host was the non-able-bodied with the New Poor Law's focus on the issue of able-bodied paupers generally limited to a minority of recipients.¹⁴²

The continuation of parish financial responsibility for its own poor, at least until the creation of irremovable status for some paupers in 1846 and the later 1865 Union Chargeability Act, and the framing of settlement within the parish meant that the politics of the parish still played a central role in the expression of the New Poor Law within localities. Thus, Driver has stated that 'there [was] always a gap between central policies and local realities.'¹⁴³ At the heart of the New Poor Law was a tension between clauses laid down in directives and the necessity of maintaining relief, often left to local interpretation. Local administrators 'recognized the difference between pauperism as it was portrayed in [the New Poor Law] and...as it actually existed.'¹⁴⁴ Dunkley has concluded that poor law unions exhibited 'so many variations as to render invalid all generalisations regarding the operation of [the New Poor Law].'¹⁴⁵ Here, local interpretation went far in defining the realities of day-to-day practice on the ground. Newman's study of workhouse architecture observes intense local variation in institutional practice, which suggests wider divergence in union policy.¹⁴⁶ This supports King's claim that under the New Poor Law 'we should speak not of a...system but of several.'¹⁴⁷ Therefore, relief continued to be dictated by 'local ideologies.'¹⁴⁸ One constant within the wide breadth of poor law history has been that 'regional traditions significantly influenced...[and] resulted in variation, which had...implications on...experience.'¹⁴⁹

¹⁴² Ibid

¹⁴³ Driver, *Power and Pauperism*, p.9

¹⁴⁴ Peter Dunkley, 'The 'Hungry Forties' and the New Poor Law: A Case Study', *The Historical Journal*, 17 (1974), p.344

¹⁴⁵ Ibid, p.329

¹⁴⁶ Newman, 'To Punish or Protect', pp.122-145

¹⁴⁷ King, 'Rights, Duties and Practice in the Transition between the Old and New Poor Laws' p.265

¹⁴⁸ Newman, 'To Punish or Protect', p.123

¹⁴⁹ Ibid, p.143

In addition, the New Poor Law was not a static entity, seeing changes to its running throughout its lifespan. Rose has seen the mid-nineteenth century as marking a turning point in conceptualisations of poor law.¹⁵⁰ The 1840s may be viewed as a decade of ‘bureaucratic creep’¹⁵¹ in regards the management of the poor law, leading to a ‘slow but steady encroachment of central authority’¹⁵² correlating to a visible increase in nationally centralised administration in the second half of the nineteenth century.¹⁵³ In the wake of national workhouse scandals, there was an increased appetite for poor law reform from the early 1840s.¹⁵⁴ The decade saw the creation of the Poor Law Board in 1847 and the formation of larger national supervisory districts, as well as key administrative changes which affected the experience and administration of relief well into the twentieth century. The most central of these changes was the 1847 Consolidated General Order, which Higginbotham has described as ‘effectively...the ‘bible’ of poor-law and workhouse operation and remained largely unchanged until...1913.’¹⁵⁵ This brought together, under a national scope, previous circulars which had only applied to certain unions and outlined the mechanics of electing guardians and meeting rules; apprenticeship procedures; documentation relevant to all permanently sick and disabled paupers; the relief of non-settled poor; workhouse administration and duties of union staff; and seven different classification of paupers. Such led to increased bureaucratic control, which Snell argues was a product of the later Victorian period and anachronistic to policy in the 1830s.¹⁵⁶ Similarly, Charlesworth has seen the 1865 Union Chargeability Act as the real changing point of the New Poor Law when ‘the bureaucratic elements of modern welfare [were] established.’¹⁵⁷ Hurren agrees, suggesting that ‘a comprehensive...administrative infrastructure was not...in place in most unions until...the Union Chargeability Act of 1865.’¹⁵⁸ As such, the claimed radicality of the New Poor Law in its 1834 form can be questioned. Overall, King has

¹⁵⁰ Michael Rose, ‘The Crisis of Poor Relief in England, 1850-1890’, in Wolfgang Mommsen (ed), *The Emergence of the Welfare State in Britain and Germany, 1850-1950* (London: Longman, 2018), pp.64-93

¹⁵¹ Harling, ‘The Power of Persuasion’, p.39

¹⁵² Ibid

¹⁵³ Rose, ‘The Crisis of Poor Relief in England, 1850-1890’; Snell, *Parish and Belonging*, p.5

¹⁵⁴ Shave, ‘Great Inhumanity’; Anstruther, *The Scandal of the Andover Workhouse*

¹⁵⁵ Peter Higginbotham, ‘The 1847 Consolidated General Order’. Available at:

<http://www.workhouses.org.uk/gco/> [Accessed on 31st August 2021]

¹⁵⁶ Snell, *Parish and Belonging*, p.5

¹⁵⁷ Charlesworth, *Welfare’s Forgotten Past*, p.3

¹⁵⁸ Elizabeth Hurren, ‘Labourers are Revolting: Penalising the Poor and a Political Reaction in the Brixworth Union, Northamptonshire, 1875-1885’, *Rural History*, 11 (2000), p.37

argued that the core tenets of 1834 were surprisingly similar to those of 1601: parish responsibility in aiding the impotent and punishing the undeserving; poor rates were to be raised at parish level; administration of relief in localities; and relief was to be a desperate, last resort.¹⁵⁹ Therefore, King has noted that the New Poor Law ‘failed to eliminate this basic characteristic of the relief system’¹⁶⁰ meaning that localised interpretation continued to be at the core of the poor law albeit within a new expanded administrative supervisory system.

2.5 Conclusions

Pivoting analysis on the Poor Law Amendment Act of 1834 suggests a chronological framing which paints the Old Poor Law as a generally homogenous entity. This is plainly false, with pre-1834 enabling legislation going far in changing the expression of relief within many areas of the country well before the New Poor Law. Debates about the purpose of the poor law stretched back into the eighteenth century and beyond. In the face of rising national poor law expenditure in the early nineteenth century, these debates became more pronounced amongst some within authority, leading to an increasingly economical focus on the purpose of the poor law which paralleled a substantial growth of an underclass of perpetually poor people, as well as a sentimental shift in attitudes towards the poor, increasingly focussed on moral education and deterrent. The passing of the Sturges Bourne’s Acts in 1818 and 1819, the last substantial Old Poor Law enabling legislation, may be seen as a culmination of such debates, issuing in an increased stability and professionalism in the administration of the poor law in many areas, as well as increasingly focusing authority into the hands of leading ratepayers. Although the Poor Law Amendment Act was clearly linked to a longitudinal process of changes in the operation of the poor law, it does not follow that it was an explicit or inevitable results of these. As such, the catalyst for reform must be grounded in the early 1830s. There was a clear reformatory political climate under the Whig government of 1830 to 1834 with a disproportional influence of individuals disposed towards Benthamite principles pressing for further reform of the poor law, exasperated by increasing rural unrest in the early 1830s which fuelled anxieties about the potential threat the labouring classes posed to authority.

¹⁵⁹ King, *Poverty and Welfare in England*, p.20

¹⁶⁰ Ibid, p.255

The reform which followed was on a wholly larger scale than anything seen under the Old Poor Law, inaugurating a national supervisory system, composing of the Poor Law Commission and Assistant Commissioners, where one did not exist before. The creation of poor law unions also had national scope, moving the fundamental geo-administrative area of the poor law away from the parish for the first time in most parts of England and Wales and creating a locus of corporate propertied authority in the form of boards of guardians. The New Poor Law also substantially increased the number of staff and administrative agents involved in the poor law, with these often superseding the continuing presence of parish overseers. Although outdoor relief continued to be the dominant form of aid given throughout the initial decades of the New Poor Law, the formation of union workhouses made indoor relief a potential reality for all relief applicants in a way which was not observable nationally before.

There was clearly a marked difference in the administrative framing of the poor law after 1834, primarily through the expansion of the geo-administrative area into the poor law union and its associated board of guardians. However, the instigation and extent of poor law unions overwhelmingly came from elites within localities, albeit with interaction with Assistant Commissioners. Where this was resisted, unionisation happened decades after 1834 with some Gilbert Unions continuing to operate well into the initial decades of the New Poor Law.

Thus, the passing of the New Poor Law was not a nationalisation. The extent of demographic continuity, both regarding administrators and relief cohorts, has also been underplayed. It was often the overseers and magistrates of the Old Poor Law who became the guardians of the New, with individuals sometimes holding multiple simultaneous roles across all local organs of poor law administration. Similarly, the dominant cohorts of relief recipients remained the same, being largely women, the elderly and children. As will be shown, in the early years of the New Poor Law, it was often the same individuals in receipt of relief as under the Old Poor Law. In addition, the changes in the administrative framing of the poor law had to meet the practicalities of relieving distress within localities and as such, as with enabling legislation under the Old Poor Law, the reality of practice was always moulded through a localised prism. This goes far in explaining the wide-spread continuation of out-door relief, as does the

centrality of the parish as it was the forum where most relief outcomes still happened; the continuing legislative focus of settlement; and financially responsible for funding the relief of its own poor.

In sum, conclusions about the extent of change and continuity between poor laws is clearly a nuanced and multi-faceted issue. To arrive at some concrete answers to the claimed radicality of the New Poor Law on the actual experience of need and relief, it is necessary to pivot analysis within a distinct locality. This thesis focusses on ten proximate parishes upon the Lincoln Heath, with a construction of the area's historic human ecological environment addressed in the next chapter and used as a fulcrum on which to pivot analysis within the rest of the thesis.

Chapter Three: The Lincoln Heath-A Human Ecological Environment

3.1 Overview

As stated in chapter one, this thesis moves away from a whole-county framing due to the methodological issues such an approach engenders. As such, it grounds analysis in the geographical, focussing on the Lincoln Heath area of Lincolnshire and adopting three interlocking landscapes of observation to approach the area of study and which form the core structure of this chapter: habitat niche and culture. Firstly, habitat will be analysed. Habitat is embedded in physical geography and within the context of this chapter will examine geology; settlement types and spread; population trends and distribution; infrastructure and the built environment. Next, niche will be explored. Niche is related to economic output and within this chapter will encompass agricultural practice, pivoting on the impact of mixed-agrarian farming in the post-1815 period; employment systems and trends; and wage levels. After this, the chapter will explore culture. Culture refers primarily within this thesis to political and societal expressions, alongside the ways these were understood and traversed by individuals. It will be argued that an increasingly agriculturalist-concerned authority bloc can be discerned as developing across the first half of the nineteenth century, clearly linked to changes in economic niche and fuelled in part by the consolidation of landed estates and rising numbers of resident landowners within parishes, all of which impacted the nature of social interactions within the area of study. Finally, the chapter will end with a conclusion which argues that the most important defining feature of the Lincoln Heath's human ecological environment over the period was the adoption of mixed-agrarian agriculture in the early decades of the nineteenth century, particularly concentrated between 1815 and the 1830s. This led to a clear restructuring of all observable landscapes and had far reaching socio-economic impacts.

It is necessary to stress that these landscapes are defined as pragmatic tools for analysis rather than discrete and concrete historical divisions. It is important to acknowledge this from the outset, as landscape boundaries were permeable with interaction between them defining the lived human ecological environment of study into which the further chapters of this thesis will embed experiences of need and relief.

3.2 Habitat

Commentators have long noted Lincolnshire's complex intra-county geography. Thirsk differentiated the county into fenland, marshland, chalk and limestone uplands, whilst in 1799, Young said of the county 'it may truly be said to include all the sorts of land that are to be found in the whole Kingdom'.¹ Grigg has categorised Lincolnshire's regions into light and heavy lands: light lands being soils situated on sands, gravel or limestones; and heavy lands being soils situated on clay.² Lincolnshire's heathland falls into light land categorisation and is a continuation of oolite limestone that begins in the Cotswolds and stretches northeast through Northamptonshire, Lincolnshire and into Yorkshire. Within Lincolnshire, it is divided into three areas: the Cliff; the Lincoln Heath; and the Kesteven Plateau (figure 3.1). This thesis will focus on the Lincoln Heath, an area stretching nineteen miles north to south between the market town of Sleaford and the city of Lincoln and roughly ten miles west to east between the villages of Leadenham and Digby (figure 3.2). Mills has categorised the underlying geology of the Lincoln Heath as follows: a western area of lias-clay; a central area of limestone heath; and an eastern area of clay fen.³ As a result, soil types are not homogenous within the area of study, resulting in important yet understudied historical intra-regional variety in habitat. The Lincoln Heath's western boundary is marked by 226-foot escarpment, with the lower ground of the Trent Vale lias-clays laying below it to the west. From the escarpment, the Lincoln Heath drops in height over the central limestone area until it meets the eastern peat fenlands around 66 feet above sea level, merging with the Kesteven fenlands proper. The predominant lines of settlement within the area were not in the central limestone zone, instead following north-south spring lines hugging the western and eastern boundaries of the central limestone plateau.⁴ This location, along with the fact that parishes were generally long east-west and narrow north-south, meant that parishes often incorporated differing soil regions which influenced land-use and farming practice. Western parishes included heavy clay in their

¹ Joan Thirsk, *English Peasant Farming: The Agrarian History of Lincolnshire from Tudor to Recent Times* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1957); Arthur Young, *General View of the Agriculture of Lincolnshire* (Plymouth: David and Charles reprints limited, 1799, Reprinted 1970), p.7

² David Grigg, 'Changing Regional Values during the Agricultural Revolution in South Lincolnshire', *Transactions and Papers of the British Geographers*, 30 (1962), p.91

³ Dennis Mills, 'Enclosure in Kesteven', *The Agricultural History Review*, 7 (1959), pp. 82-97

⁴ Dennis Mills, 'The Development of Rural Settlement Around Lincoln, with Special Reference to the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries', in Dennis Mills (ed), *English Rural Communities: The Impact of a Specialised Economy* (London: Macmillan, 1973), pp.83-98

western and central areas and limestone heath in their eastern parts. In contrast, eastern parishes saw limestone heath in their western areas and gravel as well as fenland peat clays in their eastern parts as they descended to meet the Kesteven fens. To make sense of this extremely divergent geology, Mills devised eighteen intra-Kesteven geographical regions, five of these are relevant to the area of study:⁵

- a) **The Cliff and Heath:** parishes are long and narrow, stretching from the rivers Brant or Witham in the west. They include Liassic clay; marlstone; sandstone; and limestone heath. Settlements are in two groups, above or below the escarpment.
- b) **The North Fen margin:** parishes are long and narrow, stretching down into the eastern Kesteven fens. Parishes include limestone heath in their western parts and a central mixed zone of clay and gravel, leading into peat fen in their eastern parts. Villages are located near to or on the junction between the mixed zone and limestone heath.
- c) **Central Limestone Heath:** parishes are completely confined to limestone heath and have one soil type, albeit with some limited clay. Settlement is sparse.
- d) **Fen Skirt Lands:** very mixed geology including limestone, clay, gravel and fen. Villages are located next to streams.
- e) **The Sleaford District:** a transition zone between the central limestone heath and Kesteven claylands to the south. Villages are located next to streams.

The predominant western and eastern lines of settlements largely mirrored socio-economic practice and settlement typology as found in the heavier clay land districts they bordered. For example, western parishes (incorporated into Mills' Cliff and Heath region) mirrored western Kesteven and eastern Nottinghamshire, all sharing a common underlying geology which favoured stock rearing, particularly cattle, over arable production in the later eighteenth century. Parish acreages were generally lower than 3500 acres. The fen-incorporating parishes of the eastern heath boundary (incorporating Mills' North Fen Margin and Fen Skirt Land regions) show a socio-economic relationship with the Kesteven fens to their east. Parishes in these regions had large acreages of between 4000 and 5500 acres and were extremely long, stretching eastwards

⁵ Dennis Mills, 'Regions of Kesteven Devised for the Purposes of Agricultural History', *Lincolnshire Architectural and Archaeological Society: Reports and Papers*, 17 (1957), pp.80-82

to the river Witham and thus incorporating wide soil variety. The Central Limestone Heath saw limited settlement with parishes largely incorporating homogenous soil types (limestone and limited clay). If Langton's conclusions for Oxfordshire linking geographical diversity and associated agricultural systems to differentiation in relief practice and policy hold true, the distinctions outlined above in regards the Lincoln Heath may have important implications for experiences need. To test these assertions, this thesis will examine ten parishes located across the Lincoln Heath (appendix A and figure 3.2). Parishes were selected based on geographical location; extant poor law archival material; and differing incorporation into poor law unions under the New Poor Law. This chapter will now examine differing settlement typologies shown in the parish selection.

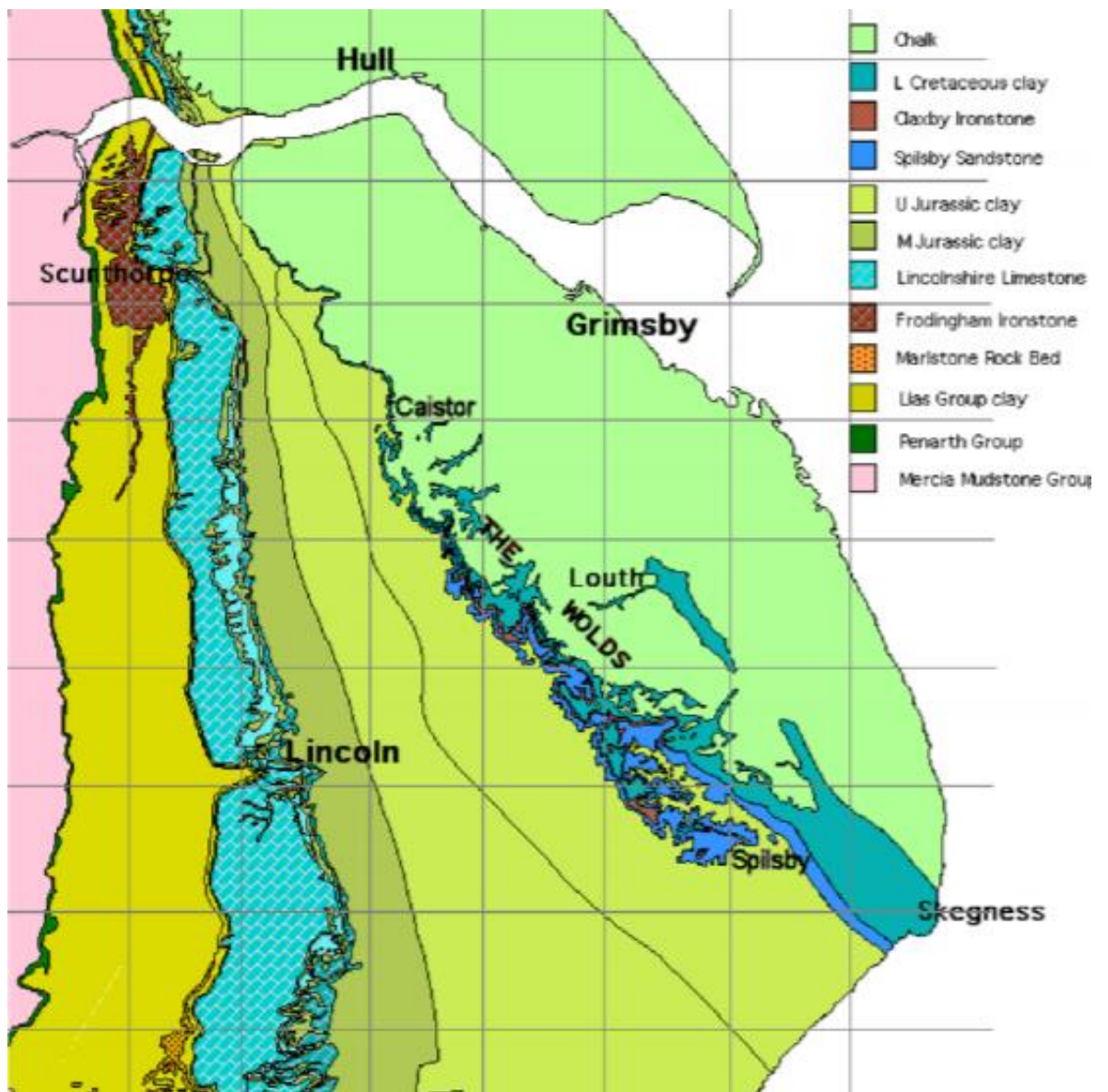


Figure 3.1: Bedrock Geology of Lincolnshire. The Lincolnshire heathland is located on the north-south strip of Lincolnshire Limestone in the west of the county. Source: Neil Breward, 'Arsenic and Presumed Resistate Trace Element Geochemistry of the Lincolnshire (UK) Sedimentary Ironstones, as revealed by a Regional Geochemical Survey using Soil, Water and Stream Sediment Sampling', *Applied Geochemistry*, 22 (2007), fig 1 (continued), p.1972

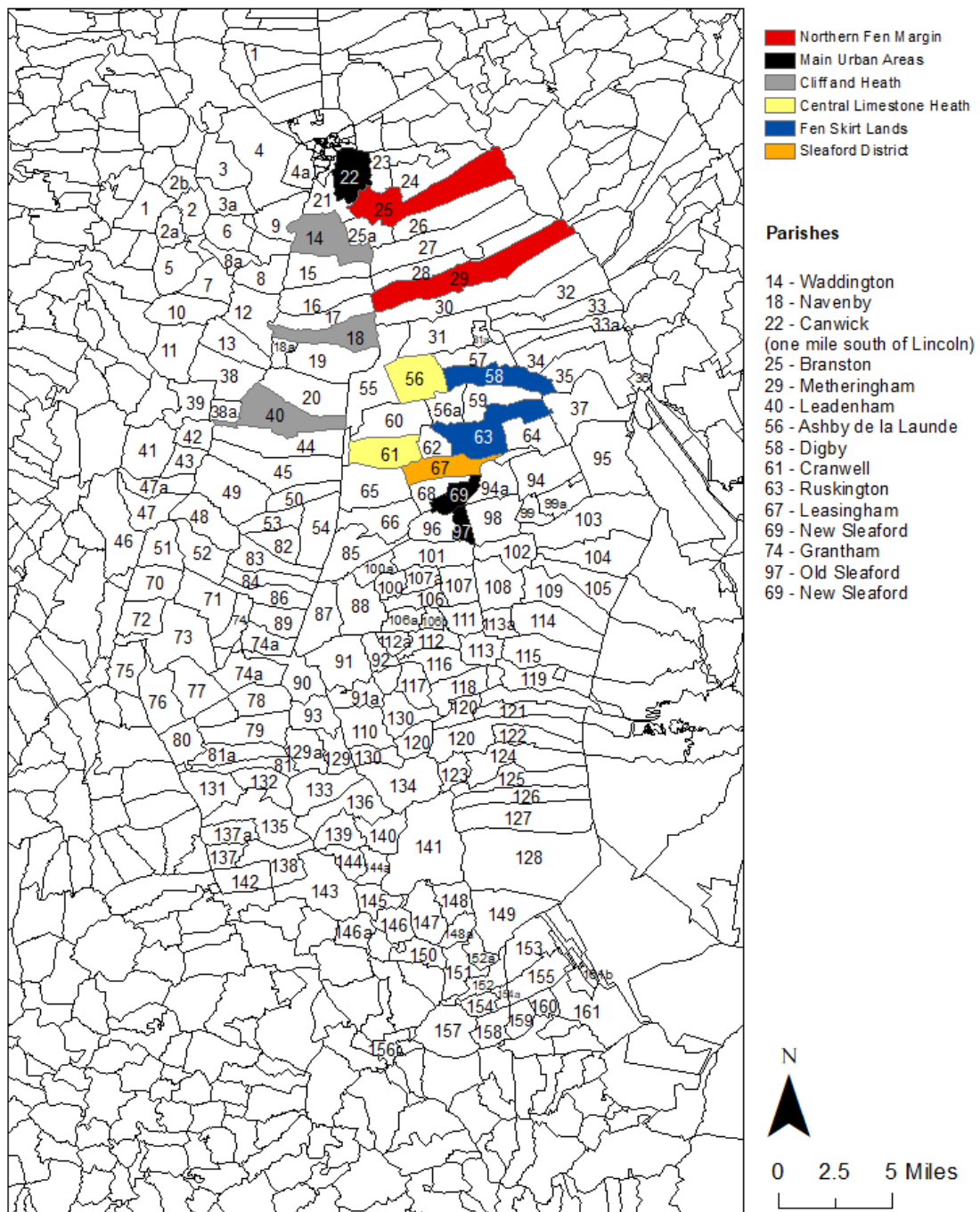


Figure 3.2: Parishes of Study Located Within Soil Regions. Source: Dennis Mills, 'Regions of Kesteven Devised for the Purposes of Agricultural History', *Lincolnshire Architectural and Archaeological Society: Reports and Papers*, 17 (1957), pp.80-82. Created by W. Farrell, the University of Leicester Library

The literature has often defined parishes by the dichotomous open-close model, conceptualised around property ownership.⁶ Mills was influential in applying the open-close model to Lincolnshire and discerned an actuality of scale within its extremes: firmly shut, such as estate villages with resident landowners; closed absentee-landlord settlements; divided, where landownership was diverse but dominated by core landowners; and wide open, which saw large variety in ownership.⁷ The same author has seen light soil areas as particularly related to closed settlement, seeing a similarity in parish typologies across these areas of England such as the East Riding of Yorkshire; the Lincolnshire Wolds; north-western Norfolk; and the Cotswolds.⁸ However, despite the designation of the Lincoln Heath as a light soil area, only 30% of the parish selection could be categorised as closed settlements (Ashby de la Launde; Cranwell; Digby) with these largely being located on the generally homogenous soils of the central limestone heath (appendix A and figure 3.2). Such a location on traditionally poorer soils meant large landholdings could be consolidated due to cheaper land tax and rents. In 1808, the closed parish of study of Cranwell paid £34 6s in land tax for 2535 acres, compared to the Kesteven clay-land parish of Stragglethorpe which paid £40 on just 729 acres.⁹ From the opening decades of the nineteenth century, both Cranwell and Digby could be viewed as absentee close parishes, with the Thorold family and St. John's College, Cambridge being landowners in the former; and the Earl of Harrowby dominating proprietorship in the latter. For much of this thesis' periodisation, Ashby de la Launde could be categorised as an estate village, with all property and land being owned by the King family. Limited proprietors within closed parishes tended to create hierarchical authority structures, headed by either a resident landowner or leading tenant farmers.¹⁰ This in turn allowed for tighter control on resident population size and the

⁶ Andrew Jackson, 'The 'Open-Closed' Settlement Model and the Interdisciplinary Formulations of Dennis Mills: Conceptualising Local and Rural Change, *Rural History*, 23 (2012), pp.121-136; Dennis Mills, 'Canwick (Lincolnshire) and Melbourn (Cambridgeshire) in Comparative Perspective within the Open-closed Village Model', *Rural History*, 17 (2006), pp.1-22; Polly Bird, 'Open' and 'Closed' Villages: A New Methodology for Assessing Landownership Concentration, *Local Historian*. 44 (2007), pp.35-50; Polly Bird, 'Landownership, Planning and Settlement Development in South-West Cheshire, 1750-2000', *Transactions of the Historic Society of Lancashire and Cheshire*, 162 (2013), pp.71-106

⁷ Jackson, 'The 'Open-Closed' Settlement Model'

⁸ Dennis Mills, *Lord and Peasant in Nineteenth Century Britain* (London: Croom Helm, 1980), p.119

⁹ David Grigg, 'The Land Tax Returns', *The Agricultural History Review*, 11 (1963), pp.84-85

¹⁰ Mills, 'Canwick (Lincolnshire) and Melbourn (Cambridgeshire)', p.2

built environment, with closed parishes generally exhibiting smaller populations and fewer houses than seen in open.

Seven parishes within this thesis' selection could be classified as open parishes to differing degrees. Apart from Leasingham, the majority of these were in western and eastern heathland areas where parishes incorporated mixed soil types (appendix A and figure 3.2). Grigg's analysis of Kesteven land tax returns suggests the highest proportion of open parishes were in the fenlands, correlating with wide open parishes of study located on fen-incorporating soils (Metheringham; Ruskington; Branston).¹¹ Similarly, open parishes were numerous on the western Kesteven clays with the western Cliff and Heath parishes of study (Leadenham; Navenby; Waddington) all being classified as open to some extent. Within open parishes of study, there was a diversity in total proprietor numbers with wide open parishes exhibiting larger totals. This can be illustrated by examining land tax records from 1830.¹² In that year, Ruskington had sixty-nine proprietors of which 57% were occupier owners; and Metheringham had fifty-seven of which 58% were occupier owners. Navenby, located in the western Cliff and Heath region, saw the largest diversity in proprietorship within the parish selection, having seventy-one proprietors in 1830, 56% of which were occupier owners. Other parishes of study in the Cliff and Heath region (Leadenham; Waddington) are best described as divided open parishes where landownership was dominated by specific individuals, often resident gentry. In 1830, there were four proprietors in Waddington and thirty-two in Leadenham, 53% being occupier owners albeit with the dominant landowner being the resident gentry Reeve family. Here, a general link between parish typology and underlying geology is suggested but with variety seen within this.

Parish typology and geography can be linked to levels of population change. Between 1801 and 1851, Lincolnshire's population increased by 95%.¹³ This was one of the highest increases in Britain, falling below the 200% rise seen in the south Welsh coal fields but above the negligible increases found in East Anglia.¹⁴ The Lincolnshire uplands of the Wolds and Heath saw the largest population increases within the county,

¹¹ Grigg, 'The Lax Tax Returns', p.89

¹² KQS/Landtax/1830, LA

¹³ William White, *History, Gazetteer and Directory of Lincolnshire* (Exeter: David and Charles, 1856, Reprint 1969), p.14

¹⁴ Richard Lawton, 'Rural Depopulation in 19th century England', in Dennis Mills (ed), *English Rural Communities: The Impact of a Specialised Economy* (London: Macmillan, 1973), Fig.9.2, p.201

in part because they were the epicentres of the adoption of mixed-agrarian agriculture in the early nineteenth century where extensive labour requirements drew in migration.¹⁵ Within the upland Wapentake of Boothby, the population rose by 68% between 1801 and 1841; in neighbouring Flaxwell Wapentake by 87%; and in Langoe Wapentake by 90%.¹⁶ As most parishes of study were in these three upland Wapentakes, this observation is important because the Lincoln Heath saw some of the highest rates of population increase within the county, reversing the low population density traditionally seen in the area.

However, population increase was not even throughout the parish selection, being more acute in wide open parishes. It was within these that the population of the parish selection congregated, largely due to better availability in rental accommodation and diversified employment options. Branston, Metheringham, Navenby and Ruskington all saw increases in population of well over 100% between 1801 and 1851 (table 3.1). Indeed, 66% of the total population for the parish selection in 1851 was living in these four wide open parishes. As seen in table 3.1, population increase in divided open parishes (Leadenham; Waddington; Leasingham) was smaller, ranging from 31-43%. These levels were on par with closed parishes of study (Ashby de la Launde; Digby) which saw increases of between 34-40%. Cranwell, however, does not fit neatly into these trends. It saw a 173% increase in its population between 1801 and 1851 despite being a closed parish. Being located on the central limestone heath, the parish was at the forefront of drives towards mixed agrarian agriculture in the post-1815 period. Therefore, the acute population increases evidenced in the parish are seemingly linked to these changes in economic niche, with increased labour demands within a mixed agrarian agricultural economy influencing this.

¹⁵ Richard Olney, *Rural Society and County Government in Nineteenth Century Lincolnshire* (Lincoln: The Society for Lincolnshire History and Archaeology, 1979), p.72

¹⁶ A Wapentake was a ceremonial division analogous to a Hundred in other parts of England. White, *The History, Gazetteer and Directory of the County of Lincoln*, p.14

Parish	1801	1811	1821	1831	1841	1851	% increase 1801-1851
Ashby de la Launde	127	124	155	178	157	170	34%
Branston	445	527	702	859	1112	1325	198%
Cranwell	88	102	155	299	230	240	173%
Digby	242	226	277	319	364	340	40%
Leadenham	517	530	574	565	624	676	31%
Leasingham	315	263	259	358	472	428	36%
Metheringham	536	601	626	880	1197	1552	189%
Navenby	479	542	625	778	942	1057	121%
Ruskington	483	556	678	782	979	1027	113%
Waddington	674	727	701	769	814	962	43%

Table 3.1: Parish Population Increase, 1801-1851. Source: Census material 1801-1851

Population increase was also not incremental; particularly in closed parishes, numbers peaked in the 1830s and 1840s. Ashby de la Launde and Cranwell saw their largest population in the 1831 census, before decreasing by 5% and 20% respectively by 1851. Similarly, Digby's population peaked in the 1841 census, decreasing by 7% by 1851. In the wake of corn price collapses and associated agrarian depression in the early 1830s and mid to late 1840s, closed parishes were more apt to reduce the amount of available housing and limit labour. This allowed a tighter control over population numbers whilst also pushing people into residency in open parishes. Therefore, at times of economic depression closed and divided open parishes were more likely to find ways of controlling population numbers, resulting in acute population rises in wide open parishes as most of the local population became concentrated within them, influencing an unequal population distribution across the parish selection.

A comparison of inhabited housing within the 1801 to 1841 censuses shows that many closed and divided open parishes of study (Ashby de la Launde; Digby; Leadenham; Waddington; Leasingham) saw limited increases in housing stock over the first four decades of the nineteenth century. Apart from Leasingham, which saw a 64% rise, these parishes exhibited an increase in inhabited housing of between 16-31%. These statistics deviate widely from the 101-381% rises in inhabited housing seen in wide open parishes, with Metheringham and Branston seeing a 381% and 171% increase respectively. However, Navenby and Cranwell both deviate from these general conclusions. Navenby saw a 75% increase in its inhabited housing, drastically smaller than in other wide-open parishes. The parish saw the highest amount of free holding proprietors in the parish selection with a larger proportion of its population involved in non-agricultural labour. 48% of families in Navenby the 1831 census were engaged in non-agricultural employment, compared to 34% in Metheringham and 19% in Branston. Similarly, Navenby exhibited a wider diversity in farm acreages in the 1851 census, with the majority being occupier owner holdings of between ten and fifty acres. Therefore, drives towards mixed agrarian agriculture, linked to demographic and habitat changes in other parishes, were seemingly not as intense in Navenby. When such a move was acute, as in the closed parish in Cranwell, its impact could be drastic. Between 1801 and 1841, the parish saw 129% increase in inhabited housing, well above the minimal rises seen in other closed parishes of study and paralleling the population rise in the parish already shown.

The most intense rises in housing were seen between the 1820s and 1840s. In Metheringham, which exhibited the largest population and biggest expansion of its built environment within the parish selection, inhabited housing rose by 145% between 1821 and 1841 compared to a decrease of 20% between 1811 and 1821. Moreover, housing stock totals did not necessarily correspond to population size within parishes, with overcrowding being a major issue; a hundred and eight families were living in ninety-four houses in Metheringham in the 1821 census. Lack of available housing was seen across the whole of the parish selection from the 1820s, even within tied accommodation in closed parishes. Within Digby, fifty families lived in forty-four houses in 1811; sixty-four in fifty houses in 1821; and in 1831, sixty-six in fifty-six houses. Lack of suitable labouring accommodation and the associated unevenness of population distribution was still commented on by contemporaries in 1867: 'the tract

north of these villages [Ashby de la Launde] is almost entirely without cottages...the labourers are all congregated into the larger towns.’¹⁷

Sharpe and McEwan’s conclusions about the poor and impermanent nature of housing inhabited by the rural population can be mapped onto housing within the parish selection.¹⁸ The majority of houses in Digby in 1801 were built of stone and thatch, with a smaller number built of cobb.¹⁹ Variety in condition of labouring housing was commented on in Navenby in the mid-1800s, with newly built cottages being notably less spacious than older houses, having two downstairs and upstairs rooms with fewer amenities.²⁰ As such, living conditions were cramped; in Metheringham, most cottages had only one bedroom.²¹ Despite Obelkevich maintaining that houses in closed parishes were substantially better than those found in open, there is little evidence for this within the parish selection.²² In Cranwell, cottages are described at the turn of the nineteenth century as ‘stone & thatch...poor old worn out...having only a yard and a little Garden.’²³ Similarly, in 1853 Cranwell’s labourer’s houses were generally one storey affairs, containing four rooms and described as ‘very small [with]...roofs...in bad order.’²⁴ Cottages were built on marginal wasteland within the parish, with four being situated on ground ‘along the churchyard...[having] been built in this waste’²⁵ next to the village pond at least from 1812 to the 1870s. Poor housing in Cranwell may be explained by the fact that ownership was split between two proprietors, which often resulted in confusion over responsibility for upkeep. Such issues were exasperated in open parishes where a diversity of proprietors led to wide variety in the condition of housing. Mrs. Grice, a labourer’s wife from Wellingore, a village neighbouring the parish of study of Navenby, explained in 1867:

¹⁷ *Royal Commission on the Employment of Children, Young Persons and Women in Agriculture* (London: House of Commons, 1867), p.133

¹⁸ Pamela Sharpe and Joanne McEwan, ‘Introduction: Accommodating Poverty: The Housing and Living Arrangements of the English Poor, c.1600-1850’, in Pamela Sharpe and Joanna McEwan (eds), *Accommodating Poverty: The Housing and Living Arrangements of the English Poor, c.1600-1850* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), p.2

¹⁹ William Hosford, ‘Digby in 1801: the Anatomy of a Lincolnshire Village’, *The Lincolnshire Historian*, 2 (1955-56), p.27

²⁰ *Royal Commission on Employment of Children, Young Persons and Women in Agriculture*, p.291

²¹ *Ibid*

²² James Obelkevich, *Religion and Rural Society: South Lindsey, 1825-1875* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1976), p.36

²³ 3 THOR 2/1/3, LA

²⁴ D110/252, SJCCA

²⁵ D202/79, SJCCA

‘Some of the cottages here is bad. Some of them have no windows in the bedroom. Mine has; it belongs to Mr. _____. He does nothing for us...there’s no very good things for the poor people in the country. I expect we will have to leave it.’²⁶

The built environment of study also included wider infrastructural trends which need to be explored due to the human ecological methodology of this thesis. Such things as transportation networks helped define the expression of and access to specific relief opportunities and outcomes. Wright has shown an increased investment in county-wide transportation systems throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, facilitating the Lincoln Heath’s participation in wider economic networks via the easier movement of produce in and out of the area.²⁷ By the 1790s, turnpike roads linked the area to important national markets: the Leadenham to Newark turnpike, opened in 1758, allowed greater access to the Nottinghamshire markets; and the Peterborough to Lincoln turnpike, opened in 1756, crossed the central limestone heath, allowing access to southern England and London. The Lincoln Heath’s location within the west of Lincolnshire meant that it was geographically more proximate to the rest of England than easterly county regions such as the Wolds, which saw limited and later turnpike creation. The development of canal navigations between 1740 and the 1830s increased the movement of goods in and out of the county.²⁸ Canals such as the Foss Dyke linked Lincoln with the Trent and the wider Midlands, whilst the Witham navigation joined the county seat to East Anglia and North Sea trade. They also increased trade with the capital; in 1837, livestock were being transported to London for meat supply along the waterways.²⁹ In the 1840s, opening of railway links from Lincoln provided direct access to burgeoning industrial markets not previously possible on the turnpike and canal network, allowing an increase in the transportation of economic goods in and out of the county.

The urban centres of Lincoln and Sleaford, bordering the Lincoln Heath to the north and south respectively, increasingly became economic and infrastructural hubs for the area

²⁶ *Royal Commission on Employment of Children, Young Persons and Women in Agriculture*, p.291. The name of the landlord is anonymised in the original.

²⁷ Neil Wright, *Lincolnshire Towns and Industry, 1700-1914* (Lincoln: The Society for Lincolnshire History and Archaeology, 1982)

²⁸ Richard Acton, ‘Navigations and the mid-Lincolnshire Economy 1790-1830’, *Lincolnshire History and Archaeology*, 15 (1980), p.49

²⁹ Francis Hill, *Victorian Lincoln* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1974), p.100

of study. The opening of the Sleaford navigation in 1794 made the town the furthest inland point on the Lincolnshire canal network, making Sleaford a socio-economic pivot for the surrounding area. By 1841, the town was ‘generally regarded as the capital of South Lincolnshire.’³⁰ The completion of a new magisterial sessions house in the town in 1831 and the centring of a poor law union around Sleaford after unionisation meant that it was increasingly central to the administration of the poor law within the Lincoln Heath. Similarly, Lincoln saw an increase in specialised industry, generally revolving around agricultural provision and output. By the late 1840s, Lincoln had several small iron foundries, two steam mills and steam engine builders, also producing agricultural fertilisers and farming machinery for national and international markets.³¹ As with Sleaford, the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century saw infrastructural developments within Lincoln which were important for experiences of need and relief. Firstly, Lincoln was the centre of a multi-parish Incorporation from 1796, within which the parish of study of Ashby de la Launde was incorporated from 1821, with the Incorporation’s House of Industry located in the city. After unionisation in 1836, the city became the focus of a poor law union. Additionally, the opening of the Lincoln County Hospital in 1777; the Lincoln Lunatic Asylum in 1820, replaced by the Lincoln County Asylum at Bracebridge Heath in 1852; as well as other institutions such as the Lincoln Penitent Females’ Home in 1847, meant that key infrastructural fabric accessed by relief recipients were located in Lincoln, the implications and outcomes of which will be addressed in later chapters. Overall, the area of study’s habitat saw acute changes over the latter eighteenth and early nineteenth century, linked closely to developments in its agricultural economy.

3.3 Niche

The chronological focus of this thesis incorporates the last sixty years of Overton’s ‘critical century’ of English agriculture, with the Lincoln Heath being part of ‘the light land revolution’ identified by Williamson.³² Before 1815, the area could be categorised

³⁰ *Pigot and Co’s Directory of York, Leicester and Rutland, Lincoln, Northampton and Nottingham* (London: J. Pigot, 1841), p.565

³¹ Ken Redmore, *Ploughs, Chaff Cutters and Steam Engines: Lincolnshire’s Agricultural Implement Makers* (Lincoln: The Society for Lincolnshire History and Archaeology, 2007)

³² Mark Overton, ‘The Critical Century? The Agrarian History of England and Wales 1750-1850’, *The Agricultural History Review*, 38 (1990), pp.185-189; Tim Williamson, *The Transformation of Rural England: Farming and the Landscape, 1700-1870* (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 2002), pp.53-83

as a ‘sheep and corn’ economy, pivoting around sheep farming with limited arable production. At the turn of the nineteenth century, soil nutrition on the central limestone heath was generally poor; Grigg has stated that in the early 1800s ‘much of the Heath was waste land.’³³ In 1801, soils within the parish of study of Cranwell were described as growing ‘a poor thin starved...herbage.’³⁴ Here, Grigg has seen farming practice within southern Lincolnshire at the turn of the nineteenth century as highly divergent, dependent on underlying soil variation.³⁵ In addition to sheep farming, rabbit rearing in warrens was also extensive.³⁶ Cranwell had a total acreage of 2500 acres in 1801, with 40% of this ‘in warren for conies.’³⁷ The area still had significant areas of rabbit warren throughout the early decades of the nineteenth century; 1819 maps show warrens at High Grange on the heath at Navenby and warrens in Ashby de la Launde.³⁸ Labour requirements for this pastoral economy were minimal, reflected in the traditionally low population densities of the Lincoln Heath. Stock raising had necessitated early enclosure, meaning that by the late eighteenth century the Lincoln Heath was essentially a fully enclosed landscape.³⁹ Therefore, debates around the importance of enclosure to experiences of need are largely anachronistic to the packaging of this thesis.⁴⁰ Stevens’ study of Leasingham’s enclosure history has shown that its 1822 enclosure act,

³³ Grigg, ‘Changing Regional Values during the Agricultural Revolution’, p.95

³⁴ 3 THOR 2/1/3, LA

³⁵ Grigg, ‘Changing Regional Values during the Agricultural Revolution’, p.88

³⁶ Jack Perkins, *Sheep Farming in Eighteenth and Nineteenth century Lincolnshire* (Lincoln: The Society for Lincolnshire History and Archaeology, 1977), p.6

³⁷ 3 THOR 2/1/3, LA

³⁸ Charles Budgen, *Pen and Ink on Paper Map, 1819*. Available at:

http://www.bl.uk/onlinegallery/onlineex/ordsurvdraw/t/002osd000000013u00241000.html?_ga=2.214010903.1469132345.1589115585-1085375921.1581433658 [Accessed on 10 May 2020]; Henry Stevens,

Pen and Ink on Paper Map, 1819. Available at:

<http://www.bl.uk/onlinegallery/onlineex/ordsurvdraw/l/002osd000000024u00240000.html> [Accessed 10 May 2020]

³⁹ Grigg, ‘The Land Tax Returns’, p.93; Sheila Stevens, ‘Leasingham’s Silent History of Enclosures Revealed’, *Lincolnshire Past and Present*, 26 (2001), pp.15-19; William King-Fane, *Kesteven Inclosures* (Kesteven College of Education, 1937)

⁴⁰ Michael Turner, *Enclosures in Britain 1750-1830* (London: Palgrave, 1984); Michael Turner, ‘Economic Protest in Rural Society: Opposition to Parliamentary Enclosure in Buckinghamshire’, *Southern History*, 10 (1988), pp.94-128; Jeanette Neeson, *Commoners: Common Right, Enclosure and Social Change in England, 1700-1820* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993); Jeanette Neeson, ‘English Enclosures and British Peasants: Current Debates about Rural Social Structure in Britain c. 1750-1870’, *Jahrbuch für Wirtschaftsgeschichte*, 2 (2000), pp.17-33; Leigh Shaw-Taylor, ‘Parliamentary Enclosure and the Emergence of an English Proletariat’, *Journal of Economic History*, 61 (2001), pp.640-662; Leigh Shaw-Taylor, ‘Labourers, Cows, Common Rights and Parliamentary Enclosure: the Evidence of Contemporary Comment c.1760-1810’, *Past and Present*, 171 (2001), pp.95-126; Sara Birtles, ‘Common Land, Poor Relief and Enclosure: The Use of Manorial Resources in Fulfilling Parish Obligations 1601-1834’, *Past and Present*, 165 (1999), pp.74-106

enclosing 377 acres of moorland, was an aberration to the enclosure of the rest of the parish by private agreement from 1652.⁴¹ Similarly, enclosure at Cranwell had begun by private agreement at least from the seventeenth century, although rabbit warrens in the west of the parish were still being enclosed in 1807.⁴² At Ashby de la Launde, 41% of the parish was already enclosed by 1789,⁴³ twenty-six years before parliamentary enclosure in 1815.

Between 1815 and 1840, Grigg has identified a levelling of diversity in farming practice within Lincolnshire, with the clear distinctions largely disappearing by 1850.⁴⁴ This picture supports Thirsk's claim that an agricultural revolution took place in the Lincolnshire uplands between 1740 and 1870.⁴⁵ Wheat was increasingly produced on Lincolnshire's light soil areas, reversing predominate farming structures seen in earlier periods, where the heavier clay lands of the county were the primary arable areas and the light soil regions pastoral in nature. By the mid-nineteenth century 'the heavy lands...had become marginal wheat producers, and the farming methods...were generally backward.'⁴⁶ By 1850, 'the pride of Lincolnshire farming was the intensive cultivation of its upland regions'⁴⁷ and by 1866, 42.8% of the county's acreage was under corn crops, significantly larger than the national average of 33.2%.⁴⁸

Commentators have suggested that a catalyst for this were fluctuations in national corn prices, with limited moves towards increasing wheat output being made in response to grain shortages in the 1760s and 1790s. Conversely, continued improvement was stimulated by the high price of grain during the Napoleonic Wars with much marginal land put under the plough. However, Beastall has argued that the main period of agricultural improvement in the Lincolnshire uplands was between 1815 and 1845, albeit with significant preparation before this time.⁴⁹ This is a view shared by Moore, with such moves being seen as a reaction to the collapse of arable prices after 1812.⁵⁰

⁴¹ Stevens, 'Leasingham's Silent History of Enclosures Revealed', pp.15-19

⁴² 3 THOR 2/1/5, LA

⁴³ Ashby de la Launde Parish/23/1, LA

⁴⁴ Grigg, 'Changing Regional Values during the Agricultural Revolution'

⁴⁵ Thirsk, *English Peasant Farming*, p.257

⁴⁶ Grigg, 'Changing Regional Values during the Agricultural Revolution', p.91

⁴⁷ Richard Olney, *Lincolnshire Politics 1832-1885* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1973), p.24

⁴⁸ *Ibid*, p.23

⁴⁹ Beastall, *The Agricultural Revolution in Lincolnshire*, p.1

⁵⁰ David Moore, 'The Corn Laws and High Farming', *The Economic History Review*. 18 (1965), p.546

Grigg has questioned the quality of farming practice on the Lincoln Heath up until the 1810s, stating farm management was generally poor.⁵¹ Similarly, the amount of wasteland ploughed for wheat production between the 1790s and 1815 resulted in declining soil fertility, convincing many farmers that the only way forward was proper husbandry, stimulating further agricultural improvement between 1815 and the 1830s.⁵² It was only after the fall in national wheat prices that agricultural innovations in practice took hold, largely as a consequence of the adoption of the Norfolk system of arable farming which denoted a four-stage rotation of turnips, barley, seeds and wheat.⁵³ This removed the need for fallow land and allowed for the rearing of livestock all year round through the use of cover crops such as turnips as feed. The light soils of the heathlands were particularly predisposed to the application of the Norfolk system because large numbers of sheep were already present and soil types were ideal for turnip cultivation. Thus, there was a clear experiential break in farming practice upon the Lincoln Heath, concentrated in the 1810s to 1830s, leading to the concentrated increases in population size and the built environment in many parishes already outlined. Wheat sold in Lincoln more than trebled in amount between 1825 and 1834 and livestock-rearing increased with between 25,000 and 30,000 sheep present at the Lincoln livestock fair in 1837.⁵⁴ In regards a study of welfare, agricultural change is important as it affected employment systems and local authority structures, as well as the spread and concentration of the population.

Mills has seen an expansion of new farms on the Lincoln Heath during drives towards mixed-agrarian agriculture.⁵⁵ Improvement 'made it possible to build farmhouses and cottages over a much wider area'⁵⁶ as the amount of arable land was extended, moving population distribution away from nucleated settlement. In 1829, the population of Metheringham was described as 'scattered at the distance of 4, 5 and even 6 miles'⁵⁷ from the main village, with acute population increases meaning that by 1833 most parishioners lived dispersed 'on one side near Lincoln Heath in a much greater part on

⁵¹ David Grigg, *The Agricultural Revolution in South Lincolnshire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1966), p.63

⁵² *Ibid*, p.127

⁵³ Grigg, 'Changing Regional Values during the Agricultural Revolution'

⁵⁴ Hill, *Victorian Lincoln*, p.81

⁵⁵ Mills, 'The Development of Rural Settlement around Lincoln', p.214

⁵⁶ Beastall, *The Agricultural Revolution in Lincolnshire*, p.89

⁵⁷ CORB 5/4/98/3, LA

the other side near the river Witham [to the east of the parish].⁵⁸ This impacted conceptions of community and belonging, known factors to have affected eligibility to relief. Agricultural practices, such as hedging and ditching and daily visits to livestock, necessitated increased settlement near newly cultivated areas of parishes.⁵⁹ Mixed-agrarian farms were generally larger in acreage and ran as tenancies rather than occupier-owners, supporting Shaw-Taylor's assertion that 'the decline of family farms and the growth of large, labour-employing farms...is one of the major themes of English agrarian history.'⁶⁰ Grigg has suggested that the predominant farming structure was one of tenant farmers in southern Lincolnshire, with occupier owners being the minority.⁶¹ By the mid-1800s, the central limestone heath became increasingly categorised by large farms of over a hundred and fifty acres, well above Olney's county average of a hundred and twenty acres.⁶² This solidified a dominant socio-economic system where tenant farmers, hiring labour from multiple parishes, rented land from key gentry landowners, influencing authority structures and interactions.

However, farm type was not homogenous within the parish selection, showing a clear relationship with underlying soil types. Grigg has suggested that 'the heathland was...the poorest land in the area, and...[not] favourable to the small farmer's survival'⁶³ leading to a dominance of larger landholdings. Closed parishes exhibited smaller overall total numbers of farms but with larger individual acreages; Ashby de la Launde and Cranwell exclusively had farms of between a hundred to over five hundred acres in the 1851 census. In contrast, both the clays and fens of the liminal heathland areas were 'fertile land...where the type of farming was suitable for small-scale owner-occupied farming.'⁶⁴ Open parishes generally saw larger total numbers of farms with more diverse acreages. Such is seen in Navenby and Ruskington in the 1851 census, with the former having twenty-two farms of which 91% were under two hundred acres; and the latter having twenty-one farms, 77% being under two-hundred acres. However,

⁵⁸ Ibid

⁵⁹ Mills, 'The Development of Rural Settlement around Lincoln', p.90

⁶⁰ Leigh Shaw-Taylor, 'Family Farms and Capitalist Farms in Mid-Nineteenth Century England', *Agricultural History Review*, 53 (2005), p.158

⁶¹ Grigg, *The Agricultural Revolution*, p.1

⁶² Olney, *Rural Society and County Government in Nineteenth Century Lincolnshire*, p.54

⁶³ Grigg, 'The Lax Tax Returns', p.92

⁶⁴ Ibid

Digby, an absentee closed parish located in the fen-skirt lands, is a caveat to these general trends. It had thirteen farms listed in the 1851 census with all but two being less than two hundred acres. As will be shown in later chapters, Digby's experience of need often deviated away from conclusions made about closed parishes within the literature, suggesting that the link between parish typology and relief regime can be over stressed and that underlying geological conditions did influence experiences of need. The importance of occupier-owner farming to the economy of the Lincoln Heath gradually decreased in favour of larger acreage tenancies, often consolidated on improved soil regions in the post-1815 period.⁶⁵ At Waddington, thirty-seven farms were listed in the 1851 census, with most being under fifty acres; ran as occupier-owners; and situated in central or eastern areas of the parish on heavier soils. Farms in the parish of between two to four hundred acres in 1851 were all located on the western central heathland soils and were a phenomenon of agricultural improvement.

These new farms had fundamental consequences for labour markets. Within both the Wolds and the Lincoln Heath, farms of a hundred acres or more employed 49% of short-term labour; and 66% of confined labour, hired on a yearly contract.⁶⁶ This is mirrored in the neighbouring region of south Lindsey, where three-quarters of workers were hired by a minority of farmers who held over 200 acres, less than a quarter of all farms in the area.⁶⁷ Collins has estimated that new agricultural practices expanded the labour market by up to 40% during the nineteenth century.⁶⁸ However, Wrigley has suggested that despite the expansion of the adult male labour force by 70% between 1811 and 1851, the actual number employed in agriculture rose minimally with non-agricultural employment increasingly providing work for an expanding population.⁶⁹ How far this is true within the parish selection is debatable. Limited non-agricultural work is noted in open parishes of study, generally limited to the building trade; shoe making; and specialist industry such as millers, blacksmiths and wheelwrights. However, agricultural labour was the main employment system within the parish

⁶⁵ Williamson, *The Transformation of Rural England*, p.24

⁶⁶ Ibid

⁶⁷ Obelkevich, *Religion and Rural Society*, pp.47-48

⁶⁸ Edward Collins, 'Migrant Labour in British Agriculture in the Nineteenth Century', *The Economic History Review*, 29 (1976), p.38

⁶⁹ Tony Wrigley, *Poverty, Progress and Population* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), pp.88-96

selection; even within many open parishes, those working outside of farming were either a minority or roughly on par with those that were. Lincolnshire lacked any considerable industries and in 1850, the percentage of Lincolnshire's adult population engaged in agriculture was third highest in England.⁷⁰ As such, the disproportionate influence of mixed-agrarian farming within the area was centrally important for male agricultural labour, the mainstay of the household economy throughout the period within the parish selection.

Thirsk has seen Lincolnshire's nineteenth century agriculture as having pivoted around three types of male labour: confined workers, including farm servants, hired on yearly contracts and predominantly working with livestock; ordinary workers, providing short-term labour; and migrant labourers hired at peak harvest season.⁷¹ It is worth quoting a description of the workforce of a four-hundred-acre heath farm in 1867:

‘On this farm there are only four regular men employed, including the shepherd and the horseman. There are besides these two men two farm servants...and two regular day boys. One of these labourers comes from Hykeham, two miles off, and one from Lincoln...we had three Irishmen hoeing corn in the spring.’⁷²

Confined systems of labour have been generally seen as a northern and western phenomenon.⁷³ However, such systems were prevalent within Lincolnshire; in 1851, the county had on average one confined labour to every four ordinary labourers, compared to one in eleven in Norfolk.⁷⁴ Within confined labour, Obelkevich has differentiated farm servants, who were young, unmarried and widely housed on the farm site, from older confined men, generally married with families and housed within tied accommodation in closed parishes.⁷⁵ Ordinary labour was sourced from open parishes, whose larger populations relied on diversified employment strategies. As such, they

⁷⁰ Olney, *Lincolnshire Politics 1832-1885*, p.23

⁷¹ Thirsk, *English Peasant Farming*, p.268

⁷² *Royal Commission on Employment of Children in Trades not Regulated by Law, 6th Report* (London: House of Commons, 1867), p.29

⁷³ Andrew 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; Andrew Gritt, ‘The Census and the Servant: A Reassessment of the Decline of Farm Servants in Early Nineteenth-Century England’, *Economic History Review*, 53 (2000), pp. 84-106

⁷⁴ Olney, *Lincolnshire Politics 1832-1885*, p.80

⁷⁵ Obelkevich, *Religion and Rural Society*, pp.67-69

were more susceptible to seasonal unemployment within the farming cycle, influencing the higher rates of able-bodied under or unemployment seen within open parishes of study, discussed in later chapters.

The main opportunity to gain secure employment was to acquire a yearly confined position at a hiring or 'statute' fair. Holland has stated that in Yorkshire and the north of England, hiring was usually conducted in November.⁷⁶ In the Lincoln Heath, it seems that hiring was held biannually, in Spring and early Winter, with the spring statutes more important and numerous. In November of 1824, nine statutes were held in Lincolnshire but in April and May 1826, nineteen fairs were held, four relevant for the parish selection at Sleaford, Navenby, Leadenham and Waddington.⁷⁷ Attendance at a hiring fair didn't necessarily mean automatic employment. A 'mop fair' was held a week after the main May fair in Sleaford for those who had not gained a position, with farmers offering lower wages and poorer employment packages due to the reduced bargaining power of labourers.⁷⁸ April and May could be months of increased need for those who could not secure a new position, particularly considering annual nature of bill payments which proved a considerable expense. As described in Digby: 'the living-in servants...drew their money...on 15th May. Then they trooped down to the village to pay the year's accounts with the tailor and the shoemaker.'⁷⁹ However, the dichotomy suggested between confined and ordinary labour types was often softened within the overall work experience of individuals, with males moving between labour types over the course of a lifetime dependent on such factors as age and experience; wage levels; and the availability of work in temporal periods of agricultural depression.

This meant that the labouring population was increasingly mobile, typified by 'migration...over relatively short distances.'⁸⁰ An analysis of historic migration has been conducted by both Pooley and Turnbull and within a Lincolnshire context, by Caine.⁸¹ In the parish selection, the hiring system meant that labourers often moved

⁷⁶ Sarah Holland, 'Farm Service and Hiring Practices in Mid-Nineteenth Century England: the Doncaster Region in the West Riding of Yorkshire' in Jane Whittle (ed), *Servants in Rural Europe: 1400-1900* (Woodbridge: Boydell & Brewer, 2017), p.192

⁷⁷ *The Stamford Mercury*, 5th November 1824 and 28th April 1826

⁷⁸ *The Sleaford Gazette*, 25th May 1889

⁷⁹ Fred Gresswell, *Bright Boots: An Autobiography and Anthology* (Newton Abbott: David & Charles, 1982), p.73

⁸⁰ Thomas Sokoll, *Essex Pauper Letters, 1731-1837*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), p.11

⁸¹ Colin Pooley and Jean Turnbull, *Migration and Mobility in Britain since the Eighteenth Century* (Abingdon-on-Thames: Routledge, 1998); Jill Caine, 'Migratory Patterns of People in Four Settlements in Lincolnshire 1851-1901.' (Unpublished Doctoral Thesis. The University of Leicester, 2019)

annually between positions.⁸² For example, the settlement examination of William Rush shows that he lived in four differing proximate parishes on the Lincoln Heath between 1821 and 1825, working yearly confined positions.⁸³ Migration influenced legalised settlement status; position within labouring hierarchies; and availability of relief options. It also affected conceptions of belonging within communities, as people often did not reside in their parish of birth and regularly moved year after year. Obelkevich has stated that in the South Lindsey district of Lincolnshire in 1851 ‘only 16% of farm servants...were employed in their native parishes: on average they lived five miles from their place of birth.’⁸⁴ A study of birth locations of the parish selection’s residents in the 1851 census supports these conclusions. Closed parishes saw the smallest percentage of their populations born in the parish; 31-38% in Ashby de la Launde’s and Cranwell. Within these two villages, 53-60% of the population was born in Lincolnshire but elsewhere, confirming the regular local movement within employment systems. Open parishes of study that saw the highest proportions of residents born in the village, ranging from 45-57% in the 1851 census. Residents born within Lincolnshire but elsewhere were again the second largest demographic group within open parishes of study, ranging from 36-48%. Across the parish selection, residents born outside of Lincolnshire were in the minority, being only 3-9%. Despite this, migrant labour from outside of the county played a major role within the area of study’s economic niche, predominately the Irish harvest labourer.

Barber has studied the experience of Irish migrant labour within Lincolnshire, stating the highest numbers of workers can be seen after 1815 due to increased labour demands.⁸⁵ The presence of seasonal population inflow, often congregated into urban areas if arriving too early for harvest, caused issues for local relief systems. At times of poor weather and delayed harvests, migrant labourers found themselves unemployed and unable to return home. Indeed, in 1847 the Lincoln union workhouse built a new wing specifically for unemployed Irish.⁸⁶ Rose has commented that ‘the Irish posed a large and unwelcome problem for...Poor Law authorities in the mid-nineteenth

⁸² Ann Kussmaul ‘The Ambiguous Mobility of Farm Servants’, *Economic History Review*, 34 (1981), p.222

⁸³ KQSA/2/536/109, LA

⁸⁴ Olney, *Rural Society and County Government*, p.78

⁸⁵ Sara Barber, ‘Irish Migrant Agricultural Labourers in Nineteenth Century Lincolnshire’, *Saothar*, 8 (1983), pp.10-23

⁸⁶ Ibid

century.⁸⁷ Between 1845 and 1849, 29,079 Irish were removed from England and Wales, with the Kesteven magistracy enforcing removals of individuals to Ireland by ships via Boston and Hull from 1834.⁸⁸ Certainly, there was no stomach to relieve the unemployed migrant in the same way as the English labourer, invoking conceptions of belonging which the general anti-Irish sentiment amongst the local agricultural workforce seemingly going far beyond purely economic concerns of undercutting wages. Such has been documented by Snell who has identified deep-rooted, localised ‘cultures of xenophobia’ within rural England, with the Irish bearing the brunt of this.⁸⁹ This was seen at Digby: ‘[there was] an Irishman called McCann. Although he lived in the village most of his life, he never ‘belonged’ and had to depend for his living on poultry dealing outside of Digby.’⁹⁰ There were often protests against the hiring of Irish harvestmen, leading to a riot in Sleaford in the summer of 1842 and in September 1838, Michael Nester, an Irishman, was murdered at Branston.⁹¹

Another understudied cohort within rural labour systems is women and children, with Shaw-Taylor concluding that this ‘understates the size of the proletarian workforce in agriculture.’⁹² The literature has often conceived of female and child agricultural employment via the gang system, which within Lincolnshire was largely used dependent on farming region.⁹³ Beastall has seen increases in the use of female and child gang labour due to an unequal distribution of the population between settlement typologies within areas which were at the forefront of mixed agrarian agriculture.⁹⁴ In the Lincoln Heath, private gangs dominated, with farmers hiring women and children directly and predominantly from open parishes. The seasonal nature of male ordinary agricultural labour which typified open settlements meant that all members of the family often needed to contribute to the household economy. Gang work developed in the Lincoln Heath within the first decades of the nineteenth century, with contemporaries assigning its genesis to the 1820s in the wake of agricultural

⁸⁷ Michael Rose, ‘Settlement, Removal and the New Poor Law’, in Derek Fraser (ed), *The New Poor Law in the Nineteenth Century* (London: Palgrave, 1976), p.38

⁸⁸ Ibid, Table VI, p.44; *The Stamford Mercury*, January 10th 1834

⁸⁹ Keith Snell, ‘Cultures of Local Xenophobia’, *Social History*, 28 (2003), p.15

⁹⁰ Gresswell, *Bright Boots*, p.87

⁹¹ *The Stamford Mercury*, 12th August 1842; PL10/102/1, p.219, LA

⁹² Shaw-Taylor, ‘Family Farms and Capitalist Farms’, p.160

⁹³ *Royal Commission on Employment of Children in Trades not Regulated by Law*, pp. vi-viii

⁹⁴ Beastall, *The Agricultural Revolution in Lincolnshire*, pp.116-117

improvement. Thomas Killsey, living in the parish of study of Waddington and interviewed in 1867, described how ‘when I was a boy there was nothing of the kind. I have lived in the village 73 years.’⁹⁵ The large acreage mixed agrarian tenancies which typified the Lincoln Heath needed extra labour at peak seasons. This relationship was noted at the time; ‘the private gang system is principally confined to farms of 300 acres and upwards.’⁹⁶ Work conducted by women and children differed widely within localities. Generally, they were involved in such tasks as weeding; clearing fields of stones; turnip cleaning; manure spreading; picking crops such as potatoes; and for very young children, scaring away birds. In addition to seasonal agricultural work, females were also engaged in household industries with the 1851 census highlighting in the parish selection dress and smock-frock making; cleaning and charwomen roles; bonnet-making; and domestic service. Such work has been explored by Humphries and Overton who have categorised it as ‘by-employment,’ utilised as one avenue of support within the household economy.⁹⁷ The same authors have seen weaving, spinning and textile work as key aspects of female employment within early modern England, a trend corresponding to work conducted within the parish selection.

Lincolnshire was a high-wage county compared to southern England.⁹⁸ Within the county, the labourers of the upland regions were ‘considered to be the most prosperous of all.’⁹⁹ In the 1830s, an upland labourer could earn 17s a week compared to 15s in the rest of Kesteven and Lindsey.¹⁰⁰ Females could get 1s 6d per day with rates for children being between 4d and 1s.¹⁰¹ However, wages could fluctuate widely over short periods of time. In 1833, weekly male wages stood at 15s on average within the county; falling to 12s in 1837; and being just 10s in 1850.¹⁰² Even those in specialised roles which headed labour hierarchies saw temporal decreases in wage levels; head waggoners could expect annual wages of around £16 in 1800, compared to just £12 in 1850.¹⁰³ Olney has

⁹⁵ Ibid,

⁹⁶ *Royal Commission on Employment of Children in Trades not Regulated by Law*, p.92

⁹⁷ Jane Humphries, ‘Spinning and the Industrial Revolution’, *Economic History Review*. 72 (2019), pp.126-155; Mark Overton, Jane Whittle, Darren Dean and Andrew Hann, *Production and Consumption in English Households, 1600-1750* (London: Routledge, 2012), pp.65-87

⁹⁸ Thirsk, *English Peasant Farming*, pp.270-271; Olney, *Rural Society and County Government in Nineteenth Century Lincolnshire*, p.80

⁹⁹ Thirsk, *English Peasant Farming*, pp.270-271

¹⁰⁰ Hill, *Victorian Lincoln*, p.90

¹⁰¹ Ibid

¹⁰² Keith Snell, *Annals of the Labouring Poor: Social Change and Agrarian England 1660-1900* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), Table 3.1, p.130

¹⁰³ Olney, *Rural Society and County Government*, p.79

suggested that mid-nineteenth century wage levels were less than those seen at the turn of the century, seeing significant drops in the 1820s and 1830s.¹⁰⁴ Richardson has linked such fluctuations to market trends in corn pricing, concluding that decreases in the price of wheat had ‘a devastating effect on the power of wages.’¹⁰⁵ Such can be seen in the area of study, with the local economy described in 1816 in the wake of corn price collapses in 1812:

‘Entirely owing to the depression in the price of grain ...wages have been much lower the last year...they have not been so much employed by reason of the farmers not making so much of their produce...the farmers are unable to employ the same number of laborers, and to make the same little improvements as before and...are generally endeavouring to reduce the number of servants in their families.’¹⁰⁶

The price of corn underpinned access to work; wage levels; and food pricing, particularly in regards the staple food of bread. From a high of 87.5s per quarter in the 1810s, national corn prices incrementally decreased in every decade until 1850, seeing a 39% reduction.¹⁰⁷ Pricing within Lincolnshire was at its highest in the late 1790s and early 1810s, with wheat fetching 84s per strike in 1811.¹⁰⁸ County corn prices drastically decreased after 1812, seeing slight rises in the late 1810s and early 1830s but remaining far below levels seen in the early nineteenth century. In 1831, wheat stood at 58s per strike in Lincolnshire, 31% lower than pricing in 1811 despite 1831 being the highest price seen for wheat since 1819 (64s per strike).¹⁰⁹ At the micro-level corn pricing was extremely divergent, largely due to poor harvests caused by inclement weather. Drastic falls in wheat prices between 1795 and 1798 due to poor weather reduced Lincolnshire’s wheat crop by a third, resulting in a 37% increase in the price of bread.¹¹⁰ Indeed, between 1794 and 1800, Hill has claimed that four harvest seasons ‘were so wet that most...of the crops [were] lost or injured.’¹¹¹ 1822 was described in

¹⁰⁴ Ibid

¹⁰⁵ Thomas Richardson, ‘The Agricultural Labourers’ Standard of Living in Lincolnshire, 1790-1840: Social Protest and Public Order’, *The Agricultural History Review*, 41 (1993), p.1

¹⁰⁶ *The Stamford Mercury*, 4th October 1816

¹⁰⁷ Boyd Hilton, *A Mad, Bad & Dangerous People? England 1783-1846* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), Table 1.3, p.7

¹⁰⁸ Francis Hill, *Georgian Lincoln* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1966), p.307

¹⁰⁹ Ibid

¹¹⁰ Richardson, ‘The Agricultural Labourers’ Standard of Living in Lincolnshire’, p.3

¹¹¹ Hill, *Georgian Lincoln*, p.172

Lincolnshire as ‘the most disastrous year in living memory’¹¹² with wheat prices slumping to levels not seen since the 1780s. Wheat was fetching 47s per strike in 1823 compared to 64s per strike in 1819.¹¹³ Between 1826 and 1830, weather ‘badly damaged the corn harvest and seriously reduced the demand for labour.’¹¹⁴ 1829 saw a stagnation of the market in the heathlands, creating wide-spread unemployment and wage reductions for those able to find work.¹¹⁵

At times of general agricultural depression availability of confined positions could be curtailed and lower wages offered. Such is seen in the early 1830s and mid to late 1840s. It was reported in May 1831 that ‘Waddington statutes were numerous attended...but very little hiring took place’¹¹⁶ Similarly, the May 1830 Sleaford statutes ‘were attended by a vast crowd of servants...There were very few farmers present, and they offered extremely low wages.’¹¹⁷ Therefore, availability and terms of employment were often insufficient to provide work for all seeking it. Labourers continued to negotiate for higher wage rates throughout the 1840s, a fact often presented in the press as the reason for lack of hiring. In May 1845 it was reported ‘[the] Sleaford statutes...were numerous attended...but in consequence of exorbitant wages asked but little hiring took place.’¹¹⁸ With the mid to late 1840s being a time of agrarian depression, labourers’ general steadfastness on wage levels may suggest an awareness of their economic capital in relation to the mixed-agrarian economy on which the socio-economic status of local elites rested. Boyer has argued that due to the mobility of the agricultural labour force, ‘the utility of constraint faced by farmers’ in their negotiations with labourers, meaning despite attempts, wages could not be indiscriminately cut.¹¹⁹ As shown, wage levels on the Lincoln Heath were generally high compared to other areas of the county and country. Labourers knew this and were prepared to reject wage rates offered by farmers; as Holland states, labourers ‘would observe, interrogate and bargain until a verbal agreement [on wages] was reached.’¹²⁰ This agency on the part of

¹¹² Richardson, ‘The Agricultural Labourers’ Standard of Living in Lincolnshire’, p.7

¹¹³ Hill, *Georgian Lincoln*, p.307

¹¹⁴ Richardson, ‘The Agricultural Labourers’ Standard of Living in Lincolnshire’, p.8

¹¹⁵ Ibid

¹¹⁶ *The Stamford Mercury*, 20th May 1831

¹¹⁷ *The Stamford Mercury*, 21st May 1830

¹¹⁸ *The Lincolnshire Chronicle*, 16th May 1845

¹¹⁹ George Boyer, *An Economic History of the English Poor Laws, 1750-1850* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), p.209

¹²⁰ Holland, ‘Farm Service and Hiring Practices in Mid-Nineteenth Century England’, p.191

the labouring classes fed into the wider forum of social interactions, influencing attitudes to acceptable levels of relief and aid.

The biggest impact to the Lincoln Heath's economy in the 1840s was the repeal of the Corn Laws in 1846. The mixed-agrarian agriculturalist interest was increasingly dominant in the cultural-political landscape of the Lincoln Heath across the first half of the nineteenth century. Their clarion call was Toryism and economic protectionism. In 1828, landowners and tenants in two parishes of study (Cranwell and Ruskington) petitioned Parliament against any duty scales in regards the import of grain.¹²¹ With the crescendo of debate around the Corn Laws, Lincolnshire was generally against repeal with petitions sent to government calling for continued protection, such as in 1839 where 'a petition...praying that no alteration...be made in the Corn Laws, has...been forwarded...from Sleaford.'¹²² The actual fear amongst agriculturalists was not an anxiety of free trade per se, but rather a lowering in rent charges brought on by unprotected corn pricing.¹²³ Landowners were reluctant to lower rents on which their income rested, meaning tenants often had to cut wages and limit employment. The repeal of the Corn Laws coincided with a general economic depression and declining corn prices within Lincolnshire.¹²⁴ Despite these wider factors, rising able-bodied pauperism due to lack of employment in the mid to late 1840s was blamed by contemporaries within Lincolnshire squarely on the repeal of the Corn Laws, using this as a rhetorical ploy to call for the reinstatement of protectionism as late as 1850.¹²⁵ As such, agriculturalist concerns were not exclusively economic but also acted as a prism through which the wider cultural-political landscape of the Lincoln Heath was increasingly conceived and defined.

Local reactions to repeal of the Corn Laws encompassed appeals to the proper administration of the poor law. The guardians of the Sleaford union sent a petition to Parliament in 1840 stating 'the strong conviction that...the Poor-Law Amendment Act could not be fully carried out if the present corn-laws were repealed.'¹²⁶ In the minds of contemporary authority figures, or at least in stances adopted to defend the status quo, a

¹²¹ *House of Lords Session Papers*, 2nd May 1828 (London: House of Lords, 1828)

¹²² *John Bull*, XIX, no 949 (1839), p.75

¹²³ Hill, *Victorian Lincoln*, p.82

¹²⁴ *Ibid*

¹²⁵ *The London Evening Standard*, 26th January 1850

¹²⁶ *The Standard*, March 25th 1840

clear link was made between agriculture; social cohesion; and the correct operation of relief, supporting Snell's suggestion that the poor law should be seen as an organising element in English agrarian society.¹²⁷ Charles Chaplin, a dominant local landowner, magistrate and Sleaford union chairman in 1850, made a speech against free trade in 1850 which emphasises this link and is worth unpacking in detail:

‘There was great distress now...in all the villages of the neighbourhood...he [Chaplin] was constantly applied to by workmen anxious to know where their settlement was, as they could get no work; and by the new law of irremovability these men could not be removed, while the parish was not bound to relieve them. They were...obliged to break up their homes and go to the union...he believed the cause [of poverty] was...the fact that farmers were obliged to reduce their labour... If the present system went on, the inferior lands which...had been brought into cultivation of late, would be thrown out and the labourers forced to emigrate...by the old law of Elizabeth, stock in trade, as well as land, was liable to the poor-rates; but the cunning mill-owners had contrived to get the burden thrown off their shoulders.’¹²⁸

Firstly, there is a clear antagonism here against aspects of the New Poor Law, particularly regarding the introduction of irremovable pauper status in 1846 and changes in rating, which sits in contrast to the sentimentalised ‘old law of Elizabeth’, meaning the Old Poor Law. The New Poor Law is presented as an entity consciously constructed against the interests of the agriculturalist by ‘the cunning mill-owners.’ Despite the consensus within the literature that the Poor Law Amendment Act was generally constructed in response to rising rural poverty, contemporaries within Lincolnshire presented it as an urban system sitting dichotomously to the smooth running of the rural socio-economic fabric of the county. Here, one senses such a rhetoric is more about the perceived curtailment of local authority rather than any outright hostility to the New Poor Law per se, with reform being grouped with repeal of the Corn Laws as examples of interference from central government. However, as Chaplin was a major figure in the administration of relief within the Lincoln Heath, the fact that he could adopt such a

¹²⁷ Keith Snell, ‘Settlement, Poor Law and the Rural Historian: New Approaches and Opportunities’, *Rural History*, 3 (1992), p.145

¹²⁸ *The Morning Chronicle*, January 25th 1850

rhetoric fourteen years after unionisation supports the assertion that conceptions of and attitudes to relief policy and practice were widely filtered through localised concerns.

3.4 Culture

Agricultural practice, land-use and the social structures such engendered were integral to the political and societal culture of the Lincoln Heath across the period of study. The Kesteven gentry were increasingly defined throughout the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries by landownership. Agricultural improvement led to a sustained increase in the amount of rent landowners could charge, as seen in Cranwell when ‘the said Tenant had inclosed part of the Warren his rent was raised ten pounds a year.’¹²⁹ An increasing focus on landowning and agrarian production helped develop the largely Tory protectionist agriculturalist bloc described, paralleling a wider national process identified by Hilton.¹³⁰ There was a clear drive to consolidate larger estates during the later eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Such can be seen in the example of the Reeve family of the parish of study of Leadenham, dominant proprietors and resident at Leadenham Hall from 1796. The family began consolidating their landholdings in the parish from the 1790s, with the process continuing throughout the 1800s.¹³¹ Ambler has suggested that the Reeve’s investment in land illustrated a new policy emphasis for Lincolnshire’s gentry, moving away from investments in stocks and shares towards estates.¹³² This view is supported by Holderness, who links acquisition of landed estates explicitly to the re-articulation of the socio-economic fabric within Lincolnshire.¹³³ This had important implications on experiences of need, no least in the administrative demography of the poor law with magistrates and prestige positions on union boards such as chairmen and vice-chairmen under the New Poor Law increasingly being landed magnates. By 1842, 91% of Kesteven justices of peace were gentry or land-owning clergy.¹³⁴ Varley has also seen an increased prominence of landowners in the Kesteven

¹²⁹ DIOC/BP/LANDTAX/1/10/4, LA

¹³⁰ Hilton, *A Mad, Bad & Dangerous People?*, pp.269-274

¹³¹ Rodney Ambler, ‘Social Change and Religious Experience: Aspects of Rural Society in South Lincolnshire with Specific Reference to Primitive Methodism, 1815-1875’ (Unpublished Doctoral Thesis, University of Hull, 1984), pp.66-67

¹³² *Ibid*, p.67

¹³³ Brian Holderness, ‘The English Land Market in the Eighteenth Century: The Case of Lincolnshire’, *The Economic History Review*, 27 (1974), p.557

¹³⁴ Olney, *Lincolnshire Politics 1832-1885*, p.102

magistracy during the first half of the nineteenth century, with those owning over a thousand acres of land increasing from 9% in 1807 to 54% by 1842.¹³⁵

Increased rent and land values made the Lincoln Heath an increasingly attractive place for gentry to live. Numbers of resident landowners rose during the first decades of the nineteenth century, aided in part by the creation of new roads; as Hill has stated, local gentry 'no longer kept houses in Lincoln [as] they could...make the journey home along the turnpikes.'¹³⁶ This affected both parish typologies and the social characteristics of villages, with the pattern of open and closed parishes shown being widely consolidated in this period. The Chaplin family completely rebuilt their estate village of Blankney in the 1830s and 1840s, resulting in a closed parish with mock-Tudor stone cottages for workers.¹³⁷ The close estate typology of the parish of study of Ashby de la Launde was largely defined in the latter 1830s. Between 1814 and 1835, Ashby Hall had been rented out and used as a girls' school, with the proprietors of the parish (the King family) living at Lincoln.¹³⁸ However, from the mid-1830s, the Kings became resident again, resulting in the consolidation of a stricter social hierarchy built around landowner, tenant farmer and confined labourers, emphasised by a description of village attendance at church:

'The inhabitants [of Ashby de la Launde] were mostly...attached to the Hall...The squire of Ashby was...N.H. Reeve King...started off from the Hall in front of a procession in which the housekeeper and butler went first, followed by the servants in their proper order...At the junction with the road they were joined...by the outdoor servants.'¹³⁹

Social relations were also morphed by increased efforts from the 1830s to redefine the parish as an Anglican 'worshipping community',¹⁴⁰ in part in reaction to the rise of non-conformity. Under the bishopric of John Kaye from 1827 to 1853 and the redrawing of the Lincoln Diocese boundaries in 1837, minimising its area to Lincolnshire and

¹³⁵ Joan Varley, *The Parts of Kesteven: Studies in Law and Local Government* (Bourne and London: Kesteven County Council, 1974), p.96

¹³⁶ Hill, *Georgian Lincoln*, p.259

¹³⁷ Ambler, 'Social Change and Religious Experience', p.76

¹³⁸ Thomas Allen, *The History of the County of Lincoln* (London and Lincoln: John Saunders, 1834), p.254

¹³⁹ Greswell, *Bright Boots*, p.50

¹⁴⁰ Obelkevich, *Religion and Rural Society*, p.103

Nottinghamshire, Anglican attention was concentrated internally on revitalising the occupational function of parish clergy and tackling non-residency. In 1832, around 63% of the county's parishes were served by a non-resident cleric, a number falling to around 38% by 1853.¹⁴¹ The rise of resident Anglican clergy is important as such individuals played central roles in the administration and distribution of charity aid, as well as sitting as ex-officio members of select vestries and being magistrates. Moreover, clerics were also increasingly acting as local landowners. Indeed, Ambler has viewed the growth in clerical magistrates within the county as being due to this; land owning clergy comprised 15% of the combined Lincolnshire magistracy in 1761, rising to 47% by 1831.¹⁴² Evidence also suggests an increased scrutiny into the character and behaviour of parish populations. In July 1833, the vicar of Cranwell visited 'every cottage for the purpose of making myself acquainted with the moral and religious stage of the inhabitants which I find to be extremely bad.'¹⁴³ The vicar complained that on a Sunday 'the children rear evil about the streets and the village is like a little Bedlam'¹⁴⁴ influencing the formation of a Sunday school in Cranwell and raising pressure to attend Anglican services. Within Lincolnshire overall, Kesteven saw a strong presence of Anglicanism with 61% less non-Anglican places of worship listed within the county part in the 1851 Census of Religious Worship than compared to Lindsey, another county division.¹⁴⁵ Despite this, non-conformity was evident across the parish selection. Only Ashby de la Launde, Digby and Leasingham did not record a dissenting place of worship in the 1851 Census of Religious Worship, with Methodist chapels of differing denominations listed in 70% of the parish selection and Waddington also having a Baptist Chapel.¹⁴⁶ These were generally clustered within open parishes but not exclusively so, with the closed parish of Cranwell having a Primitive Methodist meeting in a labourer's cottage from at least 1847.¹⁴⁷ As such, there was clearly a social and cultural agency on the part of the labouring population in the face of local elites suggested circumstantially via places of religious worship. Although not explicitly

¹⁴¹ Rodney Ambler, *Churches, Chapels and Parish Communities of Lincolnshire 1660-1900* (Lincoln: The Society for Lincolnshire History and Archaeology, 2000), p.179

¹⁴² *Ibid*, p.54

¹⁴³ CORB5/4/17/1/4, LA

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid*

¹⁴⁵ Rodney Ambler (ed), *Lincolnshire Returns of the Census of Religious Worship of 1851* (Lincoln: the Lincoln Record Society, 1979), Table 2, p.LXIX

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid*, pp.58-71

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid*, p.63

linked to a study of need and relief, such is important to acknowledge because it may have influenced the negotiated process of relief and access to specific types of support provision, such as charity aid, issues unpacked in detail in chapters six and seven.

Regarding politics, Olney has stressed a highly localised political life within nineteenth century Lincolnshire, disunited due to the county's large size and near absence of large urban centres.¹⁴⁸ Generally, the explicit political culture of the Lincoln Heath was dominated by the concerns and preoccupations of its farming class.¹⁴⁹ Such a culture resulted in authority structures fundamentally grounded in conceptualisations of hierarchies of landownership and land use.¹⁵⁰ Agriculturalist concerns increasingly permeated the cognition, rationale and practice of secular governance within the Lincoln Heath from the early nineteenth century, an atmosphere within which poor law and wider relief was embedded. Defining political culture by dichotomous party terms lacks nuance within the temporal and spatial packaging of study. Whigs did have a limited presence within the Lincoln Heath; however, their political concerns closely mirrored those of their Tory peers, being preoccupied with maintaining agrarian productivity.¹⁵¹ This can be seen in Henry Handley, a Whig MP elected for South Lincolnshire in 1832, who styled himself as 'the farmer's friend' and maintained that he 'supported the general policies of the Liberal Government, but at the same time [was]...a ...guardian of the interests of agriculture.'¹⁵² Such stances meant local Whigs often voted against the Grey and Melbourne ministries alongside their Tory contemporaries. Handley voted with the Tories in 1833 to reduce the malt tax to support local barley production and continually voted against full repeal of the Corn Laws.¹⁵³ The 1832 Reform Act did little to fundamentally change the political culture of the Lincoln Heath, with a wide continuity in the demographics of secular governance noted. Indeed, Hill concluded that reform led 'latter voters [to] reinforce the Tory interest'¹⁵⁴ due to the permeating influence such largely agriculturalist authority figures had. The Earl of Winchelsea, first

¹⁴⁸ Olney, *Lincolnshire Politics 1832-1885*

¹⁴⁹ Obelkevich, *Religion and Rural Society*, p.55

¹⁵⁰ Eastwood, *Governing Rural England*, p.9 and p.12

¹⁵¹ Hill, *Victorian Lincoln*, p.29

¹⁵² Robert Handley, *The Handley Family of Newark and Sleaford UK and Australasia* (Merimbula: R.C Handley, 1992), p.V and p.85

¹⁵³ Member Biographies, *The History of Parliament: The House of Commons 1820-1832* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press). Available at: <https://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1820-1832/member/handley-henry-1797-1846> [Accessed 17th May 2021]

¹⁵⁴ Hill, *Victorian Lincoln*, p.15

chairman of the Sleaford poor law union from 1836, founded the Conservative South Lincolnshire division in 1835.¹⁵⁵ Their meetings read as a check list of dominant landowners within the Lincoln Heath, many whom played crucial roles in the administration of the poor law.

However, the advent of Chartism from the late 1830s was represented within Lincolnshire with local Chartist organisations listed at Sleaford, Lincoln, Boston and Grantham in 1842.¹⁵⁶ Indeed, William Dobson, the secretary of the Sleaford branch of the Chartist National Land Company, was accidentally killed by a police officer in a demonstration between Whig and Tory supporters during the election of 1847.¹⁵⁷ Despite this presence, Chartist and radical influence on overall political authority within the Lincoln Heath was seemingly marginal. The political outlook of local elites was broadly Liberal Tory, identified by Mandler as pursuing ‘commercial agriculture with...vigour, and to face the social consequences...by reenforcing the tools of authority.’¹⁵⁸ This can be seen in landed reactions in the wake of the Swing Riots and spates of rural protest in the Lincoln Heath, largely confined to incendiarism, in the 1830s and 1840s, generally seen as reactions to low wage levels and high food prices.¹⁵⁹ Richardson has differentiated magisterial reactions to protest before and after 1815.¹⁶⁰ In this earlier period, responses were generally conciliatory, with all three county benches setting food prices and subsidising provisions in the poor harvests and subsequent food shortages of 1794 and 1795.¹⁶¹ However, the importance of mixed agrarian agriculture resulted in a shift in attitudes towards protest with magisterial policies for maintaining an available and deferential agricultural labour force increasingly evident. In the early 1830s, local magistrates withdrew relief from able-bodied labourers who would not accept low wages rates set by farmers.¹⁶² In 1831,

¹⁵⁵ Les Gostick, *Haverholme Estate: It's Farmers and Farming, 1139AD to 2005AD* (Self-published), p.12

¹⁵⁶ *The Northern Star*, January 29th 1842

¹⁵⁷ *The Northern Star*, August 14th 1847

¹⁵⁸ Peter Mandler, ‘Tories and Paupers: Christian Political Economy and the Making of the New Poor Law’, *The Historical Journal*, 33 (1990), p.83

¹⁵⁹ Rodney Ambler, ‘Ranters and Rick Burners: Primitive Methodism and Rural Discontent in South Lincolnshire’, in Dinah Tyszka, Keith Miller and Geoffrey Bryant (eds), *Land, People and Landscapes: Essays on the History of the Lincolnshire Region* (Lincoln: Lincolnshire County Council, 1991), pp.135-143; *The Stamford Mercury*, January 7th 1831; Beastall, *The Agricultural Revolution in Lincolnshire*, pp.125-126

¹⁶⁰ Richardson, ‘The Agricultural Labourers’ Standard of Living in Lincolnshire’

¹⁶¹ *Ibid*, p.6

¹⁶² *Ibid*, p.14

Mercy Lunn, a labourer's wife, was imprisoned at the Sleaford sessions for eighteen months for writing a letter to a local farmer stating 'if you don't let the poor have the coals all to them this year, you will have a bullet.'¹⁶³ This was deemed a sparing punishment, and her husband expected to thank 'the court, in a respectful manner, for the lenient sentence which had been passed.'¹⁶⁴

It was often leading tenant farmers who were targeted in acts of incendiarism within the parish selection, with both Clark Hales and Edward Blackburn experiencing burning of their crops between 1843 and 1851 in Navenby and Leasingham respectively.¹⁶⁵ As these individuals also staffed the administrative organs of the poor law throughout the period, with Clark Hales being union guardian for Navenby in 1836 and Edward Blackburn being overseer of the poor in Leasingham in 1843, such actions must have fed into attitudes towards the labouring population and by extension relief seekers. Indeed, Clark Hales was rumoured to have 'presided at a meeting of farmers for the purpose of reducing the wages of the labourers of the village'¹⁶⁶ as revenge for acts of incendiarism against him in 1843. This, alongside the existence of the Lincoln Heath Yeomanry Calvary between 1831 and 1838 which was formed to protect property in case of incendiarism, suggests a polarisation in social relations between the labouring population and proprietors in the 1830s and 1840s.¹⁶⁷ Phillips has noted that 'gentry opinion on paternalism...was changing in the 1830s, in the wake of 'Captain Swing' and...ideas of political economy.'¹⁶⁸ Richardson's identification as of the end of the Napoleonic Wars as a period of change in the expression of protest, moving towards individualistic and clandestine actions as opposed to mass riots, can be conceived within this. Employment opportunities were disproportionately controlled by tenant farmers renting land from dominant gentry. Therefore, Clarke has stated that labourers within the Sleaford area 'would not jeopardise [employment]...by indulging in anti-social behaviour'¹⁶⁹ with protest morphing into clandestine acts, particularly animal maiming

¹⁶³ *The Morning Post*, January 13th 1831

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid*

¹⁶⁵ *The Northern Star*, December 20th 1843 and March 15th 1851

¹⁶⁶ *The Northern Star*, December 20th 1843

¹⁶⁷ Andrew Gilks, 'Britain's Unknown Cavalry', *Journal for the Society for Army Historical Research*, 85 (2007), pp.237-246; *The Lincolnshire Chronicle*, 6th April 1838; *The Stamford Mercury*, 25th February 1831

¹⁶⁸ David Phillips, 'A 'Weak' State? The English State, Magistracy and the Reform of Policing in the 1830s', *The English Historical Review*, 119:483 (2004), p.889

¹⁶⁹ Margaret Clarke, 'Crime in the Sleaford Division of Kesteven, 1830-1838', *Lincolnshire History and Archaeology*, 18 (1983), p.17

and incendiarism of agricultural produce. As such, the cultural landscape that the poor law and wider relief provision operated in were increasingly stratified, effecting the negotiated policy process of relief and rhetorical expectations in interactions between welfare seekers and administrators. Deference to local authority stakeholders has been seen within the literature as a way for relief seekers to be deemed deserving of poor law relief, with social conduct on the part of applicants important in creating pauper personas.¹⁷⁰ These issues will be unpacked in more detail in chapter six of this thesis. It is enough here to suggest that hierarchical social relations built around interactions between landowners, farmers and the labouring population often dictated stances to be adopted by relief seekers in their relations with the poor law authorities.

3.5 Conclusion

This chapter, through the observational landscapes of habitat, niche and culture, has tried to conceive of the Lincoln Heath as a human ecological environment where ‘relationships, interactions and interdependencies between society, person and environment’¹⁷¹ can be discerned. The most fundamental pivot for this over the first half of the nineteenth century was the drive towards mixed-agrarian agriculture, consolidated largely in the decades post-1815. Although each intra-regional area, largely defined by underlying geology, retained distinctive elements which went far in defining expression and experience within the wider human ecological environment, the permeation of agriculturalist concerns in all three observable landscapes (habitat; niche; culture) necessitated a network of socio-economic reciprocity across the Lincoln Heath. Such had important implications for experiences of need and relief within the parish selection, with the rest of the thesis mapping key features of this into the human ecological environment defined within this chapter. The thesis will now turn to examining the administration of relief within the period, analysing both the demography of relief administrators and the changing structure and procedures of the geo-administrative area of relief.

¹⁷⁰ Steve Hindle, ‘Civility, Honesty and Identification of the Deserving Poor in Seventeenth Century England’, in Henry French and Jonathan Barry (eds), *Identity and Agency in England, 1500-1800* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), pp.38-55

¹⁷¹ Peter Weichhart, ‘How Does the Person Fit into the Human Ecological Triangle? From Dualism to Duality: The Transactional Worldview’, in Dieter Steiner and Markus Nauser (eds), *Human Ecology: Fragments of Anti-Fragmentary Views of the World* (London: Routledge, 1993), p.77

Chapter Four: Administrating Relief

4.1 Overview

It is necessary to stress that the Poor Law Amendment Act was an amending rather than an annulling move, redefining relations amongst a rearticulated administrative apparatus within a new supervisory system. Elements of administration noted under the Old Poor Law such as parish officers and magistrates continued to be found under the New, albeit now working alongside and within a geographically expanded unionised system.

Despite this clear element of continuity, Snell has concluded that ‘the new poor law represents fundamental administrative...discontinuity in many respects’¹ with an over-emphasis on the continuation of infrastructural components missing the crucial rearticulation such as underwent. Indeed, Apfel and Dunkley have warned that an over-emphasis on continuity between poor laws ‘threatens to explain away the significance of the New Poor Law altogether.’² In approaching these issues, this chapter will be structured around two broad sections which longitudinally examine factors across both poor laws: administrative demography and the geo-administrative area. From the outset, it must be noted that both sections were inextricably linked within the actualities of relief administration and as such, there is a necessary amount of repetition with specific aspects approached via differing lenses across the two parts of this chapter. However, for analytical clarity it has been decided to approach the issue of relief administration from the viewpoints of demography and geo-administrative area as these were the loci of change and continuity in the context of relief administration.

Firstly, the chapter will examine the demography of relief administration across the period. The importance of leading parish ratepayers in the staffing of administrative positions under both poor laws will be emphasised, with many individuals who had been overseers before unionisation becoming guardians after. However, ratepaying hierarchies were not static, seeing redefinitions in many parishes of study during the 1820s and 1830s as new farmers moved into the area to farm mixed-agrarian tenancies on improved heathland soils, thus becoming leading ratepayers due to their dominance in the area’s niche and in turn staffing the offices of the poor law. This was juxtaposed

¹ Keith Snell, *Parish and Belonging: Community, Identity and Welfare in England and Wales, 1700-1950* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), p.337

² William Apfel and Peter Dunkley, ‘English Rural Society and the New Poor Law: Bedfordshire, 1834-47’, *Social History*, 10 (1985), p.38

with a possible familial dimension to the staffing of poor law positions, with many individual administrators potentially embedded in familial lineages of authority grounded in land use and landownership, albeit this claim approached cautiously as it is dependent on nominal linkage rather than more expansive family reconstitution. The importance of local elites will also be emphasised in the actual creation of poor law unions within localities, with leading personalities often dictating the pace and extent of unionisation through negotiated interactions with Assistant Commissioners. After this, the expansion of poor law staffing under the New Poor Law will be examined. Here, boards of guardians, generally formed from leading parish ratepayers and dominant gentry, had wide scope in dictating who held such positions, with appointments often made within the context of localised socio-economic relationships. Next, this section will explore the role relief recipients themselves played in managing the poor law at the day-to-day level, often pragmatically necessary but obscured by the nature of extant source material. Finally, a study of the magistracy's role in the administration of relief will be examined, concluding that the reality of such often lay at the junction between legislatively defined accountability to some cohorts of need and individual magistrates' positions as dominant socio-economic stakeholders within localities. Moreover, the landed gentry who sat as magistrates could hold simultaneous roles across differing administrative organs of the poor law, generally also sitting as chairmen, vice-chairmen or ex-officio guardians on union boards. This often softened the divisions between the disparate parts of the New Poor Law system at local level, providing a cohesive element also paralleled by a broad continuity in the demography of administrators at parish level.

Next, the geo-administrative area of the poor law will be examined, exploring the mechanics of administration in both the parish and poor law union. Under the Old Poor Law, this thesis will highlight the importance of understudied sub-stratums of administration such as workhouse masters in delivering relief, as well as emphasise the centrality of the 1820s as a decade which saw change in the management of the poor law through the impact of the Sturges Bourne's Acts and via one parish of study joining the Lincoln Incorporation. In many parishes, there was an increased overseer involvement in the maintenance of the poor law from this decade, alongside a professionalisation and stability in poor law staffing at parish level. Under the New Poor Law, the continuing role of overseers and vestries will be analysed, stressing a

parish framing to settlement and financial legislation, alongside an ability to provide outdoor relief at times of necessity, which meant the parish was an integral part of the New Poor Law system despite the expansion of the geo-administrative area into the poor law union and the theoretical standardisation of staffing duties. Building on from this, the chapter will conclude that the day-to-day administration of the New Poor Law was generally found at sub-union levels within parishes and union districts, with guardians corporately largely playing a supervisory and punitive role. However, this did not necessarily mean that the mechanics of the poor law were synonymous either side of the Poor Law Amendment Act with the ballooning of poor law staff after unionisation having impacts on the administration of and access to relief, particularly in the case of relieving and medical officers. Despite continuity in the demography of relief administrators at the parish level, within a macro-union framing relationships between the disparate organs of the New Poor Law system could often be set against a backdrop of confusion or argument, particularly regarding accountability towards some relief seekers and recipients. Finally, this chapter will end with a conclusion which draws together the two sections of analysis to form judgments on the longitudinal expression of relief administration across the period.

4.2 Administrative Demography

Ratepaying individuals generally controlled the parish administration of the poor law; this was a constant throughout the period despite unionisation. However, there was a diversity within ratepaying cohorts generally overlooked within the literature.

Ratepayers differed in socio-economic background; the amount of rate paid; and the ability to pay rate levies at any given time. This is highlighted by the exemption of specific occupiers from paying rates or limiting the types of rates they had to pay. Non-landowning ratepayers were absolved from paying church rates in 1840 at Ruskington and in 1850, Navenby's vestry voted to rate the owners of tenements instead of occupiers.³ Branston's vestry minutes highlight the diversity of ratepayers within parishes.⁴ It was agreed in 1851 that 'the owners of all cottages under six pounds rent, be rated instead of the occupiers.' This move built on previous exemptions. In 1838, the parish applied exemptions for all those living in cottages rated at or below £3 10

³ Ruskington Parish 10/1, LA; Navenby Parish 10/1, LA

⁴ Branston Parish 10/2 and 3, LA

shillings ‘where the occupiers have not a trade [or]... are [not] in the possession of landed property or houses of their own.’ Indeed, the vestry had to reprimand overseers in 1840 for collecting rates from exempted cottages. This is a novel observation and suggests that those living in exempt properties were aware of vestry rulings, complaining when these were breached. Moreover, the divide between relief recipient and ratepayer was not always clear-cut at the individual level, generally due to circumstantial factors which necessitated recourse to the poor law at differing points across a lifespan, discussed further in chapter five. For example, in 1836 two relief recipients in Waddington (Thomas Smith and John Staples) can be identified as ratepayers in 1834.⁵ In addition, individuals who had previously paid rates could be exempted due to their current receipt of poor law relief, as shown in Leasingham in 1841:

‘Excuse the undermentioned persons from paying rates in consequence of their being paupers receiving parish relief. Michael Pointon. Richard Clarecotts. William King and Mary Broomby.’⁶

A minority of leading individuals often provided a disproportionate amount of the overall rate collection. At Branston, Thomas Kirton paid 8% of the annual collection in 1790, a figure comparable to the combined payment of the ten lowest ratepayers.⁷ 53.6% of collected rates at Leadenham in 1812 and 54% in 1813 were paid by just six ratepayers out of a parish total of forty-seven in 1812 and forty-eight in 1813.⁸ Here, involvement in the administration of the parish, within which the management of the poor law was conceived, often rested on the proportion of an individual’s contribution to rates.⁹ This can be evidenced when ranking ratepayers by the proportion of their overall contribution to rates, with a ranking of first being the largest proportion and thus individual contribution. Between 1790 and 1809, overseers of the poor in Branston held ratepaying rankings of between first and thirteenth, with 47% being between tenth and first.¹⁰ Overall totals of ratepaying individuals ranged between forty-seven and sixty between these two dates in Branston. Parish workhouse masters in Branston were also

⁵ Waddington Parish 13/2, LA

⁶ Leasingham Parish 10/1, LA

⁷ Branston Parish 13/5, LA. To the nearest pound.

⁸ Reeve 10/2, LA

⁹ Eastwood, *Governing Rural England*, p.34

¹⁰ Branston Parish 13/5, LA

generally taken from the ranks of ratepayers, albeit with lower positions in hierarchies. William Robinson, contracted to run the parish workhouse in 1790, had a ratepayer ranking of thirty-two compared to the average overseer ranking of twelve within the parish between 1790 and 1809.¹¹ In addition, the two parish overseers for Leadenham in 1812 had ratepayer rankings of sixth and ninth out of forty-seven total ratepayers.¹² Temporal circulation of leading ratepayers between parish offices is evident. For example, 41% of Waddington's churchwardens for the years 1789 to 1805 also served as overseer or assistant overseer of the poor between 1790 and 1829.¹³ At Leadenham, 61% of the individuals who served as parish constable between 1802 and 1836 also acted as overseer of the poor between 1801 and 1818.¹⁴

Generally, the highest paying ratepayers throughout the parish selection across the period were dominant farmers. However, drives towards mixed-agrarian agriculture changed the nature of farming within the Lincoln Heath, meaning a redefinition of ratepaying hierarchies within some parishes is particularly noticeable in the 1820s and 1830s. In 1817, the three largest ratepayers in Waddington were John Harmston, Thomas Smith and Benjamin Dixon with these individuals serving as overseer of the poor nine times between 1790 and 1806.¹⁵ After agricultural improvement of limestone heath soils, it was these areas within parishes that commanded the highest rents and thus highlighting that rate valuations differed internally within parishes dependent on land type and property, a factor wholly ignored within the literature. The three highest ratepayers in Waddington in 1834 (John Dixon; Richard Coupland; Elizabeth Toynbee) were all mixed-agrarian tenants farming on heathland soils, contributing 35% of the overall parish rate collection.¹⁶ John Dixon was listed as a farmer on Waddington Heath in 1832.¹⁷ Similarly, Richard Coupland, second largest ratepayer in 1834, was recorded as a tenant farmer on Waddington Heath in the 1832, 1841 and 1852 poll books.¹⁸ Both John Harmston and Benjamin Dixon, top-paying ratepayers in 1817, were still listed as

¹¹ Branston Parish 10/1 and 13/5, LA

¹² Reeve 10/2, LA

¹³ Waddington Parish 10/1, LA

¹⁴ Reeve 10/2 and 3, LA

¹⁵ Waddington Parish 13/1, LA

¹⁶ Waddington Parish 13/2, LA

¹⁷ *The Poll for the Election of Two Representatives to Serve in Parliament for Lindsey* (Lincoln: Brooke and Sons, 1832), p.16

¹⁸ *Ibid*; *The Poll Book for the Parts of Lindsey in the County of Lincoln* (Lincoln: James Drury, 1841), p.174; *The North Lincolnshire Poll Book, 1852* (Boston: J. Morton, 1852), p.152

ratepayers within the parish in 1834 albeit with lower positions. Interestingly, Richard Coupland does not appear as a ratepayer within Waddington until the 1820s at the earliest, suggesting a movement into the parish to farm large-acreage tenancy farms after moves towards mixed-agrarian agriculture. This coincided with the adoption of a salaried overseer within the parish with Coupland, due to his dominance as farmer and ratepayer, being at the forefront of the administration of the poor law within Waddington for over two decades, being overseer of the poor from 1825 to 1836 and then union guardian from 1836 until at least 1846. Coupland did not live within the nuclear village settlement, instead residing at Beaufoe Manor Farm on the extreme eastern edge of the parish on improved heathland soils. Thus, changes in habitat linked to the adoption of mixed-agrarian agriculture dictated where dominant ratepayers lived, perhaps impacting the nature of interactions between relief seekers and administrators.

Estate records in Cranwell also highlight flux in authority and ratepaying structures due to changing land-use in the first decades of the 1800s.¹⁹ The number of tenancies within the parish decreased by 50% over the first half of the nineteenth century, falling from eight largely pastoral farms in 1800 to four large-acreage mixed-agrarian farms in 1851. These changes were at their most acute during the 1820s and 1830s with new tenant farmers moving into the parish, temporally paralleling the peak of population expansion in the village between 1801 and 1851 noted in table 3.1. In 1851, the two biggest farmers were John Sardeson and Haldenby Sharp. However, neither were listed as tenants in early nineteenth century, with Joseph Long being the largest farmer in the 1790s and first decades of the 1800s.²⁰ There is no mention of Sardeson and Sharp in Cranwell; they do not appear as listed tenants on an 1829 poaching prosecution notice for the parish and are only listed in poll books from the 1830s and 1840s.²¹ However, despite their status as relative newcomers both served in the offices of the poor law due to their dominant ratepaying status underpinned by positions as leading farmers. Haldenby Sharp was union guardian for Cranwell in 1842 and 1843, with John Sardeson staffing the same role initially in 1836 and 1837 and again in 1845 until at least 1850, most probably until his death in 1855. A similar situation can be identified at

¹⁹ 3 THOR 2/1/1, LA

²⁰ DIOC/BP/LANDTAX/1/10/3, LA

²¹ *The Stamford Mercury*, 23rd October 1829; *The Poll Book for the Election of Two Members to Represent in Parliament the Southern Division of Lincolnshire* (Sleaford: James Creasey, 1841), p.5 and p.22

Ashby de la Launde. Matthew Dixon was union guardian for the parish between 1842 and 1846, being a tenant farmer of the resident gentry King family. However, Dixon did not appear to have been resident in Ashby de la Launde until the mid-1820s, being married there in 1826 at the age of twenty-three.

Using poll books as evidence, the dominance of the tenant farming class as union guardians under the New Poor Law is clear within the parish selection, even within many parishes with an open typology which exhibited a higher proportion of occupier-owner farmers and proprietors.²² In Leadenham, 60% of identifiable guardians in the 1840s were tenant farmers, primarily tenants of the resident gentry Reeve family who were also the dominant landowners in the parish. Similarly, 75% of guardians for Ruskington in the same decade were tenant as opposed to freeholding farmers, despite the open typology of the parish. Between 1842 and 1850, 67% of Leasingham's guardians were tenant farmers. Although Henry Burbank, guardian for Metheringham from at least 1840 to 1844, was a corn miller, other guardians, such as Joseph Sharp in 1836 and Richard Green in 1846, were dominant farmers embedded in a mixed-agrarian agricultural niche. In the 1851 census, Richard Green farmed 425 acres, hiring fifteen labourers and multiple farm servants. This was one of the largest farms in Metheringham with the sixteen farms listed in the parish in the 1851 census being generally less than 200 acres. These individuals often held their positions as union guardians for extensive periods, supporting Snell's point of increased permanence in administrative staffing under the New Poor Law, with the re-election of the same guardians common.²³ Within the parish selection, Branston and Waddington had the same guardian from unionisation until the end of the period in 1850. Closed parishes saw a marked stability in guardian staffing, with Ashby de la Launde, Cranwell and Digby seemingly seeing only two to three individuals each serve as guardian between 1836 and 1850, confirming the socio-economic dominance of the tenant farming class within closed parishes via confined employment systems and limited proprietorship. Although open parishes generally saw a higher turnover of guardians, most still served for more than one term: for example, Leasingham had three separate guardians between 1842 and 1850; and Navenby three between 1840 and 1846.

²² *The Poll Book for the Election of Two Members to Represent in Parliament the Southern Division of Lincolnshire*, p.17, pp.21-22 and p.67

²³ Snell, *Parish and Belonging*, p.337

Such trends feed into the fact that union guardians had their genesis within the parish, taken from a pool of leading ratepayers which, as shown, was dominated by the tenant farming class by the eve of the New Poor Law due to the importance of mixed-agrarian agriculture within the Lincoln Heath's niche. Indeed, plural voting within guardian elections gave more power to leading proprietors, expanding franchise away from resident ratepayers to include non-resident owners and thus underpinning the authority of landowners with estates across parishes, feeding into the election of their tenants for parish positions. In practice, guardian elections often relied on a minority of those eligible to vote, as can be seen in Leasingham in 1841 and 1842.²⁴ In 1841, only five out of twenty-one eligible individuals voted, with a total of eighteen votes overall. Three of these were non-resident proprietors who allocated the overseer of the poor of the parish, Richard Wharton Myddleton, as proxy to vote on their behalf. In the following year's elections, fifteen individuals voted with a total of sixty-five votes. Seven of these had six votes each; therefore, 65% of the votes submitted were made by seven people, three of whom were non-resident landowners. Moreover, the presence of Richard Wharton Myddleton as overseer in Leasingham caused disputes within guardian elections, as he seemingly used his socio-economic capital as a land-owner to influence elections. In 1842, a disgruntled parishioner complained to the Poor Law Commission about the outcome of the guardian elections for that year:

‘Mr. Middleton [Myddleton] who is a considerable Land-Owner within [Leasingham]...and...Overseer of the Poor, made use of unfair means to insure the Election of a Guardian for the Parish by threatening...to discharge his own tenants and endeavouring to procure the discharge of other Tenants holding land if they voted for Mr. Wallis [the opponent candidate].’²⁵

This appeal to the Poor Law Commission came to nothing as they referred the matter to the Sleaford board of guardians who supported the originally elected candidate. Thus, the realities of administrative demography soundly lay in local socio-economic contexts with those with socio-economic capital being able to impose their authority on proceedings.

²⁴ Leasingham Parish 10/1, LA

²⁵ *Sleaford Poor Law Union Correspondence, 1838-1842*, MH12/6764, LA

Redefinitions of authority structures are also observable amongst local gentry, who within the mechanics of the poor law generally acted as magistrates as well as chairmen and vice-chairmen on union boards. Many gentry personalities who played leading roles in the formation and administration of poor law unions were not resident in the Lincoln Heath until the 1820s and 1830s, linked to an increased presence in land-owning gentry after drives towards mixed-agrarian agriculture already noted in chapter three. The Earl of Winchelsea, leading figure in the formation of the Sleaford poor law union and its first chairman, became a landowner in the area in 1826 and took up residence at Haverholme Priory, neighbouring the parish of study of Ruskington, in 1835.²⁶ Alexander Leslie Melville served as chairman of the Lincoln union from unionisation until 1870, simultaneously acting as parish guardian for Branston.²⁷ However, he was only resident in Branston from 1829, having bought Branston Hall and its associated estate from the Earl of Buckinghamshire. His status as a newcomer was remembered by some; in 1846, Melville received correspondence questioning why ‘he had the impudence to usurp [power]...to the exclusion of the old county families.’²⁸ Despite this, as son of Alexander Leslie Melville, 7th Earl of Leven, and marriage to Charlotte Smith, daughter of local Tory MP Samuel Smith, Melville was seemingly embraced into the social dynamics of the area, becoming a leading authority figure in Branston and Lincoln during the nineteenth century.

Thus, Hill has noted that authority figures, whether newcomer or not, were widely defined by a landed interest within the Lincoln Heath.²⁹ As such, there were two parallel strands noticeable in the administrative demography of relief within the parish selection across the period. New individual tenant farmers and resident gentry were evident in the parish selection, particularly throughout the 1820s and 1830s, but these always sat in relation to a continuing stratum of authority which potentially took a familiar dimension across the period of study. However, the caveat must be noted that the evidence presented here is largely nominal, based on shared last surnames between individuals. There are evidently problems with this approach, namely that surnames can be shared between unrelated people and that last names relate purely to paternal relations,

²⁶ Les Gostick, *Haverholme Estate: It's Farmers and Farming, 1139AD to 2005AD* (Self-published), p.9 and p.11

²⁷ Branston Parish 10/1-3, LA

²⁸ Hill, *Victorian Lincoln*, p.72

²⁹ *Ibid*, p.63

ignoring maternal descent.³⁰ The nominal linkages presented here between poor law administrators across the period are based on data taken from such registers and census records. Both Levine and Hudson have noted that English family reconstitution relies heavily on Anglican parish registers.³¹ However, there are issues with these sources identified by the literature, namely limitations in coverage via the non-registration of some individuals such as non-conformists and migrants.³² Indeed, Souden has claimed that ‘many events went unregistered in English parishes, especially in the later eighteenth and early nineteenth century.’³³ Moreover, Ruggles has noted that parish record survival and the condition of extant records varies widely across England, with mistakes and incorrect logging also evident within them.³⁴ The same author has also raised concerns about selection bias, both in regards to chosen parishes of study but also in regards to families analysed, with many of a parish population potentially missing from reconstitutions.³⁵

These are important limitations, but the only alternative is a full-blown multi-source family reconstitution which would, even for a smaller range of parishes than that considered here, warrant a thesis in its own right. Hence, the aim here is to suggest a potential familial link based on surnames between poor law administrators across the period of study, with specific examples given which illustrate relations. Whether conclusions reached here are representational on the national scale remains to be seen, particularly given the limited scope of parishes chosen and the wholly rural nature of them. Evidently, further research should be undertaken to test the potential familial linkages between administrators suggested here, with complete familial reconstitutions needing to take place with each parish of study, a task outside the remit of this thesis.

With a discussion of the potential issues engendered by the approach adopted by this thesis, an examination of nominal linkages within the parish selection will now be

³⁰ David Levine, ‘The Reliability of Parochial Registration and the Representativeness of Family Reconstitution’, *Population Studies*, 30 (1976), p.108

³¹ Ibid, pp.107-122; Janet Hudson, ‘Parish Population Reconstruction in Stonehouse, Gloucestershire: an Experiment using Wrigley and Schofield’s Correction Factors’, *Local Population Studies*, 77 (2006), p.24

³² David Souden, ‘Movers and Stayers in Family Reconstitution Populations’, *Local Population Studies*, 33 (1984), pp.11-28; Steven Ruggles, ‘The Limitations of English Family Reconstitution: English Population History from Family Reconstitution 1580-1837’, *Continuity and Change*, 14 (1999), pp.105-130; Romola Jane Davenport, ‘Urban Family Reconstitution- A Worked Example’, *Local Population Studies*, 96 (2016), pp.28-49

³³ Souden, ‘Movers and Stayers in Family Reconstitution Populations’, p.15

³⁴ Ruggles, ‘The Limitations of English Family Reconstitution’, p.125

³⁵ Ibid, pp.106-126

conducted. To return to ratepaying hierarchies in Waddington and Cranwell, despite the presence of new tenant farmers, there was a continuation in familiar authority which again was linked to socio-economic prestige in farming. Some of the largest ratepayers in Waddington were members of the Dixon family. Similarly, the Oxenford family were dominant tenant farmers in Cranwell throughout the period, with Quincey Oxenford being parish overseer in 1827 and Ann Oxenford listed as a farmer of 300 acres in Cranwell in the 1851 census. There was a clear continuation of familial branches of authority into the New Poor Law within some parishes, evidenced by a comparison of individuals who staffed parish offices across the period. For example, four union guardians in Leadenham between 1843 and 1850 shared surnames with individuals who were within the top 25% of ratepayers in 1812.³⁶ Members of the Mucklow family were overseer of the poor parish eight times in Leadenham between 1801 and 1818, with Robert and John Mucklow serving as union guardian in 1843 and 1850 respectively. Robert Mucklow, born in 1797, was the son of Audley Mucklow who has served as overseer of the poor four times between 1801 and 1818. Although not conclusive due to the popularity of the name John, it is probable that Robert and John Mucklow, union guardians in 1843 and 1850, were cousins as a John Mucklow is listed as the nephew of Audley Mucklow, who had served as overseer of the poor in the early nineteenth century, in the 1851 census, living in the household of Audley Mucklow and running the family farming tenancy in Leadenham.

Familial lineage in the administration of the poor law was most explicit in Digby where parish offices were dominated by a select group of farming families; Cooke, Sumner, Scholey and Brown.³⁷ Across the period, the position of overseer of the poor was circulated on a five-year rotation between individuals from these families. For example, Thomas Brown was overseer in 1800 and 1805; John Sumner in 1801 and 1806; Robert Cooke in 1802 and 1807; George Sumner in 1803 and 1808; and William Sumner in 1804 and 1809. Scholey Sumner, evidently a progeny of the leading families of Sumner and Scholey, was overseer three times between 1819 and 1829. Born in 1793, Scholey Sumner was the son of William Sumner, overseer of the poor four times between 1790 and 1810.³⁸ This rotation continued into the New Poor Law with George Cooke being union guardian from 1836 to 1845. According to the 1851 census, George Cooke was

³⁶ Reeve 10/2, LA: Robert Mucklow; Thomas Linney; Joseph Morely; John Mucklow

³⁷ Digby Parish 10/1, LA

³⁸ Digby Parish 1/3, LA

born in Digby in 1801 and so it seems probable that he was the same George Cooke who served as overseer of the poor for the parish in 1827. Moreover, according to parish baptismal registers, George Cooke's father was Robert Cooke, an individual who had served as overseer of the poor on seven occasions between 1792 and 1822.³⁹ As such, although not concrete in all cases, it was often the same familial lineages or indeed exact individuals who had served as poor law administrators between poor laws, largely due to their position as dominant ratepayers linked to farming prestige. Familial aspects of localised authority structures potentially permeated across the Lincoln Heath between parishes. Branches of the Sumner and Scholey families were leading farmers and parish officers in Digby, Leasingham and Metheringham. This familial aspect to the administration of the poor law is a fundamental point missed in the literature. Despite constant acknowledgment in regards the importance of personal interaction between the needy and administrative staff in forming and defining policy and outcomes, there has been little appetite for biographical and genealogical analysis of individuals who formed such groups. This thesis calls for further research into this aspect of the administration of the poor law, seeing it as a crucial expression which shaped the nature of relief regimes. Indeed, individual personalities of authority figures, particularly landed gentry, were key to implementation of the New Poor Law within localities through the formation of poor law unions as it was through these that the timing and scope of incorporation were largely defined.

Unionisation was not dictated by the Poor Law Commission. Although 90% of England and Wales had been unionised by 1839, where the process was resisted, such as in some areas of northern England, unionisation was not complete until the later decades of the nineteenth century.⁴⁰ The formation of poor law unions was an overtly political process, with Brundage emphasising the importance of landed magnates in defining this through negotiated interactions with Assistant Commissioners.⁴¹ For example, the Grantham union in southern Lincolnshire incorporated parishes within both Lincolnshire and Leicestershire largely through the influence of the Duke of Rutland who consolidated the union around his core estate at Belvoir.⁴² Again, this suggests county framings of

³⁹ Ibid

⁴⁰ Steven King, *Poverty and Welfare in England, 1700-1850: A Regional Perspective* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000), p.228

⁴¹ Anthony Brundage, *The Making of the New Poor Law: The Politics of Inquiry, Enactment and Implementation, 1832-1839* (London: Hutchinson, 1978), p.ix

⁴² Ibid, p.126

analysis are often incompatible with the expression of the poor law within localities. Moreover, the pace and progress of unionisation could diverge widely dependent on the reactions of local elites. The creation of the Sleaford union was generally smoother than Lincoln due to the leadership of the Earl of Winchelsea, resident in the area and favourably disposed to reform.⁴³ Edward Gulson, an Assistant Commissioner within Lincolnshire, noted at first meeting of the Sleaford guardians:

‘All the Gentry attended and took a lively interest in the proceedings- Earl Winchelsea is Chairman & Mr. Chaplin...is Vice Chairman. A capital Board of Guardians- all are cordial as you may desire.’⁴⁴

However, opinion within the City of Lincoln was markedly against the new legislation, largely due to the pre-existence of the Lincoln Incorporation and the political leadership of the arch-Tory ‘Colonel’ Charles Sibthorp.⁴⁵ The gradual process of unionisation throughout the country and county meant that opinions were formulated about the New Poor Law well before unionisation within a locality through observing policy in other areas and reading press reports. Indeed, the influence of the local press in guiding opinions towards the New Poor Law was noted by the Assistant Commissioner Edward Gulson in 1838, who complained that ‘the report in the newspapers respecting the Stamford Board is quite a fabrication &...the Lincolnshire Chronicle...habitually circulates false statements against the law.’⁴⁶ In 1836, Humphrey Sibthorp, a key Lincoln clerical magistrate and brother to the Charles Sibthorp mentioned above, questioned the morality of the new system and attacked the formation of a poor law union within Lincoln, stating ‘I know that in a neighbouring Union they allow what no man can live on.’⁴⁷ Although the creation of the Sleaford union was generally untroubled due to the leadership of the Earl of Winchelsea, initially other leading gentry

⁴³ Ibid, pp.141-142

⁴⁴ Edward Gulson, *Correspondence and Papers Relating to the West and South Midland Districts, 1834-1838*, p.463, MH32/28, LA

⁴⁵ Brundage, *The Making of the New Poor Law*, pp.142-143; Sibthorp was widely lampooned within Parliament for his opposition to any reform. For an overview of his biography and political career see Stephen Roberts and Mark Acton, *The Parliamentary Career of Charles de Laet Waldo Sibthorp, 1826-1855: Ultra-Tory Opposition to Reform in Nineteenth Century Britain* (Lampeter and Lewiston: Edwin Mellen Press, 2010); Gulson, *Correspondence and Papers Relating to the West and South Midland Districts, 1834-1838*, p.488

⁴⁶ Edward Gulson, ‘Register of Correspondence, 1838’, *Register of Correspondence for Assistant Commissioners, 1834-1846*, MH33/2, NA

⁴⁷ *The Stamford Mercury*, December 2nd 1836; Gulson, *Correspondence and Papers Relating to the West and South Midland Districts, 1834-1838*, p.478

had hesitations with Charles Chaplin, vice-chairman and later chairman of the Sleaford union, acknowledging that ‘at first [he] viewed the new law with great prejudice.’⁴⁸ Initial hostility largely pivoted around perceived interference into local affairs with such opinions persisting long after unionisation. In 1838, the Sleaford guardians suggested that the New Poor Law could be improved ‘if rather less power was allowed to...London, and a little more given to the local Boards.’⁴⁹ However, such remarks did not necessarily amount to open defiance, with King arguing resistance to the New Poor Law largely being limited to appeals for local exceptionalism rather than all out rejection.⁵⁰ Attitudes towards the Poor Law Amendment Act from the labouring classes themselves is hard to gauge due to the nature of source material available. In December 1842, a letter from a J.T Holder, seemingly a Lincolnshire artisan, was published in the Northern Star noting his attitude towards the New Poor Law:

‘I have...within the last week helped (in the course of my occupation) to put the finishing stroke upon forty-five iron bedsteads...five for Caistor, twenty for Sleaford, five for Brigg, and twenty-five for Lincoln unions...while I ponder upon the system that is forcing our once bold English peasantry and artisans into these hell holes [union workhouses], I shuddered at the idea...’⁵¹

However, such was made within the rhetorical context of Chartism, well known for being linked to opposition to the Poor Law Amendment Act.⁵² Moreover, it was published six to seven years after unionisation had happened in Lincolnshire and as such, opinions of the New Poor Law in its initial years remain obscure outside of the gentry classes.

The personalities of Assistant Commissioners played a crucial role in placating negative opinion to reform, as well as also help define the expression and scope of unions within localities.⁵³ Within Lincolnshire, one Assistant Commissioner was not responsible for

⁴⁸ *The Stamford Mercury*, April 13th 1838

⁴⁹ *Ibid*

⁵⁰ Steven King, ‘Rights, Duties and Practice in the Transition between the Old and New Poor Laws 1820s-1860s’, in Peter Jones and Steven King (eds), *Obligation, Entitlement and Dispute under the English Poor Law* (Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2015), p.264

⁵¹ *The Northern Star*, December 31st 1842

⁵² Malcolm Chase, *Chartism: A New History* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007), pp.1-29

⁵³ Anthony Brundage, *The English Poor Laws, 1700-1930* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2002), pp.71-74; Brundage, *The Making of the New Poor Law*, pp.105-144

the unionisation of the whole county as had been the case in geographically smaller southern counties. Edward Gulson was the Assistant Commissioner who played the central role in the formation of the Sleaford and Lincoln unions. He was responsible for forming unions in Berkshire in 1835 before being moved to Lincolnshire in 1836.⁵⁴ Gulson met personally with leading dignitaries and existing poor law administrators, holding public meetings to outline ‘the benefits that may be expected to result from the formation of a Union.’⁵⁵ At a meeting in November 1836, after the first election of the Lincoln union guardians, he:

‘Invited any...present to interrogate him on any subject they chose, as he wished all their prejudices to be removed, and also to make each Guardian an instrument in removing prejudice from the minds of the poor population generally.’⁵⁶

Gulson stressed the continued allowance of outdoor relief in times of necessity; the role of the New Poor Law in improving morality; and the discretionary power of guardians in defining the nature of aid given, both inside and outside of the workhouse, stating ‘we...give you power...to do what you please.’⁵⁷ In short, he played an appeasing role to the sensibilities of local elites, framing unionisation in terms of local paternalism, a key strategy adopted by Assistant Commissioners noted by Harling.⁵⁸

Running parallel to a broad stability in administrative demography at the parish level sat a ballooning of agents involved in the poor law after unionisation through new union salaried staffing positions. Brundage has defined these as ‘the poor law civil service.’⁵⁹ By 1849, Lincoln union had twenty-four salaried staff members, with Sleaford having twenty-one.⁶⁰ Such positions included union clerks; registrars; medical and relieving officers; workhouse masters and matrons; workhouse chaplains, teachers, nurses and porters. Such an expansion sat in contrast to the limited and generally parochially centred administrative agents of the Old Poor Law, with the ballooning of staff creating

⁵⁴ *Reports and Transactions of the Devonshire Association for the Advancement of Science, Literature and Art: Vol VII* (Plymouth: W. Brendon and Son, 1875) pp.51-52

⁵⁵ *The Stamford Mercury*, September 16th 1836

⁵⁶ *The Stamford Mercury*, December 2nd 1836

⁵⁷ *Ibid*

⁵⁸ Philip Harling, ‘The Power of Persuasion: Central Authority, Local Bureaucracy and the New Poor Law’, *The English Historical Review*, 107 (1992), p.48 and p.50

⁵⁹ Brundage, *The English Poor Laws*, p.52

⁶⁰ *Return of Officers whose Incomes are Paid from Poor Rates in England and Wales, 1849* (House of Commons: London, 1849), pp.278-279 and pp.412-413

new touchpoints of interaction between relief seekers and administrators. This was something acknowledged by Assistant Commissioners, with Edward Gulson admitting that paupers utilised the increased number of administrative agents to claim for relief to the Poor Law Commission in 1838, the mechanics of which within the parish selection will be analysed in chapter six.⁶¹ This was intensified by the wide temporal demographic stability in union staffing, mirroring that seen in parish and guardian positions. In 1849, salaried staff in the Lincoln union had held their positions on average for eight years and in the Sleaford union, seven. For example, 50% of medical officers within the Lincoln union had held their positions for more than ten years in 1849, with 80% having been a medical officer in the union for more than five. Two of the three relieving officers in the Lincoln union in 1849 had held their position for ten years or more. Similarly, 57% of medical officers in the Sleaford union had been so for over a decade in 1849, with all but one holding their position for more than five years. With the continuing importance of personal interactions between the needy and administrators in defining the policy under the New Poor Law, discussed in chapter six, this stability is important as it created a larger pool of individuals who held agency in moulding welfare outcomes.

However, Midwinter has seen such an enlargement of administrative agents as ‘bureaucratic procreation,’⁶² with union staff corresponding to an addition rather than a replacement of pre-existing poor law administrators who continued to have a place in the management of the poor law after 1834. Moreover, King has stated that ‘there was no body of trained...staff waiting to fill the positions that...1834 necessitated.’⁶³ Bradley has suggested that the Poor Law Commission provided limited advice in the hiring of union staff and as a result, the impetus for recruitment, as well as definitions of qualification and suitability, came largely from within localities via boards of guardians.⁶⁴ As such, the demographic continuity in governance noted above at parish level, within which guardians belonged, had important implications for who staffed new positions within poor law unions as there was an underlying homogeneity in local

⁶¹ *Select Committee on the Poor Law Amendment Act: Fourth Report, Fifth Report 1837-1838* (London: House of Commons, 1838), p.3

⁶² Eric Midwinter, ‘State Intervention at the Local Level: The New Poor Law in Lancashire’, *The Historical Journal*, 10 (1967), p.109

⁶³ King, *Poverty and Welfare in England*, p.235

⁶⁴ Sarah Bradley, ‘Welcoming the New Poor Law: the Bromsgrove Poor Law Union, 1836-1837’, *Family and Community History*, 23 (2019), p. 204

expressions of authority across the period embedded in human ecological environment. Generally, guardians advertised roles within the press, as seen in an advertisement for a master and matron for the Sleaford union workhouse in 1838:

‘A Married Couple, Members of the Established Church, without Family, will be preferred. The salary will be £80 per annum. They will be required to reside constantly in the Workhouse, where they will be provided with Ration and Lodging. The Master must write in a good hand, and be a perfect Accomptant. The Board will require unexceptionable testimonials of character and fitness for each office.’⁶⁵

When recruiting medical officers for the Lincoln union, guardians ordered advertisements to be placed in the Stamford Mercury; the Lancet; and the Edinburgh based North British Advertiser.⁶⁶ Press advertisements meant that appointments were given to individuals from outside of the immediate vicinity. The movement of non-locals into union positions was particularly evident in regards workhouse masters and matrons. Robert Finley, Lincoln union workhouse master alongside his wife Mary as matron from 1838 until the early 1860s, was Irish. It is unclear how long the Finleys had lived in the Lincoln area before commencing their appointment, but this must have been for less than a decade due to their marriage being solemnised in Rochester, Kent in 1829. Richard Ward, Sleaford master from 1839 to 1845, was born in Suffolk and married in Seething, Norfolk in 1835. Before becoming workhouse master at Sleaford, Ward was the relieving officer for the south district of the Lincoln union in 1837, also formerly being a relieving officer in the Spalding union in southern Lincolnshire.⁶⁷ It is intriguing that Ward was relieving officer to the Lincoln south district before becoming workhouse master at Sleaford as this was the union district that directly bordered the Sleaford union. Therefore, it is reasonable to suggest that Ward had contacts within and knowledge of the Sleaford union before becoming workhouse master in 1839. Due to previous employment in Spalding, it may be supposed that Ward moved to the Lincoln Heath area in around 1837, therefore having lived in the area for around two years before becoming workhouse master at Sleaford. Edward and Mary Page, Sleaford workhouse master and matron from 1845, do not appear to have been living in

⁶⁵ *The Lincolnshire Chronicle*, May 18th 1838

⁶⁶ PL10/118/1, LA

⁶⁷ Ibid

Lincolnshire on the 1841 census. Their son Edward was born in Sleaford in 1843, suggesting that they were only recently resident in the area before taking up their positions in 1845.

There was a sense of career progression in regards individuals who took up positions as workhouse masters, linked broadly to a skill set which utilised experience of discipline and control, emphasised by the distinctively military backgrounds of many. Robert Finley, master of the Lincoln workhouse, was an ex-naval officer and Greenwich Pensioner; and Edward Page, master of the Sleaford workhouse from 1845, was a former sergeant in the Coldstream Guards.⁶⁸ This was something the Poor Law Commission promoted, recommending ‘pensioned non-commissioned officers as...appropriate candidates for...[the positions of] workhouse master and...relieving officer.’⁶⁹ The career progression of Robert Macintosh, a relieving officer in the Sleaford union from 1837, emphasises this aspect of New Poor Law staffing. Macintosh was a sergeant-major in the 6th Dragoons before applying for the position of master of the Sleaford union workhouse in 1837.⁷⁰ He was unsuccessful in obtaining this role but was offered a position as a relieving officer. In the 1841 census, Macintosh is listed alongside his wife as master and matron of Spilsby union workhouse in the Lincolnshire Wolds, further becoming the master of the House of Correction in Spilsby by 1851. The New Poor Law created the infrastructural framework which allowed for an increasingly professionally exclusive corps of staff, at least in regards the institution of the union workhouse. For example, Mary Page, matron of Sleaford union workhouse from 1845 alongside her husband Edward as master, had previously been assistant matron in the Ipswich union workhouse. There was also professional movement between poor law unions and into institutional bodies outside of poor law, particularly prisons. Both Robert Ward, workhouse master at Sleaford between 1839 and 1845, and Robert Macintosh, a relieving officer in the Sleaford union in 1837, went on to work in the prison sector. This is an aspect of poor law administration which suggests that contemporaries increasingly viewed the management of workhouses within a wider

⁶⁸ *The Stamford Mercury*, November 16th 1838; *The Lincolnshire Chronicle*, November 28th 1845

⁶⁹ Harling, ‘The Power of Persuasion’, p.33

⁷⁰ *The Stamford Mercury*, December 15th 1837

institutionalised framing, paralleling the running of prisons and other such institutions, a point noted by Darwen.⁷¹

Although the demography of workhouse masters and matrons within the Lincoln and Sleaford unions suggests a break in the administration of relief within the Lincoln Heath, there were aspects of continuity between poor laws. Particularly within the Lincoln union, the pre-existence of the Lincoln Incorporation provided a pool of experienced individuals from which to fill union positions. Richard Sutton Harvey, surgeon within the Lincoln House of Industry from 1829, became a medical officer in the Lincoln union from 1838, still holding the position in 1849.⁷² Similarly, the appropriation of the Lincoln House of Industry by the union to provide indoor relief before the opening of the new union workhouse in 1838 meant the continuation of staff, with the former master and matron (John and Mary Spacie) retaining their positions.⁷³ Robert Cooke, clerk of the Lincoln union from 1836 until his death in 1843, had been clerk to the directors of the Lincoln House of Industry from 1824.⁷⁴ However, such individuals were still expected to apply for new union positions, as seen in Cooke's published notice of application in 1836:

‘Having for upwards of thirteen years performed the duties of Clerk to the Guardians and Directors of the Poor within the City of Lincoln...it is my anxious desire to retain the appointment.’⁷⁵

Therefore, continuation of role was not a given. As such, there seems to have been a clear theoretical administrative break to some extent between poor laws at the local level, with boards of guardians, embedded in continuing strands of authority from before unionisation, in charge of recruiting appropriate individuals for new positions.

However, such a break was softened by the practicalities of sourcing adequate staff within the bounds of economy. An emphasis on financial savings caused major issues in sourcing medical officers for the Lincoln union, with all initial offers made immediately after unionisation rejected by candidates due to low wages and Edward Sherriff, a Scot

⁷¹ Lewis Darwen, ‘Workhouse Populations of the Preston Union, 1841-61’, *Local Population Studies*, 93 (2015), p.47

⁷² *The Stamford Mercury*, October 9th 1829; *Return of Officers whose Incomes are Paid from Poor Rates in England and Wales, 1849*, pp.278-279 and pp.412-413

⁷³ PL10/118/1, LA

⁷⁴ *The Stamford Mercury*, January 9th 1824

⁷⁵ *The Stamford Mercury*, January 22nd 1836

from Edinburgh, only being appointed the sole medical officer for the whole union in January 1837.⁷⁶ This appointment was still made in the context of personal interaction with Alexander Leslie Melville, a Scot and chairman of the Lincoln union, writing ‘to his friends...to make private inquiries’⁷⁷ in Scotland in order to source a medical officer. Concerns about expenditure permeated the early decades of the New Poor Law; with the death of the Lincoln union clerk Robert Cooke in 1843, the guardians advertised for a replacement but with a salary reduction of £25.⁷⁸ Often local practitioners with the necessary transferable skills were appointed, especially evident in regards union clerks and medical officers. Clerks were often sought for amongst lawyers; Charles Clements, clerk of the Sleaford union over the course of the period between 1836 and 1850, and John William Danby, clerk of the Lincoln Union from 1843, were local solicitors.⁷⁹ Medical officers were generally drawn from the ranks of local doctors, with individuals often having pre-existing relationships with parishes. Peter McTaggart, a medical officer in the Lincoln union from 1838 to at least 1849, was a local surgeon who had dealings with poor law officials before unionisation, being paid by Navenby’s vestry under the Old Poor Law to ‘attend on Hannah Smith of Harmston...and Paupers in this Parish sent to time.’⁸⁰ As such, appointments were often made in the context of localised interaction.

Mills, Wheeler and Woolard’s work gives some insight into the biography of James Reeve, relieving officer for the south district of the Lincoln union and based in the village of Harmston on the Lincoln Heath, emphasising this human ecological aspect to staffing.⁸¹ Before becoming a relieving officer in 1839, Reeve was master at the National School in Lincoln, moving to Harmston by the late 1830s to become an assistant teacher to Richard Coddington Moore, also registrar for the south district of the Lincoln union. In 1843, Reeve married Bridget Day ‘the daughter of Harmston’s second most substantial farmer...and guardian of the poor’⁸² and lived in Harmston

⁷⁶ PL10/118/1, LA

⁷⁷ *Select Committee on the Poor Law Amendment Act: Fourth Report, Fifth Report 1837-1838*, p.17

⁷⁸ PL10/118/1, LA

⁷⁹ Dennis Mills, Robert Wheeler and Matthew Woolard, ‘Some Comparative Perspectives on Two Early Victorian Registrars of Births and Deaths in Rural Lincolnshire in the Context of National Legislation’, *Local Population Studies*, 79 (2007), p.10

⁸⁰ *Return of Officers whose Incomes are Paid from Poor Rates in England and Wales, 1849*, pp.278-279 and pp.412-413; Navenby Parish 10/1, LA

⁸¹ Mills, Wheeler and Woolard, ‘Some Comparative Perspectives on Two Early Victorian Registrars of Births and Deaths in Rural Lincolnshire in the Context of National Legislation’, pp.8-22

⁸² *Ibid*, p.14

Manor House. Reeve was relieving officer for the Lincoln south district until 1859, holding the position for twenty years. Personal connections played a part in defining who staffed positions within unions; Reeve married the daughter of Harmston's poor law guardian, whose position as a dominant farmer underpinned his socio-economic capital. Moreover, Richard Coddington Moore, registrar for the Lincoln south district and Reeve's boss at Harmston school, secured his position due to his close relationship with B.H Thorold, a dominant landowner in the area and poor law guardian for Harmston in 1837.

Therefore, patronage went far in defining staffing under the New Poor Law. So did nepotism, highlighting a continuity of practice noted under the Old Poor Law; in 1831, W.D Cookson was made physician to the Lincoln House of Industry due to 'his uncle...[having] held the office.'⁸³ Familial relations between staff under the New Poor Law are evident. Mary Cavill, nurse at the Lincoln union workhouse throughout the 1830s and 1840s, was seemingly a female relation of Thomas Cavill, a porter at the workhouse in 1848.⁸⁴ Edmund Clements, clerk to the Sleaford union throughout the latter and early decades of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, inherited the position from his father, Charles Clements. Similarly, William Taylor Dixon, a leading farmer in the parish of Ashby de la Launde on the Lincoln Heath, was chairman of the Sleaford union in 1900 and was seemingly related to Matthew Dixon, guardian for the parish from 1842 to 1846. These Dixons may also have been related to Abraham Dixon, master of the Lincoln House of Industry during the 1810s. Indeed, the infrastructural framework created by the New Poor Law via the union workhouse fostered familial relationships. In 1873, Rachel Finley, daughter of the Lincoln workhouse master Robert Finley and school mistress in the workhouse, married William Hew Ross, master of the Stamford union workhouse in southern Lincolnshire.⁸⁵ Therefore, familial lineages in the administration of poor law can also be discerned within union staffing positions, mirroring those noted at parish level which permeated between poor laws. These were long lasting and identifiable well into the twentieth century. A full survey of familial dimensions to the staffing of the poor law is outside the scope of this thesis; however, it is clearly an important observation that calls for further analysis.

⁸³ *The Stamford Mercury*, June 17th 1831

⁸⁴ *Return of Officers whose Incomes are Paid from Poor Rates in England and Wales, 1849*, pp.278-279

⁸⁵ *The Stamford Mercury*, January 31st 1873

There were other important administrative agents within the context of relief which ran in conjunction to union and parish officers, no less relief recipients themselves. In the 1851 census, the porter of the Sleaford union workhouse was John Evans. Alongside this position, Evans was also an inmate in the workhouse. The role of inmates in managing the day-to-day activities of union workhouses has recently been noted by both Walton and Williams.⁸⁶ Williams focuses on the situation in Lincolnshire, noting a large discrepancy between the number of staff within workhouses and overall inmate populations.⁸⁷ This can be mapped onto the ratio between staff and inmate numbers within the union workhouses of study: in the 1851 census, Sleaford had 5 staff and 243 inmates, and Lincoln 6 to 256 inmates. These statistics meant that it was necessary for inmates to play a role in the running of workhouses. Unlike Lincoln, Sleaford's union workhouse did not have a nurse, meaning other inmates were tasked with providing medical care or supervising the sick. Indeed, inmates at Sleaford also had to act as pallbearers at pauper funerals alongside the porter.⁸⁸ Walton has seen internal hierarchies amongst the inmate population as central to the running of union workhouses, noting that trusted inmates were often given roles and responsibilities to aid staff.⁸⁹ This can clearly be seen in the workhouses of study, often evidenced incidentally via complaints from inmates who felt others were receiving preferential treatment. In 1839, Ann Baker, an inmate chargeable from the parish of study of Ashby de la Launde, complained to the Sleaford guardians that the master and matron of the workhouse were allowing two other female inmates who worked in the kitchen 'to sell the fat arising from the Skimmings of Puddings and also...Bones.'⁹⁰ Again, the fact that inmates worked in the kitchen underpins the fact that recipients had an active role in the running of workhouses. However, recipients' involvement in the management of relief was not limited to the New Poor Law union workhouse, being explicit within the parish selection under the Old Poor Law. This often took the form of paying recipients, particularly females, to care for others or doing domestic jobs around the parish. In Digby, Mary Winter was paid 'for cleaning the poor in the workhouse' in December

⁸⁶ Caroline Walton, 'Taking Control: Gossip, Community and Conflict in the Basford Union Workhouse, 1836 to 1871', *Family and Community History*, 23 (2020), pp.23-41; Samantha Williams, 'Paupers Behaving Badly: Punishment in the Victorian Workhouse', *Journal of British Studies*, 59 (2020), pp.764-792

⁸⁷ Williams, 'Paupers Behaving Badly', Table 1, p.772

⁸⁸ PL12/102/1, pp.295-296, LA

⁸⁹ Walton, 'Taking Control'

⁹⁰ PL12/102/1, p.319, LA

1807 with Mary Smith ‘paid...for Work at the workhouse’ in March 1808.⁹¹ Similarly, Elizabeth Hooten was paid 3s in addition to her regular 2s weekly allowance by the Leadenham overseer in 1801 to nurse another pauper, Dorothy Vicars.⁹² Indeed, Hooten conducted this role for multiple paupers throughout the early 1800s. Such care is also evidenced at parish level under the New Poor Law; in 1837, Branston paid a female pauper for ‘waiting on [George] Goulding’s wife.’⁹³ Although the limited and statistical nature of extant documentation often makes it difficult to ascertain the extent of pauper involvement in the maintenance of relief, such was clearly important to the day-to-day provision of support across the period.

Similarly, the role of magistrates within the poor law has also been understudied. The magistracy, through petty and quarter sessions, theoretically acted as a representative of central government within localities.⁹⁴ On a surface level, magisterial duties in the initial decades of the New Poor Law mirrored those seen under the Old: they still swore in parish officials; approved parish and county rates; oversaw bastardy and removal cases; and in a legal sense, still interacted with the parish rather than the union. However, there was a difference in action dependent on cohorts of need. Policy to some, such as bastardy and settlement cases, had legally enshrined magisterial accountability.⁹⁵ Although the New Poor Law changed elements of bastardy and settlement law, magistrates continued to hold an administrative role in regards these cohorts and so remained a constant presence throughout the period. However, to broader cohorts of need, particularly the perceived non-deserving such as vagrants, magisterial attitudes could be harsh or administered in a criminal context. Thus, there was a disconnect between enshrined legislative magisterial duties within the poor law and wider conceptions of need and relief as defined by the literature. To understand this, Eastwood and Charlesworth have stressed that despite legal accountability, the personality and preoccupations of individual magistrates went far in defining the actualities of policy.⁹⁶ Here, the magistrate’s dual position as legislatively defined

⁹¹ Ibid

⁹² Reeve 10/2, LA

⁹³ Branston Parish 13/13, LA

⁹⁴ Lorie Charlesworth, *Welfare’s Forgotten Past: A Socio-Legal History of the Poor Law* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2010), p.143

⁹⁵ Lynn Hollen-Lees, *The Solidarities of Strangers: The English Poor Law and the People, 1700-1948* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), p.117

⁹⁶ David Eastwood, *Governing Rural England: Tradition and Transformation in Local Government, 1780-1840* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), p.99; Charlesworth, *Welfare’s Forgotten Past*, pp.143-144

administrator and socio-economic stakeholder meant that the reality of magisterial administration lay in the junction between these dual personas.⁹⁷ As stated in chapter three, magistrates applicable to the parish selection were generally taken from the land-owning class, whether gentry or clerical. They were intimately tied in socio-economic relationships within the human ecological landscapes of niche and culture throughout the period, increasingly concerned with mixed-agrarian agriculture on which their income and prestige position rested. Such influenced magisterial policy with the harshness of reactions to increasing rural unrest from the 1830s, particularly in cases of incendiarism, already noted. As such, magisterial decisions in cases of need and relief incorporated diverse strands, being founded on a legislative bedrock for some explicit cohorts of need but more generally being defined by opinions formed within human ecological environment.

The persona of magistrate was just one of many that individual justices held within the context of local secular governance and authority structures, being nearly almost dominant landowners and playing leading roles as vice-chairman and chairmen on poor law union boards, often alongside being trustees or governors of charities, hospitals and asylums. For example, all chairman and vice-chairman of the Sleaford union (the Earl of Winchelsea; Charles Chaplin; and Robert Adam Christopher) over the period of study were magistrates and leading gentry landlords. Therefore, the magisterial bench, rather than being a foil to policy formulated at parish and union level, often sat in relation with it and was conceived as just one avenue of many to distribute policy within a wider administrative forum. As such, magisterial decisions could happen outside of proscribed sessions, with other relief administrators personally approaching magistrates to judge on cases in their own time. In the 1837 case against Martin Palin, a man who had abandoned his family at Branston, the Lincoln guardians advised the parish overseers to ‘take Palin before Mr. Chaplin [magistrate] rather than wait for the next monthly meeting...understand that...Chaplin will hear the case [privately].’⁹⁸ Continually throughout the early decades of the New Poor Law, guardians advised overseers to take cases before the bench, with the distinction between administrative bodies softened by the fact that many guardians and union chairmen were also

⁹⁷ Charlesworth, *Welfare's Forgotten Past*, p.143; Eastwood, *Governing Rural England*, p.99; David Phillips, ‘A ‘Weak’ State? The English State, Magistracy and the Reform of Policing in the 1830s’, *The English Historical Review*, 119 (2004), p.884

⁹⁸ PL10/118/1, LA

magistrates. Therefore, although such proceedings were often underpinned by legislative tenets, the reality of administration could involve the same individuals acting in different guises across the distinct organs of the poor law, softening the distinctions between these.

These issues were compounded by the fact that the mechanics of magisterial administrative within Lincolnshire were far from unified, lacking a county-wide framing as seen in other English counties. Although Lincolnshire had one Lord Lieutenant and High Sherriff, the county had nine separate commissions of the peace and quarter sessions held in thirteen different towns.⁹⁹ Within the county, magistracies were divided by the ceremonial parts of Kesteven, Lindsey, Holland and the City of Lincoln. The responsibility for the parish selection generally fell under the Kesteven magistracy; however, Waddington and Branston were incorporated into the City of Lincoln, with magisterial responsibility was conducted by city justices. Even within county parts, there were further sub-stratums of magisterial administration. The Kesteven magistracy held sessions in three locations: Folkingham until 1828; Sleaford; and Bourne. For most of the parish selection, sessions were held at Sleaford and magistrates did not seemingly sit in differing locations. Between 1835 and 1839, the named magistrates in the Kesteven Bastardy Book sat at either Bourne or Sleaford, never both.¹⁰⁰ This further reenforced the authority of individual magistrates within an intensely localised system with a continuity evident in the same individuals and gentry families acting as magistrates across the period. Again, their position was embedded within the human ecological environment of study, with their status as gentry landowners affecting judgments made at the bench with socio-economic relationships between landlords, tenants and labourers filtering into this. Indeed, the Chartist Northern Star described the Sleaford magistrates as ‘land rats’ in 1847, and although made in the context of political rhetoric, the editorial is worth quoting in detail to show the realities of magisterial interactions often made in the context of an agriculturally focussed human ecological environment:

‘The once quiet agricultural slaves of Sleaford have awakened to a consciousness of their dignity as men...high time some one should

⁹⁹ Richard Olney, *Lincolnshire Politics 1832-1885* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1973), p.2 and p.10

¹⁰⁰ Sleaford PS/Bastardy Order Book 1824-1839, LA

reduce magisterial law in the agricultural counties into something like the bounds of common sense and common justice...But at present the poor agriculturalist is bound hand and foot in the power of the Magistrate-Landlord...all...the agricultural slave, can hope for is that his masters *will not be too severe* and he will be a “better boy next time”...he will not dare to suppose the “Squire” or the “Parson” can be wrong.’¹⁰¹

The intensely local reality of magisterial administration within Lincolnshire was not negated under the New Poor Law. Although within the Sleaford union, all incorporated parishes were the responsibility of the Kesteven magistracy, the larger geographical area of the Lincoln meant that three magistracies (Kesteven; Lindsey; the City of Lincoln) were involved in the administration of the poor law dependent on the location of the parish in question and thus which magisterial jurisdiction it fell under. This caused major issues due to a continuing magisterial role in the mechanics of poor law and the logistical realities of time and geography:

‘The [Lincoln] Guardians have several times being inconvenienced in the discharge of magisterial duties of the union on consequence of the magistrates...of Kesteven meeting only once in each month...the Board...had requested...to lay the matter before the [Poor Law Commission] thinking that the magistrates ought to meet more frequently...It was suggested that the evil might be resolved by the magistrates...of Lindsey being qualified to act for both parts [Kesteven and Lindsey] if this could be arranged we should be able to get on with the business of the Union without having to wait for the monthly meeting...the magistrates for...Kesteven live...five & seven miles from Lincoln.’¹⁰²

Thus, the New Poor Law union system was mapped onto pre-existent administrative areas which continued to play a role in the management of the poor law. Here, physical geography was important because the disparate organs of New Poor Law administration at the local level (the parish; the poor law union; the magistracy) did not necessarily sit

¹⁰¹ *The Northern Star*, August 21st 1847. Italics in original

¹⁰² PL10/118/1, LA

in geographical harmony even though each had an involvement in managing policy. This chapter will now move onto examining the changing dimensions of the geo-administrative area of relief across the period, analysing relationships between the various geo-administrative spacings of the poor law and how such impacted experiences of need and relief.

4.3 The Geo-administrative Area

The geo-administrative area of relief was overwhelmingly found at parish level before the Poor Law Amendment Act, with management centring primarily but not exclusively on the organs of vestry and overseers of the poor. However, throughout the parish selection the nature of overseer positions differed under the Old Poor Law. Although most parishes had one overseer serving for an annual term, a minority exhibited multiple serving overseers and length of service. Until the adoption of an annual salaried overseer position in the early 1820s, overseers in Waddington had sat for six-month terms meaning that, within the administrative year, two overseers served.¹⁰³ A similar system was seen at Leadenham, albeit with differing overseers responsible for alternating months.¹⁰⁴ For example, in 1801 William Mucklow was responsible for April, June, August, October and December, with John North being overseer in May, July, September and November.

Moreover, the nature of overseer positions was not static under the Old Poor Law. In 1821, Ashby de la Launde officially joined the Lincoln Incorporation alongside other rural parishes, as we have already seen, albeit with the parish having contracted with the Incorporation to provide indoor relief within the Lincoln House of Industry from the 1790s.¹⁰⁵ The reasons for this seem to have been linked to increased relief spending in the parish, with expenditure sitting at £168 in 1822 compared to £76 in 1815.¹⁰⁶ By joining the Incorporation, finances were split between all member parishes and set at an average rate for a seven-year period with Ashby de la Launde's contribution set at £55

¹⁰³ Waddington Parish 13/1-2, LA

¹⁰⁴ Reeve 10/2, LA

¹⁰⁵ *An Act to Amend and Render more effectual an Act passed in the Thirty-sixth Year of the Reign of His late Majesty King George the Third, intituled An Act for the better Relief and Employment of the Poor of the several Parishes within the City of Lincoln, and County of the same City, and of the Parish of Saint Margaret, Part whereof lies within the said City and the other Part in the Close of Lincoln, in the County of Lincoln* (Act 1 & 2 Geo 4 c.49. London: House of Commons, 1821)

¹⁰⁶ *Abridgment of the Abstract of the Answers and Returns so far as Relates to the Poor* (London: House of Commons, 1818); *Report from the Select Committee on Poor Rate Returns* (London: House of Commons, 1825)

18s per annum from 1821.¹⁰⁷Joining the Lincoln Incorporation seemingly changed overseer practice within the parish. Overseers of member parishes were prohibited from giving relief except in ‘cases of sudden Emergency or urgent Necessity’¹⁰⁸ with relief decisions instead made by the directors of the Incorporation, with ratepayers for each member parish voting in a director per parish.¹⁰⁹ Unfortunately, surviving records do not show who served as director for Ashby de la Launde between 1821 and 1836. However, the duties of overseers were theoretically limited to ‘general superintendence of the poor...the collection of assessments, and in payments of them into the hands of the [Incorporation’s]...treasurer.’¹¹⁰ Therefore, from 1821 to the end of the Old Poor Law, overseer duties in Ashby de la Launde were differentiated from the rest of the parish selection via its membership of the Lincoln Incorporation. The parish thus included other administrative agents not found in other parishes of study through the position of director, placing it within a multiple parish administrative structure which in many ways mirrored the New Poor Law union system well before the passing of the Poor Law Amendment Act in 1834.

The impact of the Sturges Bourne’s Acts of 1818 and 1819 were also felt within the parish selection, with many parishes creating salaried overseer and assistant overseer positions during the early 1820s. Brundage has suggested that 20% of English parishes instigated these.¹¹¹ Both Branston and Waddington seem to have adopted salaried overseer or assistant overseer positions, marking an increased stability in parish staffing from the early 1820s which fed into the demographic continuity of administration already noted. Branston saw a regular pattern of service from this decade onwards which saw overseers becoming assistant overseers in the next administrative year. To illustrate, Frederick William Oates, overseer in 1827, became assistant overseer under Leonard Harland in 1828, who in turn became assistant overseer to Joseph Tonge in 1829.¹¹² Indeed, a wider stability in staffing can be discerned across all parish officers in

¹⁰⁷ *An Act to Amend and Render more effectual an Act passed in the Thirty-sixth Year of the Reign of His late Majesty King George the Third, intituled An Act for the better Relief and Employment of the Poor of the several Parishes within the City of Lincoln, and County of the same City, and of the Parish of Saint Margaret, Part whereof lies within the said City and the other Part in the Close of Lincoln, in the County of Lincoln*

¹⁰⁸ Ibid

¹⁰⁹ William Wylde, *Report from His Majesty’s Commissioners for inquiring into the Administration and Practical Operation of the Poor Laws: Appendix A Part II*, (House of Commons: London, 1834), pp.131-132

¹¹⁰ Ibid, p.132

¹¹¹ Brundage, *The English Poor Laws, 1700-1930*, pp.51-52

¹¹² Branston Parish 12/3, LA

Branston from the 1820s. William Newstead served as constable for fourteen years between 1823 and 1837, in stark contrast to earlier decades when the parish saw twenty-five individuals serve in this position between 1790 and 1823.¹¹³ Similarly, Waddington only had two individuals serving as overseer in the twenty-three years between 1821 and 1836: from 1821 to 1825, John Harrison; and from 1826 to 1836, Richard Coupland, who, as discussed above, was a relative newcomer to the parish but whose position as a leading farmer led to dominance within ratepaying hierarchies and thus a place within parish governance, with Coupland later becoming Waddington's union guardian from unionisation to the end of the period of study.¹¹⁴ An assistant overseer was also appointed, with a limited number of individuals serving in this capacity in circular rotation across the rest of the Old and into the New Poor Law. As such, the deep-seated continuity in administrative demography noted within the parish selection across the period was reinforced by administrative structures, with the position of overseer becoming increasingly stabilised and professionalised in much of the parish selection from the early 1820s.

Alongside salaried overseer positions, the Sturges Bourne's Acts also allowed for the creation of select vestries. Brundage has concluded that 15% of English parishes adopted these with Hastings arguing that Lincolnshire saw a high creation.¹¹⁵ Roughly 40% of the parish selection seems to have adopted select vestries (Navenby; Leadenham; Waddington; Branston) with Navenby's vestry minutes in the 1830s showing a vestry of between four and seven individuals.¹¹⁶ These parishes were all of varying open typologies and exhibited high numbers of relief recipients in 1815, ranging from twenty to twenty-seven compared to the parish selection average of seventeen, also seeing increasing rate amounts and numbers of annual rate levies in the late 1810s and early 1820s to deal with rising levels of need.¹¹⁷ For example, in Branston five rates were levied in 1822, ranging from 6d to 12d, compared to just two in 1808.¹¹⁸ Here, 1816 was the first year when annual rate levies surpassed two per year in Branston, suggesting that the adoption of a select vestry and salaried overseer

¹¹³ Ibid

¹¹⁴ Waddington Parish 13/2, LA

¹¹⁵ Brundage, *The English Poor Laws, 1700-1930*, p.51; Robert Paul Hastings, *Poverty and Poor Law in the North Riding of Yorkshire, c.1780-1837* (York: Saint Anthony Publishing, 1982), p.6

¹¹⁶ Navenby Parish 10/1, LA

¹¹⁷ *Select Committee on the Education of the Poor (1818)- Digest of Parochial Returns Volumes I, II and III* (London: House of Commons, 1819), pp.518-531

¹¹⁸ Branston Parish 13/5, 13/7 and 13/14, LA

position was linked to rising levels of need. Similarly, Leadenham's poor rates increased in the post-1815 period, rising from 25d in 1815 to 36d in 1818.¹¹⁹ Thus, the adoption of aspects of the Sturges Bourne's Acts across the parish selection was seemingly linked to financial pressures in providing relief. After the adoption of a select vestry, there was an increased scrutiny into the actions of overseers within Branston; in 1820, the select vestry ordered that 'the Overseer...shall make us receipts...as his disbursement will not be allow'd without he can give a sufficient reason that he has done his duty.' Supervision is also seen in accounting practice within the parish, with the select vestry auditing and signing off annual expenditure from 1823. However, the Branston overseer accounts were summarised and edited into a larger volume of all parish finances from the 1810s, predating the adoption of a select vestry and suggesting an ability to run relief administration along bureaucratic lines well before the adoption of enabling legislation.¹²⁰ Despite this, the creation of a select vestry generally seems to have coincided with an increased scrutiny into the spending of overseers within the parish selection; parish accounts in Leadenham were only audited annually by magistrates up until 1819, but after were signed-off monthly by the select vestry.¹²¹ Therefore, across the parish selection accounting processes in many parishes became increasingly refined in the final decades of the Old Poor Law, supporting Hilton's assertion that '[the Old Poor Law] was nowhere near as lax as the reformers made out.'¹²²

However, how far adoption of select vestries radically altered the nature of vestries is debatable. Such can be seen in the experience of Branston.¹²³ Up until the 1820s, attendance at vestry meetings was limited, with only nine parishioners present at a meeting in October 1817. When it is noted that there were fifty-three ratepayers within the parish, this observation corresponds with Eastwood's conclusions that in practice vestries were staffed by the larger ratepayers throughout the Old Poor Law which in turn fed into who staffed the offices of parish governance.¹²⁴ Branston's select vestry consisted of five individuals in 1823: Peregrine Curtois, rector of the parish and so

¹¹⁹ Reeve 10/2, LA

¹²⁰ Branston Parish 13/5-6, LA

¹²¹ Reeve 10/2, LA

¹²² Boyd Hilton, *A Mad, Bad & Dangerous People? England 1783-1846* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), p.596

¹²³ Branston Parish 10/2 and 12/3, LA

¹²⁴ Eastwood, *Governing Rural England*, p.39

assigned a place ex-officio; Richard Goulding; John Grimes; William Kirton; and William Graham. All were leading ratepayers and apart from Curtois, key farmers which, as discussed above, were the class who dominated parish staffing positions throughout the period due to their disproportionate contribution to rate levels. Interestingly, parishes which adopted aspects of the Sturges Bourne's Acts had ratepayers to proportion of the population which were remarkably stable across the period, being below or around 10% in most cases.¹²⁵ In contrast, Metheringham saw 12-15% of its population paying rates at the earliest and latest dates in extant data and did not adopt a select vestry.¹²⁶ Thus, a smaller and more stable proportion of ratepayers to population, with vestries generally already dominated by leading ratepayers, may have allowed for a consolidation of policy and the adoption of aspects of the Sturges Bourne's Acts. Geographically, apart from Branston, identifiable parishes which adopted select vestries or salaried overseer positions were all proximately located in the Cliff and Heath sub-region of the western heathland, perhaps prompting policy dissemination through observation of practice amongst other parishes.

Outside of overseers and vestries, there were also important sub-stratums in the management of the Old Poor Law at parish level which have been widely bypassed in the literature, generally embedded within the framework of 'farming out' care to the poor.¹²⁷ This took two major forms in the parish selection; parish workhouse masters and payments to private individuals to maintain specific relief recipients for a certain amount of time. Regarding the latter, between 1800 and 1820 Branston's overseer signed twenty-six contracts with private individuals to maintain relief recipients.¹²⁸ Eleven relief recipients received care in this way within Branston over this period with sixteen individuals contracted to provide care by private agreement with the overseer. When compared with ratepayer data in Branston from 1790 to 1809, many of these individuals were leading ratepayers, often having been overseer of the poor at various times.¹²⁹ For example, Richard Goulding, overseer of the poor in Branston in 1807 and 1808, was paid to maintain David Franklin on two occasions between 1811 and 1814. Similarly, William Kirton, who maintained various members of the Lintin family

¹²⁵ Branston Parish 13/5 and 13/14, LA; Reeve 10/2, LA; and Waddington Parish 13/1 and 2, LA

¹²⁶ Metheringham Parish 13/1, LA

¹²⁷ Brundage, *The English Poor Laws, 1700-1930*, p.13

¹²⁸ Branston Parish 10/2, LA; Branston Parish 13/5, LA

¹²⁹ Branston Parish 10/2 and 13/5, LA

between 1800 and 1809, was the highest ratepayer in the parish six times between 1801 and 1809.

The prevalence of workhouses in the parish selection under the Old Poor Law, discussed in detail in chapter seven, often meant the hiring out of care to workhouse masters. This was important because long-term continuity in workhouse masters often far outstripped the generally annual turnover in overseer positions, particularly before the increased professionalisation and stability in overseer staffing noted above from the early 1820s. For example, between 1809 until at least 1828, Richard Roberts was workhouse master in Digby; John Bee was master in Waddington from at least 1813 until 1837; and Richard Duncombe in Navenby from 1816 to 1837.¹³⁰ This had real effects on poor law outcomes within the parish selection, particularly given the face-to-face negotiated nature of the Old Poor Law and the generally laissez faire attitude of overseers once contracts with workhouse masters had been signed. Indeed, workhouse masters were often expected to provide comprehensive care to all recipients, not just workhouse inmates, only being exempt from removal, legal and medical costs. The 1790 contract signed between Thomas Idle and Digby for the maintenance of the parish poor for three years stipulates:

‘That the said Thomas Idle shall...provide for the said poor Meat, Drinks & Clothing & every other necessary article...shall clear...the parish of Digby of all Costs & Charges...the said Thomas Idle shall be Permitted to agree with any of the Poor...for out payments as he & they shall think proper.’¹³¹

Evidently, workhouse masters had the discretion to define relief outcomes through negotiated interactions with relief recipients and in practice, the actual overseer involvement in the day-to-day running of the poor law could be surprisingly light in the period up until the 1820s. Apart from buying goods for the workhouse and making three payments, John Sumner, the overseer of Digby in 1791, sub-contracted all other relief responsibilities to the workhouse master.¹³² However, in the face of increasing relief expenditure in the first decades of the 1800s, overseers became increasingly involved in

¹³⁰ Digby Parish 13/1, LA; Waddington Parish 13/2, LA; Navenby Parish 13/2/2/3, LA; Navenby Parish 10/1, LA

¹³¹ Digby Parish 13/1, LA

¹³² Ibid

the logistics of poor relief with a policy emphasis away from the parish workhouse also noted, paralleling reasons for the adoption of aspects of the Sturges Bourne's Acts in some parishes discussed above. Such can be seen in Digby, where spending rose by 60% between 1803 and 1823.¹³³ John Sumner was again overseer for the parish in 1821 and in contrast to thirty years before, his accounts show weekly out-payments made to recipients; the buying, transportation and distribution of coals, clothing and food; payment of medical fees and the parish subscription to the Lincoln County Hospital; and various journeys made in person to Sleaford, Lincoln and surrounding villages.¹³⁴ The only mention of the parish workhouse is in reference to mending its windows with the importance of the workhouse master in the day-to-day maintenance of relief seemingly diminishing. All this suggests that poor law administration within the parish was not static under the Old Poor Law, showing redefinitions in many parishes during the early 1820s, mirroring similar changes examined by Green in that decade within a London context, noting 'stricter relief practices and changes in the nature of the governance of the poor law itself.'¹³⁵ Thus, a generalised dichotomy between practice under the Old and New Poor Laws is too simple for the realities of relief within the parish selection, with the management of the poor law looking remarkably different by the eve of the New Poor Law to what it had been at the beginning of the period of study in the 1790s.

The passing of the Poor Law Amendment Act in 1834 changed the extent of the geo-administrative area of the poor law via the process of unionisation, expanding it away from a largely parish framing towards the poor law union. Poor law unions within Lincolnshire were not formed immediately after the passing of the Act, with fifteen created in the county between 1835 and 1837.¹³⁶ The Sleaford and Lincoln unions were formed respectively in September and November 1836 with the parish selection split between them.¹³⁷ Therefore, the Lincoln Heath presents a liminal geographical area

¹³³ *Abstracts of Answers and Returns under the Act for Procuring Returns Relative to Expense and Maintenance of Poor in England* (London: House of Commons, 1803-04), p.270; *Abridgment of the Abstract of the Answers and Returns so Far as Relates to the Poor* (London: House of Commons, 1818), p.240; *Report from the Select Committee on Poor Rate Returns* (London: House of Commons, 1825), p.122

¹³⁴ Digby Parish 13/1, LA

¹³⁵ David Green, 'Icons of the New System: Workhouse Construction and Relief Practices in London under the Old and New Poor Law', *The London Journal*, 34 (2009), pp.269-270

¹³⁶ John Brocklebank, 'The New Poor Law in Lincolnshire', *The Lincolnshire Historian*, 11 (1962), p.32

¹³⁷ Sleaford union: Ashby de la Launde; Cranwell; Leasingham; Digby; Leadenham; and Ruskington. Lincoln: Branston; Metherringham; Waddington; and Navenby

which sat at an interface between differing unions, a novel analytical framing within a literature generally concerning itself with single union studies. Indeed, three unions were in operation within the wider Lincoln Heath area: alongside Sleaford and Lincoln, the Newark union, incorporating parishes in Lincolnshire and Nottinghamshire, included parishes in the western Cliff and Heath region of the Lincoln Heath. Contemporaries were acutely aware of differences between unions; as noted in Lincolnshire ‘it is extraordinary...to witness the difference...as to the practice, the prejudices...and the facilities which exist in...the administration [of unions].’¹³⁸ By national standards, both unions were large. Lincoln incorporated eighty-six parishes which were both urban and rural. It exhibited the largest population of all Lincolnshire unions with 30,230 people in 1831, with Mills, Wheeler and Woolard asserting that it ‘was one of the larger districts in the county.’¹³⁹ Sleaford was a smaller administrative area, incorporating fifty-six parishes which apart from the market town of Sleaford were all rural in character.

However, as shown, the existence of the Lincoln Incorporation meant that unionisation in 1836 was not the first time a multi-parish administrative unit had been experienced within the Lincoln Heath. As discussed above, the Incorporation was governed by a board of directors, with overseer involvement in the mechanics of relief administration theoretically limited. Moreover, as will be discussed in chapter six, the scope of the Incorporation in providing relief was larger than just within its purely incorporated parishes, with the paying of non-resident relief to individuals who held settlement status within an incorporated parish meaning that non-incorporated parishes had to interact with it administratively. Moreover, the prior existence of the Lincoln Incorporation also allowed for memories of practice to permeate into the New Poor Law. Unionisation in 1836 reversed previous expenditure procedure, where under the Incorporation non-settled relief receivers were paid for by the whole union fund, placing financial responsibility for certain cohorts of needy, notably vagrants, back at the door of the parish:

‘Much dissatisfaction is manifest in Lincoln as to the liability of the Parishes individually to the charge of supporting Paupers not having

¹³⁸ *The Hertford Mercury and Reformer*, August 29th 1837

¹³⁹ Brocklebank, ‘The New Poor Law in Lincolnshire’, pp.32-33; Mills, Wheeler and Woolard, ‘Some Comparative Perspectives on Two Early Victorian Registrars of Births and Deaths in Rural Lincolnshire in the Context of National Legislation’, p.10

settlement in any parish in the union found and relieved in such individual Parish. Under the Old Incorporation such charges were made on the Whole Fund of the Incorporation.’¹⁴⁰

This caused wide policy disputes during the 1830s and 1840s within the Lincoln union between city parishes which had been the locus of the former Incorporation and rural parishes which had not. Thus, the experience of poor law unions within the Lincoln Heath was affected by understandings of best practice which had been carried over from the Old Poor Law.

How far unionisation changed the administration of the poor law at parish level is a nuanced issue. Firstly, although the position of overseer became increasingly more professionalised within the parish selection from the 1820s onwards, unionisation standardised the administrative framework of the poor law. The New Poor Law went far in negating variance in the characteristics of overseer practice between parishes and, in the long run, eradicating important administrative positions noted in the parish selection under the Old Poor Law such as workhouse masters and in the case of Ashby de la Launde, the director of the Lincoln Incorporation. However, although the geo-administrative area was expanded towards the poor law union and theoretical standardisation of practice did take place, the parish and its officers still played important administrative functions under the New Poor Law leading Snell to conclude that 1834 was not ‘a curfew which tolled the knell of parting days for the parish.’¹⁴¹ The foundation for funding the poor law was the rate system with the preservation of rating and parish financial responsibility for its own poor after 1834 meaning the centrality of parish expenditure anxieties in affecting the scope and expression of relief continued into the New Poor Law. Administratively, overseers of the poor continued to set and collect rates as both vestries and union guardians had no legal grounding to do so. Such a system largely lasted until the 1865 Union Chargeability Act, albeit with the creation of irremovable pauper status in 1846 removing parish financial responsibility for some poor who were paid for by the union. Similarly, settlement status defined within a parish framing survived the Poor Law Amendment Act, helping construct notions of eligibility alongside issues such as deservingness and belonging which were largely formed through interactions between relief seekers and administrators within the parish

¹⁴⁰ PL10/118/1, LA, underlining in the original.

¹⁴¹ Snell, *Parish and Belonging*, p.340

and sub-union districts under the New Poor Law. Finally, outdoor relief was the dominant form of poor law aid given well into the New Poor Law despite directives limiting its distribution to the able-bodied. As the majority of recipients under the New Poor Law were the non-able-bodied, the parish continued to be the main stage within which the realities of relief outcomes were generally experienced.¹⁴²

The Poor Law Amendment Act also did not dissolve key administrative organs of the poor law found before 1834 with overseers of the poor and vestries continuing to be involved in its management. Digby's overseer accounts for the 1830s and 1840s emphasise this, showing journeys to audit expenditure and bank funds; attendance at magisterial sessions; accompanying relief recipients on journeys and removals; and general tasks such as paying rents and buying of goods for the parish poor.¹⁴³ Similarly, Branston's overseer accounts for the early years of the New Poor Law show a surprising continuity in the day-to-day mechanics of provision, with the conveyance of paupers to magisterial sessions; the paying of rents and providing out-payments; and dealing with removals.¹⁴⁴ As late as 1847, it was the Branston overseer, not the district relieving officer, who made the journey 'to Lincoln and Harmston respecting Joseph Goodman a Lunatic.'¹⁴⁵ However, the mention of Harmston in the accounts is intriguing as this was the resident parish of the relieving officer for the south district of the Lincoln union (James Reeve) within which Branston was included, suggesting that overseers were liaising with union officials in the construction of policy. This is paralleled in parish officers' involvement in new union administrative tasks, not least in running guardian elections alongside union clerks.¹⁴⁶

As stated, unionisation of the parish selection was not synonymous with the passing of the Poor Law Amendment Act. Pragmatically, the Poor Law Commission took a generally conciliatory tone in its interaction with parish offices within this transitional period, as can be seen in a circular sent to non-unionised parishes in November 1834:

¹⁴² Ibid, pp.207-338

¹⁴³ Digby Parish 12/1 and 13/2, LA

¹⁴⁴ Branston Parish 13/13, LA

¹⁴⁵ Ibid

¹⁴⁶ *The Lincolnshire Chronicle*, 17th March 1837

‘As Overseers you...remain responsible for the...relief of the Poor...you may furnish such relief...bearing in mind always, the necessity of vigilance and strict economy in its distribution.’¹⁴⁷

Indeed, legally the Poor Law Commission and union officials had no right to compel parishes to instigate certain policies. Wells’ discussion of parish-owned property under the New Poor Law highlights that the authority to sell housing stock was held by parish proprietors.¹⁴⁸ Moreover, parishes were seemingly aware of their right to reject certain union directives. In 1839, the Lincoln union presented a policy to create district assistant overseers within each union district to help in the collection of rates. Some parishes voted to accept this suggestion, such as in Branston where it was ‘requested to consent...that there be an assistant Overseer appointed by the...Guardians.’¹⁴⁹

However, due to wider opposition from other parishes, this plan came to nothing. It was roundly rejected by the Navenby vestry who ‘unanimously agreed that the appointment of District Assistant Overseers is unnecessary and the Guardian of this Parish is desired to oppose the appointment of them.’¹⁵⁰ Here, the role of union guardian is presented as a parish position which acted as a communicative agent between parish and union, with policy sanctioning still roundly conceived as the prerogative of the parish. Despite rejecting district assistant overseers within the Lincoln union, many parishes separately created supporting positions to fill this need. In April 1842, Branston created a salaried assistant position to help the overseers of the poor and highways collect rates.¹⁵¹ Such emphasises the dynamic nature of the parish within the unionised geo-administrative area of the New Poor Law with the demographic continuity noted above regarding the staffing of parish officers, within which union guardians should be included, reinforcing this.

However, unionisation did mean administrative change with parish officials having to interact with union officers to form relief policy and deliver outcomes. As such, the fundamental administrative boundary of the poor law was expanded into the poor law union, leading to redefinition of how parish officers operated. This often proved

¹⁴⁷ *To the Overseers of the Poor*, 8th November 1834, Digby Parish 13/22, LA

¹⁴⁸ Roger Wells, ‘The Poor Law Commission and Publicly-Owned Housing in the English Countryside, 1834-47’, *The Agricultural History Review*, 55 (2007), pp.184

¹⁴⁹ Branston Parish 10/3, LA

¹⁵⁰ Navenby Parish 10/2, LA

¹⁵¹ Branston Parish 10/3, LA

unpopular in the immediate period after unionisation, as can be seen via correspondence in the Lincoln union letter book.¹⁵² The Lincoln union clerk in 1837 had to remind the Branston overseers to ‘as far as practicable carry out...orders into effect...I hope you will see the necessity of prompt compliance.’ Indeed, as late as seven months after the creation of the Lincoln union many parishes were still without guardians. In 1837, several parishes within the Lincoln union were disregarding orders to send pauper list returns to the union, instead sending them ‘direct to [the Poor Law Commission in] London.’ There was clearly antagonism to the new system at parish level within the initial years of unionisation with which union officials had to contend.

Snell has seen limitations on the amount and nature of relief allowed to be given by the parish, authorised by the poor law union and limited to times of necessity, as the main change to parish authority under the New Poor Law.¹⁵³ Theoretically, unionisation did impose limitations on parish independence, as noted in instructions to overseers published by the Poor Law Commission in 1839:

‘Immediately from the First Meeting of...Guardians, you must observe...as far as you are enabled in the convenient and proper discharge of your duty, the following Rules. Firstly- No relief shall be given in money (except in cases of sickness or accident) to any able-bodied male pauper...Secondly- If any able-bodied male pauper shall apply to be set out to work, one half [of relief] shall be in kind. Thirdly- the relief...to widows or single women, not being aged or infirm, shall be in kind...Fifthly- Except in case of accident, sickness, or other urgent necessity, you must not relieve any pauper...who shall not be resident in your parish.’¹⁵⁴

Regulations in regards the limiting of relief seem generally to have been concerned with the able-bodied pauper; indeed, Williams has suggested that ‘all that was meant to change [under the New Poor Law] ...was the treatment of the able-bodied.’¹⁵⁵ Until the 1844 Outdoor Relief Prohibitory General Order came into force in the unions of study, both the Sleaford and Lincoln unions were working under special orders from the Poor

¹⁵² PL10/118/1, LA

¹⁵³ Snell, *Parish and Belonging*, pp.346-347

¹⁵⁴ Metheringham Parish 13/16, LA

¹⁵⁵ Karel Williams quoted in King, *Poverty and Welfare in England*, p.231

Law Commission which restricted outdoor relief for able-bodied.¹⁵⁶ Copies of these special orders are not extant for the Sleaford union but a copy of a special order sent to the Lincoln union dated November 1840 survives in the Metheringham parish archive.¹⁵⁷ This was the third special order forbidding outdoor relief to the able-bodied made to the Lincoln union since 1836, suggesting the previous directives were challenged. In terms of content, it reads very similar to the later 1844 general order, reiterating that no outdoor relief should be given to the able-bodied except through exemption clauses which read verbatim to the eight found in the 1844 general order. Guardians were also allowed to digress from the special order in allowing out-relief to the able-bodied so long as the Poor Law Commission was notified within fifteen days and allowed this. How far such special and general orders impacted recipient demography and outcomes will be explored in later chapters, it is enough to emphasise here that theoretically unions were under limitations to whom and in which mode relief could be given.

However, the debates about the use of exemptions outlined in chapter two still hold for the experience of the parish selection.¹⁵⁸ Again, the issue was one of linguistic ambiguity of Poor Law Commission orders, which consistently allowed local discretion in regards granting outdoor relief to the able-bodied at times of necessity and sickness. However, directives were imprecise in defining what such necessity looked like. Thus, there was still considerable scope for interpretation of need, based on local context rather than hard-and-fast national descriptors. Guardian boards were keenly aware of the limited powers of compulsion given to the Poor Law Commission. Particularly in regards the treatment of perceived deserving cohorts, recommendations by the central poor law authorities could be challenged, often dependent on variable notions of pauper categorisation at the local level. In September 1839, a period for when a special order forbidding outdoor relief for the able-bodied was in force within the Lincoln union, the Poor Law Commission complained of the continued non-resident out-relief given by the

¹⁵⁶ *Return of the Number of Poor Law Unions to which Orders for withholding Out-door Relief to the Able-bodied were sent, November 1837-1838* (London: House of Commons, 1839)

¹⁵⁷ Metheringham Parish 13/17, LA

¹⁵⁸ Felix Driver, *Power and Pauperism: The Workhouse System, 1834-1884* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), p.48; Karel Williams, *From Pauperism to Poverty* (London: Routledge, 1981), pp.40-87; Snell, *Parish and Belonging*, pp.235-237 and pp.243-244

Lincoln union to Jane Whitehead and her five children. The response of the union clerk is worth noting in detail:

‘The Board...consented that [Jane Whitehead] should be allowed out relief at Boston, she not being very able bodied but a weakly woman...the allowance agreed to be given...to bring up her children...It’s not for me to argue the legality or illegality of this allowance but I am well satisfied after the test of the work house being given to this poor woman and her highly respectable character that the Board...did not act without due consideration of the merits of her care and the discretionary power delegated to them...I hope it will be considered by you that the present relief may be continued to this poor widow in consequence of her weak state of health and large family.’¹⁵⁹

It appears that the exemption clauses were utilised here to provide relief to Whitehead despite her not living within the bounds of the union, with the opinion being made that she was ‘not very able bodied’. Thus, central directives were seemingly applied through local notions of categorisation and deservingness with the guardians noting ‘her highly respectable character,’ the importance of paupers maintaining an identity of deservingness being explored in chapter six. There was little the Poor Law Commission could do in this case, replying ‘after due consideration, we think it best to be satisfied...you [Assistant Commissioner] can keep an eye on them when you visit the Union.’¹⁶⁰ However, the very fact that the issue was reported to the Poor Law Commission in the first place, presumably via the Assistant Commissioner, meant that unions were still part of a larger supervisory system at the national level, with policy overseen by the Poor Law Commission despite outcomes at the local level. This was a clearly a departure from practice under the Old Poor Law.

Analysis of Poor Law Commission directives continually suggests a preoccupation with standardisation of administrative procedure, with far more time given to outlining accounting and administrative processes than in dictating specific relief practice, outside of a curtailment of out-door relief to the able-bodied. Indeed, Snell has suggested that auditing of accounts was ‘much more demanding under the new poor law than under the

¹⁵⁹ Edward Senior, *Correspondence and Papers Related to the Welsh District and the North Midland District, 1838-1847*, MH32/66, pp.143-144, NA

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid*, p.145

old'¹⁶¹ with an increase in the amount and type of accounts overseers were legally supposed to keep. Parish overseers were now to keep five separate books of accounts: a rate book; a rate receipt book; a bastardy receipt book; a general receipt book; and a receipts and payments book.¹⁶² Although an increased emphasis on expenditure and account keeping is evident in the parish selection from at least the 1810s, the actual infrastructural fabric needed to be kept by parishes after unionisation surpassed previous experience. Increased supervision of overseers' accounts was evident through union auditing processes, with financial penalties given for failure to comply with orders.¹⁶³ Indeed, Branston was charged two shillings on April 5th 1839 for a late signing of its accounts.¹⁶⁴ Digby's overseers accounts for the 1830s show that they needed to be approved by the guardians at the Sleaford union and at Ruskington, the increased number of accounts needed to be kept necessitated appointing a salaried vestry clerk in 1839.¹⁶⁵ Such bureaucracy is also noted at union level, with directives noting the documentation needed to be kept including a guardian meeting minute book and ledger; an order check book, signed by the chairman and the union clerk; a workhouse admissions and discharge book; a pauper description book; quarterly account abstracts for each parish in the union; and quarterly relief lists from each parish, amongst others.¹⁶⁶ Under the New Poor Law, the parish was integrated into a system which concerned itself with increased administrative supervision.

At the centre of the poor law union supervisory system sat boards of guardians. Driver has shown that these worked as a lynchpin between national, regional and local levels of administration.¹⁶⁷ Although differing agents such as parish officers and union staff had important relationships with each other, they were only directly responsible to the board which in turn was directly answerable to the Poor Law Commission and later Poor Law Board. Brundage has criticised the literature for failing to move beyond conceptions of dictatorial control when discussing centralisation under the New Poor Law, arguing for the construction of guardian boards as its key centralising feature.¹⁶⁸ Similarly, Dunkley

¹⁶¹ Snell, *Parish and Belonging*, p.341

¹⁶² Metheringham Parish 13/16, LA

¹⁶³ Snell, *Parish and Belonging*, pp.361-363

¹⁶⁴ Branston Parish 13/13, LA

¹⁶⁵ Digby Parish 13/2, LA; Ruskington Parish 10/1, LA

¹⁶⁶ PL12/101/1, LA

¹⁶⁷ Driver, *Power and Pauperism: The Workhouse System, 1834-1884*, Figure 8.3, p.139

¹⁶⁸ Brundage, *The Making of the New Poor Law*, p.14

has argued for a reappraisal of the Poor Law Commission's role in the management of the poor law, arguing for a supervisory function which was discretionary to local authority via guardians.¹⁶⁹ As such, the New Poor Law was 'a system which combined national, uniform policy with local implementation.'¹⁷⁰ The presence of Assistant Commissioners and later Poor Law Inspectors within localities generally fell within the remit of supervision rather than compulsion. Their infrequent visits to unions meant a limitation in influencing policy; in the quarter ending December 1838, the Assistant Commissioner Edward Gulson visited the Sleaford and Lincoln unions just three times each.¹⁷¹

Despite the centrality of guardian boards to the overall mechanics of the New Poor Law, they mostly supervised policy which generally had its genesis in sub-union districts, parishes and workhouses. The large size of boards and the fact that in both the Sleaford and Lincoln unions they only met every two weeks, with non-attendance common, limited the amount of control they had in dictating the day-to-day management of the poor law. In Lincoln, guardians were generally laissez-faire, being described as such in 1854: '[they] attend the board very generally; there is no fine for non-attendance... They are generally... disinterested.'¹⁷² As noted by the Lincoln union chairman in 1841: 'if the Union be not situated in the market town which they usually frequent, country Guardians will not be likely to attend.'¹⁷³ Indeed, guardians often left the day-to-day running of the poor law to others, particularly overseers who they interacted with at the parish level, often requesting that they should not be bothered by cases. Such is seen in the issuing of warrants against two men from Branston who had abandoned their families in the Lincoln workhouse in 1837, with the union clerk explicitly telling the parish overseers 'Mr. Melville [the parish guardian] particularly requests that he may not be troubled at all in the matter and therefore you will not trouble him... on the subject.'¹⁷⁴ However, boards of guardians were not powerless bodies; corporately, they

¹⁶⁹ Peter Dunkley, 'The 'Hungry Forties' and the New Poor Law: A Case Study', *The Historical Journal*, 17 (1974), pp.329-346

¹⁷⁰ Peter Mandler, 'Tories and Paupers: Christian Political Economy and the Making of the New Poor Law', *The Historical Journal*, 33 (1990), p.100

¹⁷¹ Gulson, *Correspondence and Papers Relating to the West and South Midlands Districts, 1834-1838*, p.595

¹⁷² *Return of Salary, Compensation and Allowances to Clerks to Poor Law Unions in England and Wales* (London: House of Commons, 1854) p.50

¹⁷³ Senior, *Correspondence and Papers Related to the Welsh District and North Midland District, 1838-1847*, p.360

¹⁷⁴ PL10/118/1, LA

reprimanded staff and asserted minimum standards of care across the union.¹⁷⁵ Despite this, they had to rely widely on others to report misdemeanours, with disclosure coming from staff or relief receivers themselves. In October 1839, the Sleaford guardians dismissed the porter William Lord due to sexual relations with a female workhouse inmate. However, this only came to light due to a complaint by the workhouse master, emphasising a detachment between boards of guardians and the day-to-day experience of poor law.¹⁷⁶

Importantly, the poor law union did not in itself present a homogenous administrative unit. In many ways, the union workhouse presented a separate administrative space in itself; this need not be expanded on here, with the experience of indoor life explicitly analysed in chapters six and seven. Poor law unions were also divided internally into relieving and medical districts with Snell seeing these as having ‘a more local disposition than was implied by union administration.’¹⁷⁷ Within both the Sleaford and Lincoln unions, three relieving districts were formed. These were substantial areas, with the southern district of the Lincoln union, within which the parishes of study of Branston, Metheringham, Navenby and Waddington were included, having twenty-nine parishes and extra-parochial places.¹⁷⁸ Medical districts were more numerous, five being formed within Sleaford and nine in Lincoln by 1850.¹⁷⁹ These union sub-units went far in differentiating experiences of need internally within unions in part due to the wide-ranging responsibilities held by relieving and medical officers within them. As already shown, boards of guardians were responsible for the hiring of union staff, with appointments often made in the context of pre-existing local relationships regarding relieving and medical officers and the movement of non-locals into workhouse positions also noted. However, the actual actions of these union staff after appointment had considerable effects on the day-to-day experience of relief under the New Poor Law, especially considering the mostly detached supervisory corporate role of boards of guardians. This was particularly true in the case of relieving and medical officers due to the disproportionate amount of relief given out of doors. The multi-parish nature of

¹⁷⁵ Bradley, ‘Welcoming the New Poor Law’, p. 206

¹⁷⁶ PL12/102/1, LA, p.377

¹⁷⁷ Snell, *Parish and Belonging*, p.226

¹⁷⁸ William White, *History, Gazetteer and Directory of Lincolnshire* (Exeter: David and Charles, 1856, Reprint 1969), p.64

¹⁷⁹ *The Union and Parish Officers’ Pocket Almanac and Guide for the Year of Our Lord 1850* (London: Charles Knight, 1850) p.123

relieving and medical districts meant that officers presented an explicit union presence within parishes much more so than guardians, who as stated were largely dominant parish ratepayers in a new administrative guise, and Assistant Commissioners or Poor Law Inspectors who generally concerned themselves with corresponding with guardian boards and inspecting workhouses.

The duties of relieving officers were substantial, leading Midwinter to conclude that 'the onus of [New] Poor Law management fell squarely upon [them].'¹⁸⁰ These involved taking applications for relief; delivering out-door relief; taking paupers to workhouses, hospitals or asylums; and communicating between recipients, parish officers and the guardian board.¹⁸¹ In 1840, it was noted in the Lincoln union that most applicants dealt directly with relieving officers, only approaching guardians when 'refused relief and consider themselves aggrieved.'¹⁸² Although relieving officers often gave agreed aid to overseers for distribution, such as when the Branston overseer received 'relief [for] Richard Moore'¹⁸³ from a relieving officer in 1843, it was not the case that this was a necessity. Within the Lincoln union, it was stated in 1838 that relieving officers did not have to meet with parish officers when visiting parishes, meaning distribution of relief without their involvement.¹⁸⁴ For example, Elizabeth Towers, chargeable to Leadenham, received a bread dole 'left by the Relieving Officer at a certain place for [her] to call for.'¹⁸⁵ Moreover, relieving officers could overrule the wishes of overseers. At Leasingham, out-relief was granted by a relieving officer, with the support of the parish guardian, to Eleanor Vine in 1838 despite protests from the overseer.¹⁸⁶ Such illustrates the discretionary power relieving officers had in defining relief outcomes, which could have negative consequences for relief seekers when relieving and medical officers disregarded directives, again emphasising the sub-union realities of relief under the New Poor Law. In 1845 and 1846, a relieving officer in the Lincoln union was repeatedly reprimanded for failing to implement relief ordered by the guardians, with the relieving officer of the north district of the union discharged due to

¹⁸⁰ Midwinter, 'State Intervention at the Local Level: the New Poor Law in Lancashire', p.109

¹⁸¹ Harling, 'The Power of Persuasion', p.40

¹⁸² Senior, *Correspondence and Papers Related to the Welsh District and the North Midland District, 1838-1847*, p.239

¹⁸³ Branston Parish 13/13, LA

¹⁸⁴ *Report from the Select Committee on the Poor Law Amendment Act; and Appendix* (House of Commons: London, 1837-38), p.50

¹⁸⁵ PL12/102/4, p.234, LA

¹⁸⁶ PL12/102/1, p.291, LA

inadequate provision given.¹⁸⁷ Relieving officers could also steal funds meant to be distributed, a national issue noted by Harling.¹⁸⁸ John Bingham, a relieving officer in the Sleaford Union, was convicted of embezzlement in 1838 having stolen money from out-payments, leading to his dismissal and imprisonment.¹⁸⁹

The role of relieving officers was paralleled by that of medical officers. Until the 1842 General Medical Order, medical practice within unions was not stipulated, with medical officers having wide scope in defining relief offered, exasperated by the fact that they had to pay for provisions from their own funds.¹⁹⁰ One Lincolnshire medical officer concluding in 1837 that ‘medical officers are shamefully used. They...scarcely know what they are doing right, or when they are liable to be called to account by the board.’¹⁹¹ Union medical relief could prove so poor that parish officers continued to provide private medical care to paupers throughout the New Poor Law, as correspondence to the overseer of Digby in 1836 confirms:

‘I have this day seen Morr & find that the Union Doct is not doing him any good, nor do the medicines which he sends him relieve his complaint- I should therefore advise that a collection should be made for him; and that he should go to Dr North.’¹⁹²

Moreover, the size of relieving and medical districts meant that it was ‘virtually impossible for [officers] to service...the needs of the population under their charge.’¹⁹³ Indeed, only one medical officer was responsible for the whole Lincoln union between 1836 and 1838 with more districts only being formed when it was clear that the sole medical officer could not cope.¹⁹⁴

As such, although there were broad similarities in the nature of relief outcomes either side of unionisation, a point stressed in chapter seven, the actual processes relief seekers

¹⁸⁷ PL10/102/3, p.12, LA; *The Stamford Mercury*, 22nd June 1849

¹⁸⁸ Harling, ‘The Power of Persuasion’, p.41

¹⁸⁹ KQS A/2/499/153

¹⁹⁰ Samantha Shave, ‘Immediate Death or a Life of Torture Are the Consequences of the System: The Bridgewater Union Scandal and Policy Change’ in Jonathan Reinarz and Leonard Schwarz (eds), *Medicine and the Workhouse* (Rochester: the University of Rochester Press, 2013), p.166

¹⁹¹ *The Hertford Mercury and Reformer*, December 30th 1837

¹⁹² Digby Parish 13/15, LA

¹⁹³ William Apfel and Peter Dunkley, ‘English Rural Society and the New Poor Law: Bedfordshire, 1834-47’, *Social History*, 10 (1985), p.57

¹⁹⁴ *The Stamford Mercury*, 16th November 1838; Richard Hall, *Correspondence and Papers Relating to the West Midland District and South Midland District, 1837-1839*, MH32/35, p.514, NA

had to go through in order to obtain relief did change, becoming noticeably more drawn-out and complex due to the expansion of administrative agents under the New Poor Law. For example, relieving and medical officers made rounds to parishes within their district; however, if relief was needed outside of the period where officers were present, relief seekers had to physically search for the relevant officer.¹⁹⁵ Such is seen in the Sleaford union in 1837:

‘The Relieving Officer of the Heckington District received an application from the wife of George Lockey by a messenger from South Kyme for Medical Relief in consequence of her husband having taken a large quantity of laudanum. On investigating the circumstances...the Relieving Officer found they were not in a state of destitution – the father having been constantly in work...to the time of his taking the poison. He therefore told the messenger...he could not order Medical Attendance. The messenger went to Mr. Gibbs [medical officer] before coming to the Relieving Officer to request his attendance.’¹⁹⁶

This source highlights several important points. Firstly, the wife of George Lockey did not approach the union officers directly, instead sending a messenger to deliver her request. This then initiated a visit from the relieving officer who then decided that the applicant was ineligible, using his own personal criterium to define this and assuming George Lockey must have savings due to ‘having been constantly in work...to the time of his taking the poison.’ Moreover, the medical officer was sought before the relieving officer was contacted. In the early years of the New Poor Law, medical officers had to reach agreement with relieving officers before relief could be given; as noted by Shave, this complicated the logistics of relief access as ‘the poor would have to obtain the attention of two officers, sometimes in different places.’¹⁹⁷ This could cause negative outcomes for relief seekers, with differing administrative agents sometimes refusing relief already agreed on by others. In December 1844, Thomas Hayland, a medical officer in the Lincoln union, was reprimanded for not treating ‘Sarah Snell of Metheringham to whom medical orders were given by the R.O [Relieving Officer] & to

¹⁹⁵ Shave, ‘Immediate Death of a Life of Torture Are the Consequences of the System’, p.169

¹⁹⁶ PL12/118/1, LA

¹⁹⁷ Shave, ‘Immediate Death of a Life of Torture Are the Consequences of the System’, p.169

whom...relief had been agreed.’¹⁹⁸ However, apart from exceptional circumstances, such as when the master and matron of the Sleaford union workhouse were dismissed in 1839 due to death of the pregnant inmate Mary Asher, inadequacy in duty did not necessarily lead to dismissal of staff with many union officials holding posts for years despite complaints and reprimands against them.¹⁹⁹ This has already been shown to be the case within the Sleaford and Lincoln unions, meaning that the individuals who staffed union positions were a long-lasting presence in the mechanics of the poor law during the early New Poor Law within the parish selection.

At the centre of inadequacy lay the interlocking factors of financial and administrative responsibility; as Harling concludes ‘efficiency...ran up against the limitations imposed by...economy.’²⁰⁰ The focus on cutting expenditure which permeated both poor laws meant that union staffing salaries were often poor, increasing the potential for incompetence. Indeed, salaries varied within unions for the same position; in 1837, medical officers’ salaries within the Sleaford union ranged from £15 to £45 per annum dependent on district.²⁰¹ Union staff often complained of conditions and pay. In 1837, the three relieving officers of the Sleaford union wrote corporately to the board of guardians, complaining of poor expenses and the cost of keeping horses which were necessary for travel due to the large size of their districts:

‘We beg respectfully to request your consideration of the very heavy expenses to which the Relieving Officers...have been subject during the year...and also to point out...[that] the Relieving Officers of the Retford Union having recently been granted a permanent addition to their salaries...In Huntingdonshire a Relieving Officer is receiving £110 per annum for duties that can be performed on foot. As chairman of the Sleaford Board...we hope you will have the goodness to...increase of our salaried before the termination of the present year.’²⁰²

In part, negligence often resulted from a confusion of role and responsibility, whether feigned or actual, between the varied constituent parts of New Poor Law administrative

¹⁹⁸ PL10/102/2, p.473, LA

¹⁹⁹ *The Lincolnshire Chronicle*, 26th April 1839; PL12/102/1, p.338, LA

²⁰⁰ Harling, ‘The Power of Persuasion’, p.43

²⁰¹ PL12/118/1, LA

²⁰² Ibid. Underlining in original

apparatus. The reality of the New Poor Law meant that multiple agents were involved in administration, often with clear remits blurred. Documentation from the Sleaford union show that guardians, the union clerk, relieving officers, or parish officers could at various times be responsible for applying for bastardy orders, despite this legislatively being a parish responsibility.²⁰³ Similarly, complaints made against medical officers in the Sleaford union in 1836 ‘originated in the mistaken opinion that the Medical Attendant was bound to convey the Medicine instead...of the overseer.’²⁰⁴ Policy disputes within unions were particularly evident in the care of perceived non-deserving cohorts such as vagrants who were generally not settled within a parish incorporated into the union from which they were receiving aid. Indeed, the Poor Law Commission only implemented specific policy for vagrants after 1837, with relief to be provided in casual wards in union workhouses.²⁰⁵ There was ambiguity in who was administratively and financially responsible for vagrants, evidenced by prolonged policy debates within the Lincoln union during the late 1830s and 1840s. From 1838, the union circulated vagrant tickets to be issued in parishes by overseers, allowing for a night’s accommodation in the casual ward in return for two hours work.²⁰⁶ However, overseers often refused to issue these, sending vagrants to relieving officers who then claimed they ‘had no power to act, except called upon at the instance of some parish.’²⁰⁷ When pressed on the issue in 1840, the union clerk stated that it was overseers’ responsibility to relieve vagrants, due to the clauses of the New Poor Law which allowed for parish relief at times of necessity.²⁰⁸ However, due to the continuation of parish financial responsibility for its own poor, many overseers were lax to relieve vagrants as the cost would be incurred by the parish who issued the relief ticket. This led to a situation where vagrants were:

‘Coldly referred to an Overseer of another parish, and by him to a third...he [the vagrant] was at last referred to the relieving officer, who also refused, until the threat of complaint to the Guardians exhorted one [a ticket]’²⁰⁹

²⁰³ PL12/102/1, p.375, LA

²⁰⁴ Ibid, p.49

²⁰⁵ Norman Longmate, *The Workhouse: A Social History* (London: Temple Smith, 1974), p.232

²⁰⁶ Francis Hill, *Victorian Lincoln* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1974), p.133

²⁰⁷ *The Hertford Mercury and Reformer*, January 25th 1840

²⁰⁸ Ibid

²⁰⁹ *The Stamford Mercury*, March 26th 1841

Attempts by Lincoln city guardians in the early 1840s to finance vagrancy relief out of union funds, as had been the case under the Lincoln Incorporation, were blocked by their rural counterparts who found it economically viable for liability to be held at parish level due to city parishes overwhelmingly attracting more vagrants. Indeed, rural parishes were often accused of thrusting their poor into the city; in 1849, the Lincoln parish of St. Swithin's complained that rural parishes 'do all they can to get rid of their poor.'²¹⁰ The impasse in regards vagrancy policy was only broken when relief was taken out of the hands of the poor law and handed over to the police, paralleling the role of parish constables and magistrates in administering vagrancy under the Old Poor Law. In 1849, the Sleaford union reported that 'the number of vagrants...continued to decrease, in consequence of the police being employed to examine and relieve them instead of the union officers,'²¹¹ introducing a new position within the union, that of Inspector of Vagrants, held by the police officer George Sharpe in 1849.

There was also an ambiguity in role and responsibilities in delivering relief once recipients had crossed union boundaries, a central point within the Lincoln Heath as the area sat on the border of three poor law unions. Frequent localised migration in the context of employment systems within the mixed-agrarian agricultural niche of the Lincoln Heath meant that many relief seekers were not resident in their settled parish or indeed the union of incorporation of their settled parish. This necessitated constant contact between proximate unions to provide relief, particularly in regard non-resident relief which was common well into the New Poor Law. For example, in 1852 the Sleaford union sent £7 13s in out-relief to the Lincoln union to be distributed to Walker Wilkinson, a pauper living in the boundaries of the Lincoln union but with settlement within a parish incorporated into the Sleaford.²¹² Such scenarios question the supposed rigidity of the poor law union; the geo-administrative area was in a sense larger than the borders of the poor law union, with the boundaries of unions always being permeable. Moreover, many of the main infrastructural components of relief, particularly medical aid such as the hospital, general dispensary and asylums, were found within the city of Lincoln and shared between the county. This meant relief recipients had to cross union boundaries to access aid, as described in 1855:

²¹⁰ *The Stamford Mercury*, June 22nd 1849

²¹¹ *The Nottinghamshire Guardian*, March 15th 1849

²¹² PL12/102/3, p.107, LA

‘Gervase Boor...had been sent from the Sleaford workhouse...to the county hospital [and] was refused admission...he was removed to the Lincoln workhouse...where he expired on the following Thursday...George Coe...also stated that he was from Sleaford workhouse, applied at the hospital for admission, but was refused, and sent to the Lincoln workhouse. This man...became chargeable to St. Michael-on-the-Mount, as the hospital stands in that parish...[this] brings a serious incumbrance upon a...parish which has no right to bear it.’²¹³

Such a source illustrates several points. Firstly, as stated, recipients moved between union jurisdictions to access relief because the poor law union as an administrative entity was superimposed on pre-existing socio-economic landscapes. Secondly, an order granting relief did not necessarily mean it was given, with Boor and Coe both being refused entry into the county hospital despite having been sent from the Sleaford union workhouse to access medical aid. Thirdly, this then resulted in them becoming chargeable to the parish where the hospital was located and being placed in the Lincoln union workhouse, despite being settled in parishes incorporated into the Sleaford union and initially being granted relief from that union. As such, those seeking relief under the New Poor Law were faced with a multitude of administrative agents far more so than under the Old Poor Law, with each agent having the potential to block earlier decisions made. Such issues were exasperated by the geographical positioning of poor law unions on the Lincoln Heath and the human ecological environment such were imposed upon.

4.4 Conclusions

It must be noted that the administration of relief in the waning period of the Old Poor Law was far from static within the parish selection. Firstly, the importance of workhouse masters in managing the poor law, particularly in the period up until the 1820s, denotes important sub-stratums in the administration of relief generally overlooked within the literature which often focusses on the overseer of the poor as the quintessential Old Poor Law officer. In much of the parish selection, the day-to-day role of overseers could be surprisingly light in the period before the 1820s, with a policy emphasis on the workhouse and ‘farming out’ care noted. However, rising levels of

²¹³ *The Lincolnshire Chronicle*, March 30th 1855

need and increasing costs seemingly impacted the administration of the poor law within the parish selection, with the adoption of select vestries and salaried overseer positions under the Sturges Bourne's Acts of 1818 and 1819 exhibited. Thus, from the 1820s overseers became increasingly involved in the management of the poor law in many parishes of study, paralleling a wider stability and professionalisation of parish staffing which formed a bedrock of practice which continued in some respects into the New Poor Law. Complementing such developments were changes to the operation of the poor law in Ashby de la Launde through its membership of the Lincoln Incorporation from 1821. Unlike in other parishes of study, overseer involvement in administration was limited in Ashby de la Launde during the 1820s due to policy within the Incorporation which meant the directors were responsible for the distribution of relief. Similarly, Ashby de la Launde exhibited other administrative agents not found in other parishes of study through the persona of parish director, locating the parish within a multiple parish administrative system well before the Poor Law Amendment Act of 1834.

Clearly, the expansion of the geo-administrative area under the New Poor Law had real effects on the way relief was administered and delivered, most notably by the increasing of staff involved in the management of relief. Despite the continuing presence of parish officers, these now had to work alongside union officials to administer relief, with relieving and medical officers being a much more explicit union presence in the life of the parish than guardians who at parish level, were taken from the same ranks of leading ratepayers as other parish officers, and at union level generally played a corporately supervisory role somewhat detached from the day-to-day mechanics of the poor law. However, framing administrative change around the locus of the poor law union can also be questioned. The macro-union area was not a homogeneous administrative unit, as the experience of relieving and medical districts shows. Neither was the geo-administrative area of the poor law restricted to union borders at the local level, with cross-union cooperation in delivering support evident and with relief seekers having to cross union boundaries to access centrally delivered aid, most notably regarding medical relief with infrastructure grouped in the county capital at Lincoln. Such was intensified by the geographically liminal position of the Lincoln Heath between three poor law unions and extensive localised migration within the mixed-agrarian agricultural niche of the area of study. The experience of the magistracy also highlights geographical

importance to the administration of relief under the New Poor Law, with the disjunction of union and magisterial spheres of management causing issues, particularly in the Lincoln union which had to contend with multiple magistracies dependent on parish location. Thus, poor law unions were mapped onto pre-existing administrative structures but also human ecological environments, with both going far in influencing the management of the poor law after unionisation.

Despite this, if one moves away from a macro-framing back towards the parish selection, the centrality of the parish as a forum of interaction and stage upon which the day-to-day provision of relief was generally experienced continued into the New Poor Law. This was not necessarily synonymous with the mechanics of practice under the Old Poor Law with, as stated, the presence of relieving and medical officers being important. However, parish preoccupations remained similar either side of unionisation, concerned with providing relief for their own poor within the bounds of economy, often underpinning policy rationale under the New Poor Law and being the catalyst for disputes internally within unions. Indeed, the quintessential position of the union guardian, theoretically forming the lynchpin between local and national spheres of administration via union boards, was intimately tied to the socio-economic realities of respective parishes due to their positions as leading ratepayers. Thus, administrating the poor law union was seemingly an interactive process between spheres of influences expressed via the framings of parishes; sub-union districts; boards of guardians; and national bodies.

To unpack the realities of this process it is necessary to look more closely at the individuals involved in staffing poor law administrative apparatus at the local level, with this thesis suggesting a strong continuity in the demography of relief administrators, generally taken from local elites embedded in human ecological conditions, between poor laws. This was particularly true at the parish and magisterial level. It can be argued that this provided a cohesive element between the disparate local administrative organs of the New Poor Law, often masked if only the administrative function of such organs is focussed on, which embedded the administration of relief into localised human ecological environment. Those involved in the formal administration of the poor law were overwhelmingly taken from the land-using and landowning tenant farming and gentry classes, increasingly consolidated into a socio-economically dominant agriculturalist bloc during the early decades of the nineteenth century and

joined in relationships outside of the scope of poor law which fed into the administration of and attitudes towards relief. There was broad demographical continuity in the personalities who managed relief within the parish selection between poor laws, with potential nominally-evidenced familial lineages of authority being joined by new dominant tenant farming ratepayers during the 1820s and 1830s as mixed-agrarian practice was consolidated. Here, reconstructions in the cultural and economic capital given to land led to changes in the demography of parish relief administration in the waning period of the Old Poor Law, setting the scene for continuity into the New albeit within new administrative guises such as union guardian. Thus, divisions between administrative organs, although legislatively real and rearticulated after unionisation, were often blunted in some respects by the cohesive capacity demography played, emphasised by the fact that the same individual could hold simultaneous roles across the differing organs of relief administration. It was within this context that new union roles were appointed, with staffing largely controlled by guardian boards and often made in relation to pre-existing relationships within the local socio-economic forum, particularly in the case of non-workhouse staff. However, the increased number of agents involved directly with relief seekers under the New Poor Law could lead to the potential for agreed outcomes to be contested by others within an extended chain of poor law management, sometimes resulting in problems for relief seekers. New union staff, alongside the continuing presence of overseers of the poor, were in constant contact with the poor at the sub-union level where the realities of policy and practice were to be found. What this all meant for relief seekers and recipients themselves will now be the focus of the remaining chapters of this thesis, with the next chapter examining the dynamics of need across the period.

Chapter Five: The Dynamics of Need

5.1 Overview

Definitions of what exactly constituted historic poverty have proved surprisingly difficult to arrive at with debate linked to arguments regarding localism and regionalism. Both Hollen Lees and French have emphasised that poverty was variable; it was highly dependent on specific localised circumstances and could change rapidly dependent on temporal and geographical framings.¹ Even under the New Poor Law, Snell has emphasised that contemporary definitions of need were debatable with Goose stating that these should ‘be embedded within the specific circumstances of local communities.’² As such, King has criticised the literature for mapping generalised definitions of poverty onto the national picture, substituting them ‘for detailed regional analysis.’³ It is this chapters aim to conduct such an analysis for the area of study, utilising a human ecological methodology to do so. However, it is necessary to stress that poverty was not necessarily a permanent condition across the life cycle of an individual, seeing ebbs and flows in increased susceptibility to need. All this means that any definitions of poverty need to be conscious of the dynamic process of need which saw variety dependent on temporal framing; geographical area; and individual experience. This chapter engages with such a process, tracing broad trends in the dynamics of need across the period.

To do this, it begins with a quantitative study of relief expenditure and recipient trends. This is first conducted for each parish of study, grouped according to Mills’ farming regions identified in chapter three, before overall trends for the whole parish selection are outlined. It was largely open parishes of study which saw the largest totals of relief recipients at any given point with overall totals of recipients increasing in the waning decades of the Old Poor Law, particularly so within the 1820s. This is perhaps understandable given the large population rises seen in the parish selection across the

¹ Lynn Hollen-Lees, *The Solidarities of Strangers: The English Poor Law and the People, 1700-1948* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), pp.13-14; Henry French, ‘An Irrevocable Shift: Detailing the Dynamics of Rural Poverty in Southern England, 1762-1834: A Case Study’, *Economic History Review*, 68 (2015), pp.769-771

² Keith Snell, *Parish and Belonging: Community, Identity and Welfare in England and Wales, 1700-1950* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), p.331; Nigel Goose, ‘Workhouse Populations in the Mid-Nineteenth Century: The Case for Hertfordshire’, *Local Population Studies*, 62 (1999), p.52

³ Steven King, *Poverty and Welfare in England, 1700-1850: A Regional Perspective* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000), p.120

first half of the nineteenth century but may also indicate that recourse to the poor law became more common within the parish selection in the last two decades or so before 1834. There was seemingly an initial drop in spending and recipient numbers in the initial years of the New Poor Law; however, both could temporally fluctuate across the course of the 1830s and 1840s. Indeed, it is suggested that across both poor laws increasing levels of relief spending, recipient totals and percentages of populations in receipt were linked to temporal periods of economic downturn, poor harvests and decreasing wheat prices, a factor which generally underpinned wage levels and the availability of work within the Lincoln Heath.

After this, the chapter will narrow its focus to the dominant cohorts of need across the period, examining change and continuity in the relief experiences of able-bodied males; the elderly; the disabled and mentally ill; children; and women. Although not all demographics of recipients are covered, for example vagrant experiences are not explored, the main cohorts of receipt identifiable within the parish selection are. These provided the bedrock of relief recipients across the period and thus focussing on them to the expense of marginal groups allows for a clearer understanding of the overall impact of the New Poor Law on most recipients. Firstly, as stated in the main findings section of chapter one, data suggests that the explicit poor law relief of males generally and able-bodied men in particular declined under the New Poor Law, with a reduction in the numbers of men relieved noticeable. However, at times of local economic downturn, there was still seemingly a will to support able-bodied men under the New Poor Law, largely due to the episodic and short-term nature of their need, often linked to lulls in employment cycles. There is circumstantial evidence from the parish selection that the sickness exemption clause of special and general Poor Law Commission orders was utilised to provide outdoor relief to the able-bodied man. Similarly, under both poor laws, parishes gave support to men via parish work. Despite this, funding parish work seemingly changed under the New Poor Law, moving away from explicit poor law relief paid out of the poor rates as had generally been the case under the Old Poor Law, towards utilising the high-way rate and other financial means to pay men for work.

However, although a substantial cohort of receipt at some periods of the Old Poor Law, able-bodied males were generally always a minority of recipients across the period compared to other demographics such as women, children and non-able-bodied. It was

these cohorts which formed the bulk of the pauper host within the parish selection across both poor laws, with their experience of relief examined in this chapter. Next, life cycles of need will then be discussed, suggesting that support was often transient; linked to episodic circumstances across an individual's lifetime; and relief and support often not exclusively relying on the poor law. Finally, this chapter will end by outlining conclusions which trace longitudinal trends in the dynamics of need across the period.

5.2 Parish Expenditure and Recipient Trends

By 1830, poor law spending accounted for one-fifth of national expenditure.⁴ Lincolnshire's relief spending mirrored acute increases seen at the national level. Between 1803 and 1815, relief costs rose by 128% within the county, peaking at £230,191 in 1815.⁵ However, in the subsequent seventeen years between 1815 and 1832, poor law spending within Lincolnshire decreased by 23%.⁶ Therefore, although county-wide expenditure on relief was 76% larger in 1832 than in 1803, it was not the case that the first decades of the nineteenth century saw an incremental rise in spending, perhaps supporting Snell's conclusion that poor law expenditure in the early 1830s was generally at 'the unproblematic levels [of]...the mid-1780s.'⁷

However, the reality of relief expenditure trends within Lincolnshire was highly regionalised, meaning that the conclusions given at the county level need to be approached cautiously. The advent of the New Poor Law did little to change regionalised patterns of spending, with variation apparent even within single poor law unions. This can be evidenced by examining the Sleaford and Lincoln unions expenditure from 1846.⁸ Within both unions, parishes located in fen-incorporating soil areas generally exhibited higher levels of expenditure and recipients. It was within these regions that open parishes were found in higher concentrations, with larger populations more susceptible to under or unemployment within predominantly ordinary agricultural labour roles. In 1846, 60% of the ten highest spending parishes within the Sleaford

⁴ David Englander, *Poverty and Poor Law Reform in 19th Century Britain, 1834-1914: From Chadwick to Booth* (Abingdon on Thames: Routledge, 1998), p.4

⁵ William White, *History, Gazetteer and Directory of Lincolnshire* (Exeter: David and Charles, 1856, Reprint 1969); Tom Beastall, *The Agricultural Revolution in Lincolnshire* (Lincoln: The Society for Lincolnshire History and Archaeology, 1978), p.127

⁶ *Ibid*

⁷ Snell, *Parish and Belonging*, p.213

⁸ *Return Showing the Annual Value of Real Property Rated to the Poor Rates for the Year Ending Lady Day 1847* (London: House of Commons, 1848), pp.66-67

union were in fen soil regions. The incorporation of both rural and urban parishes into the Lincoln union further differentiated internal union expenditure, with 40% of the ten biggest spending parishes being within the City of Lincoln and 20% located in fen areas in 1846.

Moreover, parishes located within one proximate geographical region, but split between poor law unions, could exhibit broad similarities in expenditure trends and increased periods of susceptibility to need. Again, this can be approached by union data from 1846, a year of generally high spending and increasing need within the parish selection due to agrarian depression. Within the Lincoln union, all parishes of study incorporated into it were in the top 13% of highest spending parishes out of a union total of 86, with Waddington seeing the fourth largest union expenditure in 1846; Branston seventh; Navenby tenth; and Metheringham eleventh. These parishes had an average of £273 in annual spending, 133% larger than the union average of £117. Similarly, the six parishes of study incorporated into the Sleaford union exhibited high levels of spending in 1846, well above union averages. Out of 56 incorporated parishes, Ruskington saw the sixth largest spending levels within the union; Leadenham tenth; Ashby de la Launde seventeenth; Digby nineteenth; Cranwell twenty first; and Leasingham thirty-three. Although there was variation here between parishes, with Leasingham exhibiting lower spending than other parishes of study in 1846, four out of five parishes of study incorporated into the Sleaford union were in the top 50% of highest spending parishes in the union in 1846. Thus, the experience of the parish selection may suggest that parishes located within one proximate geographical area, generally sharing a human ecological environment, could exhibit similarities in experiences of need, circumstantially evidenced by expenditure trends, despite being divided between poor law unions under the New Poor Law.

Moving back towards the individual parishes of study, it is necessary to first give an analysis of expenditure and recipient numbers within them for the whole period, grouped together within the soil regions identified in chapter three. This will test the human ecological methodology of this thesis, as well as identify any trends in regard to change and continuity across the period of study. Before this is commenced, it is worth noting the extent of extant records for each parish as this necessarily limits analysis. Detailed overseer accounts for the Old Poor Law do not survive for Ashby de la Launde, Cranwell, Leasingham and Navenby. Consequently, governmental statistics

have been used to trace spending trends under the Old Poor Law within these parishes. However, such data does not cover all years of study and as such figures are missing for the periods 1790 to 1801, 1803 to 1811, and 1829 and 1832. This means that the years presented in expenditure figures related to Ashby de la Launde, Cranwell, Leasingham and Navenby are not consecutive. For parishes with extant overseer accounts for the Old Poor Law period, any gaps in data will be announced within the description of figures. For the New Poor Law period, record survival is richer for the Sleaford union, with minute books, account ledgers and correspondence to the Poor Law Commission surviving in the Lincolnshire and National Archives. For the Lincoln union, New Poor Law data is more limited due to the fact that no expenditure data in the form of ledgers survives for the union within the Lincolnshire Archives for the period of study. Similarly, no documents relating to the Lincoln union in the pre-1877 period are extant in the MH12 catalogue in the National Archives. For both unions, pauper lists and returns do not cover the whole period between 1836 and 1850, meaning only specific temporal points of comparison are available dependent on record survival. In regard to spending figures, all have been given to the nearest whole shilling to aid in comparison between temporal points and ease presentation within figures.

a) The Central Limestone Heath: Ashby de la Launde and Cranwell

i) Ashby de la Launde

Figure 5.1 outlines poor law relief spending in Ashby de la Launde in years with available figures between 1802 and 1836. In 1802, Ashby de la Launde spent 1112s on poor law relief with 96% of this going on the provision of indoor relief within the Lincoln House of Industry.⁹ The parish relieved 4 individuals (children and adults) indoors with 1 of these being over sixty, disabled or permanently ill.¹⁰ No resident poor were relieved outdoors with 2 non-resident recipients being relieved in this way. When such figures are compared with the census return of 1801, it appears that resident recipients constituted 3% of the parish population of 127 people.

Record survival means expenditure data is not available for the parish between 1802 and 1812. However, spending rose steadily from 1812 to 1816 before seeing a drastic

⁹ *Abstracts of Answers and Returns under the Act for Procuring Returns Relative to Expense and Maintenance of Poor in England* (London: House of Commons, 1803-04), pp.270-271

¹⁰ *Ibid*

45% increase in the year between 1816 and 1817. Despite drops in expenditure in 1818 and 1819, the years 1820 and 1821 saw the highest spending within the parish under the Old Poor Law, at least in years with extant data. In 1821, expenditure sat at 3363s, 202% more than spending in 1802. Spending dropped drastically in the years 1822 and 1823 and this perhaps may be explained by the parish officially joining the Lincoln Incorporation, with annual costs to the union formed via averages, as discussed in chapter four. Spending rose again in 1824 but generally saw a decreasing trend in the later 1820s which meant that expenditure in 1831 roughly sat at levels seen in 1802. Between 1833 and 1836, expenditure in Ashby de la Launde saw a generally increasing trajectory which meant that in the year of unionisation in 1836, spending was at levels comparable to peaks seen in 1820 and 1821. Overall, expenditure in Ashby de la Launde ranged between 1027s and 3363s in years with extant data between 1802 and 1836.

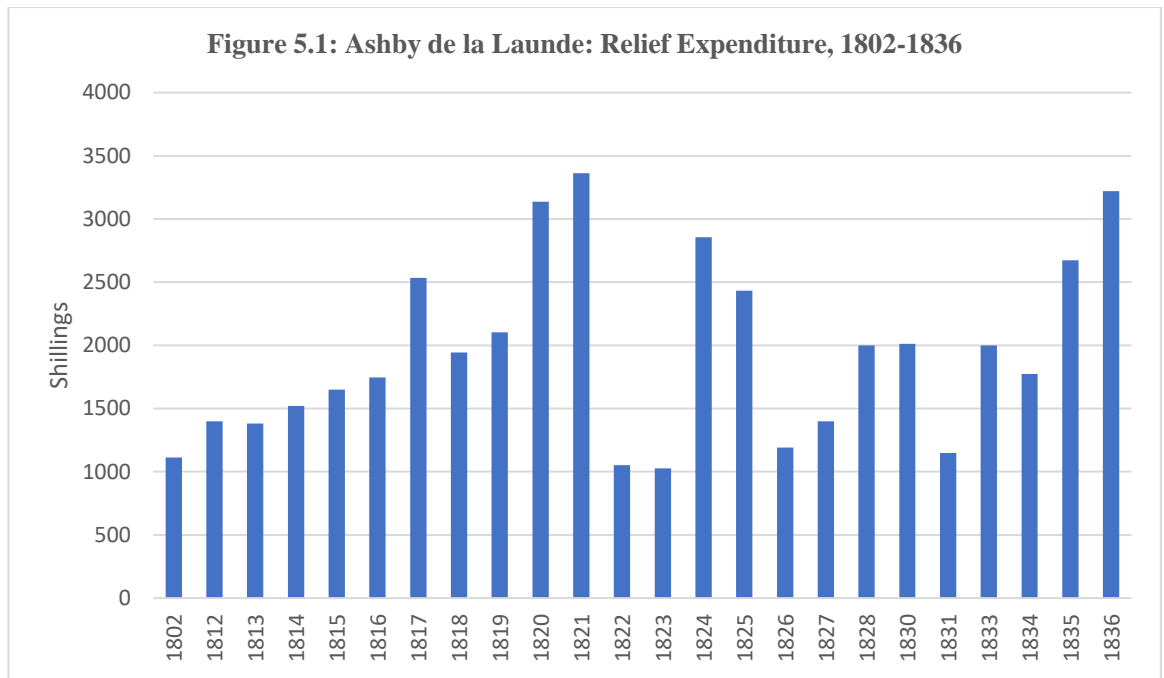


Figure 5.1. Ashby de la Launde: Relief Expenditure, 1802-1836. Source: *Abstracts of Answers and Returns under the Act for Procuring Returns Relative to Expense and Maintenance of Poor in England* (London: House of Commons, 1803-04), pp.270-271; *Abridgement of the Abstract of the Answers and Returns so Far as Relates to the Poor* (London: House of Commons, 1818), pp.240-241; *Report from the Select Committee on Poor Rate Returns, 1822* (London: House of Commons, 1822), p.90; *Select Committee on Poor Rate Returns: Report, Appendix (1824)* (London: House of Commons, 1825), p.122; *Account of Money Expended for Maintenance of Poor in England, 1824-1829* (London: House of Commons, 1830), p.105; *Account of Money Expended for Maintenance of Poor in England, 1829-1834* (London: House of Commons, 1835), p.103; *Second Annual Report of the Poor Law Commissioners for England and Wales together with appendices A, B, C, D* (London: House of Commons, 1836), pp.192-193; *Third Annual Report of the Poor Law Commissioners for England and Wales together with appendices A, B and C* (London: House of Commons, 1837), p.99.

Extant demographic data for recipients under the Old Poor Law is generally lacking for Ashby de la Launde; thus, government statistics for the years 1812 to 1815 have been used to secure data (figure 5.2). During this period, the parish relieved between 4 and 7 individuals either outdoors and indoors permanently or with occasional relief. Unlike in 1802, where no permanent outdoor recipients were listed in the parish, outdoor relief is noticeable in the years between 1812 and 1815 with outdoor recipients being 75% of the total individuals relieved in 1812, suggesting a shift in policy within the parish. However, indoor provision was still evident with between 1 and 2 individuals relieved permanently and consecutively indoors within the Lincoln House of Industry between 1812 and 1814. It is unclear how many recipients between 1812 and 1815 were resident or non-resident, but when compared with the 1811 census return it can be hypothesised that between 3-6% of Ashby de la Launde's population was in receipt of permanent or occasional poor law relief within these years, with the caveat that this may be a higher estimation than in reality due to the potential for some recipients to be non-resident.

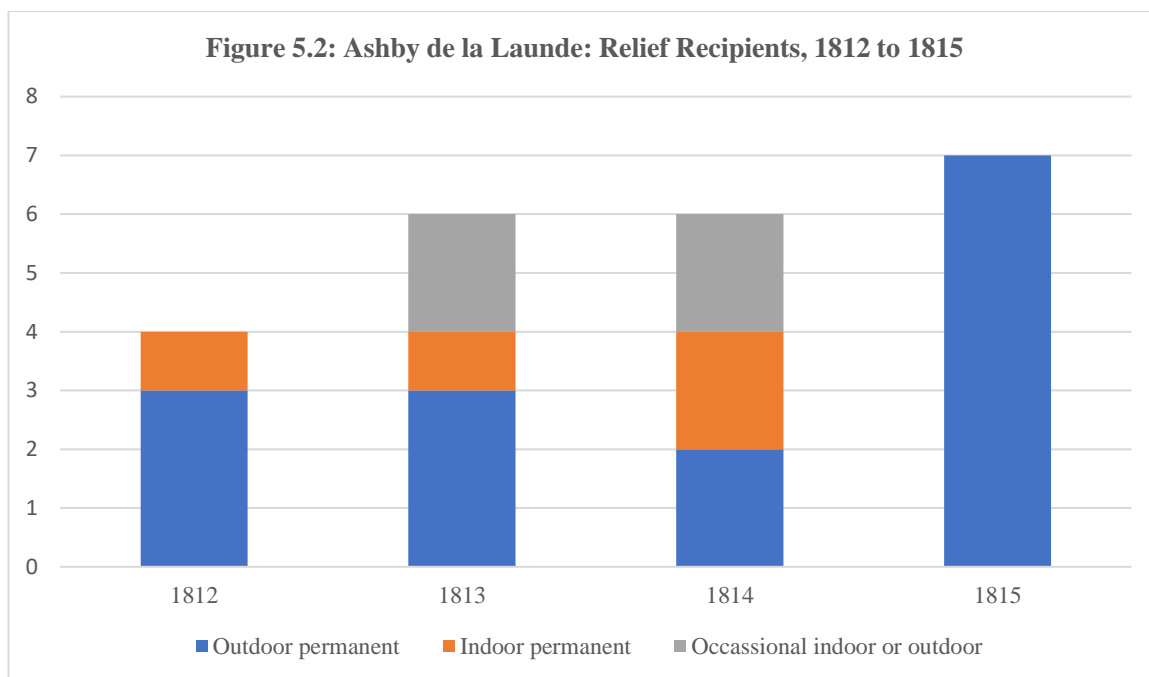


Figure 5.2. Ashby de la Launde: Relief Recipients, 1812 to 1815. Source: *Abridgement of the Abstract of the Answers and Returns so Far as Relates to the Poor* (London: House of Commons, 1818), pp.240-241; *Select Committee on the Education of the Poor (1818)- Digest of Parochial Returns Volumes I, II and III* (London: House of Commons, 1819), p.518. The 1815 data does not differentiate between permanent, occasional, outdoor or indoor recipients. All recipients have been included as outdoor recipients.

The records of the Lincoln Incorporation give some idea of the demographic make-up of outdoor recipients in Ashby de la Launde for various years between 1831 and 1835 (tables 5.1 to 5.4). In 1831, a generally low expenditure year for the parish (figure 5.1), 13 outdoor recipients, excluding dependents, were listed with one of these being a one-off payment for Timothy Wray's funeral (table 5.1). Widows consisted of 31% of these recipients, being a total of 4 women, 3 of which were elderly and 1 having a large family. As this last widow had the surname Wray, it is reasonable to suggest she was the widow of Timothy Wray collecting relief for just under ten months for the support of her family. The elderly made up 23% of recipients, either collecting for themselves or as a couple. It is unclear where the recipient Thomas King and his wife fit into demographic breakdowns due to the fact that no age information or reason for relief is given for them. However, as they were receiving a regular weekly allowance at levels given to those identifiably elderly, it is perhaps reasonable to suggest that they were an elderly couple and thus they have been included in this demographic. Payments for

illegitimate children consisted of 15% of recipients with identifiably non-able-bodied males making up 8%, this percentage relating to William Massingham who was blind and collecting for the support of his family. Able-bodied males collecting for their families consisted of around 15% of recipients (William Padman and family; and Samuel Padman and family). This statistic needs to be approached with caution as the available information makes it difficult to ascertain if these males were generally able-bodied. Although William Padman was listed as being aged 60 in 1831, his receipt has been included in able-bodied males due to the temperamental nature of payments to him and his family which sit in contrast to the regular weekly allowances generally given to those receiving relief because of age. All in all, 62% of the main recipients had regular weekly allowances for a year or more with 8 out of 13 recipients being identifiably non-resident, albeit with all of these living locally within Lincolnshire. This sits in contrast to receipt in 1802 where the majority of recipients were resident.

Overall, 79% of outdoor relief recipients relieved by Ashby de la Launde in 1832 had been in receipt a year earlier in 1831 (tables 5.1 and 5.2). The 21% who had not consisted of 3 adult males, presumably able-bodied relieved for shorter periods of time. For example, 2 of these males were relieved for sickness and the third only received relief for 8 weeks. Thus, it was the non-able-bodied who dominated the demography of out-door receipt within Ashby de la Launde in the early 1830s. As shown in table 5.3, 50% of recipients in 1834 were identifiable as having been in receipt of out-relief in 1831 (table 5.1). In actuality, the percentage was more likely 86% as the widow Rossington listed as a recipient in 1834 was most likely the widow of John Rossington, collecting out-relief in 1831. This is further supported by the fact that both Rossingtons lived in Dorrington. No identifiably able-bodied males are listed as out-door relief recipients in 1834 and amongst the recipients, all but one lived outside of Ashby de la Launde, confirming the wide-spread use of non-resident relief within the parish. In 1835, the last year before unionisation, the parish was making out-relief payments to 14 individuals, 57% had been a relief recipient in 1831 and 50% were identifiably non-resident, albeit living within the surrounding local area (table 5.4). Able-bodied males were generally collecting due to sickness, with the majority of recipients being elderly, children or females.

Name	Resident parish	Age in 1831	Reason for relief	Weekly payment	Number of weeks
Widow Abbott	Martin	71	/	1s 6d	53
Thomas King and Wife	Ashby de la Launde	/	/	1s 6d	44
William Massingham and Family (wife and 6 children)	Ruskington	36	William Massingham was blind	10s	53
Mary Marriott	Ashby de la Launde	77	/	1s 6d	53
William Padman and Family	Ashby de la Launde	60	/	Various	/
Samuel Padman and Family	Ashby de la Launde	31	/	7s and 5s	5
John Rossington and Wife	Dorrington	Aged	/	3s	53
Widow Stoker	Lincoln	79	/	2s	53
Ann Thorpe's Child	Wellingore	/	/	1s 6d	53
Eleanor Taylor's Child	Dunston	/	/	2s and 1s 6d	57
Widow Ward	Langret Ferry	Aged	/	1s	53
Widow Wray and Family	Dunston	/	Large Family	Various	39
Timothy Wray's Funeral	/	/	/	/	/

Table 5.1. Ashby de la Launde Outdoor Relief Recipients, June 1831 to June 1832.

Source: *State of the Accounts of the Lincoln House of Industry from the First Wednesday in June 1831 to the first Wednesday in June 1832, 35th Annual Report* (Lincoln: R.E Leary, 1832)

Name	Resident parish	Age in 1832	Reason for relief	Weekly payment	Number of weeks
Widow Abbott	Martin	72	/	1s 6d	52
Thomas King and Wife	Ashby de la Launde	/	/	1s 6d	52
Robert Doughty	/	/	/	7s	8
William Massingham and Family (wife and 6 children)	Ruskington	37	William Massingham was blind	10s	52
Thomas Linton	Ashby de la Launde		Illness	/	/
John Stuffing	Ashby de la Launde		Illness	10s 9d	/
Mary Marriott	Ashby de la Launde	78	/	1s 6d	7
William Padman and Family	Ashby de la Launde	61	/	5s	6
Samuel Padman and Family	Ashby de la Launde	32	/	3s 6d	/
John Rossington and Wife	Dorrington	Aged	/	3s	52
Widow Stoker	Lincoln	80	/	2s	52
Ann Thorpe's Child	Wellingore	/	/	1s 6d	53
Eleanor Taylor's Child	Dunston	/	/	2s and 1s 6d	57
Widow Ward	Langret Ferry	Aged	/	1s	53

Table 5.2. Ashby de la Launde Outdoor Relief Recipients, June 1832 to June 1833.

Source: *State of the Accounts of the Lincoln House of Industry from the First Wednesday in June 1832 to the first Wednesday in June 1833*, 36th Annual Report (Lincoln: R.E Leary, 1833)

Name	Resident parish	Age in 1834	Reason for relief	Weekly payment	Number of weeks
Widow Abbott	Martin	74	/	1s 6d	52
William Massingham and Family (wife and 6 children)	Ruskington	39	William Massingham was blind	8s	52
Widow Doughty	Beckingham	/	/	1s 6d	63
Mary Brigg's Child	Hykeham	10	/	1s 6d	13
Thomas King and Wife	Ashby de la Launde	/	/	1s 6d	52
Widow Rossington	Dorrington	/	/	1s 6d	52

Table 5.3. Ashby de la Launde Outdoor Relief Recipients, June 1834 to June 1835.

Source: *State of the Accounts of the Lincoln House of Industry from the First Wednesday in June 1834 to the first Wednesday in June 1835*, 38th Annual Report (Lincoln: T.J.N Brogden, 1836)

Name	Resident parish	Age in 1835	Reason for relief	Weekly payment	Number of weeks
Widow Abbott	Martin	75	/	1s 6d	39
William Massingham and Family (wife and 6 children)	Ruskington	40	William Massingham was blind	8s	52
Widow Doughty	Beckingham	/	/	1s 6d	63
Thomas King and Wife	Ashby de la Launde	/	/	1s 6d	52
Widow Rossington	Dorrington	/	/	1s 6d	52
Thomas Bates and Family	Ashby de la Launde	/	Illness	/	/
William Padman and Family	Ashby de la Launde	/	Illness	Various	/
William Padman Junior	Ashby de la Launde	/	Illness	/	/
John Stuffing and Family	Ashby de la Launde	/	Illness	/	/
Robert Towe	/	/	/	5s	2
Mary Lintin's child	/	/	/	1s	13
Ann Thorp's child	Wellingore	/	/	1s	52
Eleanor Taylor's child	Dunston	/	/	1s 6d	52
Widow Wray and Family	Dunston	/	Large family	8s	52

Table 5.4. Ashby de la Launde Outdoor Relief Recipients, June 1835 to June 1836.

Source: *State of the Accounts of the Lincoln House of Industry from the First Wednesday in June 1835 to the first Wednesday in June 1836*, 39th Annual Report (Lincoln: T.J.N Brogden, 1836)

Compared to levels of out-relief in the parish between 1812 and 1815 (figure 5.2), the data from 1831 to 1835 suggests an increase in the total number of recipients. In this earlier period, those relieved permanently outdoors ranged between 2 and 3 individuals where identifiable. If outdoor recipients who were collecting for 52 weeks or more are counted for the available years between 1831 and 1835, this ranged between 5 and 8 per year. Such an increase can not necessarily be squared by demographic factors within the parish such as rising population levels as most permanent outdoor recipients in the first half of the 1830s were non-resident. Indeed, those recipients who were resident were generally able-bodied men in receipt for shorter periods of time, perhaps due to lulls in the agricultural cycle amongst a predominantly confined agricultural labour force. If resident recipients for the available years between 1831 and 1835 are compared with the 1831 census data, only 1-3% of Ashby de la Launde's resident population was in receipt of poor law relief over that period. Thus, it may be hypothesised that recourse to the poor law increased for those holding settlement within Ashby de la Launde over the first decades of the nineteenth century, although not necessarily resident, or that eligibility to relief and the granting of outdoor relief was relaxed. It is interesting to note that the two sets of data (figure 5.2 and tables 5.1 to 5.4) sit either side of the 1821 date of when Ashby de la Launde joined the Lincoln Incorporation. As discussed in chapter four, this changed the administration of the poor law within the parish, with the Directors of the Incorporation and not the overseer theoretically granting relief. Thus, the higher levels of outdoor relief noted in the 1830s may have been influenced by such a change. Of course, this is a hypothesis as the corresponding indoor relief figures do not survive for the period 1831 to 1835. However, it does illustrate that recipient totals and modes of relief were versatile within the waning period of the Old Poor Law.

Available spending data for Ashby de la Launde in the period between 1838 and 1850 is given in figures 5.3 and 5.4. Initially, spending under the New Poor Law seemed to decrease with expenditure between March 1838 and March 1839 being 29% less than exhibited in 1836. Across all quarterly spending between March 1838 and March 1847 in Ashby de la Launde (figure 5.3), expenditure on outdoor relief was higher than that spent on relief within the workhouse. Indoor relief expenditure was particularly high between March 1838 and September 1839, with this period seeing the largest amounts spent on relief within the workhouse across all quarters between March 1838 and March 1847, with total inmate numbers given in figure 5.5. From September 1839 to

December 1842, Ashby de la Launde did not relieve any paupers within the Sleaford Union workhouse with all expenditure paying for outdoor relief. From December 1843 to March 1847, the parish largely consistently relieved some paupers indoors, albeit with the levels spent on workhouse relief being lower than seen in 1838 and 1839, ranging from 20s to 60s per quarter as opposed to 53s to 159s per quarter in the earlier period. Across all quarters between 1838 and 1850, the numbers relieved within the Sleaford union workhouse by Ashby de la Launde ranged from 0 to 6 individuals. Peaks in workhouse inmates can be seen in 1838 and 1839 and in the spring of 1845.

General highs in quarterly relief spending can be discerned in the following periods: September 1838 to March 1839; March to June 1842; December 1842 to March 1843; September to December 1843; March to June 1844; December 1844 to March 1845; June 1844 to March 1846; and December to March 1847. Thus, both the late 1830s and the middle years of the 1840s were periods of high relief expenditure within Ashby de la Launde. The highest spending over the period March 1838 to March 1847 was seen between June 1845 and March 1847, albeit with expenditure decreasing in the summer of 1846 before rising again into the autumn. Such conclusions are also supported by half-yearly expenditure data from March 1847 to September 1850 (figure 5.4), with the largest spending across this period seen in the half-year between March and September 1847. Relief expenditure reduced in Ashby de la Launde after September 1847, seeing a downward trend until March 1849 before seeing minimal rises between March 1849 and September 1850. However, expenditure from September 1847 to September 1850 never reached the levels seen in the half-year between March 1847 and September 1847, with spending in the half-year ending September 1850 being 109% lower than that seen in the same period in 1847. All in all, half-year spending in Ashby de la Launde between 1838 and 1850 peaked at 1542s, with this highest figure spent between September 1845 and March 1846.

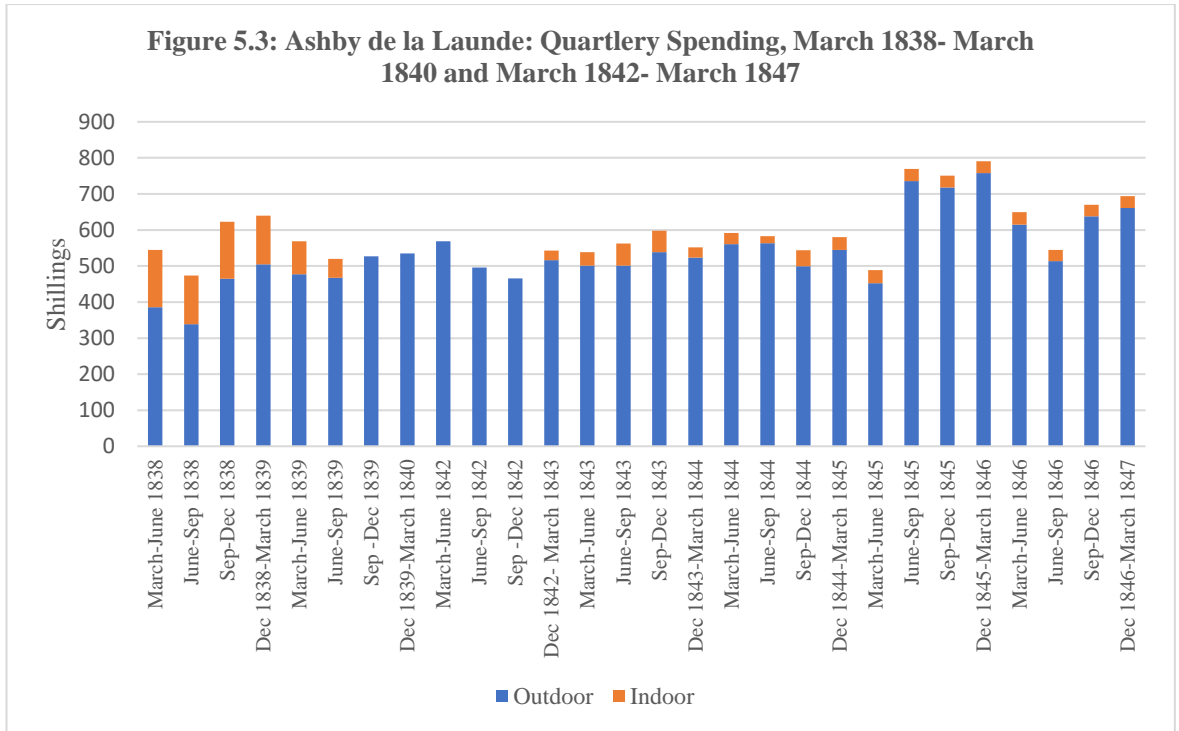


Figure 5.3. Ashby de la Launde: Quarterly Spending, March 1838-March 1840 and March 1842-March 1847. Source: *Sleaford Union Ledgers, 1838-1848*, PL12/104/1 and 2, LA. No data available for March 1840 to March 1842.

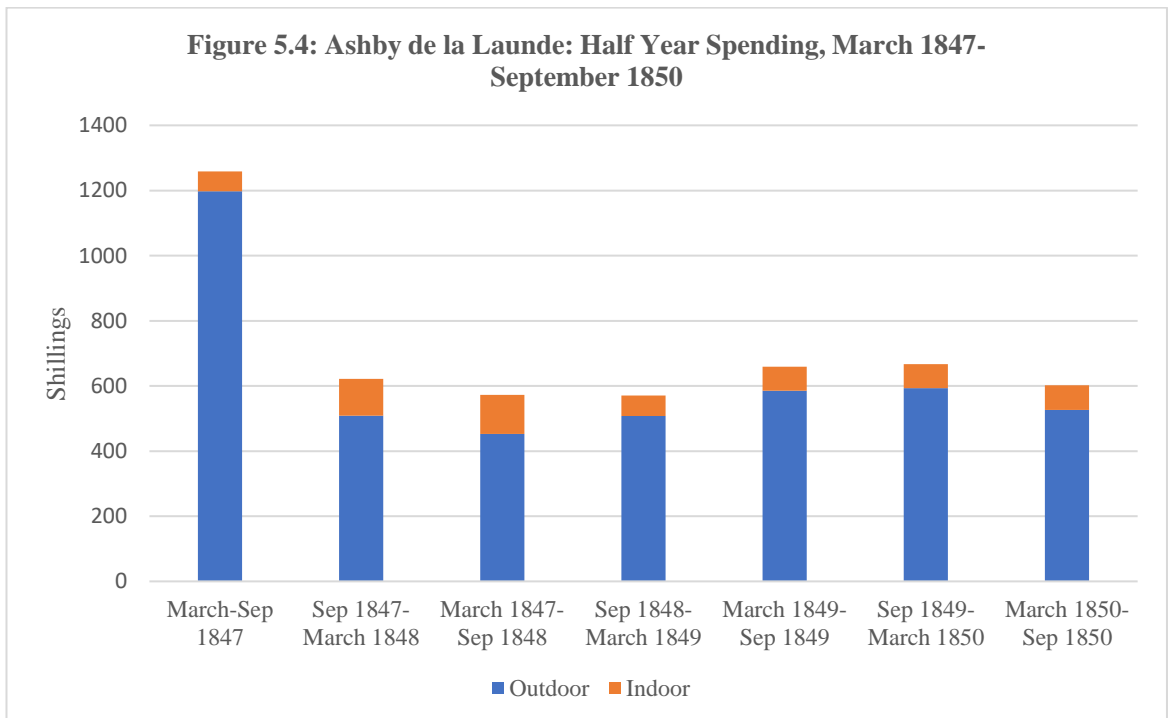


Figure 5.4. Ashby de la Launde: Half Year Spending, March 1847-September 1850. Source: *Sleaford Union Ledger, 1847-1855*, PL12/104/3, LA.

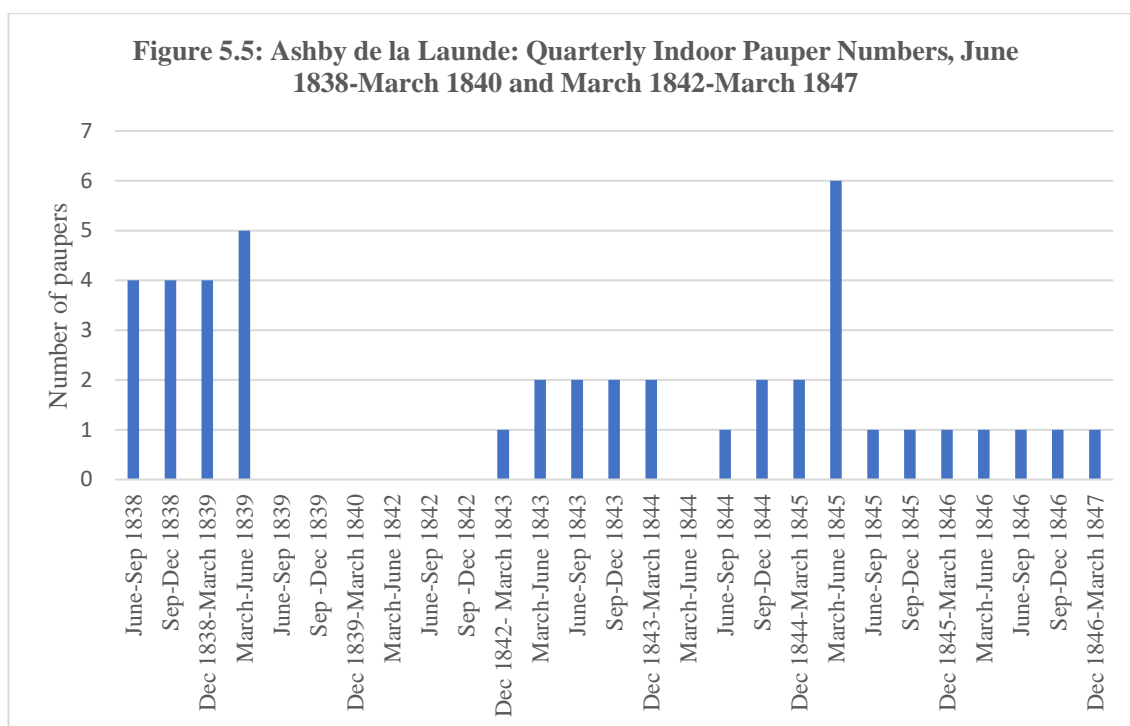


Figure 5.5. Ashby de la Launde: Quarterly Indoor Pauper Numbers, June 1838-March 1840 and March 1842-March 1847. Source: *Sleaford Union Ledgers, 1838-1848*, PL12/104/1 and 2, LA. No data available for March 1840 to March 1842.

Unfortunately, incomplete record survival limits a complete demographic analysis of relief recipients within Ashby de la Launde during the early decades of the New Poor Law. However, data does exist for the period between December 1838 and September 1839 and at various points between 1844 and 1846 (figure 5.6). Within the available data, children dominated as recipients, primarily receiving outdoor relief. Similarly, adult women constituted a large cohort, again relieved primarily out-of-doors. Adult males were the minority of recipients, but again when relieved were far more likely to be done so outside of the workhouse. Such a demography was generally consistent with outdoor receipt within the parish in the final half decade of the Old Poor Law between 1831 and 1835, analysed above. Interestingly, totals of relief recipients overall seem to have risen from the available Old Poor Law data. In the various available quarters between 1838 and 1846, totals per quarter ranged from 29 to 45 individuals with the largest number of recipients seen in 1845 and 1846, generally periods of high relief

spending. If these figures are compared to the census return of 1841, between 18-29% of the parishes population may have been in receipt of relief within these various quarters, with the caveat that these percentages are a high estimation as some recipients were likely non-resident. Clearly, such total recipient numbers and proportions to population were well in excess of anything noted within the parish under the Old Poor Law, ostensibly suggesting a rise in relief recipients under the New Poor Law.

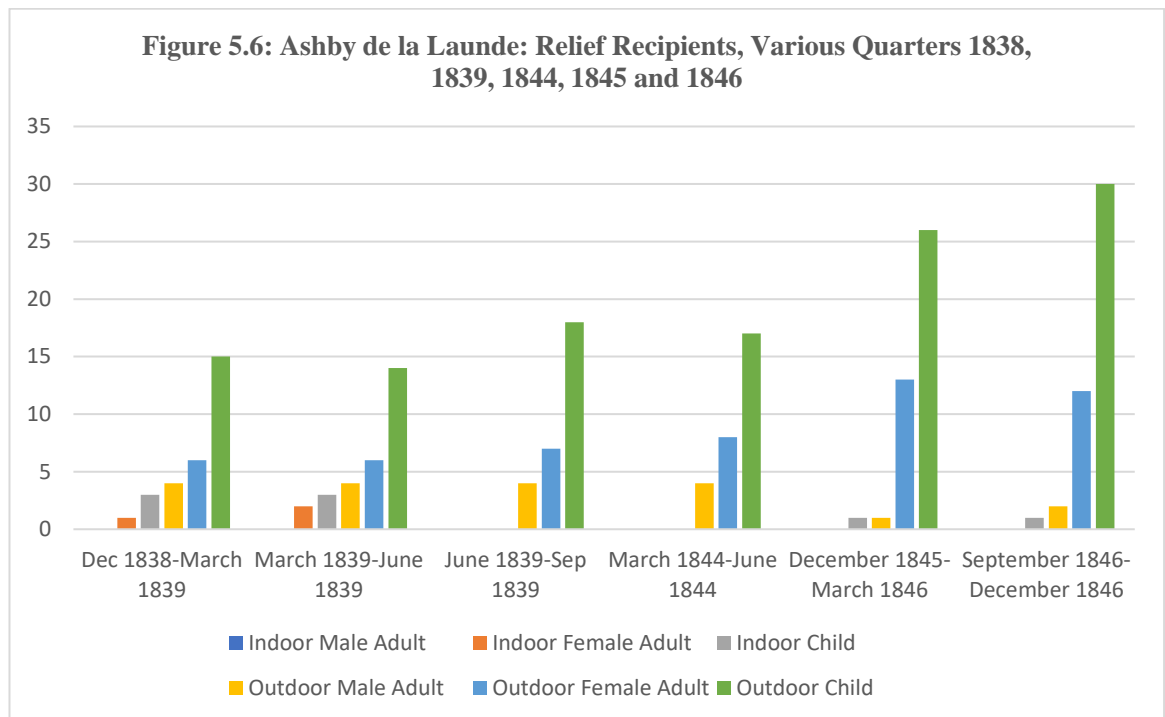


Figure 5.6. Ashby de la Launde: Relief Recipients, Various Quarters 1838, 1839, 1844, 1845 and 1846. Source: Digby Parish 13/24, LA; *Sleaford Poor Law Union Correspondence, 1843-1847*, MH12/6764, NA.

However, the proportionally large number of child recipients listed in Ashby de la Launde during the 1830s and 1840s may obscure the possibility that such children were collecting relief as dependents within a household, meaning that they should not necessarily be judged as sole recipients. Using this hypothesis, if children are taken out of recipient totals for the various quarters between 1838 and 1846, totals of both indoor and outdoor recipients per quarter range from between 11 and 14 individuals. This is roughly on par with annual outdoor relief recipient numbers exhibited between 1831 and 1835, with specific numbers of dependent children generally not listed on this Old Poor Law documentation, instead collectively noted as ‘family.’ Using adult recipient

numbers in these New Poor Law quarters, it appears that around 7-9% of the parish population may have been in receipt of poor law relief when compared to the 1841 census. Such a percentage need not necessarily be read as a drastic increase in proportions of receipt. As stated, percentages may be skewed by the fact that they presume all recipients were resident. In 1831, 13 outdoor relief recipients, minus dependents, were listed for the parish (table 5.1) giving a percentage to population of 7%, comparable to New Poor Law levels in the quarters with existing data. However, only 4 out of the 13 recipients (30%) in 1831 were resident within the parish, with a revised percentage of recipients to population of 2% using the 1831 census. As will be shown in analysis of other parishes below, non-resident relief continued into the early New Poor Law within the parish selection. Working on the hypothesis that only around 30% of recipients may have been resident within Ashby de la Launde during the 1830s and 1840s, it is reasonable to suggest a revised resident recipient total of 4 individuals for the various quarters between 1838 and 1846, leading to a receipt to population percentage of 2.5% using the 1841 census. Thus, if these hypotheses are correct, levels of receipt within Ashby de la Launde remained roughly consistent either side of unionisation, at least in regard to recipient numbers within the available data, with the demography of receipt dominated by females and children.

ii) Cranwell

Relief spending for Cranwell in years with extant figures between 1802 and 1836 is given in figure 5.7. Cranwell spent 895s in poor relief in 1802.¹¹ In that year, 6 adults were relieved permanently and 2 occasionally outdoors with 1 of these being over sixty years old, disabled or permanently ill. In regard to children, 4 aged between five and fourteen were relieved outdoors. No permanent indoor recipients were listed but the parish did relieve 4 non-resident poor. Thus, the parish had a total of 16 recipients in 1802, 75% of whom were resident. In regard to proportions of receipt per population, this sat at 14% in 1802 using the 1801 census return. Data is missing for expenditure and pauper trends in the decade after 1802. Expenditure saw a general upwards trajectory between 1812 and 1818, seeing peaks in spending in 1814, 1816 and 1818. From 1818 to 1824, expenditure generally fell albeit with high spending years in 1822 and 1823 which were on par or higher than the large expenditure years in 1816 and

¹¹ *Abstracts of Answers and Returns under the Act for Procuring Returns Relative to Expense and Maintenance of Poor in England*, pp.270-271

1818. The biggest spending period within the parish under the Old Poor Law appears to be the late 1820s with the highest annual spending amongst years with extant data being 1827. In this year, spending sat at 4965s. Although not reaching the figure seen in 1827, spending between 1828 and 1833 remained comparatively high before dropping in 1834. By the eve of unionisation, spending again began to increase, seeing a 14% rise between 1834 and 1836. In years with existing figures between 1802 and 1836, expenditure in Cranwell ranged between 760s and 4965s.

Recipient totals for the parish exist for the period between 1812 and 1815 (figure 5.8). Indoor relief was seemingly rare with only 1 individual relieved indoors in the years 1812 to 1814. As the parish seemingly did not have a workhouse under the Old Poor Law, it is unclear where this relief took place. Between 1812 and 1815, Cranwell relieved 4 to 6 individuals with most relief given permanently outdoors. When such figures are compared to the 1811 census, they give a recipient to population percentage of 4-6%, significantly lower than exhibited in the parish in 1802 and perhaps impacted by both the 16% increase in Cranwell's population between 1801 and 1811 alongside a decrease in recipient totals from a high of 16 in 1802. Thus, by 1811 the poor law was seemingly a less important feature of life within the parish than had been the case in 1802. The reasons for this may have been linked to drives towards mixed-agrarian agriculture outlined in chapter three. In 1802, nearly half the parish was non-arable land put over for rabbit rearing with farming primarily of a pastoral nature.¹² However, over the next decades land was ploughed to grow wheat, necessitating increased labouring opportunities which perhaps meant recourse to the poor law was less pressing for a larger proportion of the population than in earlier periods.

¹² 3 THOR/2/1/3, LA

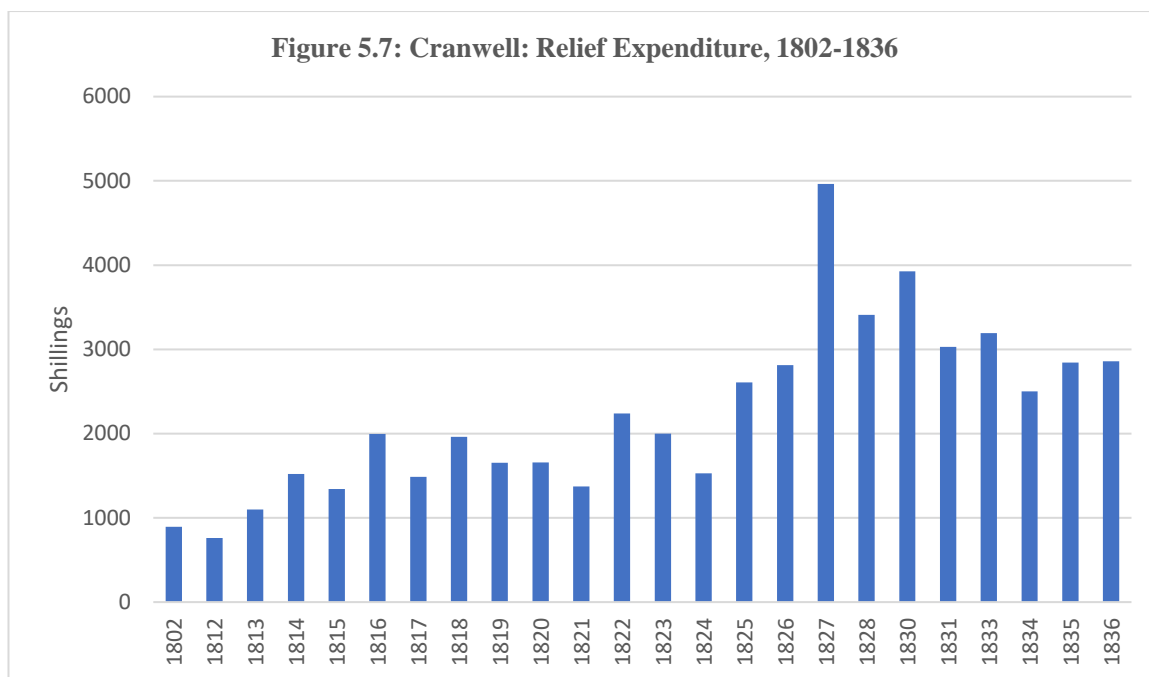


Figure 5.7. Cranwell: Relief Expenditure, 1802-1836. Source: *Abstracts of Answers and Returns under the Act for Procuring Returns Relative to Expense and Maintenance of Poor in England* (London: House of Commons, 1803-04), pp.270-271; *Abridgement of the Abstract of the Answers and Returns so Far as Relates to the Poor* (London: House of Commons, 1818), pp.240-241; *Report from the Select Committee on Poor Rate Returns, 1822* (London: House of Commons, 1822), p.90; *Select Committee on Poor Rate Returns: Report, Appendix (1824)* (London: House of Commons, 1825), p.122; *Account of Money Expended for Maintenance of Poor in England, 1824-1829* (London: House of Commons, 1830), p.105; *Account of Money Expended for Maintenance of Poor in England, 1829-1834* (London: House of Commons, 1835), p.103; *Second Annual Report of the Poor Law Commissioners for England and Wales together with appendices A, B, C, D* (London: House of Commons, 1836), pp.192-193; *Third Annual Report of the Poor Law Commissioners for England and Wales together with appendices A, B and C* (London: House of Commons, 1837), p.99.

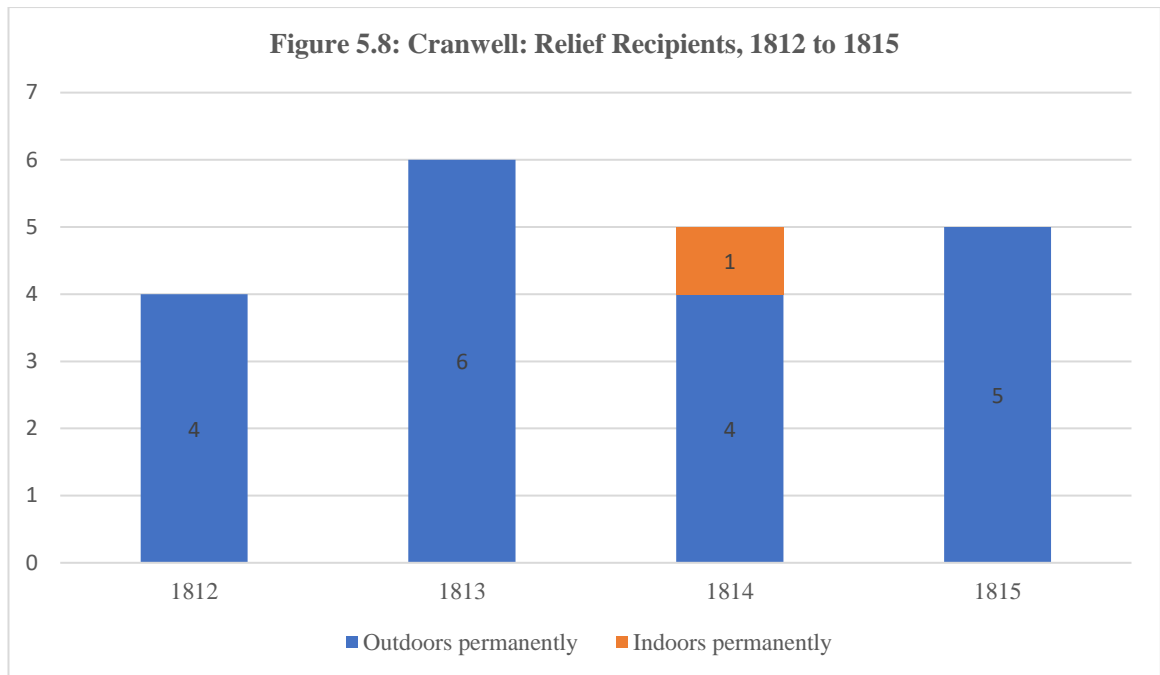


Figure 5.8. Cranwell: Relief Recipients, 1812 to 1815. Source: *Abridgement of the Abstract of the Answers and Returns so Far as Relates to the Poor* (London: House of Commons, 1818), pp.240-241; *Select Committee on the Education of the Poor (1818)-Digest of Parochial Returns Volumes I, II and III* (London: House of Commons, 1819), p.521. The 1815 data does not differentiate between permanent, occasional, outdoor or indoor recipients. All recipients have been included as outdoor recipients.

Available New Poor Law spending data is presented in figures 5.9 and 5.10. Initially, expenditure after unionisation decreased with spending between March 1838 and March 1839 being 60% less in Cranwell than on 1836 levels. Figure 5.9 shows extant quarterly spending figures from between 1838 and 1847. Peaks in spending can be discerned in the following quarters: June to September 1838; December 1839 to March 1840; March to June 1842; December 1842 to March 1843; December 1843 to March 1844; December 1844 to March 1845; December 1845 to March 1846; and September to December 1846. Thus, the late 1830s and the mid-1840s were years of comparatively high relief expenditure in Cranwell, particularly during winter quarters. Again, the identification of the mid-1840s as a time of increased relief spending is evidenced by half-year spending figures from between 1847 and 1850 (figure 5.10), with the period between March and September 1847 seeing the largest expenditure of any half-year within that period. Spending sat at 87% less in the period March to September 1850

than it had done in the same period in 1847. Expenditure levels seemingly decreased in Cranwell in the later years of the 1840s. Although there were some rises in spending in the autumn and winter of 1848 to 1849, with an increase in indoor relief expenditure noted, overall expenditure spending took a downward trend between March 1847 and September 1850, with outdoor relief expenditure consistently decreasing in every half-year across that period. Between 1838 and 1850, half-year spending in Cranwell peaked between September 1846 and March 1847, seeing 1236s spent in this period.

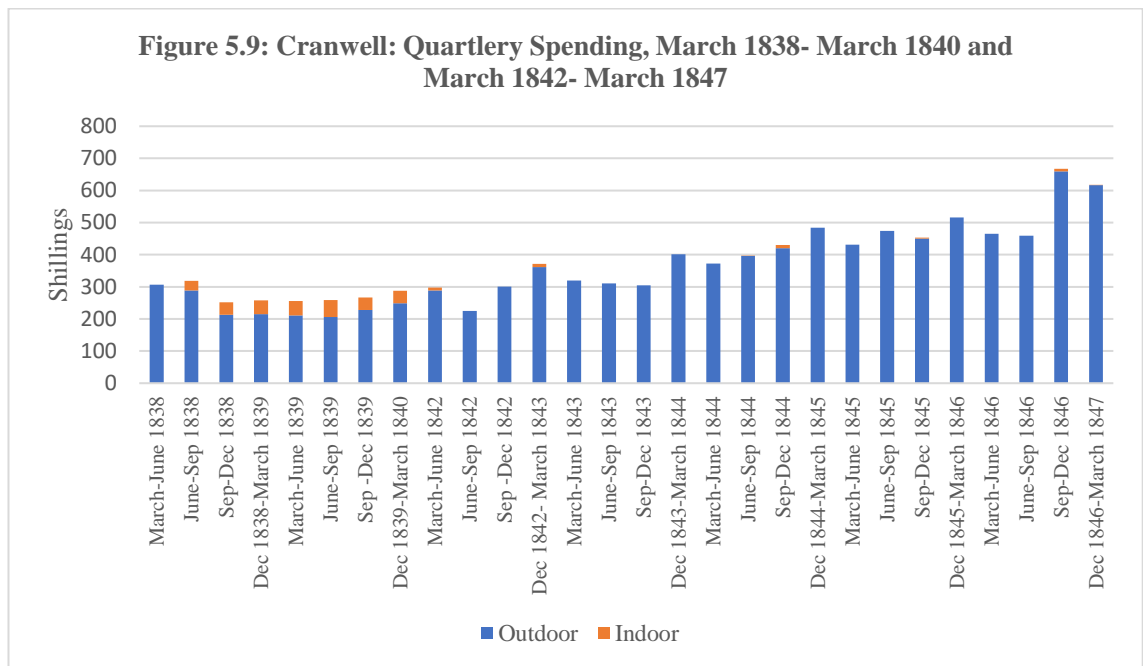


Figure 5.9. Cranwell: Quarterly Spending, March 1838-March 1840 and March 1842-March 1847. Source: *Sleaford Union Ledgers, 1838-1848*, PL12/104/1 and 2, LA. No data available for March 1840 to March 1842.

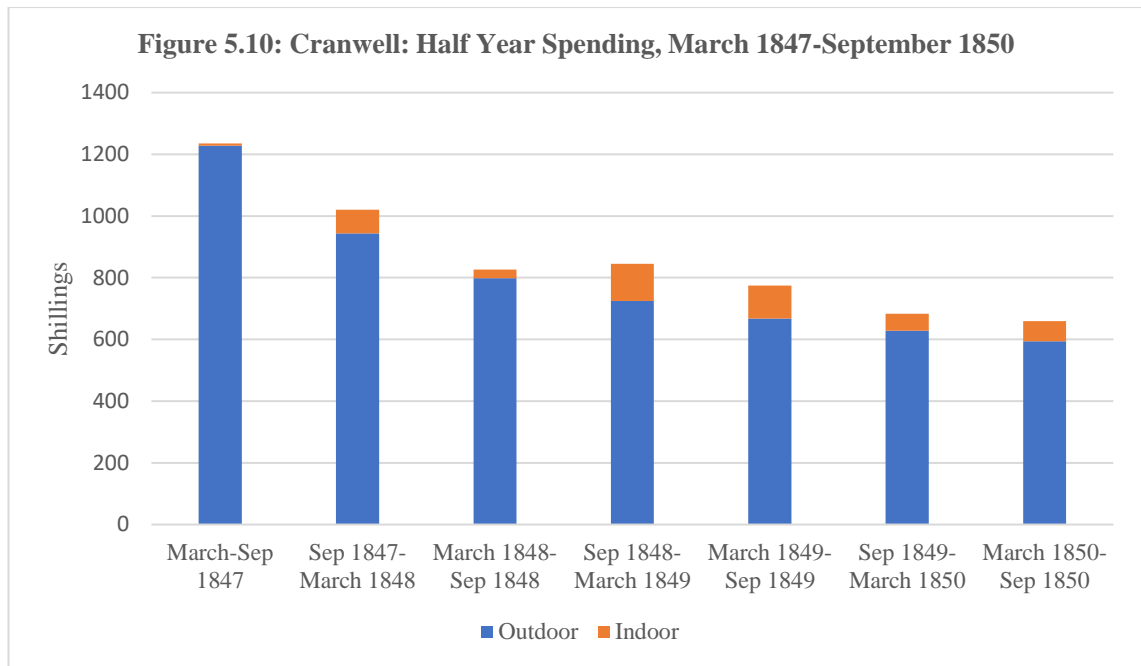


Figure 5.10. Cranwell: Half Year Spending, March 1847-September 1850. Source: *Sleaford Union Ledger, 1847-1855, PL12/104/3, LA.*

Figure 5.11 outlines totals of indoor relief recipients for Cranwell in quarters between 1838 and 1847. Across this period, the numbers relieved by the parish within the Sleaford union workhouse ranged from 1 to 7, with a peak in indoor relief being explicit between September and December 1844. Apart from a consistent use between 1838 and 1842, indoor relief was generally sporadic for Cranwell in the five years after 1842, except for spikes in inmate numbers in late 1844 and 1845. Figure 5.12 gives demographic breakdowns of receipt in Cranwell for various quarters between 1838 and 1845. As in all parishes of study, outdoor relief recipients outweighed those relieved indoors, with recipient totals per quarter ranging from 5 to 31 individuals, the highest number being seen in the quarter ending December 1846, the largest spending quarter of any between March 1838 and March 1847 (figure 5.9). Thus, recipient numbers were temporally variable in Cranwell across the course of the New Poor Law, seeing significant rises in the mid-1840s. Overall, women and children dominated the demography of poor law receipt, with adult men consisting of between 1 and 7 outdoor recipients per various quarter. However, it is unclear if such males relieved outdoors were necessarily able-bodied or resident poor. Thomas Smith, a pauper lunatic, was relieved by Cranwell within the Lincoln Lunatic Asylum from 1836 to at least 1853. Paying for Smith made up a considerable sum of outdoor relief spending in Cranwell

across the early New Poor Law period. For example, between March and June 1838, 41% of the total outdoor expenditure of the parish was spent on asylum fees for Smith.¹³ In a period of high relief spending between September and December 1846, 21% of parish outdoor expenditure went to relieving Thomas Smith.¹⁴ Thus, the types of paupers relieved and relief offered could have a considerable effect on expenditure trends.

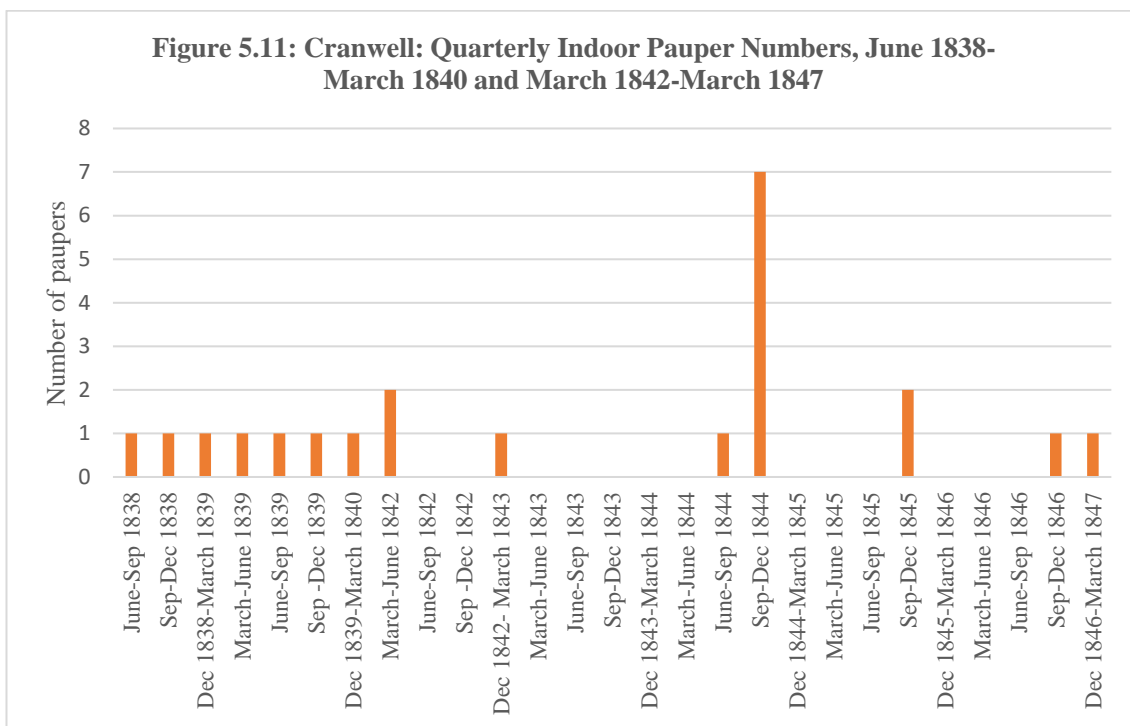


Figure 5.11. Cranwell: Quarterly Indoor Pauper numbers, June 1838-March 1840 and March 1842-March 1847. *Sleaford Union Ledgers, 1838-1848, PL12/104/1 and 2, LA.* No data available for March 1840 to March 1842.

¹³ PL/12/104/1, LA

¹⁴ Ibid

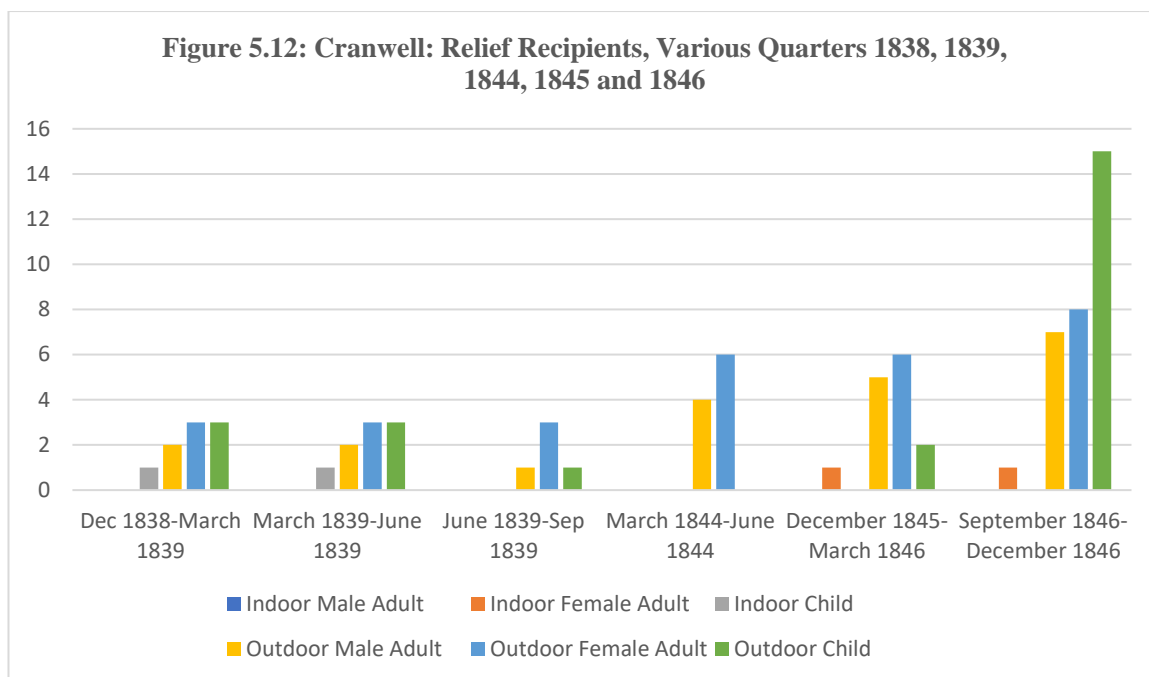


Figure 5.12. Cranwell: Relief Recipients, Various Quarters 1838, 1839, 1844, 1845 and 1846. Source: Digby Parish 13/24, LA; *Sleaford Poor Law Union Correspondence, 1843-1847*, MH12/6764, NA.

b) The Sleaford District: Leasingham

Parish overseer accounts are not extant for Leasingham across the Old Poor Law period of study; thus, governmental statistics have been used in an attempt to trace expenditure and recipient trends. Figure 5.13 outlines relief spending in the parish between 1802 and 1836, and figure 5.14 gives recipient information for 1812 to 1815. These figures will be used to analyse trends in relief spending and recipient demography across the waning Old Poor Law period.

Between 1790 and 1836, most recipients in Leasingham were relieved outdoors as the parish lacked a workhouse. In 1802, 9 adults were relieved permanently outdoors and 1 occasionally with none of these being aged above sixty, disabled or permanently ill.¹⁵ In regard to children aged up to fourteen, 4 were recipients. Thus, in 1802 a total of 14 individuals received relief, all being resident and giving a recipient to population percentage of 4% when compared to the 1801 census. Between 1812 and 1815, the parish relieved between 14 and 21 individuals annually with the highest number being

¹⁵ *Abstracts of Answers and Returns under the Act for Procuring Returns Relative to Expense and Maintenance of Poor in England*, pp.270-271

seen in 1815. As in 1802, the majority of recipients in this period were relieved permanently outdoors. When compared to the 1811 census, levels of receipt between 1812 and 1815 give recipient to population percentages of 5-8%, significantly larger than noted in 1802 and with this increase perhaps magnified by the fact that Leasingham's population decreased by 17% between 1801 and 1811. Relief spending fell by 15% within Leasingham between 1812 and 1815, paradoxically as the total of recipients increased by 50% over the same period. Thus, on average the amount spent on relief per individual per week decreased, standing at just above 4s in 1813; 3.5s in 1814 and 2.75s in 1815.

From 1812, expenditure saw a downwards trajectory until 1818. The highest annual spending in Leasingham seen in years with extant data from between 1802 and 1836 was in 1819, with expenditure peaking at 4206s. Unfortunately, records do not survive to give a demographic breakdown of receipt in this year or for the years up until 1836. After 1819, expenditure generally fell, reaching a trough in the years between 1822 and 1825 with levels of spending at their lowest in any years with extant data between 1812 and 1836. In 1825, annual relief costs sat at 2159s, 49% lower than seen in 1819. Between 1826 and 1833, expenditure did rise in Leasingham, ranging from annual totals of 2482s to 2860s, albeit not reaching levels noted in 1812 to 1816 and 1818 to 1820. From 1833, spending was reduced, falling by 30% between 1833 and 1834, with the years between 1833 and 1836 generally exhibiting the lowest spending in all years with extant data across the waning Old Poor Law period. Thus, by the eve of the New Poor Law, spending was generally low in Leasingham, being comparable with levels noted at the turn of the nineteenth century. As recipient data is missing for Leasingham after 1815, it is difficult to analyse how far lower spending levels were linked to falling totals of recipients. The caveat must be made again that expenditure levels did not necessarily correspond to numbers of poor law receipt, with a link between falling spending and decreasing recipient totals not explicit.

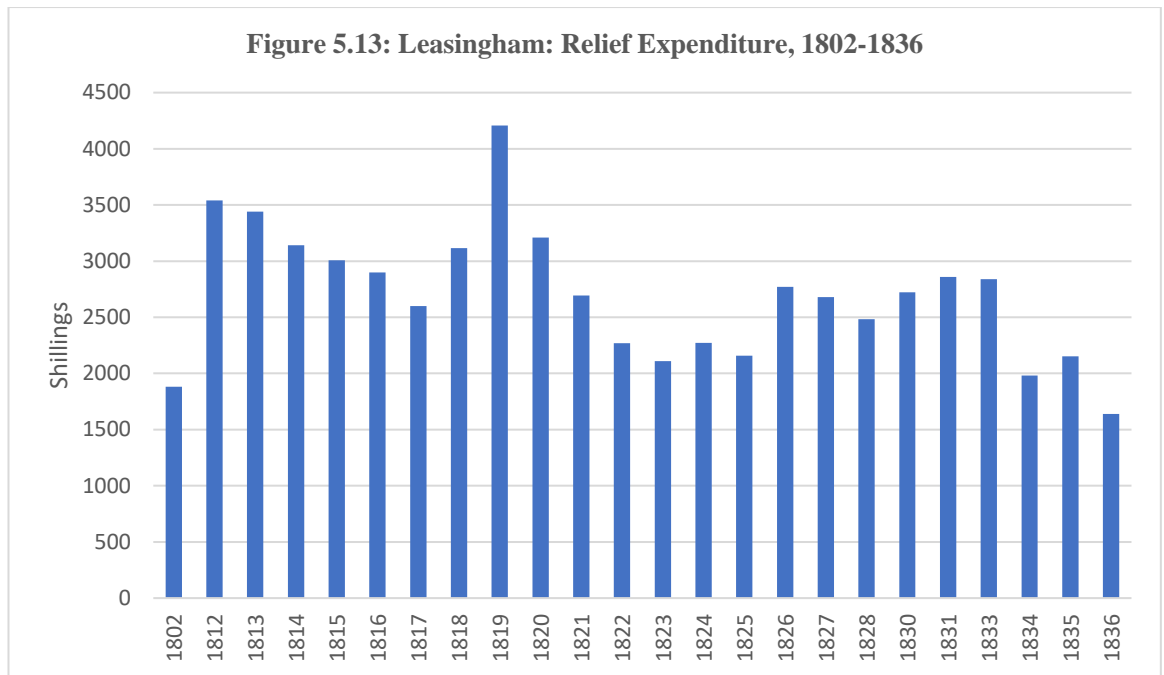


Figure 5.13. Leasingham: Relief Expenditure, 1802-1836. Source: *Abstracts of Answers and Returns under the Act for Procuring Returns Relative to Expense and Maintenance of Poor in England* (London: House of Commons, 1803-04), pp.270-271; *Abridgement of the Abstract of the Answers and Returns so Far as Relates to the Poor* (London: House of Commons, 1818), pp.240-241; *Report from the Select Committee on Poor Rate Returns, 1822* (London: House of Commons, 1822), p.90; *Select Committee on Poor Rate Returns: Report, Appendix (1824)* (London: House of Commons, 1825), p.122; *Account of Money Expended for Maintenance of Poor in England, 1824-1829* (London: House of Commons, 1830), p.105; *Account of Money Expended for Maintenance of Poor in England, 1829-1834* (London: House of Commons, 1835), p.103; *Second Annual Report of the Poor Law Commissioners for England and Wales together with appendices A, B, C, D* (London: House of Commons, 1836), pp.192-193; *Third Annual Report of the Poor Law Commissioners for England and Wales together with appendices A, B and C* (London: House of Commons, 1837), p.99.

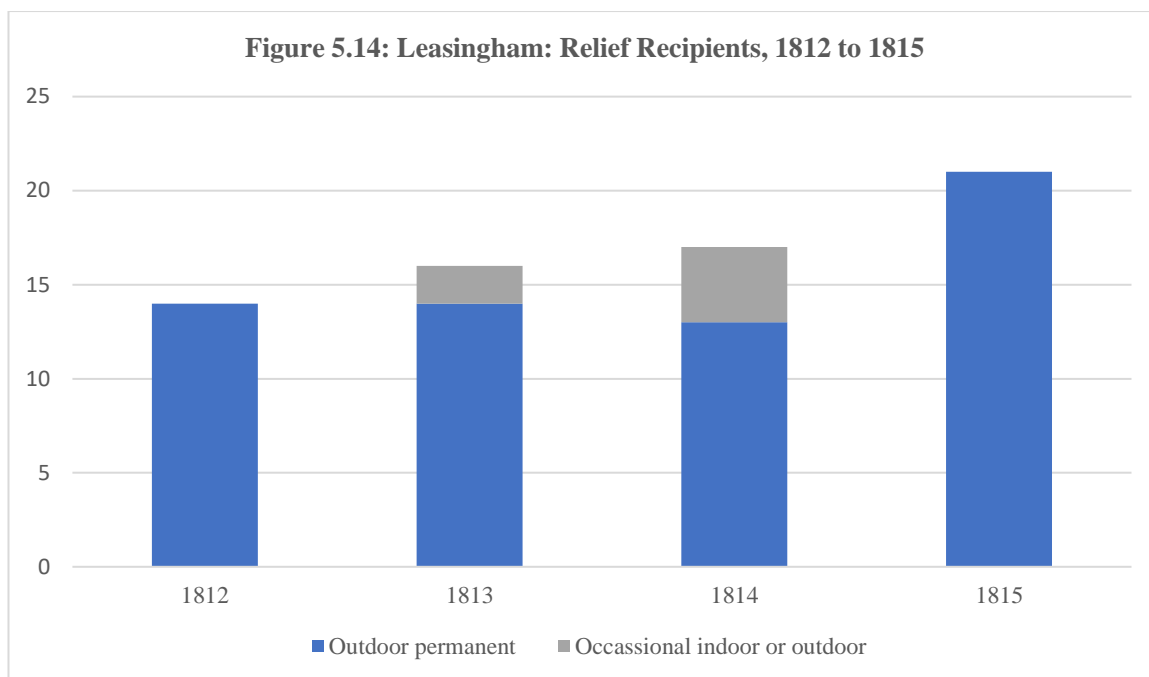


Figure 5.14. Leasingham: Relief Recipients, 1812 to 1815. Source: *Abridgement of the Abstract of the Answers and Returns so Far as Relates to the Poor* (London: House of Commons, 1818), pp.240-241; *Select Committee on the Education of the Poor (1818)- Digest of Parochial Returns Volumes I, II and III* (London: House of Commons, 1819), p.525. The 1815 data does not differentiate between permanent, occasional, outdoor or indoor recipients. All recipients have been included as outdoor recipients.

Figure 5.15 outlines quarterly spending in Leasingham between March 1838 and March 1847, albeit with no available data for the period between March 1840 and March 1842. On a short-term level, expenditure in Leasingham increased in the initial years of the New Poor Law, seeing a 29% rise between 1836 and the year between March 1838 and March 1839. The later years of the 1830s and the opening years of the 1840s were seemingly ones of high relief spending within Leasingham. Apart from September to December 1843, where expenditure reached 578s, the period between March 1838 and June 1842 saw the highest spending within Leasingham in all quarters from March 1838 to March 1847. That this period was one of increased receipt is perhaps also suggested by high numbers of workhouse inmates (figure 5.17). Between June 1838 and March 1844, Leasingham generally relieved individuals within the Sleaford union workhouse every quarter, with between 2 and 7 inmates listed. Apart from the quarter September to December 1846, where between 6 individuals were relieved indoors, the years between 1838 and 1844 saw the largest number of recipients relieved indoors by Leasingham in

all quarters with extant data. Between 1844 and 1847, relief expenditure in the parish was roughly consistent, sitting between 283s to 278s per quarter. For the year between March 1844 and March 1845, spending was 1289s, a figure lower than any noted in the parish under the waning Old Poor Law period and 39% less than spent on relief between March 1838 and March 1839. Similarly, expenditure sat at 1317s in the year between March 1846 to March 1847, roughly comparable to levels noted in 1844. Half-yearly spending data for between March 1847 and September 1850 (figure 5.16) suggests rises in relief spending in 1847 and 1848, with 1603s spent in the administrative year of 1847 and 1492s in 1848. However, such increases did still not meet levels noted in Leasingham in the late 1830s and were less than any year with extant expenditure figures under the Old Poor Law period of study. Thus, despite initial rises noted in spending in the immediate years of unionisation, on a macro-level relief expenditure seemingly did decrease under the New Poor Law. By 1849, spending began to decrease within the parish with the figure for the half-year ending September 1850 being 47% less than the peak spending half-year ending September 1847.

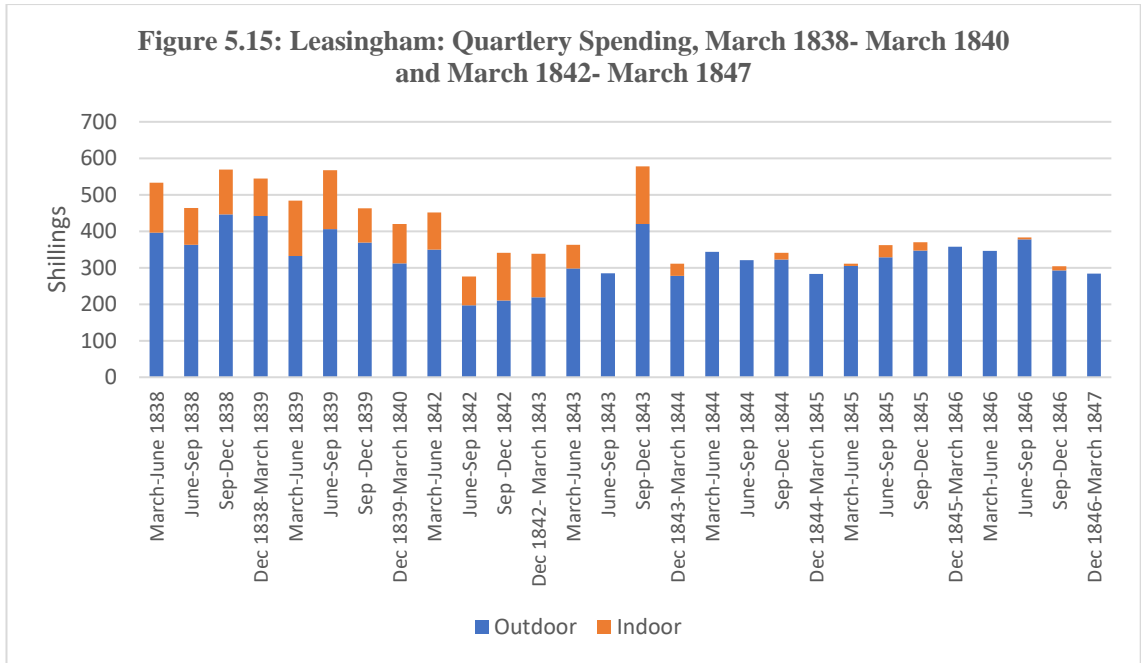


Figure 5.15. Leasingham: Quarterly Spending, March 1838-March 1840 and March 1842-March 1847. Source: *Sleaford Union Ledgers, 1838-1848*, PL12/104/1 and 2, LA. No data available for March 1840 to March 1842.

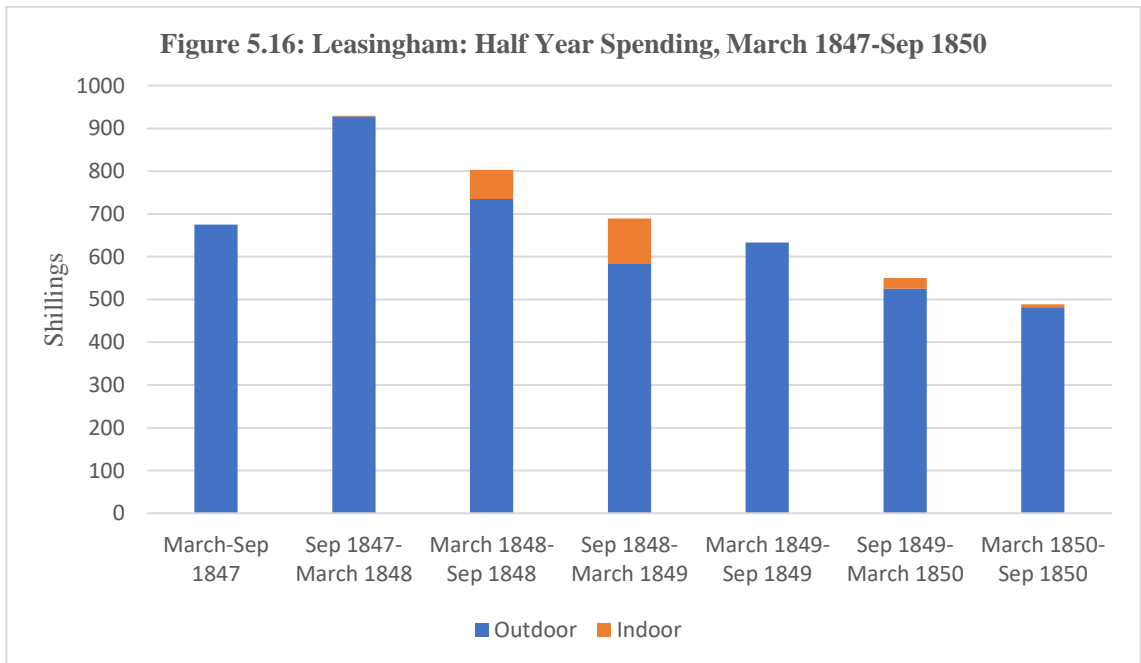


Figure 5.16. Leasingham: Half Year Spending, March 1847-September 1850. Source: *Sleaford Union Ledger, 1847-1855*, PL12/104/3, LA. No data available for March 1840 to March 1842.

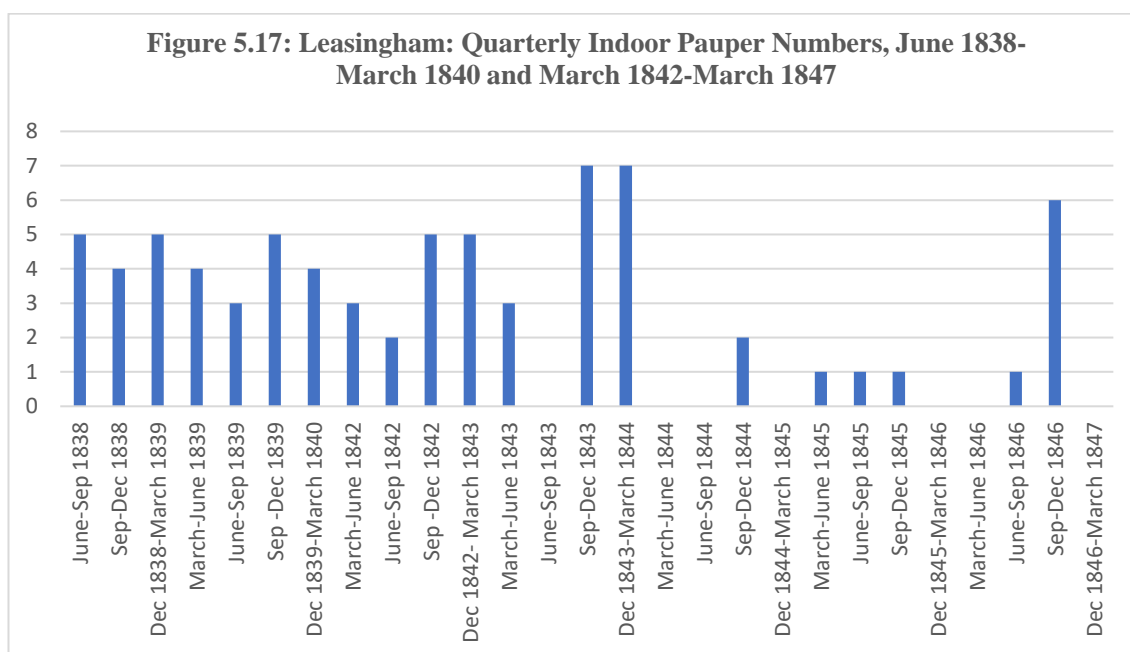


Figure 5.17. Leasingham: Quarterly Indoor Pauper Numbers, June 1838-March 1840 and March 1842-March 1847. Source: *Sleaford Union Ledgers, 1838-1848*, PL12/104/1 and 2, LA. No data available for March 1840 to March 1842.

Pauper lists survive for the parish for various quarters in 1838, 1839, 1844, 1845 and 1846 (figure 5.18). December 1838 to September 1839 was a period of generally high relief expenditure in Leasingham, with the parish relieving between 13 and 35 individuals per quarter in this period. This reflected recipient to population percentages of 3-7% when compared to the 1841 census, albeit with the caveat that it is unknown if all recipients were resident. The largest total of recipients was seen in the winter quarter between December 1838 and March 1839. Here, 35 individuals were relieved: 5 indoors consisting of 2 adult men, 2 adult women and 1 child; and 30 outdoors, of which 50% were children, 33% adult women and 17% adult men. However, recipient totals could fluctuate across the year. Between March and June 1839, Leasingham relieved 2 adult males and 2 children indoors and 9 individuals outdoors, 7 being adult females and 2 adult males. This total of 13 recipients was comparable to totals seen in the parish between 1812 and 1815 and 63% lower than recorded in the previous quarter of December 1838 to March 1839. Recipient numbers again rose in the quarter ending September 1839, albeit not reaching the levels seen in the winter quarter of 1838 to

1839. Between June and September 1839, Leasingham relieved 20 individuals: 3 workhouse inmates, being 1 adult male and 2 children; and 17 outdoor recipients, 52% of who were adult females and 24% each being adult males and children.

Data for various quarters between 1844 and 1846 show a reduction in recipient totals compared to the late 1830s, ranging from between 10 to 18 individuals per quarter and giving recipient to population percentages of 2-4% when compared to the 1841 census. In the quarter ending June 1844, Leasingham relieved 10 individuals wholly outdoors, 70% of which were adult women, 20% adult males and 10% children. These totals remained generally comparable in the quarter ending March 1846, albeit with a significant increase in child receipt. In this quarter, 18 individuals were relieved: 2 adult males, 8 adult females and 8 children. Again, all were relieved outside of the workhouse. Indeed, between March 1844 and March 1847 indoor relief was comparatively rare in Leasingham, with 50% of quarters not registering any workhouse inmates at all. In the half of quarters where relief was given indoors, recipient totals ranged from 1 to 6 individuals. In the quarter ending December 1846, Leasingham relieved 16 individuals, 38% within the Sleaford union workhouse. Outdoor recipients consisted of 1 adult male, 6 adult women and 3 children. All in all, extant data from the New Poor Law period suggests that the majority of recipients in Leasingham were women and children, with most relieved outdoors.

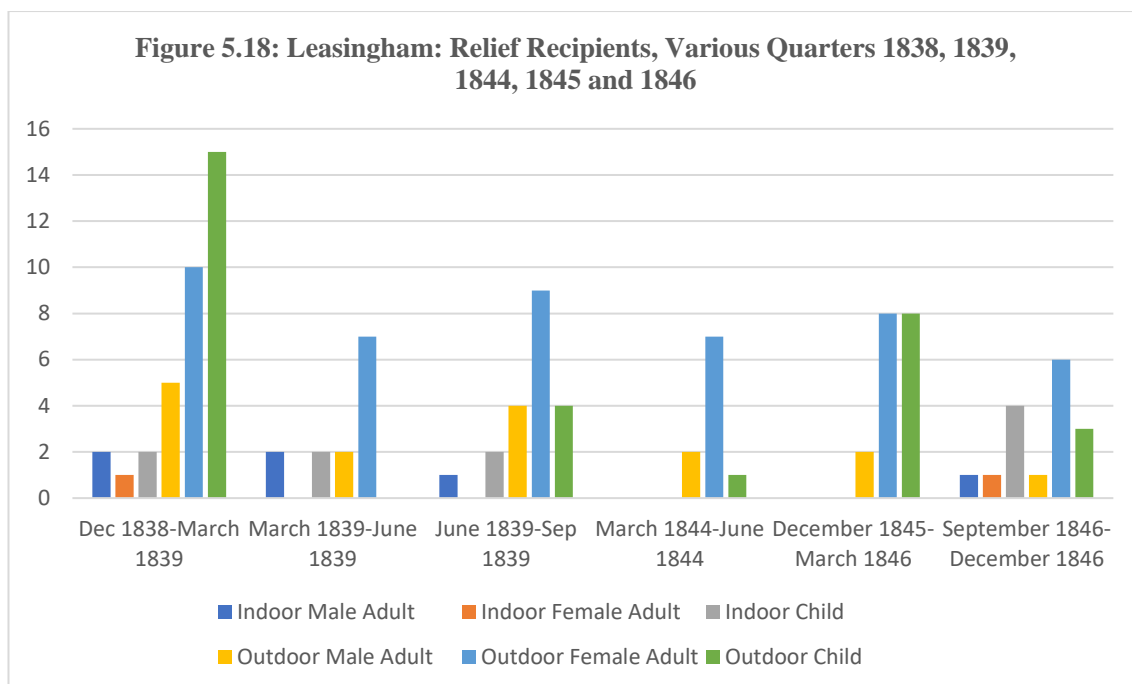


Figure 5.18. Leasingham: Relief Recipients, Various Quarters 1838, 1839, 1844, 1845 and 1846. Source: Digby Parish 13/24, LA; *Sleaford Poor Law Union Correspondence, 1843-1847*, MH12/6764, NA.

c) The Fen Skirtlands: Digby and Ruskington

i) Digby

Relief expenditure for Digby between 1791 and 1835 is shown in figure 5.19 with outdoor recipient demography at various points under the Old Poor Law given in figure 5.20. Spending made to the workhouse master in differing years under the Old Poor Law is presented in figure 5.21. All three figures will be used to examine expenditure and recipient trends in the parish in the waning period of the Old Poor Law.

Within Digby, the highest spending year across the 1790s was 1796. In that year, the majority of expenditure went to the workhouse master in order to maintain the poor. Unfortunately, the parish records do not list demographic details about indoor relief recipients; however, 9 individuals were relieved outdoors in 1796, 44% being adult males and 56% adult females. When compared to the 1801 census, these outdoor recipients constituted around 4% of the parish's population. It is unclear if all recipients were resident but the fact that all recipients in 1802 were resident parishioners may suggest that they probably were. Spending decreased across the closing years of the

1790s before rising at the turn of the nineteenth century, although with the high expenditure years of 1801 and 1802 not seeing levels reached in the mid-1790s. In 1802, 78% of expenditure went on the provision of indoor relief with 4 individuals relieved within the parish workhouse, none permanently outdoors and 4 relieved occasionally.¹⁶ Of these 8 recipients, none were children or aged over 60 years old, disabled or permanently ill. All were resident and consisted of 3% of the parish's population using the 1801 census for comparison. Spending saw a general downward trajectory between 1803 and 1806 before rising over the next decade, seeing a high of 3057s in 1817. This period saw peaks in expenditure given to the workhouse master to relieve the poor, seeing a 198% increase between 1806 and 1812. Again, demographic information is lacking for indoor relief recipients but outdoor relief recipients stood at between 6 and 9 individuals in 1806, 1809 and 1812, relating to recipient to population percentages of 3-4% when using the 1811 census data. The period between 1812 and 1817 seems to have been one of changing policy within Digby, with the amounts given to workhouse masters decreasing and outdoor relief increasing. In 1817, expenditure via the workhouse master was 22% less than in 1812 despite the total annual expenditure rising by 10% between these two years. Similarly, there were larger numbers of people receiving outdoor relief in 1817 compared to 1812, with 14 individuals in receipt in this latter year compared to 9 in 1812. In 1817, 43% of outdoor relief recipients were adult males; 29% adult females; and 14% each being children or individuals of an unidentifiable age or gender. These 14 individuals constituted 6% of Digby's resident population using the 1811 census data, a clear rise on the 3-4% levels noted in the parish in earlier decades.

For the closing years of the 1810s and first years of the 1820s, spending generally decreased before seeing a peak in 1822 (3203s). This year saw the second highest spending of any year with extant data between 1791 and 1836. Indeed, there was a 51% increase in spending just between the years 1821 and 1822. These opening years of the 1820s saw a drastic reduction in the amounts spent by workhouse masters, being just 7% of the annual expenditure in 1821 and with seemingly no spending made by workhouse masters in the peak year of 1822. In comparison, 72% of spending in 1812 went to the workhouse master. Thus, there was a clear rise in outdoor relief with 31

¹⁶ *Abstracts of Answers and Returns under the Act for Procuring Returns Relative to Expense and Maintenance of Poor in England*, pp.270-271

individuals relieved outdoors in 1821, 29% being adult males; 32% adult females; 13% children; and 26% of an unidentifiable age or gender. This was a particularly high proportion to population of 11% when using the 1821 census data. The peak in spending in 1822 seems to have been linked to an increase in adult male relief. In this year, 42 individuals received outdoor relief (15% of the parish's population when compared to the 1821 census) with 45% being adult males, being a total of 19 men. In comparison, the totals of adult females, children and persons of an unidentifiable age or gender remained remarkably consistent between 1821 and 1822, suggesting that 1822 saw more irregular, short-term relief given to able-bodied men. Here, the opening years of the 1820s were seemingly one of increased need within Digby, with recipient to population percentages sitting at 11-15%, albeit with it being unclear if all were necessarily resident poor.

Although seeing peaks and troughs, spending remained high in Digby across the 1820s and early 1830s, with expenditure in 1829 sitting at 3183s and 3415s in 1834, the highest annual sum of any year with extant data between 1791 and 1836. Interestingly, there seems to have been a policy change back towards utilising workhouse masters and indoor relief in the mid-1820s, presumably in response to the high levels of spending and receipt seen in the opening years of that decade. In 1826, a generally lower expenditure year in the context of the 1820s, 67% of spending went to the workhouse master. Again, no demographic data survives for indoor relief recipients or those maintained regularly by the workhouse master. However, 21 individuals were relieved outdoors in 1826, 19% being adult males which was a sharp reduction from the levels of adult male outdoor relief seen in 1822. All in all, recipients in 1826 sat at around 7.5% of Digby's population when compared to the 1821 census, much lower than levels seen in 1821-1822 but still generally larger than noted in the parish during the 1790s, 1800s and 1810s.

Totals of outdoor relief recipients being identifiably adult women and children remained generally consistent between 1822 and 1829, suggesting a core of females and children relieved regularly with allowances. In 1829, a high expenditure year, there was again a peak in able-bodied adult male relief. Of the 25 outdoor relief recipients listed in that year, 48% were adult males, consisting of around 8% of the resident population when the 1831 census data is used. The trend of decreasing payments to workhouse masters as outdoor relief increased is also noticeable in 1829, with just 4% of expenditure in that

year going to the workhouse master. Unfortunately, demographic data of receipt does not survive for 1834, the highest expenditure year of any with extant figures between 1791 and 1836. However, due to trends noted within Digby across the waning period of the Old Poor Law, it is reasonable to suggest that this was a year of increased able-bodied male need. The last years of the Old Poor Law saw decreases in spending with expenditure in 1835 and 1836 sitting at levels seen within the parish in the late 1810s. Overall, annual spending ranged between 883s to 3415s from 1791 and 1836 in Digby.

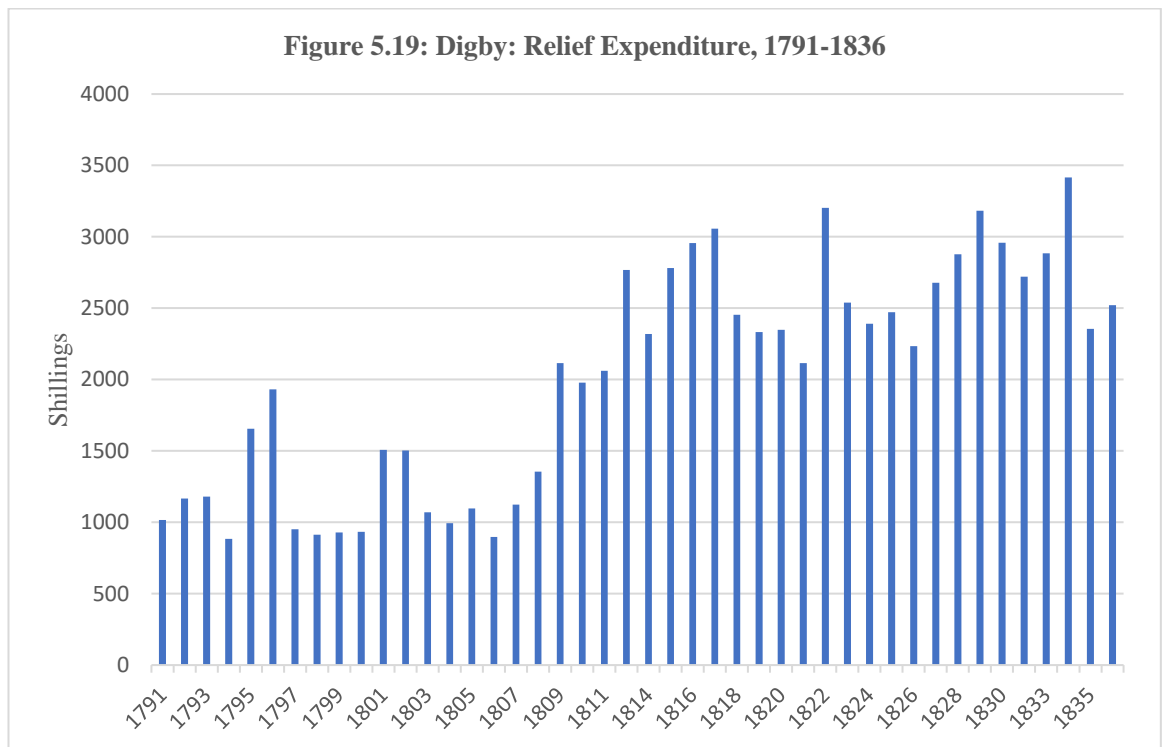


Figure 5.19. Digby: Relief Expenditure, 1791-1836. Source: Digby Parish 13/1, LA. *Account of Money Expended for Maintenance of Poor in England, 1829-1834* (London: House of Commons, 1830), p.103; *Second Annual Report of the Poor Law Commissioners for England and Wales together with appendices A, B, C, D* (London: House of Commons, 1836), pp.192-193; *Third Annual Report of the Poor Law Commissioners for England and Wales together with appendices A, B and C* (London: House of Commons, 1837), p.99.

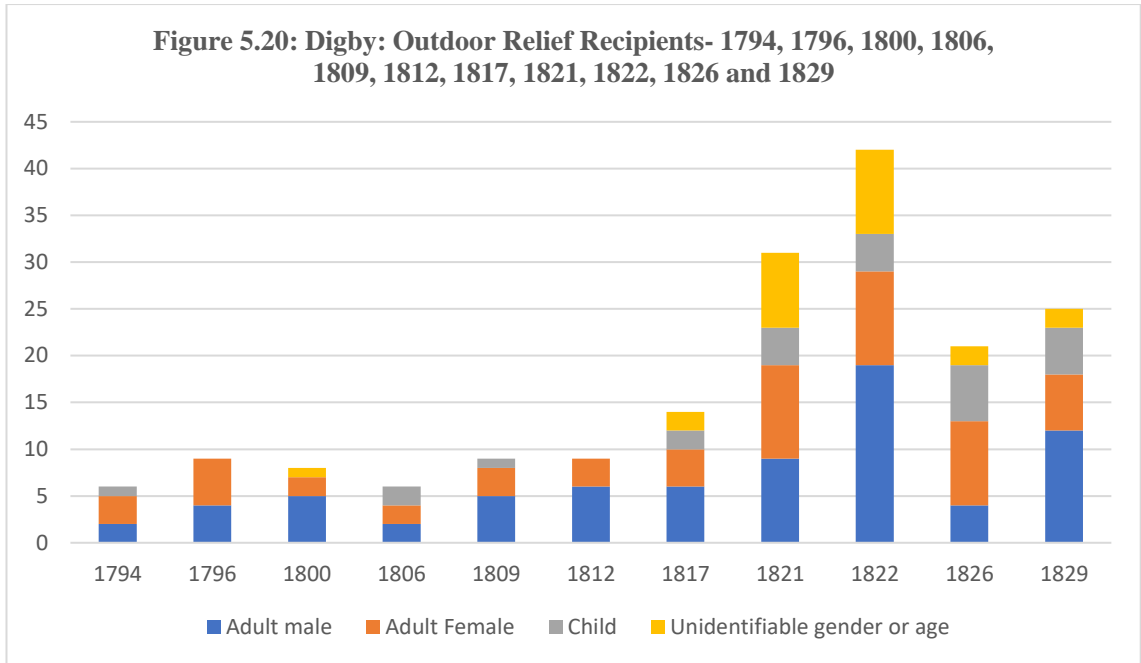


Figure 5.20. Digby: Outdoor Relief Recipients- 1794, 1796, 1800, 1806, 1809, 1812, 1817, 1821, 1822, 1826 and 1829. Source: Digby Parish 13/1, LA.

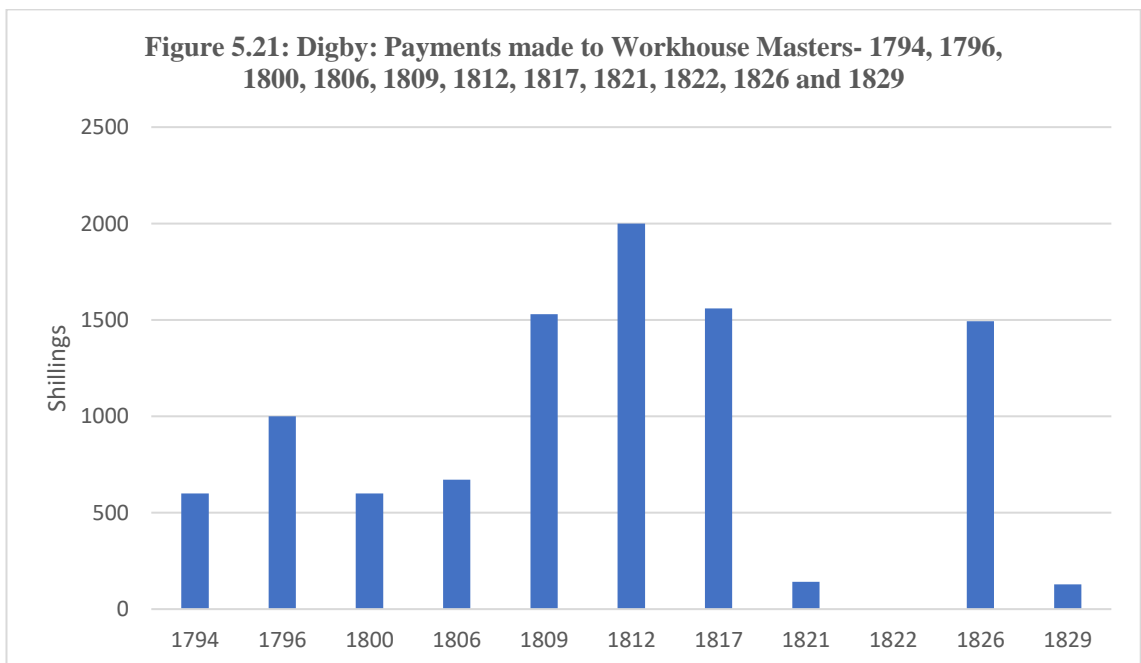


Figure 5.21. Digby: Payments made to Workhouse Masters- 1794, 1796, 1800, 1806, 1809, 1812, 1817, 1821, 1822, 1826 and 1829. Source: Digby Parish 13/1, LA

New Poor Law expenditure and recipient data for Digby is presented in figures 5.22 to figures 5.25. Quarterly and half-year spending figures between 1838 and 1850 are given in figures 5.22 and 5.23, with pauper demographic information shown in figures 5.24 and 5.25.

In the opening years of the New Poor Law, expenditure seemingly decreased in Digby with spending between March 1838 and March 1839 being 1007s, 60% less than seen in 1836. Expenditure within the parish remained generally consistent between March 1838 and spring 1843, ranging from 231s to 340s per quarter. However, rises can be seen after this date with spending between March and June 1844 being 69% higher than in the same quarter in 1843. Between June 1844 and September 1846, expenditure saw a general downward trajectory, although rises can be seen in the summer of 1845 and the winter of 1845 to 1846. From September 1846, spending per quarter increased reaching a high of 755s between December 1846 and March 1847. This was the highest expenditure between all quarters between March 1838 and March 1847. Such rises parallel increases in indoor pauper levels within the parish, with Digby relieving 6 individuals indoors within the Sleaford union workhouse in the quarter between December 1846 and March 1847, the highest number of inmates from the parish between March 1838 and March 1847 (figure 5.24). Indeed, indoor relief was comparatively rare in Digby during the first decade of the New Poor Law, with 59% of all quarters between March 1838 and March 1847 recording no paupers relieved by Digby within the Sleaford union workhouse. In quarters which did exhibit indoor relief recipients, most were clustered around the second half of the 1840s with Digby consistently seeing inmates within the workhouse between September 1845 and March 1847. Other periods where indoor recipients are identifiable are December 1838 to March 1839; March to June 1842; June to September 1843; December 1843 to June 1844. All in all, Digby relieved between 1 and 6 individuals per year within the Sleaford union workhouse between March 1838 and March 1847. Half year figures for March 1847 to September 1850 confirm that 1847 was a year of high spending, with expenditure between March to September 1847 being 1151s, 49% higher than in the same period in 1848. Expenditure generally saw a downward trajectory across the later 1840s with spending between March to September 1850 being 60% less than in the same half-year in 1847. Despite this, spending on indoor relief was consecutively present between March 1847 and September 1850, contrasting with the periods between

1838 and 1847 where Digby relieved no individuals indoors and meaning that indoor relief became a persistent feature within the parish from the late 1840s.

Pauper demographic information in the context of the New Poor Law exists for Digby for various quarters in 1838, 1839, 1844, 1845 and 1846 (figure 5.25). The period between December 1838 and September 1839 was one of generally low expenditure. Within these quarters, Digby relieved no adult males or children indoors, only relieving one adult female within the workhouse in the quarter ending March 1839. Outdoor recipients remained generally consistent across all three quarters between December 1838 and September 1839, sitting at 5 adult females, 7 children and between 1 and 2 adult males. Thus, between December 1838 and September 1839, the parish relieved between 13 and 14 individuals per quarter, the majority of these receiving outdoor relief and being adult females and children. This constituted around 3.5% of the parish's resident population when compared to the 1841 census, albeit again with the caveat that not all recipients may have been resident. Overall, there was seemingly a reduction in the total amounts of individuals in receipt of relief compared to levels seen in the waning period of the Old Poor Law. For example, when compared to 1829 levels, total recipient numbers were down by 44% in 1839 with the proportion of receipt to population falling by around 5%. Moreover, the reduction in relief to adult males noted in 1839 does show change from the demography of receipt noted in the waning decades of the Old Poor Law. Even in years of low expenditure between 1791 and 1836, adult males consisted of a healthy minority of relief recipients, at least for those relieved outdoors. For example, in 1806 they consisted of a third of all individuals relieved outdoors and in 1826, 19% of outdoor relief recipients. In contrast, adult males relieved outdoors consisted of 14% of recipients between June to September 1839, the quarter with the largest amount of adult male receipt between December 1838 and September 1839.

Rises in adult male relief can be seen in various quarters between 1844 and 1846, with these periods seeing corresponding increases in relief spending and suggesting growing episodic need which led males towards the poor law. In the three quarters with extant data between 1844 and 1846, 4 to 5 adult males were relieved outdoors and 1 indoors, in comparison to the 1 to 2 male outdoor relief recipients noted between December 1838 and September 1839, with no males receiving indoor relief in this period. Despite seeming rises in adult male relief between 1844 and 1846, the majority of recipients

continued to be women and children, as had been the case in the late 1830s. Within the three quarters with existing figures between 1844 and 1846, Digby relieved between 8 and 9 women outdoors and 1 indoors; and between 9 and 17 children outdoors with 1 indoors. Thus, the demography of receipt under the New Poor Law was largely dominated by women and children. Overall totals of receipt in these various quarters between 1844 and 1846 sat at between 22 and 33 per quarter, consisting of 6-9% of Digby's parish population when compared to the 1841 census and emphasising that the demography of receipt was temporally variable throughout the New Poor Law period.

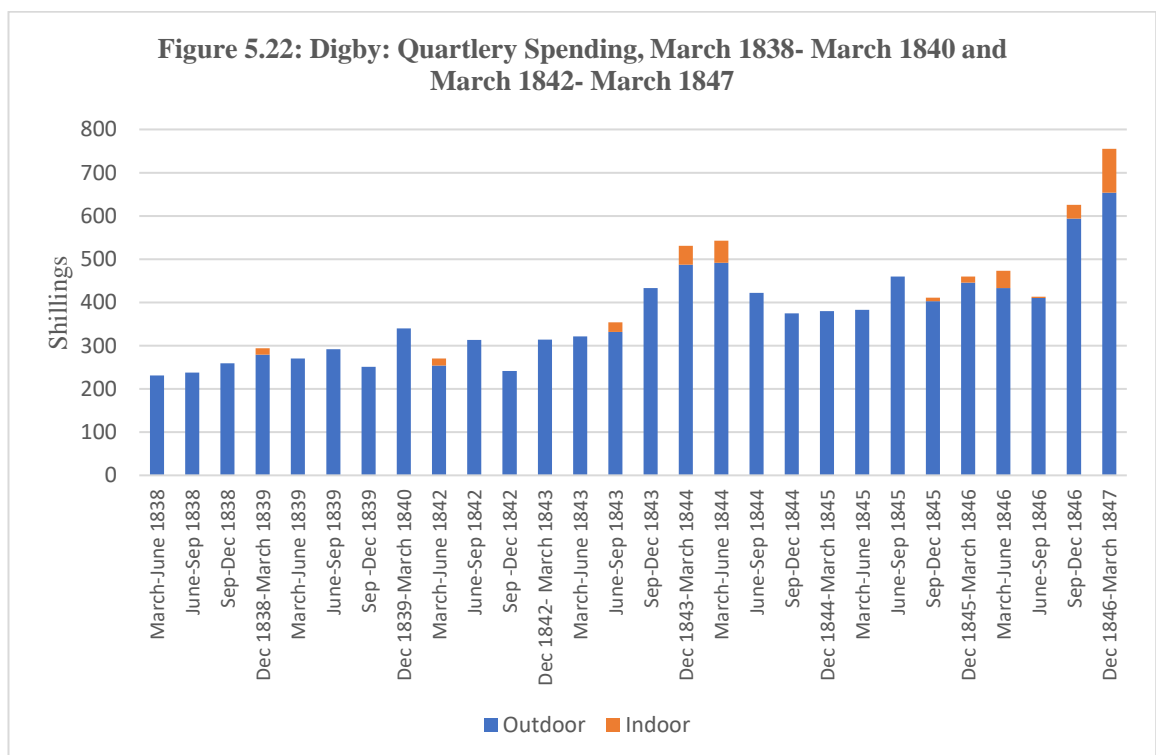


Figure 5.22. Digby: Quarterly Spending, March 1838-March 1840 and March 1842-March 1847. Source: *Sleaford Union Ledgers, 1838-1848*, PL12/104/1 and 2, LA. No data available for March 1840 to March 1842.

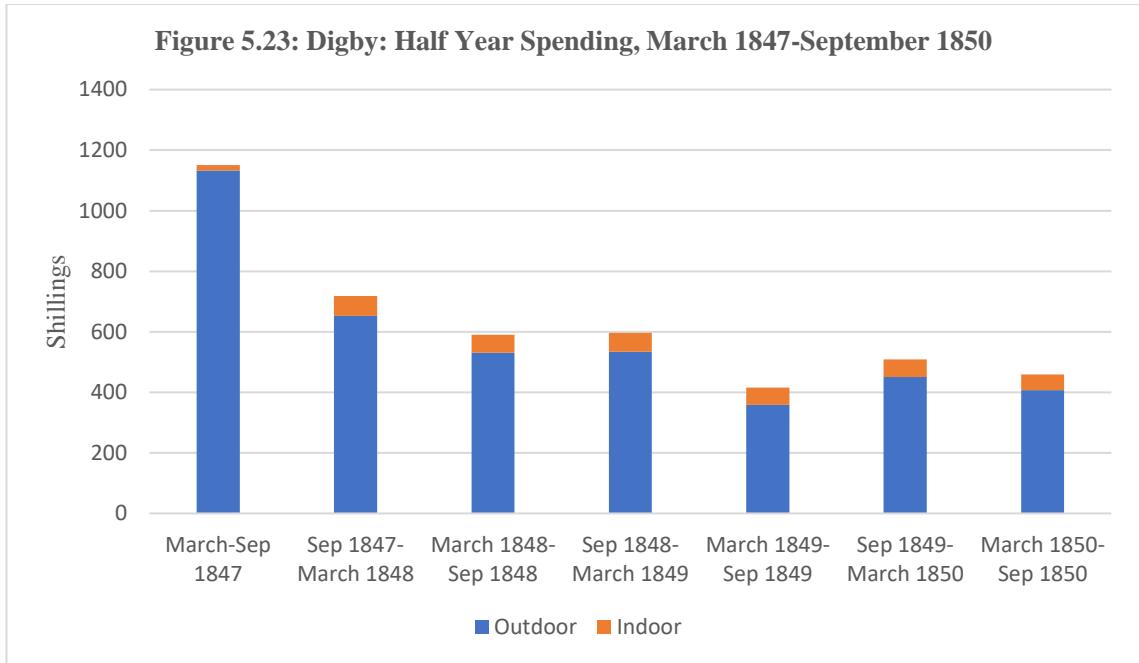


Figure 5.23. Digby: Half Year Spending, March 1847 to September 1850. Source: *Sleaford Union Ledger, 1847-1855, PL12/104/3, LA*

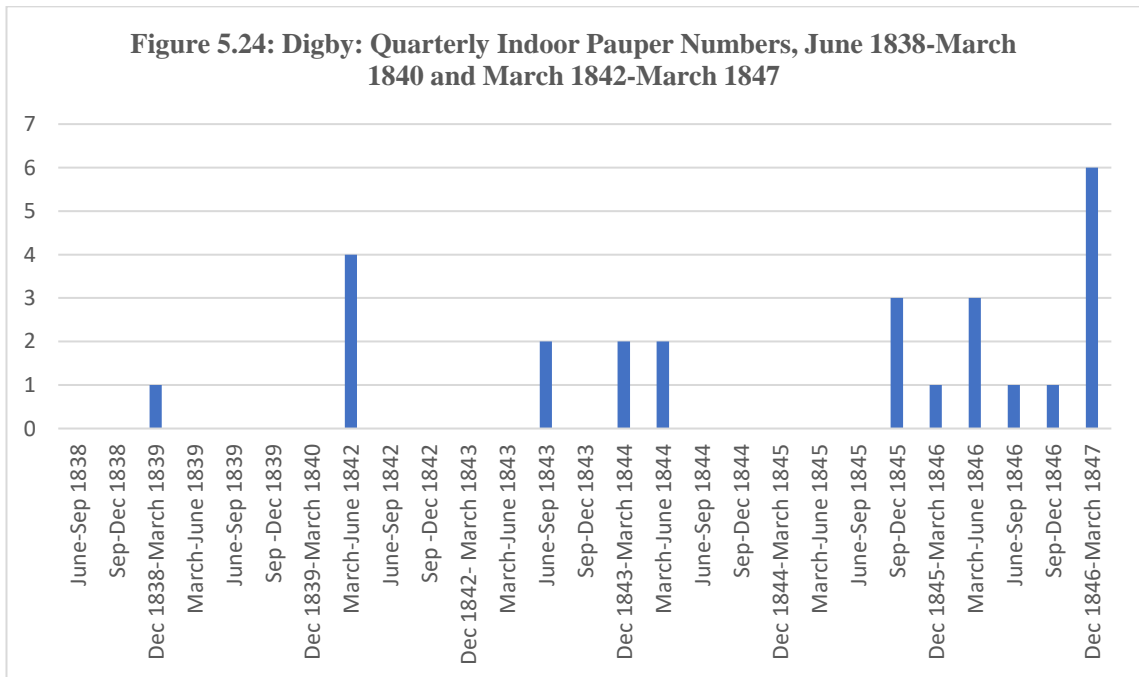


Figure 5.24. Digby: Quarterly Indoor Pauper Numbers, June 1838-March 1840 and March 1842-March 1847. Source: *Sleaford Union Ledgers, 1838-1848, PL12/104/1 and 2, LA.* No data available for March 1840 to March 1842.

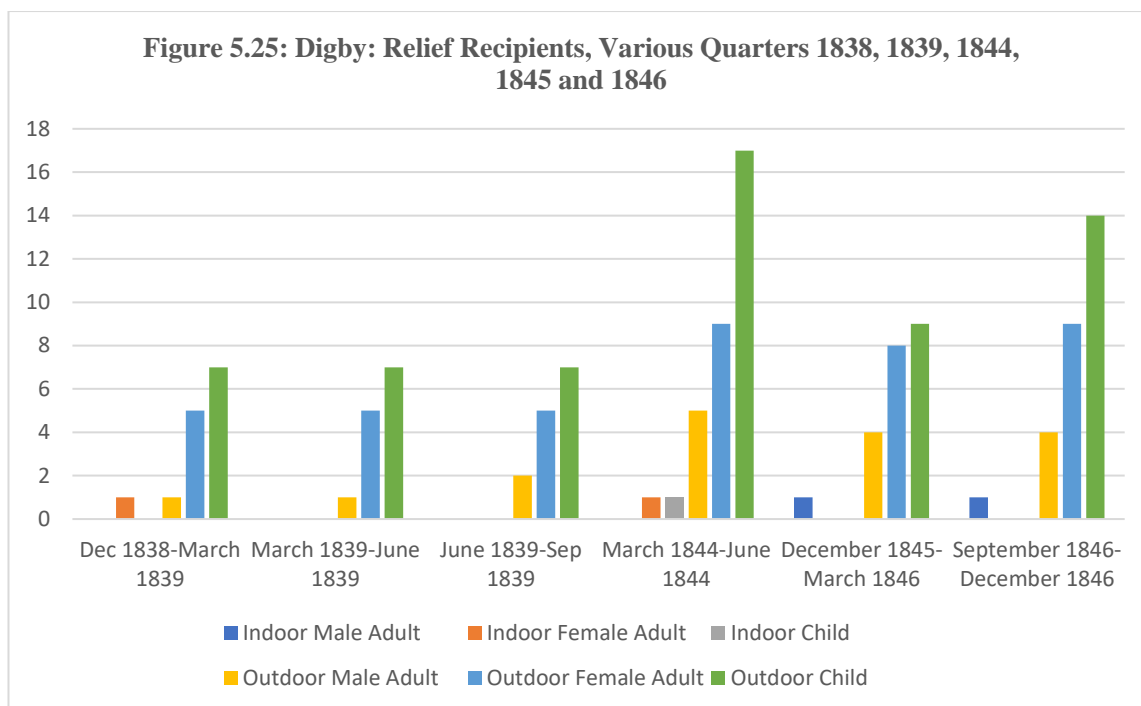


Figure 5.25. Digby: Relief Recipients, Various Quarters 1838, 1839, 1844, 1845 and 1846. Source: Digby Parish 13/24, LA; *Sleaford Poor Law Union Correspondence, 1843-1847*, MH12/6764, NA.

ii) Ruskington

Figures 5.26 and 5.27 present expenditure and recipient data for Ruskington within the Old Poor Law period of study. Within years with existing spending figures, 1798 was seemingly a high spending year within Ruskington. Unfortunately, demographic data for recipients is not complete for that year. However, in 1799, a lower expenditure year than 1798, 33 outdoor relief recipients were listed in Ruskington with 48% being identifiably adult females; 27% adult males; 9% children; and 15% being of unidentifiable age or gender. In addition, the parish was relieving a smaller number of people indoors with 3 workhouse inmates listed in December 1799. If these totals are compared to the 1801 census data, this gives a recipient to population percentage of around 7%. The opening years of the nineteenth century were ones of high expenditure in Ruskington, with rises seen in each year between 1799 and 1803. Governmental data for 1802 shows that the parish was relieving 21 adults and 1 child under the age of 5

permanently outdoors.¹⁷ No paupers were listed as having been relieved indoors. Alongside these 22 permanent outdoor relief recipients, 11 others were relieved occasionally. Out of these 33 relief recipients, the same total as listed in 1799, 36% were aged over 60, disabled or permanently ill. Additionally, Ruskington was relieving 6 non-parishioners giving an overall total of 39 relief recipients in 1802, with resident recipients consisting of around 7% of the population when compared to the 1801 census figures. Despite seeing only 6 more relief recipients in 1802 than in 1799, expenditure was 217% higher in the latter compared to earlier year. Spending rose by 11% between 1802 and 1803, with 1803 exhibiting the highest levels of spending seen in the parish until 1817. A complete breakdown of recipient demography for 1803 is not possible due to the numbers and names of individuals in receipt of weekly allowances not included in parish records, with only the payment of the weekly collect listed. The 22 outdoor relief recipients recorded by name in 1803 were therefore seemingly in receipt of irregular payments and were not included in those who received a regular weekly allowance. Out of these 22 individuals, 45% were adult males; 23% adult females; 5% children; and 27% being of an unidentifiable age or gender. As in 1802, there were seemingly no inmates within the parish workhouse, at least with these not being listed in the parish accounts if there were any.

From a high in 1803, relief expenditure in the parish saw a generally downward trajectory over the next decade, albeit with spikes in 1807, 1809, 1812 and 1813. A low in spending can be seen in 1810 and in this year, Ruskington was relieving 19 individuals outdoors with no indoor recipients listed despite the existence of a parish workhouse, around 3% of the resident population using the 1811 census return. Adult males consisted of 26% of these outdoor recipients, a significant decrease to levels seen in 1803. Adult females made up 37% of outdoor recipients in 1810, followed by 16% being children and 21% being of an unidentifiable age or gender. In the immediate post-Napoleonic Wars period, spending drastically increased, seeing a 172% rise between 1814 and 1818. Indeed, 1818 was the highest expenditure year of any with extant data between 1798 and 1836, reaching a peak of 7090s, albeit with demographic breakdowns for recipients being incomplete for this year. This period of high spending in the immediate post-1815 years was seemingly linked to rises in able-bodied male

¹⁷ *Abstracts of Answers and Returns under the Act for Procuring Returns Relative to Expense and Maintenance of Poor in England*, pp.270-271

pauperism, unsurprising given the general national economic depression which typified that era. In 1817, Ruskington was relieving 36 individuals outdoors (around 6% of the 1811 resident population) with 69% of these being adult males; 17% adult females; 3% children; and 11% of unidentifiable gender or age. No data is available for parish workhouse inmates in this year. Outdoor relief recipients in 1817 contrasted with the demographic make-up of receipt in 1799 and 1810 when adult females dominated, seeing similarities with the rises in adult male receipt in 1803, another period of high expenditure. However, there were differences between the ways individuals were relieved between these dates, with regular weekly allowances typifying outdoor relief in 1799 compared to short-term payments given to able-bodied males, generally for parish given work over a set number of days, in 1817.

Parish records do not exist for the period after 1817, meaning an analysis of recipient demography is lacking with statistical data gleaned from government sources. After 1818, relief expenditure generally decreased until the mid-1820s, albeit with 1821 being a high spending year. From 1825, expenditure began to rise again, reaching a high of 6260s in 1831, a figure only 13% less than the peak year of 1818. Over the final years of the Old Poor Law, spending decreased with levels in 1836 being 66% smaller than in 1831 and the second lowest seen in all years with extant data between 1798 and 1836. All in all, between 1798 and 1836 spending in Ruskington ranged from 1505s to 7090s in years with surviving figures.

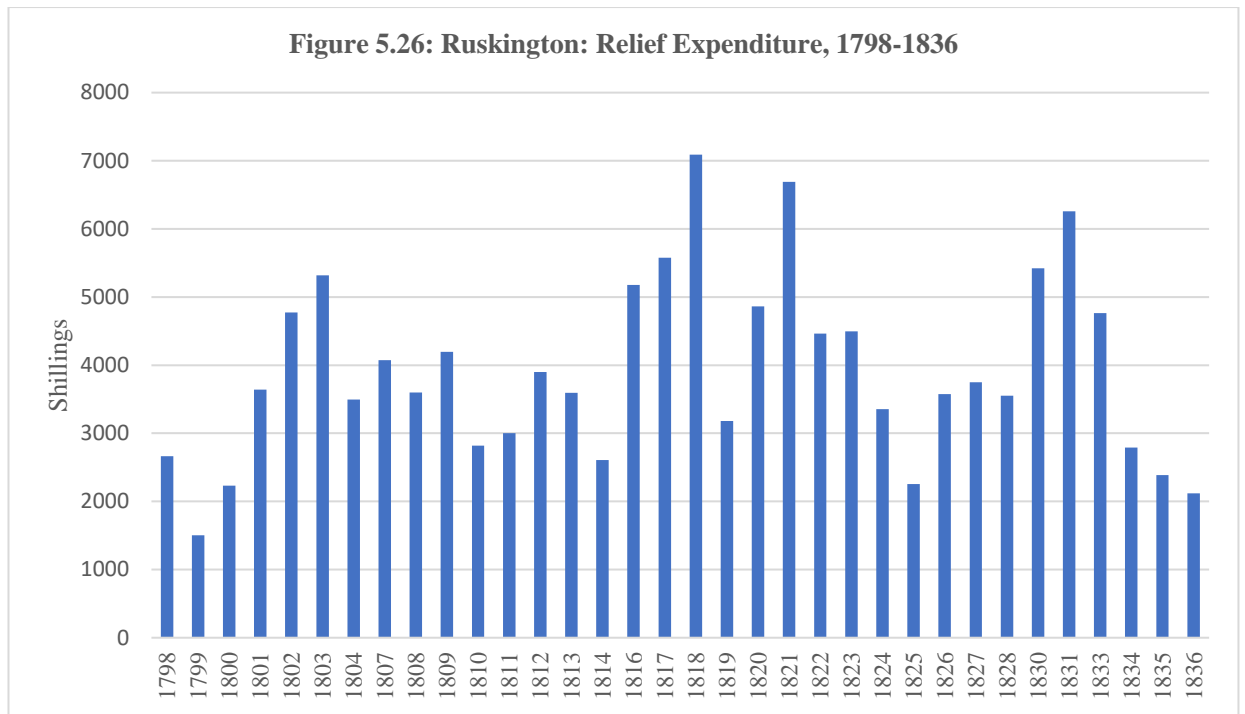


Figure 5.26. Ruskington: Relief Expenditure, 1798 to 1836. Source: Ruskington Parish 13/1, LA. No data in the parish archives for 1805, 1806 and 1815. *Report from the Select Committee on Poor Rate Returns, 1822* (London: House of Commons, 1822), p.90; *Select Committee on Poor Rate Returns: Report, Appendix (1824)* (London: House of Commons, 1825), p.123; *Account of Money Expended for Maintenance of Poor in England, 1824-1829* (London: House of Commons, 1830), p.106; *Account of Money Expended for Maintenance of Poor in England, 1829-1834* (London: House of Commons, 1835), p.103; *Second Annual Report of the Poor Law Commissioners for England and Wales together with appendices A, B, C, D* (London: House of Commons, 1836), pp.192-193; *Third Annual Report of the Poor Law Commissioners for England and Wales together with appendices A, B and C* (London: House of Commons, 1837), p.99.

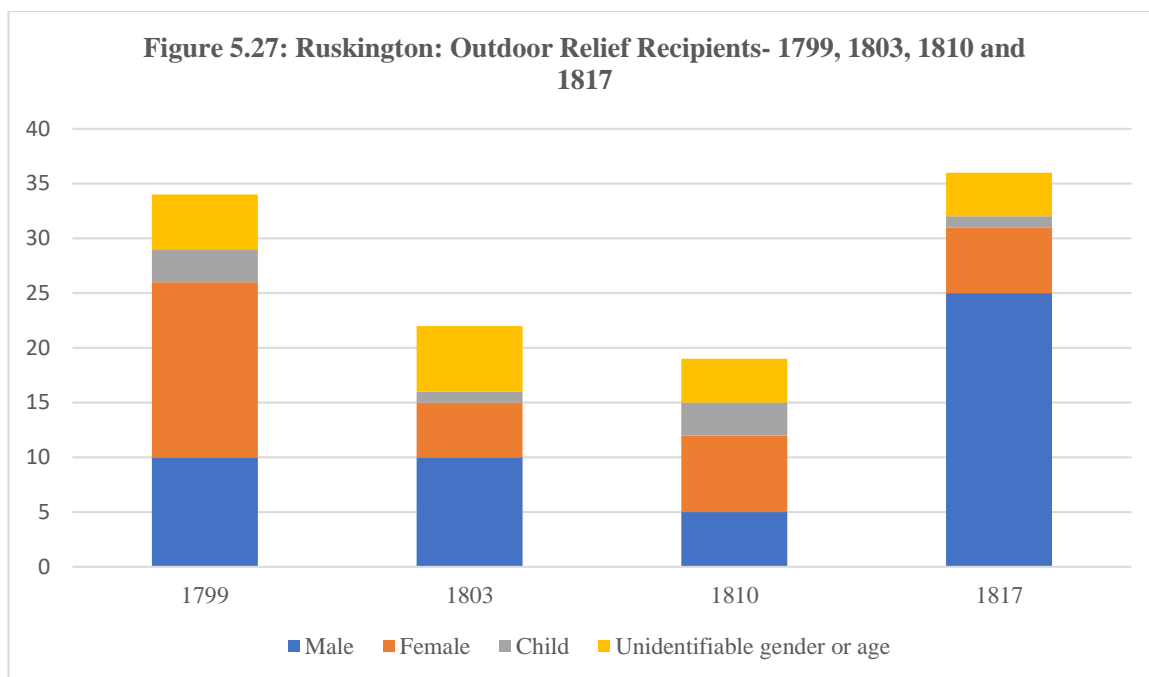


Figure 5.27. Ruskington: Outdoor Relief Recipients- 1799, 1803, 1810 and 1817.

Source: Ruskington Parish 13/1, LA

Quarterly and half-yearly expenditure data for the parish under the New Poor Law period of study is given in figures 5.28 and 5.29. Between March 1838 and March 1839, Ruskington's expenditure sat at 1202s, 43% less than 1836 levels and suggesting that the advent of the New Poor Law did decrease relief spending within the parish. Indeed, expenditure continued to fall until the spring of 1839 before seeing a rising trend which lasted to the quarter of March to June 1843. Despite small decreases in spending between June to December 1843, expenditure continued to rise in Ruskington to a peak of 1446s in the quarter December 1844 to March 1845. Therefore, the parish was spending more in this quarter than it had done for the whole administrative year of 1838. Expenditure remained comparatively high throughout the rest of the 1840s, with half-year spending figures for between March 1847 to September 1850 confirming the mid-1840s as a period of high spending. For example, expenditure between March to September 1847 was the highest of any half-year period until September 1850, sitting at 4265s and 117% higher than spending in the same period in 1850. Although falling from levels seen in the spring and summer of 1847, spending remained relatively high in Ruskington until the spring of 1849. After this point, expenditure saw larger decreases, falling by 40% between the half-year ending in March 1849 and the one

ending September 1849. Thus, the final year of the 1840s was one of falling spending after the highs of the mid-1840s. However, spending in 1850 was still substantially bigger than evidenced in the initial years after unionisation with the figure for March to September 1850 being 199% larger than that for the same period in 1838.

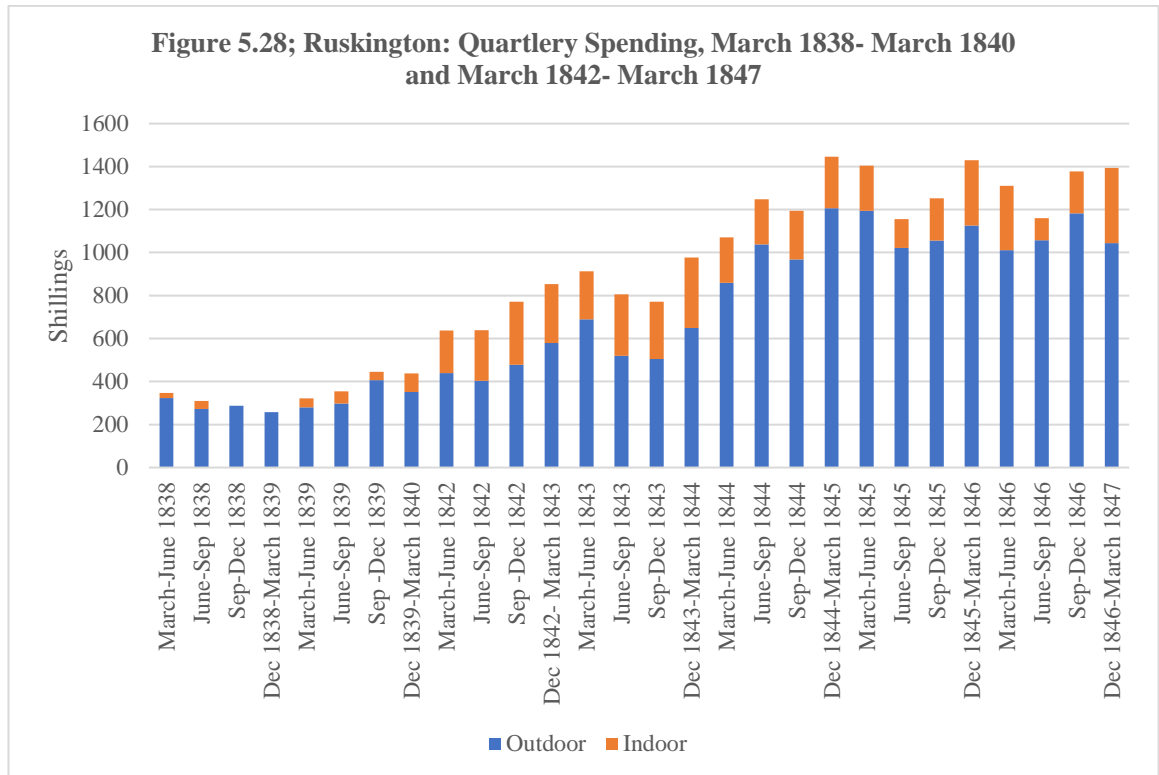


Figure 5.28. Ruskington: Quarterly Spending, March 1838-March 1840 and March 1842-March 1847. Source: *Sleaford Union Ledgers, 1838-1848*, PL12/104/1 and 2, LA. No data available for March 1840 to March 1842.

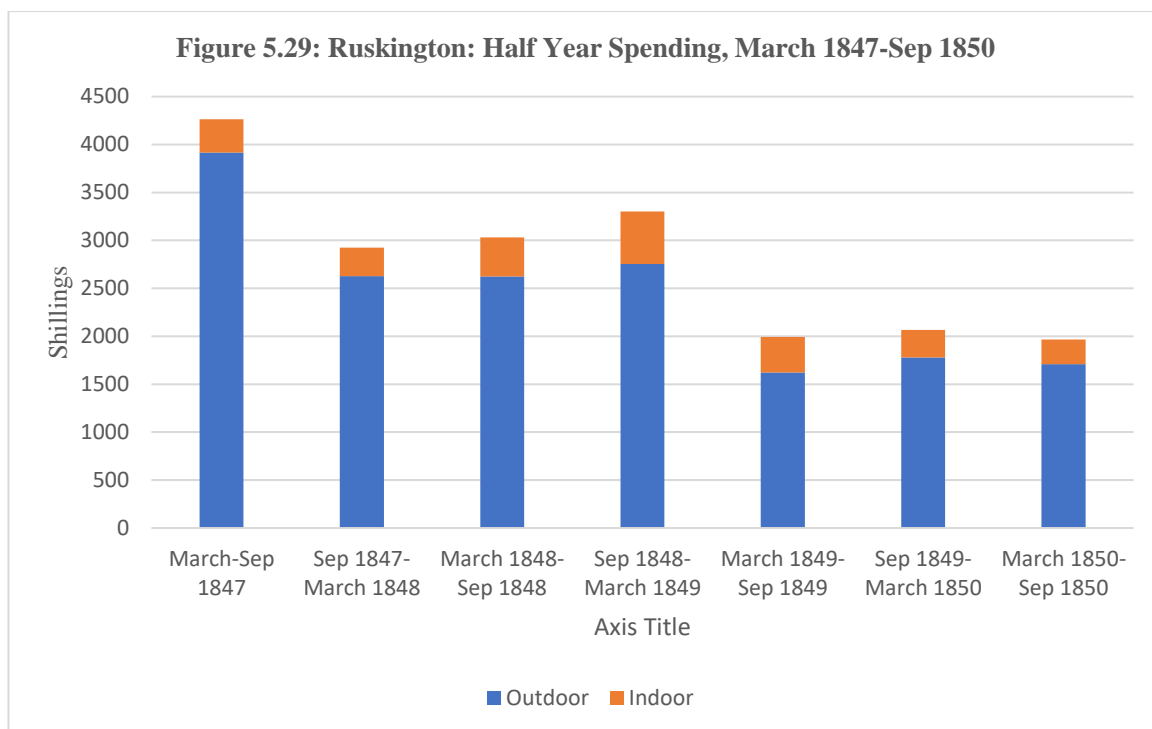


Figure 5.29. Ruskington: Half Year Spending, March 1847-September 1850.

Source: *Sleaford Union Ledger, 1847-1855*, PL12/104/3, LA.

Figure 5.30 shows that indoor relief was generally a consistent feature of relief in the early decades of the New Poor Law within Ruskington, with only the period between September 1838 and March 1839 not recording any inmates chargeable to the parish within the Sleaford union workhouse. Between June 1838 and March 1847, the parish relieved between 1 and 21 individuals indoors, with peaks in workhouse inmates notable in 1843, 1844, 1846 and 1847, albeit with fluctuations between quarters. Such correlate with high expenditure periods within the parish.

However, despite regularity in workhouse relief, the majority of recipients under the New Poor Law were relieved outdoors. Extant recipient demographic data for Ruskington under the New Poor Law is limited to various quarters in 1838, 1839, 1844, 1845 and 1846 (figure 5.31). Between December 1838 to September 1839, total numbers of recipients were far lower in this period than seen under the Old Poor Law, at least in years with extant data between 1799 and 1817. A total of between 11 and 18 individuals were relieved per quarter between December 1838 to September 1839, sitting at around 1% of the parish's resident population when compared to the 1841 census data. Of these, the majority were women and children relieved outdoors,

although a substantial minority of recipients were adult males. For example, 18-27% of recipients per quarter were adult males between December 1838 and September 1839. However, it is unclear if these were able-bodied men. Moreover, aggregate totals of males in receipt were far smaller in these quarters than in the waning Old Poor Law period, sitting at between 2 and 5 individuals and perhaps suggesting a reduction in explicit poor law relief given to men overall.

Despite this, totals of men relieved saw an increase in the quarters with extant data between 1844 and 1846, years of rising relief spending within Ruskington. In these quarters, between 11 and 13 males received relief, predominantly outdoors. Moreover, increases were seen in the overall total of recipients compared to levels noted in 1838 and 1839, with between 51 and 82 individuals in receipt of relief per quarter with surviving records in 1844 to 1846, being around 5-8% of the resident population when compared with the 1841 census, albeit with all recipients perhaps not resident. These are levels higher than noted in Ruskington under the Old Poor Law and suggest that overall numbers of recipients could fluctuate temporally. However, the bulk of those relieved in 1844 to 1846 were women and children receiving outdoor relief, as had been the case in 1838 and 1839. For example, 82 recipients were listed in the parish in the quarter ending March 1846. Of these, only 22% were relieved indoors with 22% of outdoor recipients being women and 45% children. Adult males constituted just 16% of the total relief recipients in the quarter ending March 1846, corresponding to 13 individuals, 31% of which were relieved indoors within the Sleaford union workhouse. All in all, despite temporal fluctuations in the totals of men relieved, relief to males seemingly fell under the New Poor Law with the majority of recipients being women and children in Ruskington.

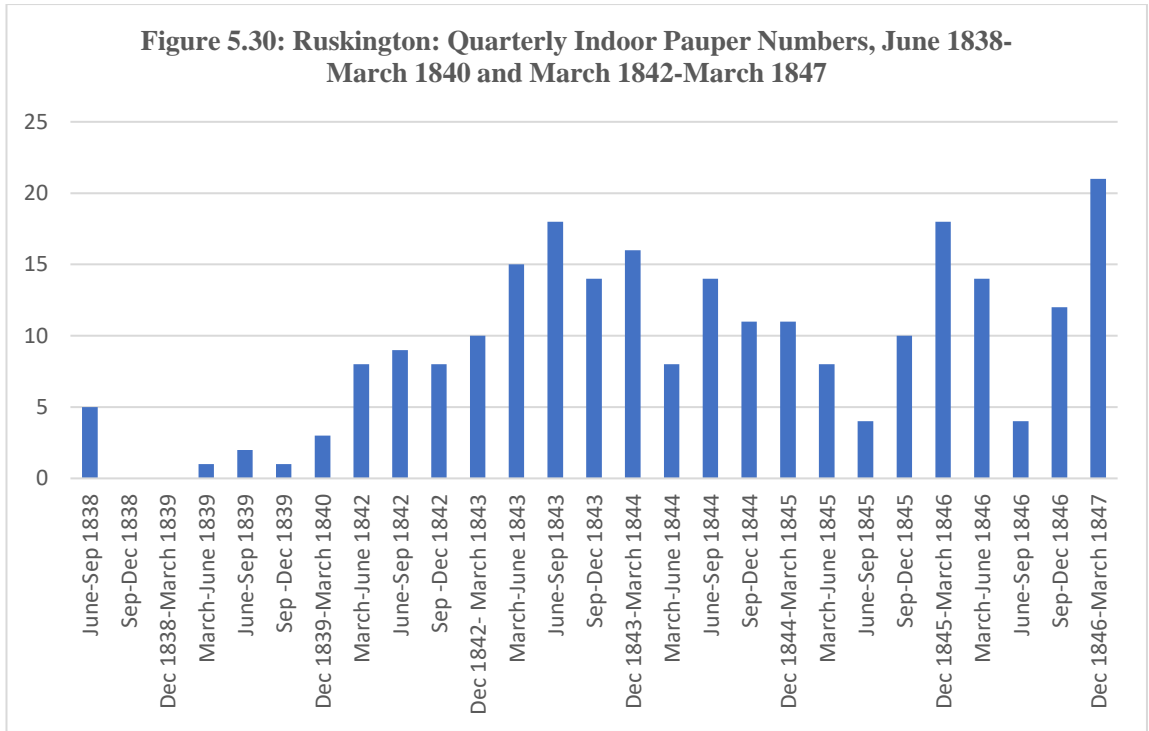


Figure 5.30. Ruskington: Quarterly Indoor Pauper Numbers, June 1838-March 1840 and March 1842-March 1847. Source: *Sleaford Union Ledgers, 1838-1848*, PL12/104/1 and 2, LA. No data available for March 1840 to March 1842.

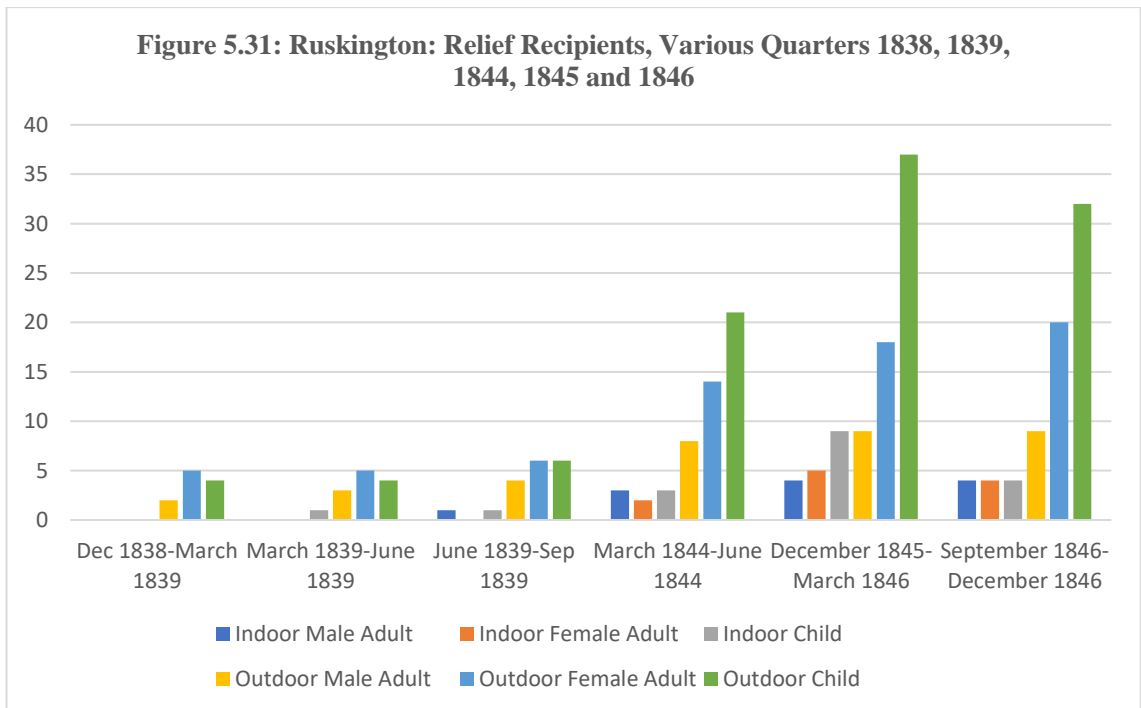


Figure 5.31. Ruskington: Relief Recipients, Various Quarters 1838, 1839, 1844, 1845 and 1846. Source: Digby Parish 13/24, LA; *Sleaford Poor Law Union Correspondence, 1843-1847*, MH12/6764, NA.

d) The Cliff and Heath: Leadenham, Navenby and Waddington

i) Leadenham

Figures 5.32 and 5.33 outline Leadenham's relief expenditure from 1801 to 1836 and outdoor relief recipient demographics for various years which saw peaks and troughs in spending across this period. The earliest extant data for Leadenham's relief spending is from 1801. The first two years of the nineteenth century saw generally high annual expenditure. In 1801, the parish was relieving 48 individuals, 54% of whom were adult females; 27% adult males; 15% children; and 4% of unidentifiable age or gender. All in all, this constituted around 9% of the parish's resident population, with the fact that non-resident relief was uncommon in Leadenham within the early nineteenth century, with only 2 out of 37 recipients living outside the parish in 1802,¹⁸ suggesting that this 9% were largely resident. Between 1801 and 1803, spending decreased by 16% within the parish and the total number of relief recipients by 46%, with a total of 26 individuals in receipt of relief in this latter year, around 5% of the population. In 1803, 4% of relief recipients were identifiably adult males; 38% adult women; 8% children; and 50% of an unidentifiable gender or age. Between 1803 and 1811, relief expenditure generally remained at levels lower than seen in 1801 and 1802, albeit with spikes in spending identified in 1805 and 1809. In 1805, 33 relief recipients were listed, around 6% of the resident population when compared to the 1801 census data. Of these, 45% being were adult women; 12% children; 9% adult males; and 33% individuals of an unidentifiable age or gender.

The parish workhouse opened in 1808, with the decision to have it constructed made in 1804, and in 1809 Leadenham relieved between 7 and 10 individuals indoors per month. Although no demographic data aside from totals of individuals is given for workhouse inmates, the parish was paying 2s 9d per inmate per week to the workhouse master in 1809. Therefore, Leadenham paid, to the nearest shillings, between 17s and 24s per month in indoor relief costs in 1809. If this highest figure is used, the parish paid around 288s across the year to relieve workhouse inmates, around 5% of the annual expenditure for 1809. In regard to outdoor recipients, 37 were listed in 1809 with 32% being adult females; 24% children; 22% each being adult men or individuals of an unidentifiable

¹⁸ *Abstracts of Answers and Returns under the Act for Procuring Returns Relative to Expense and Maintenance of Poor in England*, pp.272-273

age or gender. Here, outdoor recipients constituted around 7% of the resident parish population if the 1811 census is used for comparison.

Expenditure rose by 68% between 1811 and 1812, with this latter year seeing the highest spending of any year with extant data between 1801 and 1836, sitting at 7198s. In 1812, between 5 and 8 individuals per month were relieved within the parish workhouse, slightly less than seen in 1809. In regard to outdoor relief, 39 individuals were listed as recipients (around 7% of the population), 56% being adult females; 23% adult males; 13% children; and 8% of unidentifiable gender or age. Although smaller than 1812 levels, expenditure remained generally high until another peak in 1820, albeit with troughs in 1815. In that year, there were between 2 to 4 workhouse inmates per month and 29 outdoor relief recipients, with outdoor recipients constituting 5% of the population when compared to the 1811 census. Adult women consisted of 55% of those relieved outdoors in 1815; 28% adult males; 7% children; and 17% of an unidentifiable age or gender. Spending again rose after this date, seeing a slight peak in 1817. In this year, there was seemingly an increase in adult male relief, again understandable within the context of the post-1815 economic depression. The total number of outdoor relief recipients sat at 33 in 1817, 39% of which were adult males; 55% adult females; and 6% individuals of an unidentifiable age or gender. There were seemingly no payments made to children on their own account, for example due to bastardy, in that year. Annual spending in 1820 stood at 7116s, the second largest in any year with surviving figures from 1801 to 1836. Unfortunately, the parish records for Leadenham are only extant until 1818 and so demographic information for relief recipients is not available for the 1820s and 1830s. Spending generally decreased across the early 1820s before seeing an upward trajectory from 1824, seeing a spike of 6679s in 1827. From this year until unionisation in 1836, expenditure in Leadenham steadily decreased with levels in 1836 being 42% less than seen in the peak year of 1812. All in all, spending in Leadenham ranged from 4168s to 7198s in years with extant data between 1801 and 1836.

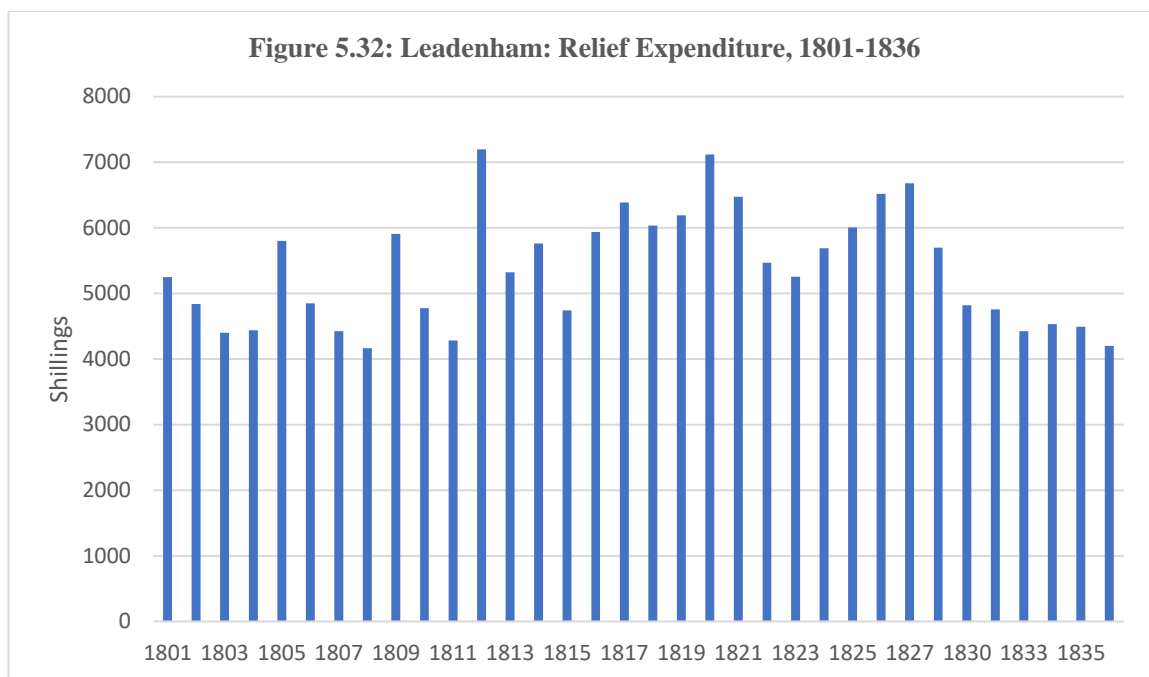


Figure 5.32. Leadenham: Relief Expenditure, 1801 to 1836. Source: Reeve/10/2, LA. *Report from the Select Committee on Poor Rate Returns, 1822* (London: House of Commons, 1822), p.91; *Select Committee on Poor Rate Returns: Report, Appendix (1824)* (London: House of Commons, 1825), p.123; *Account of Money Expended for Maintenance of Poor in England, 1824-1829* (London: House of Commons, 1830), p.106; *Account of Money Expended for Maintenance of Poor in England, 1829-1834* (London: House of Commons, 1835), p.104; *Second Annual Report of the Poor Law Commissioners for England and Wales together with appendices A, B, C, D* (London: House of Commons, 1836), pp.192-193; *Third Annual Report of the Poor Law Commissioners for England and Wales together with appendices A, B and C* (London: House of Commons, 1837), p.100.

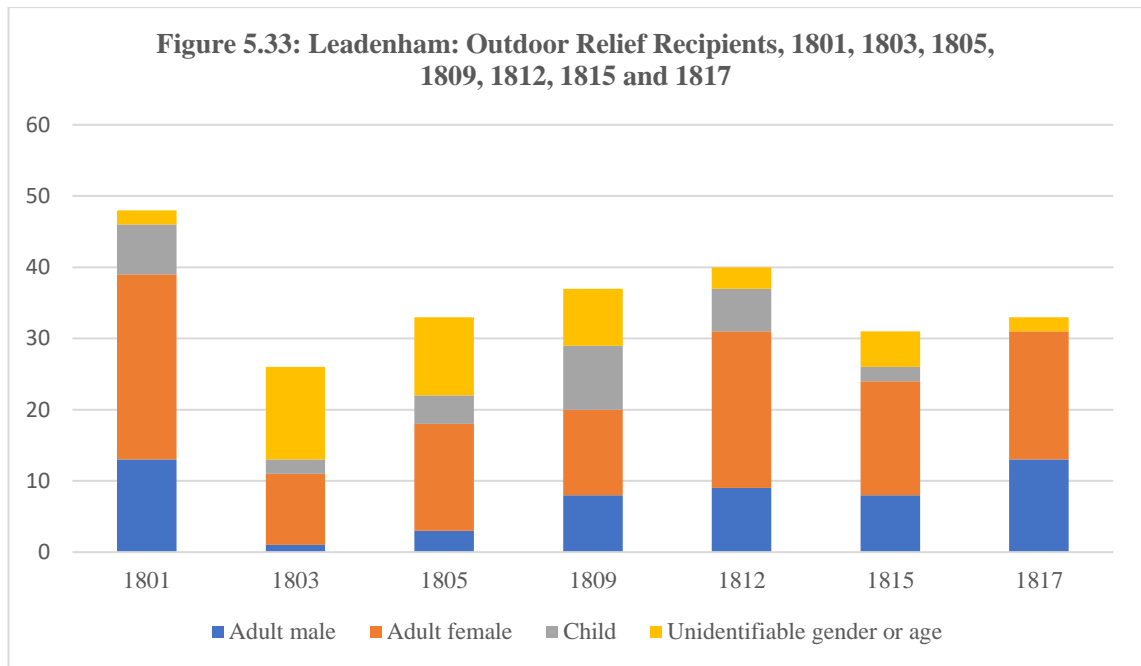


Figure 5.33. Leadenham: Outdoor Relief Recipients, 1801, 1803, 1805, 1809, 1812, 1815 and 1817. Source: Reeve/10/2, LA.

Figures 5.34 and 5.35 show extant expenditure data for Leadenham in the years of study under the New Poor Law. In the early years of the New Poor Law, spending did seemingly reduce with expenditure between March 1838 and March 1839 being 24% lower than the annual expenditure for 1836, sitting at 3175s. Despite slight rises in the quarter December 1838 to March 1839, spending in Leadenham remained roughly consistent until June 1843. From this point, spending began to rise, reaching a peak of 1014s in the quarter September to December 1844. Troughs in spending can be seen between December 1844 and September 1845 before increases are again evident, with expenditure taking a generally upward trajectory until a peak of 978s in the quarter September to December 1846. As in other parishes of study, half-year expenditure figures between March 1847 and September 1850 suggest that 1847 was a particularly high year for relief spending, with the figure for March to September 1847 being 31% higher than in the same period in 1848 and 21% larger than in this half-year period in 1850. Expenditure generally decreased between March 1847 and September 1850, albeit with slight rises between September 1848 and March 1849 and the half-year ending September 1850.

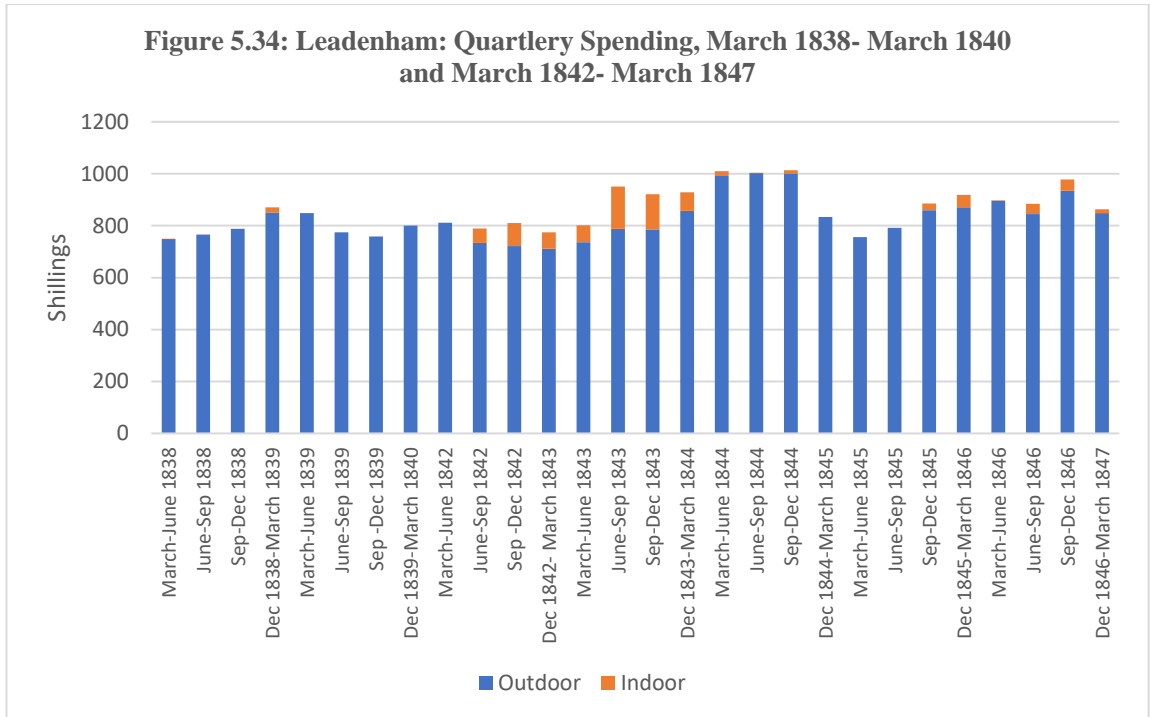


Figure 5.34. Leadenham: Quarterly Spending, March 1838-March 1840 and March 1842-March 1847. Source: *Sleaford Union Ledgers, 1838-1848*, PL12/104/1 and 2, LA. No data available for March 1840 to March 1842.

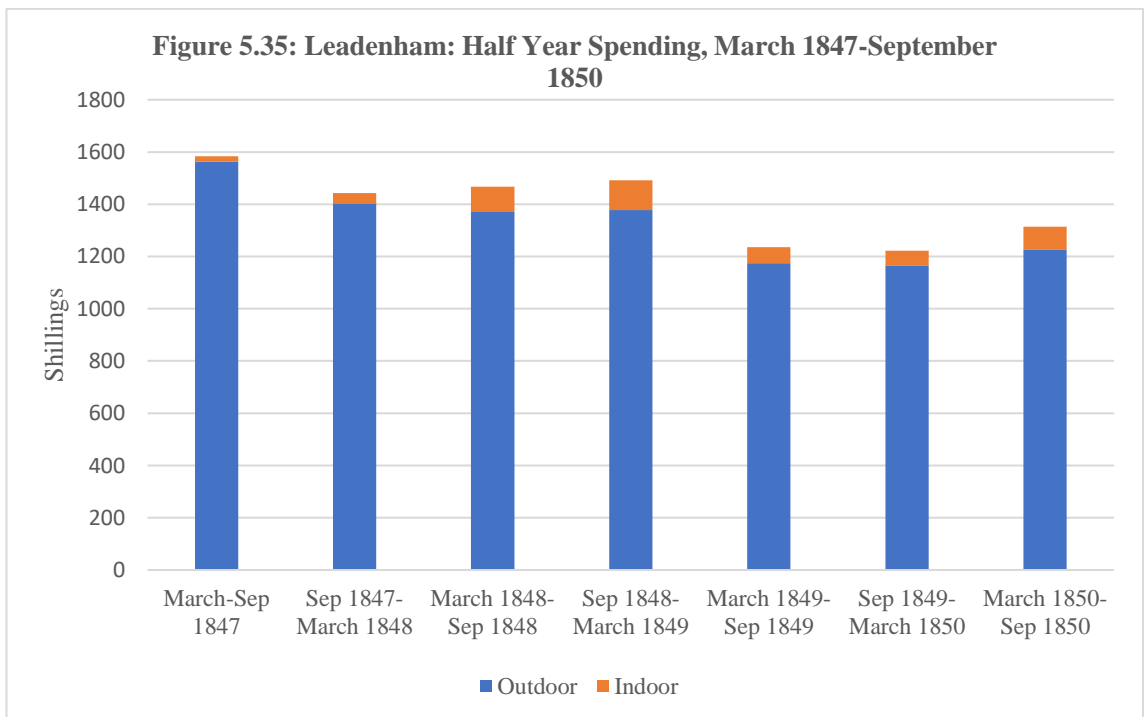


Figure 5.35. Leadenham: Half Year Spending, March 1847-September 1850. Source: *Sleaford Union Ledger, 1847-1855*, PL12/104/3, LA.

Figure 5.36 shows indoor relief recipients from Leadenham between 1838 and 1847. In the late 1830s and opening years of the 1840s, indoor relief within Leadenham was seemingly rare with only the quarter between December 1838 and March 1839 exhibiting any inmates chargeable to the parish within the Sleaford union workhouse between June 1838 and June 1842. However, between 1842 and 1850, indoor relief generally became a conspicuous aspect of the New Poor Law within the parish, with quarterly and half-yearly expenditure figures emphasising this. Apart from March to September 1845, between 1842 and 1850 Leadenham consistently provided relief indoors for individuals. Peaks in indoor relief recipients can be discerned between March 1843 to March 1844 and again in June to December 1846. The highest recorded number of inmates chargeable to Leadenham within the Sleaford union workhouse in quarters with pauper numbers was 9 in December 1843 to March 1844. All in all, the parish relieved between 1 and 9 individuals indoors in varying quarters between June 1838 and March 1847.

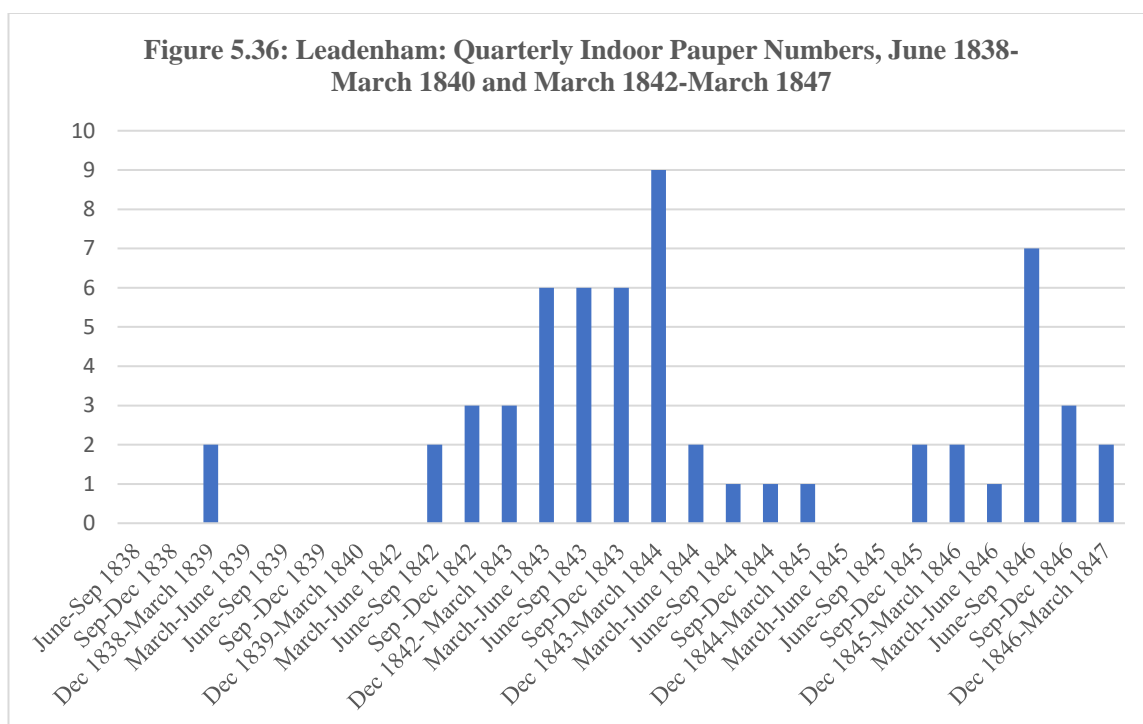


Figure 5.36. Leadenham: Quarterly Indoor Pauper Numbers, June 1838-March 1840 and March 1842-March 1847. Source: *Sleaford Union Ledgers, 1838-1848*, PL12/104/1 and 2, LA. No data available for March 1840 to March 1842.

Demographic data for receipt under the New Poor Law exists for Leadenham at various quarters in 1838, 1839, 1844, 1845 and 1846 (figure 5.37). In the period between December 1838 to September 1839, the parish was relieving between 25 and 28 individuals per quarter, around 4% of the resident population when compared to the 1841 census, again with the caveat that not all recipients may have been resident. Of these, the overwhelming majority were adult females, with this cohort being between 81-84% of all those relieved per quarter. Both adult male and child relief was seemingly sparse in this period. Adult males consisted of 11-12% of recipients per quarter between December 1838 and September 1839, relating to a consistent total of 3 individuals. Children made up just 4-7% of recipients in this period, although children relieved as dependents within a household may be masked in this data. As with other parishes of study, outdoor relief dominated under the New Poor Law, at least in periods with extant data. Within quarters with existing records between 1844 and 1846, an increase in the total number of recipients can be noted compared to levels in the late 1830s, ranging from 39 to 57 individuals, being 6% to 7.5% of the 1841 resident population. Again, adult women dominated but with rises in child receipt identifiable compared to figures in 1838 and 1839. Totals of adult male receipt were also larger, sitting at between 6 and 8 men per quarter.

Such rises did not necessarily correlate with drastic increases in expenditure. For example, spending in the quarter ending March 1839 sat at 871s, corresponding to the relief of 27 individuals with an average quarterly spending per individual of 32s. In the quarter ending June 1844, expenditure sat at 1010s for the relief of 54 individuals, giving an average quarterly spending per individual of 19s. On the face of things, such may suggest that less was spent per individual by the mid-1840s than had been the case in the late 1830s. However, if the suggestion made above that dependent child receipt given a household context may have been masked in the data for 1838 to 1839 due to only heads of households being listed, the differences noted in recipient totals without seemingly equal increases in expenditure may be squared by the fact that dependent children may have been listed as separate recipients in the period between 1844 and 1846, equally explaining the drastic increases in child receipt noted in this latter period. This is only a hypothetical suggestion with the statistical nature of the existing documentation not allowing it to be conclusively proven. Overall, as in other parishes of study, the demography of receipt under the New Poor Law in Leadenham was generally

dominated by women and, at least in the mid-1840s, children with relief overwhelmingly being given outdoors.

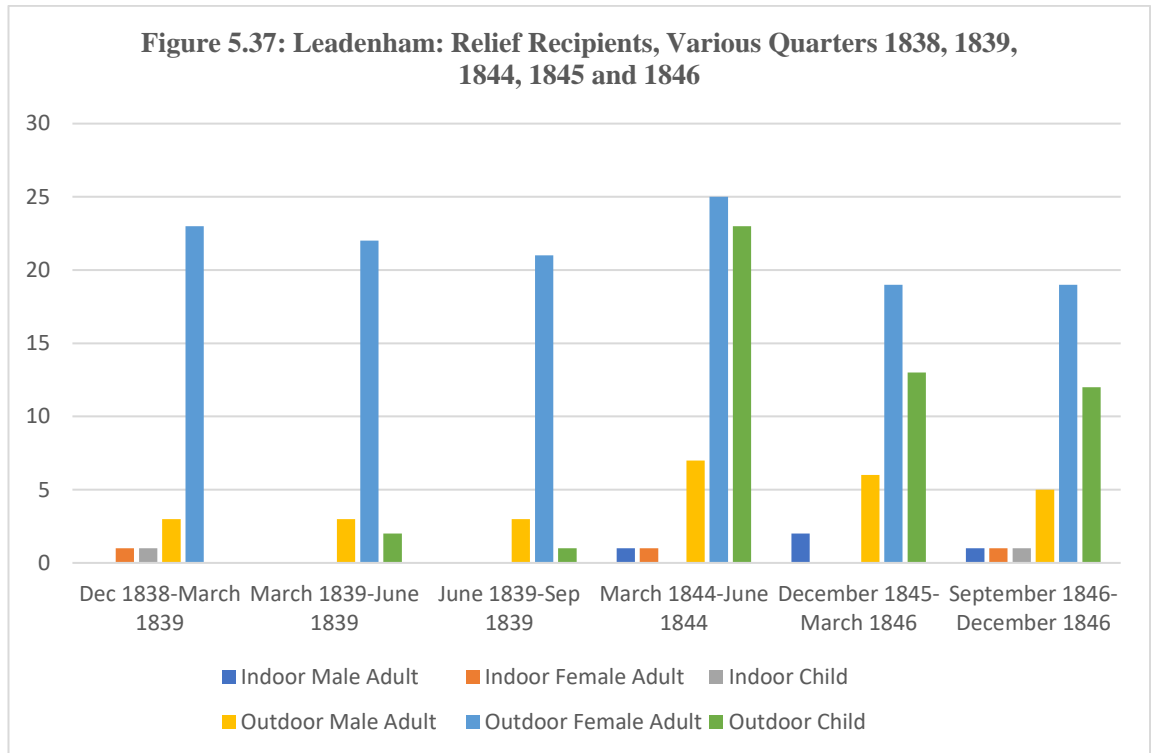


Figure 5.37. Leadenham: Relief Recipients, Various Quarters 1838, 1839, 1844, 1845 and 1846. Source: Digby Parish 13/24, LA; *Sleaford Poor Law Union Correspondence, 1843-1847*, MH12/6764, NA.

ii) Navenby

Unfortunately, parish archival record survival for Navenby under the Old Poor Law is negligible, with government data being used to trace expenditure and recipient trends within the parish over the Old Poor Law years of analysis, presented in figures 5.38 and 5.39. In 1802, Navenby was relieving a total of 11 individuals: 7 adults permanently outdoors; 2 individuals (adults or children) indoors; and 2 children aged between 5 and 14 outdoors.¹⁹ None of these individuals were aged above 60, disabled or permanently ill and the parish did not relieve any non-resident poor. Thus, recipients constituted around 2% of the parish population when compared to the 1801 census data. Despite outdoor relief recipients dominating in 1802, 58% of the Navenby's annual poor relief

¹⁹ *Abstracts of Answers and Returns under the Act for Procuring Returns Relative to Expense and Maintenance of Poor in England*, pp.270-271

expenditure for that year went on the provision of indoor relief within the parish workhouse, denoting the higher costs indoor relief generally generated. Spending mostly saw an upward trajectory in Navenby to a peak of 6751s in 1820, albeit with slight decreases in expenditure in 1813 and 1819. Indeed, 1820 was the highest expenditure year within the parish in years with extant data between 1802 and 1836.

In the period between 1802 and 1836, demographic data is only available for recipients between 1812 and 1815. In 1812, Navenby was relieving 19 individuals, around 3.5% of its resident population when the 1811 census is used for comparison. Of these, 58% received outdoor relief permanently; 37% indoor relief permanently; and 5% received occasional relief in any kind. Levels of receipt were generally consistent to this 1812 breakdown in both 1813 and 1814, albeit with a decrease of 1 outdoor permanent individual from 1812 levels and an increase of 1 individual each for permanent indoor relief and occasional relief between 1813 and 1814. Although not differentiating between relief types, the total of recipients in 1815 was the same as 1814, being 21 individuals in both instances. Thus, between 1812 and 1815 Navenby annually relieved 19 to 21 individuals, being 73-91% higher than totals of receipt documented in 1802 and seeing proportionally more people relieved within the parish workhouse between 1812 and 1815 than had been the case in 1802.

After 1820, expenditure decreased within the parish across the rest of the decade, although a spike in spending can be discerned in 1824 and 1825. Indeed, between 1823 and 1834 expenditure rose by 36%. However, aside from these two years, levels of spending in the late 1820s were generally comparable to those seen before 1815 and did not reach expenditure amounts exhibited between 1816 and 1824. The opening years of the 1830s saw decreases in relief spending, falling by 32% between 1828 and 1833 with levels at this latter date being on par with those seen in 1812 and 1813. However, the mid-1830s saw rising relief costs with levels in 1834 and 1835 being 55% and 37% higher respectively than the annual expenditure of 1833. Such peaks were short-lived, dropping to 2060s in 1836, a figure 43% lower than spending in 1835. Thus, by the eve of the New Poor Law expenditure in Navenby was proportionally low within the context of the waning period of the Old Poor Law, being comparable to levels seen in 1802. Overall, in years with extant data between 1802 and 1836, annual spending in the parish ranged from 1900s to 6751s.

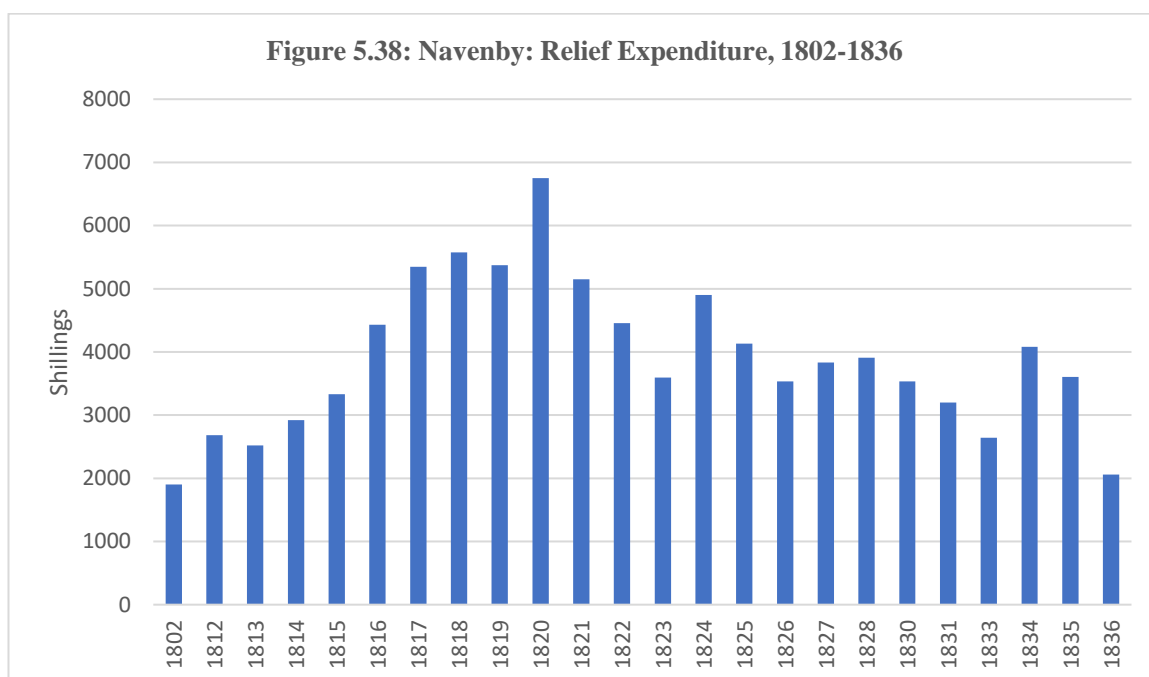


Figure 5.38. Navenby, Relief Expenditure, 1802-1836. Sources: *Abstracts of Answers and Returns under the Act for Procuring Returns Relative to Expense and Maintenance of Poor in England* (London: House of Commons, 1803-04), pp.270-271; *Abridgement of the Abstract of the Answers and Returns so Far as Relates to the Poor* (London: House of Commons, 1818), pp.238-239; *Report from the Select Committee on Poor Rate Returns, 1822* (London: House of Commons, 1822), p.90; *Select Committee on Poor Rate Returns: Report, Appendix (1824)* (London: House of Commons, 1825), p.122; *Account of Money Expended for Maintenance of Poor in England, 1824-1829* (London: House of Commons, 1830), p.105; *Account of Money Expended for Maintenance of Poor in England, 1829-1834* (London: House of Commons, 1835), p.102; *Second Annual Report of the Poor Law Commissioners for England and Wales together with appendices A, B, C, D* (London: House of Commons, 1836), pp.192-193; *Third Annual Report of the Poor Law Commissioners for England and Wales together with appendices A, B and C* (London: House of Commons, 1837), p.99.

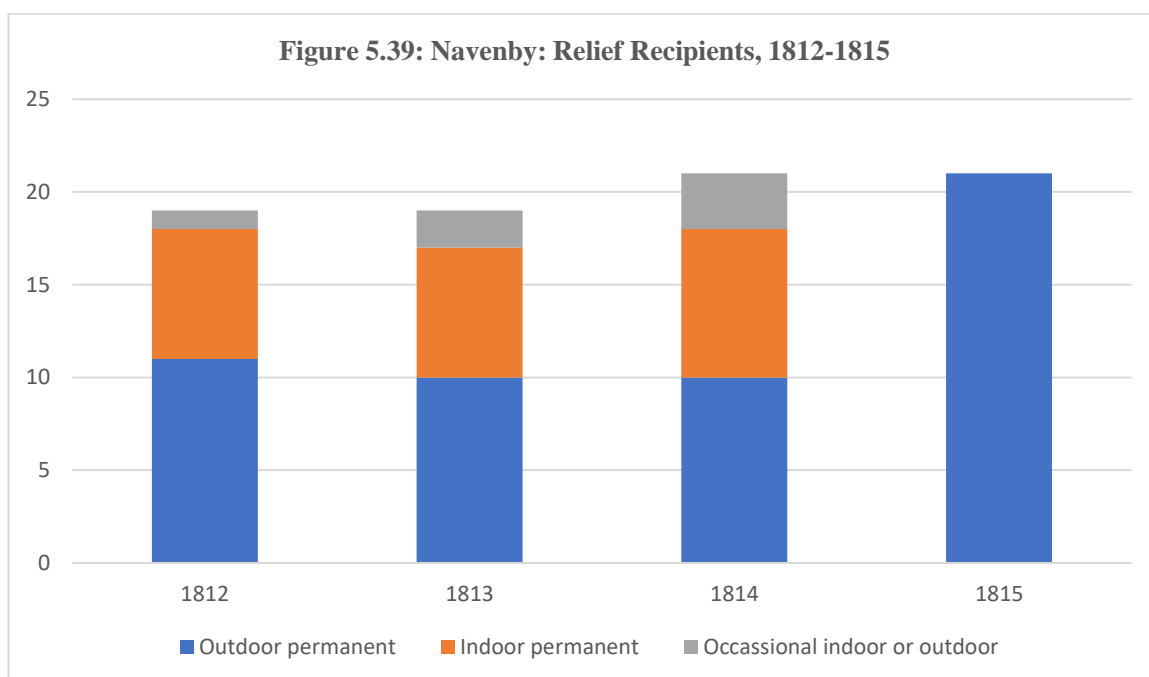


Figure 5.39. Navenby: Relief Recipients, 1812-1815. *Abridgement of the Abstract of the Answers and Returns so Far as Relates to the Poor* (London: House of Commons, 1818), p.239; *Select Committee on the Education of the Poor (1818)- Digest of Parochial Returns Volumes I, II and III* (London: House of Commons, 1819), p.526

After 1836, Navenby was incorporated into the Lincoln poor law union. Unlike the Sleaford union, expenditure ledgers do not survive from the Lincoln union during the early decades of the New Poor Law, with records in the MH12 catalogue in the National Archives only surviving for the Lincoln union from the 1870s onwards. Thus, there is a limitation on what can be said about the effect of unionisation on expenditure and recipient trends in Navenby. Spending and recipient demographic breakdowns do exist for various quarters between December 1846 and March 1848 (figures 5.40 and 5.41). Within these quarters, spending was highest in the winter months with increases in male receipt also noted in winter quarters. The largest total expenditure in extant quarterly records was 1228s in the quarter ending March 1847, suggesting again that the mid-1840s was a period of increased need as expenditure in Navenby in the quarter ending March 1847 was 50% higher than that seen in the same quarter a year later. In the quarter ending March 1847, 83% of expenditure went on the provision of outdoor relief. All in all, 73 individuals were in receipt of relief in that quarter, 52% of which were

children; 32% adult women; and 16% men. This constituted just under 7% of the parish's resident population when compared to the 1851 census, although not all recipients may have been resident. Expenditure in the quarter ending December 1847 was 47% lower than in the quarter ending March 1847, being 655s. This corresponds to a similar fall in total relief recipients, with 29 individuals relieved in the quarter ending March 1847 who were again predominantly women and children and sitting at just below 3% of the resident population if the 1851 census figures are used for comparison. Rises in relief spending can be seen in the winter quarter ending March 1848, with expenditure being 816s and relating to the relief of 50 individuals, just under 5% of the resident population. Of this total, a rise in male receipt can be noted, with 8 men relieved in the winter quarter ending March 1848 compared to 3 in the quarter ending December 1847. However, the majority of recipients in the quarter ending March 1848 were women and children, with adult females consisting of 26% of total recipients and children 58%. As in other parishes of study, it was women and children who constituted the bulk of recipients under the New Poor Law in Navenby, at least in quarters with extant data.

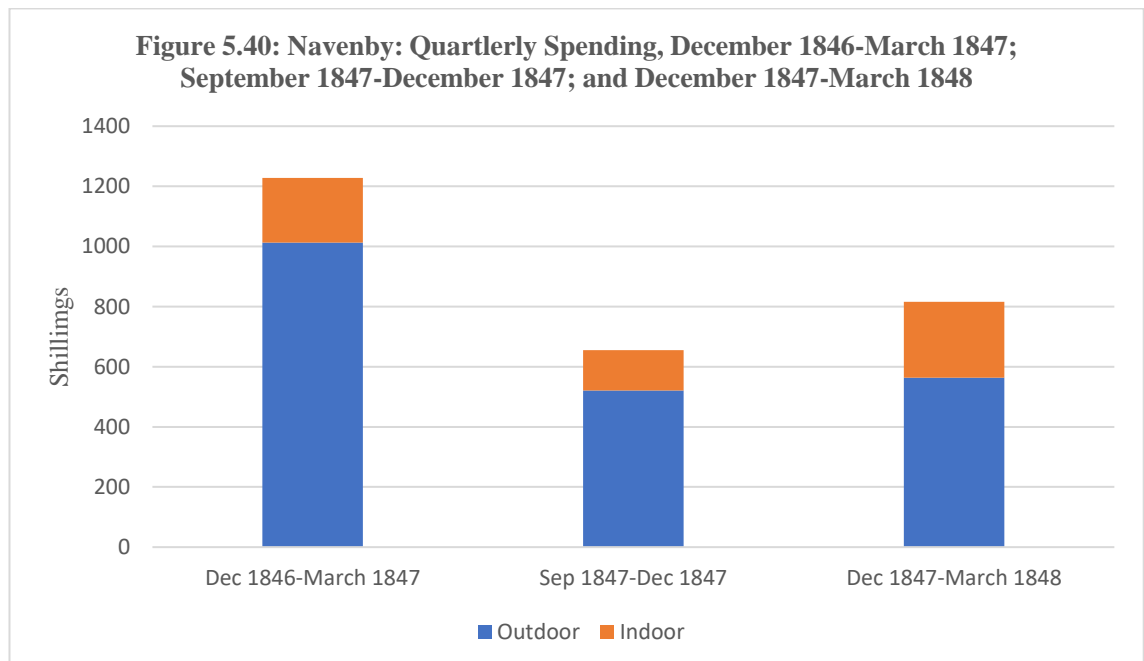


Figure 5.40. Navenby: Quarterly Spending, December 1846-March 1847; September 1847-December 1847; and December 1847-March 1848. Source: Waddington Parish 13/11/10-12, LA

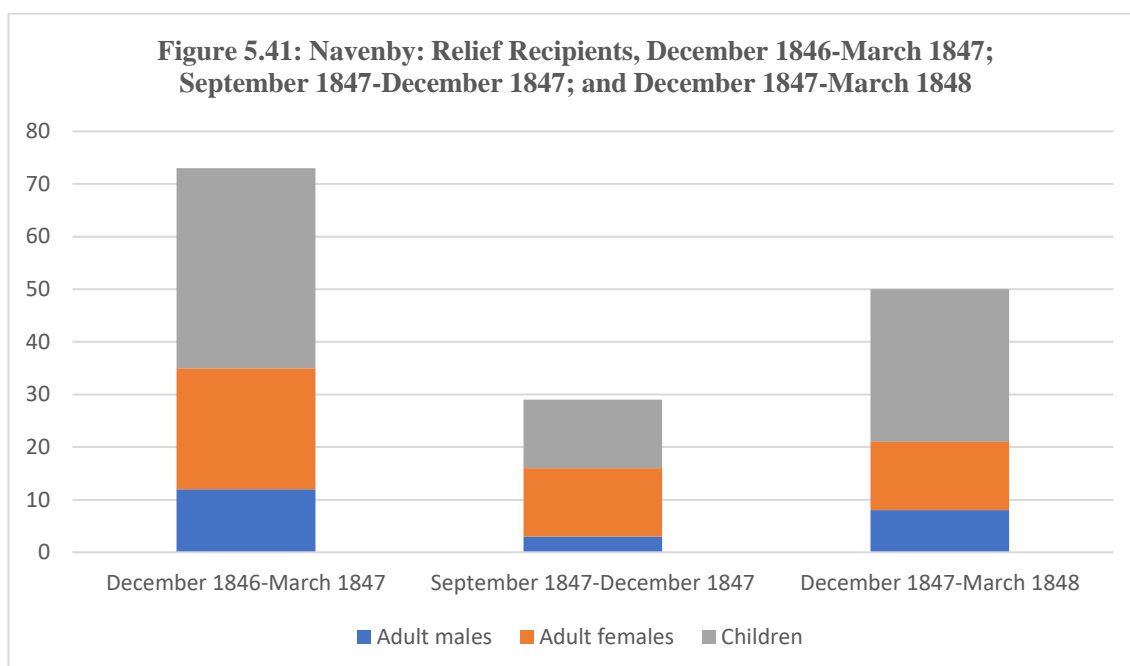


Figure 5.41. Navenby: Relief Recipients, December 1846-March 1847; September 1847-December 1847; and December 1847-March 1848. Source: Waddington Parish 13/11/10-12, LA

iii) Waddington

Old Poor Law spending and recipient data for Waddington is given in figures 5.42, 5.43 and 5.44. Expenditure data exists for Waddington from the second half of the 1790s and within this period, the year 1795 saw a peak in expenditure. A total of 10 outdoor recipients were listed in that year, 70% being adult females and sitting at around 1.5% of the resident population if compared to the 1801 census figures. It is unclear if the parish had a workhouse at this point as overseer spending for 1795 makes no reference to one; however, Waddington did have a parish workhouse by 1802. In that year, the parish relieved a total of 28 individuals, all of whom were resident poor, giving a receipt to population percentage of 4% when compared to the 1801 census.²⁰ Out of this total, 36% were relieved occasionally; 32% permanently outdoors; 21% permanently indoors; and 11% being children aged up until fourteen. Regarding adult recipients, 4 were aged

²⁰ *Abstracts of Answers and Returns under the Act for Procuring Returns Relative to Expense and Maintenance of Poor in England*, pp.290-291

over sixty, disabled or permanently ill. All in all, 66% of expenditure in 1802 went to the provision of indoor relief within the parish workhouse. Judging by years with extant data within the parish overseer records, spending generally rose within the parish over the first two decades of the nineteenth century. Full demographic breakdowns of receipt are not extant in the parish records for this period; however, government statistics can be used to give numerical totals for 1812 to 1815 (figure 5.43). Within these four years, Waddington relieved between 20 and 21 individuals, just under 3% of the resident population when compared to the 1811 census data, with the highest total given in 1812. The largest cohort of recipients were seemingly relieved within the parish workhouse with those relieved permanently outdoors or occasionally consisting of between 4 and 7 individuals in 1812 to 1814.

The 1820s were a decade of generally high expenditure within Waddington. Spending reached 3861s in 1820, the second largest annual expenditure within years with surviving figures between 1795 and 1836 and 16% higher than 1816 levels. In 1820, the parish paid the workhouse master 1800s to relieve the poor, 47% of the annual expenditure. Outdoor expenditure related mainly to bastardy and settlement cases alongside irregular payments to individuals. All in all, 12 individuals were relieved outdoors in 1820, 43% each being adult males or individuals of an unidentifiable age or gender, with adult women consisting of 17%. These outdoor recipients constituted of around 1.5% of the resident population when compared to the 1821 census figures, although they do not include those relieved within the workhouse or by the workhouse master. Levels of outdoor receipt in 1820 were comparable to totals of permanent outdoor and occasional receipt noted in 1814, suggesting that indoor relief remained a conspicuous feature of the Old Poor Law within Waddington. Within years with extant expenditure data between 1795 and 1836, 1824 saw the highest spending at 4057s. In this year, 14 individuals were in receipt of outdoor relief, 36% being adult males; 21% adult females; 29% children; and 14% individuals of a non-identifiable gender or age. Waddington paid the workhouse master 1600s in 1824, consisting of 39% of annual expenditure, a drop of 8% from 1820 levels. Although expenditure decreased from 1824 to 1828, levels remained higher than exhibited in the period between 1795 and 1812.

Relief spending once again rose at the end of the decade, reaching 3693s in 1830. However, the proportion paid to the workhouse master to provide relief significantly dropped when compared to earlier periods, being just 15% in 1830 compared to 66% in

1802. This change is also reflected in the higher totals of outdoor relief recipients noted in 1830, sitting at 69 individuals or nearly 9% of the resident population when compared to the 1831 census data. Of these, 25% were adult males; 33% adult women; and 42% children. Thus, there was seemingly a proportional reduction of outdoor and occasional relief to adult males by 1830 when compared to levels in 1820 and 1824, albeit with men still contributing a significant minority. The composition of outdoor receipt in 1830 centred around a core group of individuals receiving a weekly allowance, mainly adult females, and irregular occasional relief given to others. Often, occasional relief was given in the context of a family unit with the Waddington overseer making irregular payments of around 1s to 7 identifiable family units in 1830, 43% of which were female-headed with dependent children. Statistically, each individual within the family has been listed as a separate recipient; for example, a man, wife and 3 children has been logged as an adult male, an adult female and 3 child recipients. Thus, the total of 69 relief recipients noted in 1830 has to be approached with the caveat that many individuals received relief within the context of a family unit and were not necessarily sole recipients.

From a peak in 1830, spending generally decreased across the first half of the 1830s albeit with significant spikes in 1834 and 1835. For example, in 1834 annual spending stood at 3678s, 32% higher than exhibited the year before in 1833. As in 1830, a decreasing reliance on the workhouse master and parish workhouse is perhaps identifiable in 1834, with money given for this only being 2% of the annual expenditure. Therefore, permanent and occasional outdoor relief dominated in much the same way as in 1830, with its composition consisting of regular weekly allowances to named individuals and irregular relief often sporadically given to family units. Overall, 97 outdoor relief recipients were listed in 1834, around 12.5% of the resident population when compared to the 1831 census. Of these, 26% were adult males; 27% adult females; and 47% children. However, there needs to be caution when approaching this figures due to the nature of the overseer's accounts. As in the reconstruction of receipt in 1830, much occasional relief was given within the context of families with 21 identifiable family units listed in the accounts for 1834.²¹ It is also interesting to note

²¹ Where possible, each family member has been counted as an individual recipient even though in actuality they received relief within a familial context. Despite this, some license has had to be made in reconstruction due to the wording of account entries. When the gender of the adult family member was

the frequency of occasional relief given to travelling families within the overseer accounts of 1834, perhaps suggesting increased vagrancy and need linked to slumps in corn pricing in the mid-1830s. This latter point may be evidenced by the numbers of vagrant Irish noted in the Waddington account's for 1834, with 29% of the family units listed as occasional recipients being explicitly Irish. This was perhaps linked to the unavailability of harvest work, the mechanics of which are outlined in chapter three.

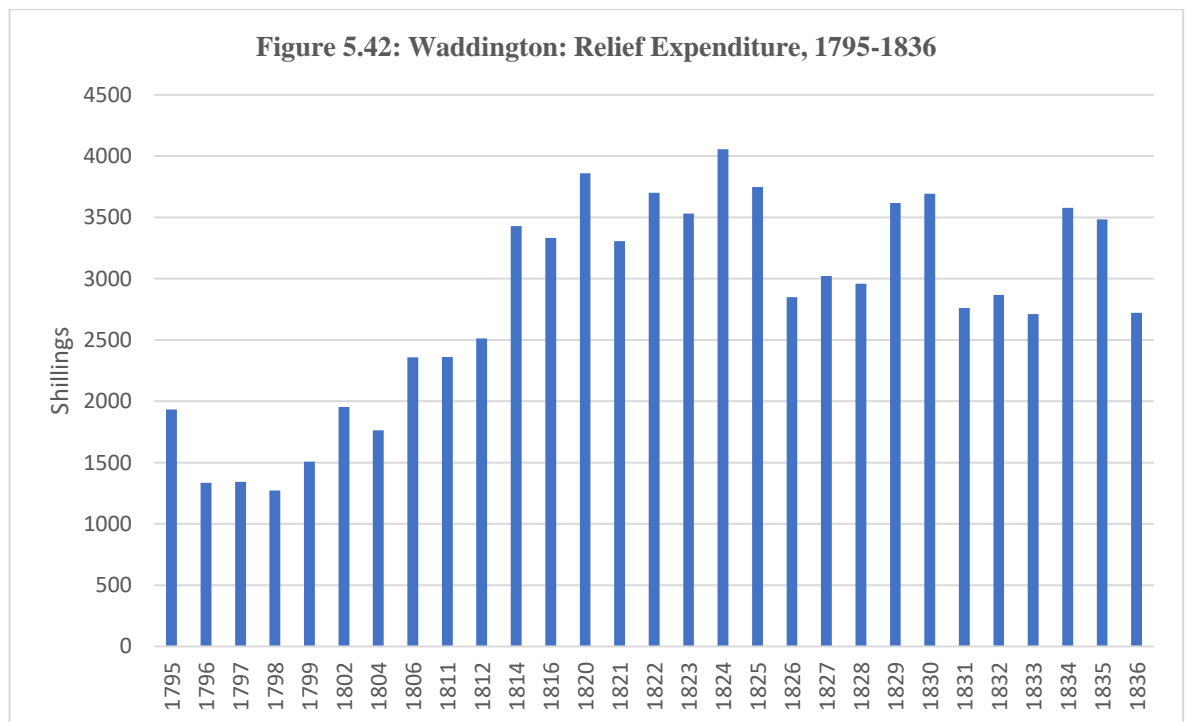


Figure 5.42. Waddington, Relief Expenditure, 1795-1836. Source: Waddington Parish 13/1 and 2, LA. *Abstracts of Answers and Returns under the Act for Procuring Returns Relative to Expense and Maintenance of Poor in England* (London: House of Commons, 1803-04), pp.290-291. There is no extant data within the parish records for the years 1800-1801; 1803; 1805; 1807-1810; and 1817-1819. Waddington was included in the City of Lincoln for administrative purposes and government statistics on relief expenditure for the late 1810s gives a lump sum for the whole City of Lincoln without parish breakdowns.

not given, the adult individual has been added as a male recipient. Therefore, the figures given for adult male receipt may be higher than in reality.

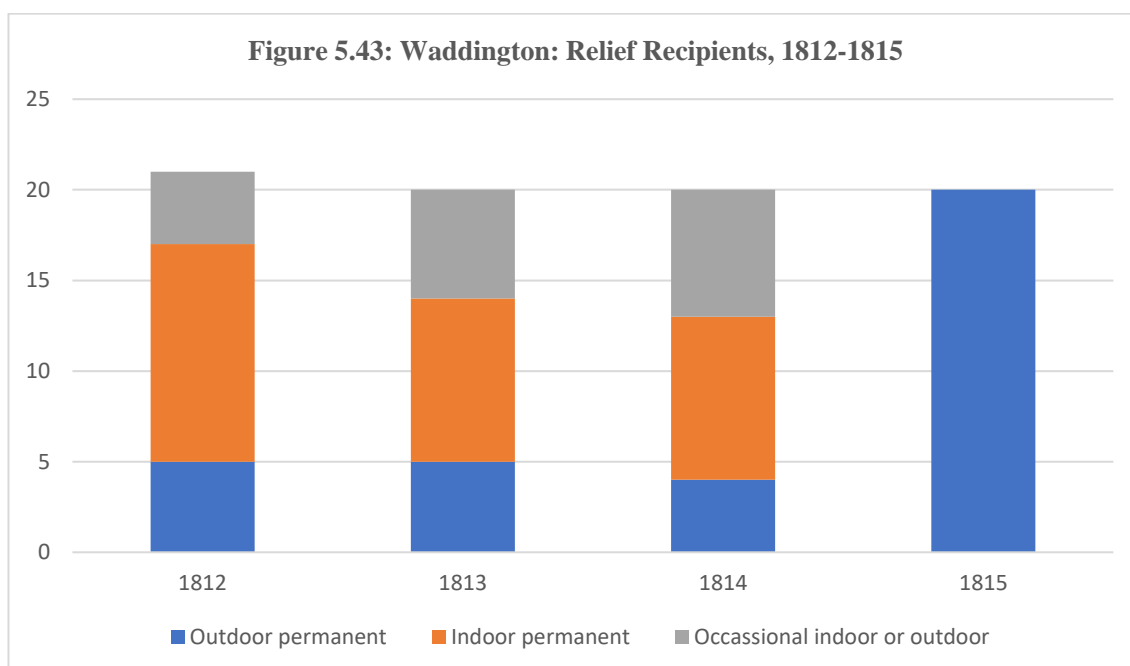


Figure 5.43. Waddington: Relief Recipients, 1812-1815. Source: *Abridgement of the Abstract of the Answers and Returns so Far as Relates to the Poor* (London: House of Commons, 1818), p.259; *Select Committee on the Education of the Poor (1818)- Digest of Parochial Returns Volumes I, II and III* (London: House of Commons, 1819), p.531. The 1815 figure does not differentiate by type of relief; therefore, the total number has been added to outdoor relief.

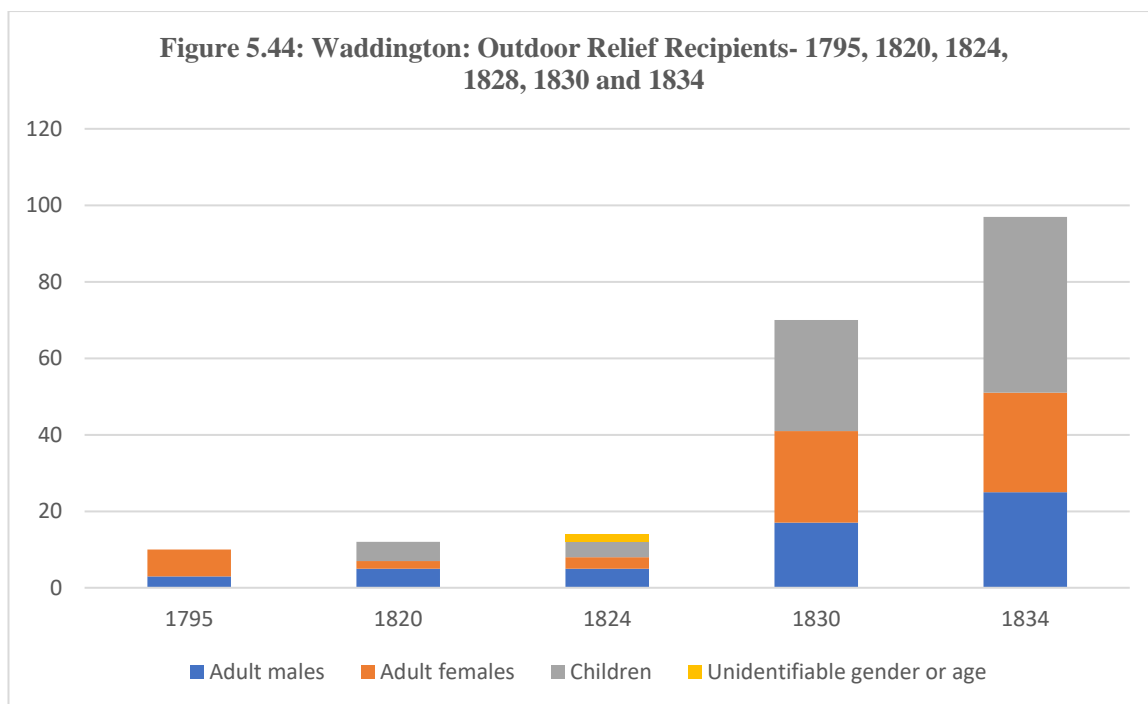


Figure 5.44. Waddington: Outdoor Relief Recipients- 1795, 1820, 1824, 1828, 1830 and 1834. Source: Waddington Parish 13/1 and 2, LA.

Due to Waddington’s incorporation into the Lincoln poor law union in 1836, limited record survival means spending data is not available for the parish in the decade between 1836 and 1846. However, expenditure figures do survive for three quarters between December 1846 and March 1848, alongside half-year data between March 1848 and September 1849 (figures 5.45 and 5.46). In the extant figures for three quarters between 1846 and 1848, spending ranged from 1181s to 1463s, with the winter quarter of December to March seeing higher rates of spending. In the quarter ending March 1848, Waddington relieved 99 individuals (table 5.5), including dependents, 85 being resident poor and constituting of just under 9% of the parish’s population when compared to the 1851 census data. Of these, 90% of these were in receipt of outdoor relief. Indoor relief recipients consisted of 10 people; 6 lone individuals and 2 families made-up of a husband and wife each. Stays within the Lincoln union workhouse ranged from 3 to 91 days, with only 40% of Waddington’s indoor relief recipients having been in the workhouse for more than a month. All inmates who had been resident in the workhouse for the full quarter were elderly, aged between 68 and 79. Outdoor recipients for the quarter ending March 1848 constituted 9 individuals and 17 family units of 80

people, inclusive of household head and dependents, 47% of which were female-headed. Males aged between 16 and 70 constituted 9 main recipients, with all but one collecting on behalf of themselves and dependents. Thus, although a minority of outdoor relief recipients were male, relief to men via the poor law seemingly continued into the late 1840s. Moreover, apart from John Wright who was aged 70 and relieved due to destitution, all other 8 main male recipients can conceivably be categorised as able-bodied with 88% of these relieved for sickness. Therefore, their receipt fell within the bounds of acceptable outdoor relief for able-bodied males as defined by the 1844 General Order which was in force at the time.

Whether such an outdoor recipient cohort as exhibited in the quarter ending March 1848 was generally indicative of relief demography across the initial decades of the New Poor Law is questionable. As seen within other parishes of study, the middle years of the 1840s were one of agrarian economic depression where rises in able-bodied male need may perhaps be expected. If the quarterly demographic breakdown as described above is compared to the recipient cohort in Waddington at other periods, it may be suggested that the levels of able-bodied relief exhibited within it, despite meeting the criterium of the 1844 General Order, were episodic. In the half-year ending March 1849, 2139s was spent on relief. Here, 3 identifiable males were listed as main recipients with only one of these relieved for sickness (table 5.6). Indeed, levels of outdoor receipt overall were lower in this half-year, sitting at 49 individuals inclusive of dependents and thus 45% smaller than the total number of outdoor relief recipients noted in Waddington for the quarter ending March 1848. Of these, 44 individuals were resident poor and constituted of around 4.5% of Waddington's population when compared to the 1851 census. For the half-year ending March 1849, 79% of main relief recipients were identifiably female, with 47% collecting for themselves and dependent children in the context of a female-headed household. In regard to indoor relief recipients, Waddington relieved 24 individuals, inclusive of dependents, within the Lincoln union workhouse in the half-year ending March 1849. Stays ranged between 7 and 182 days, with 29% of inmates resident for the full half-year. The point must be made that the half-year ending March 1849 exhibited the lowest spending in the period between March 1848 and September 1849, with expenditure reaching 2761s in the half-year ending September 1849. However, recipient demography noted within it supports the conclusion that levels and cohorts of receipt could fluctuate both within and between

years. Overall, as with other parishes of study, most recipients under the New Poor Law were seemingly the non-able-bodied, women and children.

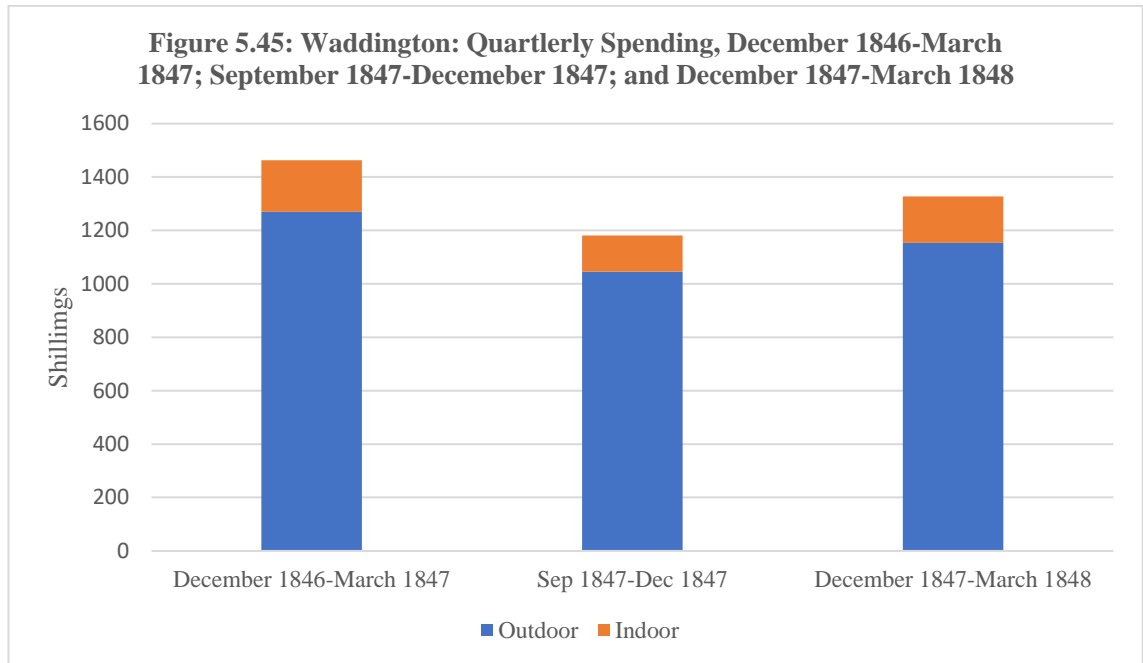


Figure 5.45. Waddington: Quarterly Spending, December 1846-March 1847; September 1847-December 1847; and December 1847-March 1848. Source: Waddington Parish 13/11, LA

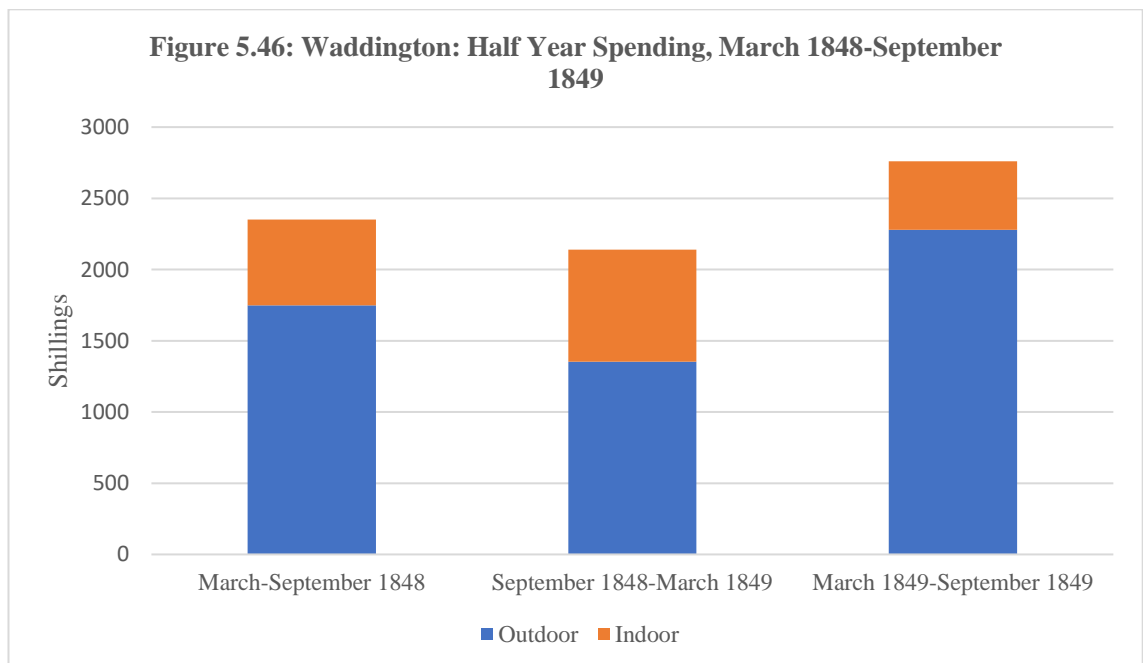


Figure 5.46. Waddington: Half Year Spending, March 1848-September 1849. Source: Waddington Parish 13/11, LA.

Outdoor				
Name (age)	Dependents (age)	Resident parish	Reason for Relief	Amount
Ann Dansby (42)	3 children (11, 8, 5)	Waddington	Destitution	£2 10s 11d
Jane Staples (75)		Waddington	Destitution	£1 12s 2.75d
Sarah Woodcock (70)		Waddington	Destitution	£1 12s 2.75d
William Linton (75)	Wife- Martha (77)	Waddington	Destitution	£2 12s 0.75d
Sarah Elston (64)		Waddington	Destitution	£1 5s 8.75d
Elizabeth York (64)		Waddington	Destitution	£1 12s 2.75d
Frances Kelsey (32)	4 children (13, 12, 8, 5)	Waddington	Destitution	£3 3s 7.75d
Jane Smithson (39)	4 children (12, 11, 7, 5)	Lincoln	Destitution	£3 9s 10.5d
George Kelsey (38)	Wife- Mary (36). 2 children (11, 6)	Lincoln	Destitution	£2 17s 5d
Eleanor Beckett (46)	3 children (12, 11, 8)	Waddington	Destitution	£2 1s 1.75d
Sarah Briggs (45)	6 children (12, 10, 9, 8, 4, 1)	Waddington	Destitution	£5 8s 4d
Ann Linton (42)	2 children (8, 5)	Waddington	Destitution	£1 11s 8.25d
Mary Bugg (32)	4 children (6, 4, 2, baby)	Hykeham	Destitution	£3 3s 11d
Elizabeth Linton (17)		Waddington	Destitution	£1 12s 2.75d
Mary Dansby (16)		Waddington	Destitution	£1 12s 2.75d
John Wright (70)	Wife- Ann (67)	Waddington	Destitution	£3 4s 5.5d
Hannah Green (55)		Waddington	Destitution	£1 12s 2.75d
Elizabeth Selby (36)	4 children (9,6,4,2)	Waddington	Destitution	£5 15s 1.75
William Russell (16)		Waddington	Sickness	10s 4.25d
Edward Allbones (33)	Wife- Elizabeth (32). 6 children (9,7,6,4, 1, baby)	Waddington	Sickness	£3 17s 10d
William Bee (60)	Wife- Frances (63)	Waddington	Sickness	14s 10.5d
John Andrew (33)	Wife- Ann (30). 4 children (4,3,1, baby)	Waddington	Sickness	£1 1s 11.5d
Charles Johnson (27)	Wife- Judith (38). 6 children (15,13, 11, 8, 8, 2)	Waddington	Sickness	17s 9d
John Sutton (52)	Wife- Rebecca (37). 5 children (11, 9, 7, 5, 3)	Waddington	Sickness	£1 13s 4d
Ann Barker (61)		Waddington	Sickness	7s 4.75d
Richard Paley (59)	Wife (58). 1 child (12)	Waddington	Sickness	£1 12s 2.75d

Table 5.5. Waddington Relief Recipients, Quarter Ending 25th March 1848. Source: Waddington Parish 13/11, LA.

Indoor		
Name (age)	Dependents (age)	Number of days
John Spalding (79)		91
William Burr (17)		11
George Hales (68)		91
Ann Proctor (77)		91
Sarah Lyon (23)		79
James Squires (26)	Wife- Maria (28)	3
John Kent (24)	Wife- Amelia (18)	5
Anne Maltby (24)		20

Table 5.5 Continued. Waddington Relief Recipients, Quarter Ending 25th March 1848. Source: Waddington Parish 13/11, LA.

Outdoor				
Name	Dependents	Resident parish	Reason for Relief	Amount
Ann Dansby	3 children	Waddington	Destitution	£4 19s 8d
Jane Staples		Waddington	Destitution	£3 3s 11d
Sarah Woodcock		Waddington	Destitution	£3 3s 11d
Elizabeth York		Waddington	Destitution	£3 3s 11d
George Kelsey	2 children	Lincoln	Sickness	£5 12s 8d
Eleanor Beckett	3 children	Waddington	Destitution	£4 19s 8d
Sarah Briggs	6 children	Waddington	Destitution	£10 12s 4d
Ann Linton	2 children	Waddington	Destitution	£4 7s 9d
Mary Bugg	4 children	North Hykeham	Destitution	£7 9s 7d
Mary Dansby		Waddington	Destitution	£3 3s 11d
John Wright	Wife	Waddington	Destitution	£6 7s 10d
Hannah Green		Waddington	Destitution	£3 3s 11d
F. Briggs		Waddington	Destitution	£1 4s 5d
Elizabeth Selby	4 children	Waddington	Destitution	£1 19s
Emily Ward		Waddington	Destitution	8s 7.5d
Elizabeth Staples	4 children	Waddington	Destitution	£2 6d
John South	Wife	Waddington	Destitution	19s 6d
Mary Martin		Waddington	Destitution	3s 10.5d
Ann H.		Waddington	Destitution	7s 5d

Table 5.6. Waddington Relief Recipients, Half Year Ending 25th March 1849.

Source: Waddington Parish 13/11, LA

Indoor		
Name	Dependents	Number of days
John Spalding		182
George Hales		182
Ann Proctor		182
Sarah Lyon		182
Mary Lyon		182
James Smith		182
Rhoda Smith		182
Susan Johnson		61
Joseph Harker		162
Elizabeth Selby		63
William Children	Mary; George; Ann	63
Fanny Johnson		26
Mary Maltby		104
Watson Maltby		63
William Body	Harriet (wife); William; Richard; George; M. Ann	12
William Kennington		7

Table 5.6 Continued. Waddington Relief Recipients, Half Year Ending 25th March 1849. Source: Waddington Parish 13/11, LA.

e) The North Fen Margin: Branston and Metheringham

i) Branston

Branston's accounts generally exist for the whole period of study under the Old Poor Law, covering 1790 to 1835. Spending data and recipient information for this period is presented in figures 5.47 and 5.48. During the 1790s, the highest spending was seen in 1795 and 1796, peaking at 3447s in this latter year. Indeed, 1796 seems to have been a turning point in poor law policy within the parish, moving away from the provision of relief via a workhouse master towards an increased overseer involvement in the day-to-day logistics of relief. Between 1790 to 1796, sums given to the workhouse master

constituted between 82-33% of annual expenditure, seeing a proportional decrease between these two dates. From 1797, no sums were seemingly paid to the workhouse master, a situation which continued into the early years of the nineteenth century. In 1802, no relief was given indoors with 18 adults relieved permanently outdoors; 8 receiving occasional relief; and 18 children aged up to fourteen in receipt of relief.²² All recipients were resident and 6 were aged above sixty, disabled or permanently ill. Thus, a receipt to population percentage of just under 10% is suggested for this year when compared to the 1801 census figures. It is difficult to analyse both recipient demographics and the use of the parish workhouse in the period between 1802 and 1810 as the surviving overseer accounts only give the final yearly expenditure sum. The 44 recipients listed in Branston in 1802 constituted a relief cohort within a generally high expenditure year, with 1802 exhibiting the largest spending in the parish between 1790 and 1810. Demographic information for recipients in 1810 does not survive. However, in 1811 the parish was relieving 32 individuals, 66% of which were adult women; 22% children; and 13% adult men. This gave a recipient to population percentage of 6%, lower than that noted in Branston in 1802.

Spending remained generally consistent in Branston between 1811 and 1815, seeing rises in the immediate post-1815 period with expenditure in 1817 being 7785s, 92% higher than 1815 levels. Total recipient numbers were 81% higher in 1817 than 1811, predominantly through a rise in adult male relief with the totals for adult females and children being generally comparable to 1811. Indeed, 52% of relief recipients in Branston in 1817 were adult males, understandable within the context of economic depression after the Napoleonic Wars. All in all, 58 outdoor recipients were listed in the parish in 1817, sitting at 11% of the residential population when compared to the 1811 census figures.

For the rest of the Old Poor Law period, spending in the parish never saw pre-1817 levels, being consistently higher and sitting between 6391s and 8708s per annum. Another peak in expenditure can be evidenced in 1822, with Branston paying 7884s in that year. Again, this was seemingly a period of increased adult male relief, with 48% of the 58 recipients listed in that year being adult men, with total recipient numbers constituting around 8% of the parish population when compared to the 1821 census. In

²² *Abstracts of Answers and Returns under the Act for Procuring Returns Relative to Expense and Maintenance of Poor in England*, pp.290-291

regard to males relieved in 1822, 61% were done so via parish work on the roads, suggesting that the majority of adult male recipients were able-bodied. Totals of adult female and child receipt were generally similar to those seen in both 1811 and 1817, with a core of women and children receiving regular weekly allowances. If recipient composition for 1822 is compared with 1827, a proportionally low spending year within the context of the 1820s, levels of adult male relief were not necessarily reduced, with this cohort still constituting 39% of recipients in that year. The types of relief offered to men in 1827 clustered mainly around rent payments, goods in kind and small irregular cash doles in contrast to the sustained payments given for parish work to men in 1822. Indeed, in 1827 only 15% of men were relieved via parish work in contrast to 61% in 1822, perhaps suggesting that the bulk of male recipients in 1827 were not unemployed able-bodied men. Despite this, it seems that significantly more people were in receipt of poor law relief in the 1820s than had been the case in early periods, with the total number of recipients being 103% larger in 1827 than in 1811 with proportionally more adult men relieved. Demographic factors may have played a part here as Branston's population increased by 63% between 1811 and 1831. Therefore, the high relief expenditure noted in the parish during the 1820s may have been linked to a rise in total recipient numbers.

The early 1830s constituted a period of high relief expenditure, with spending rising every year between 1831 and 1834, peaking at 8708s in that later year with this sum being the largest paid by Branston in any year with extant data between 1790 and 1835. In 1834, 75 individuals were in receipt of relief, just under 9% of the parish population when compared to the 1831 census data. Of these, 37% were adult males and with 32% of these receiving relief via parish-given work on the roads, suggesting that they were again able-bodied men. There was seemingly also an increase in adult female receipt, with 12 more women in receipt of relief in 1834 compared to 1827. All in all, adult females constituted 41% of recipients in 1834, with children being 20% of those in relieved by the poor law. Overall, annual expenditure in Branston ranged from 977s to 8708s in years with extant data between 1790 and 1835, with the highest spending seen in the period between 1817 and 1835

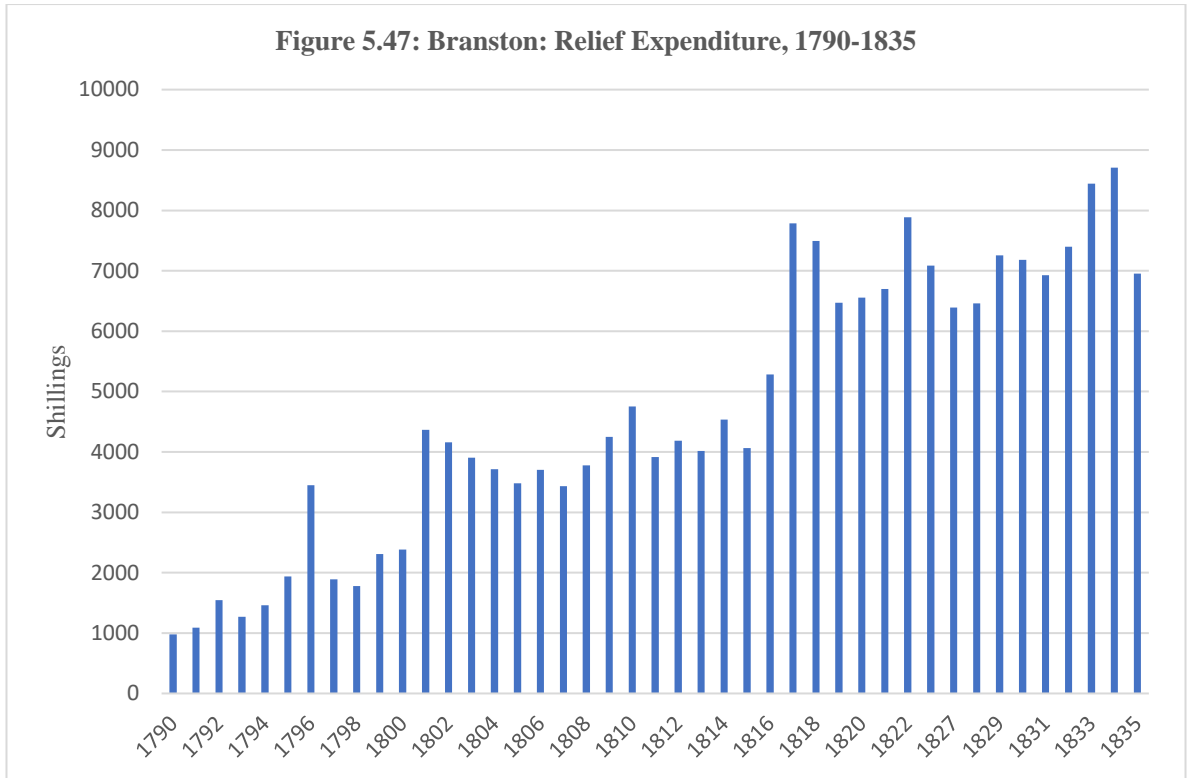


Figure 5.47. Branston: Relief Expenditure, 1790-1835. Source: Branston Parish 13/5, 6 and 7, LA. Complete parish records are not available for the period between 1824 and 1826.

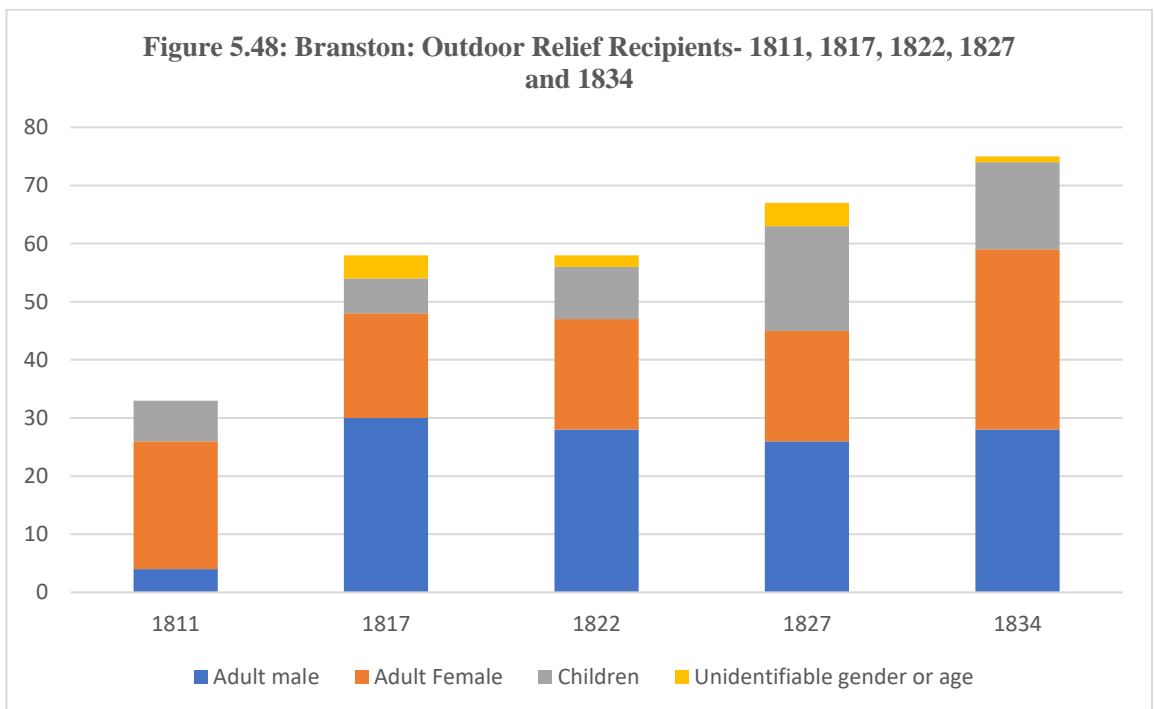


Figure 5.48. Branston: Outdoor Relief Recipients- 1811, 1817, 1822, 1827 and 1834. Source: Branston Parish 13/5, 6 and 7, LA.

Expenditure data for 1838 to 1847 is given in figure 5.49. The initial years of the New Poor Law saw a reduction in annual relief spending within Branston. In 1838, spending sat at 5031s, a figure 28% smaller than annual expenditure in 1835. Indeed, relief costs in 1838 were the lowest in the parish since 1815. Spending remained generally stable between 1838 and 1841, ranging from 4220s to 5408s per year. However, 1842 saw expenditure rise to 7500s, the largest amount listed between 1838 and 1847 and comparable to peaks in spending identifiable under the Old Poor Law. From this high, troughs in spending can be identified in 1843 and 1844 before rising again in 1845, sitting at 6360s, an increase of 69% on 1844 levels. Between 1845 and 1847, expenditure remained generally high, albeit with reductions in 1846, perhaps confirming rising levels of need due to economic depression identifiable in other parishes of study in the mid-1840s.

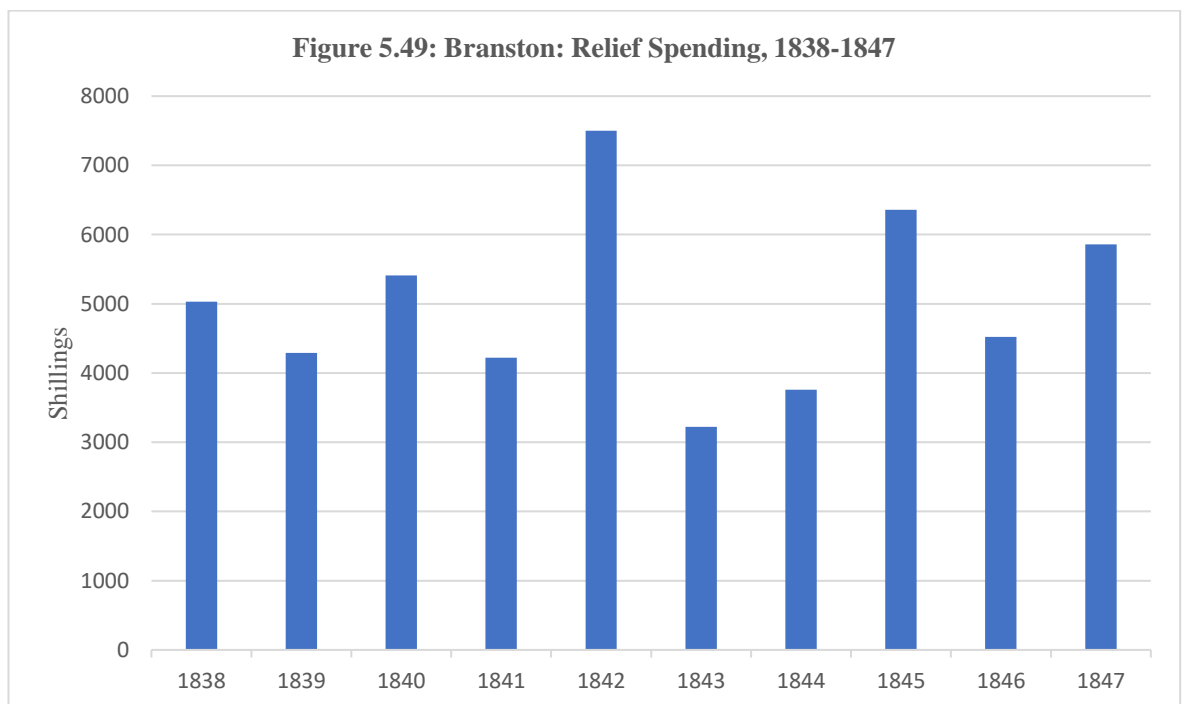


Figure 5.49. Branston: Relief Spending, 1838-1847. Source: Branston Parish 13/13, LA. Years run January to December and are totals of payments made during that period.

New Poor Law recipient demographic information is generally lacking for parishes incorporated into the Lincoln poor law union but with quarterly reports existing for Branston for three quarters between 1846 and 1848 (figure 5.50). Firstly, there was

seemingly a reduction in the total amounts of individuals in receipt of relief by the mid-1840s than seen in the high expenditure period of the Old Poor Law between 1817 and 1835, ranging from between 44 to 59 individuals per quarter, relating to recipient to population percentages of 3-4% when compared to the 1851 census data. The largest number of individuals relieved was in the quarter ending 25th March 1848; however, this was 22% less than the total number of recipients in Branston in 1834, the highest expenditure year under the Old Poor Law. Such a reduction sits in opposition to the rising population size of the parish which increased by 54% between 1831 and 1851. Decreases in recipient totals can perhaps be attributed to lower numbers of adult male receipt, with men consisting of 19-22% of recipients in quarters with surviving data between 1846 and 1848. These proportions relate to totals of between 10 and 12 men, generally far lower than totals of male receipt noted in Branston under the Old Poor Law. If it is acknowledged that the mid-1840s was a time of increased adult male receipt linked to agrarian depression, evidenced by Branston relieving between 11 and 15 men for sickness from 1845 to 1847 compared to just 1 to 8 between 1841 and 1844,²³ such proportions of male receipt noted in the quarters between 1846 and 1848 were in actuality high, suggesting even lower levels of male receipt in other years of the New Poor Law and perhaps supporting the effect of the Poor Law Amendment Act on reducing able-bodied male receipt. Thus, the majority of poor law relief recipients under the New Poor Law were seemingly women and children, being between 77-81% of recipients in Branston in quarters with surviving data between 1846 and 1848.

²³ PL10/102/1-3, LA

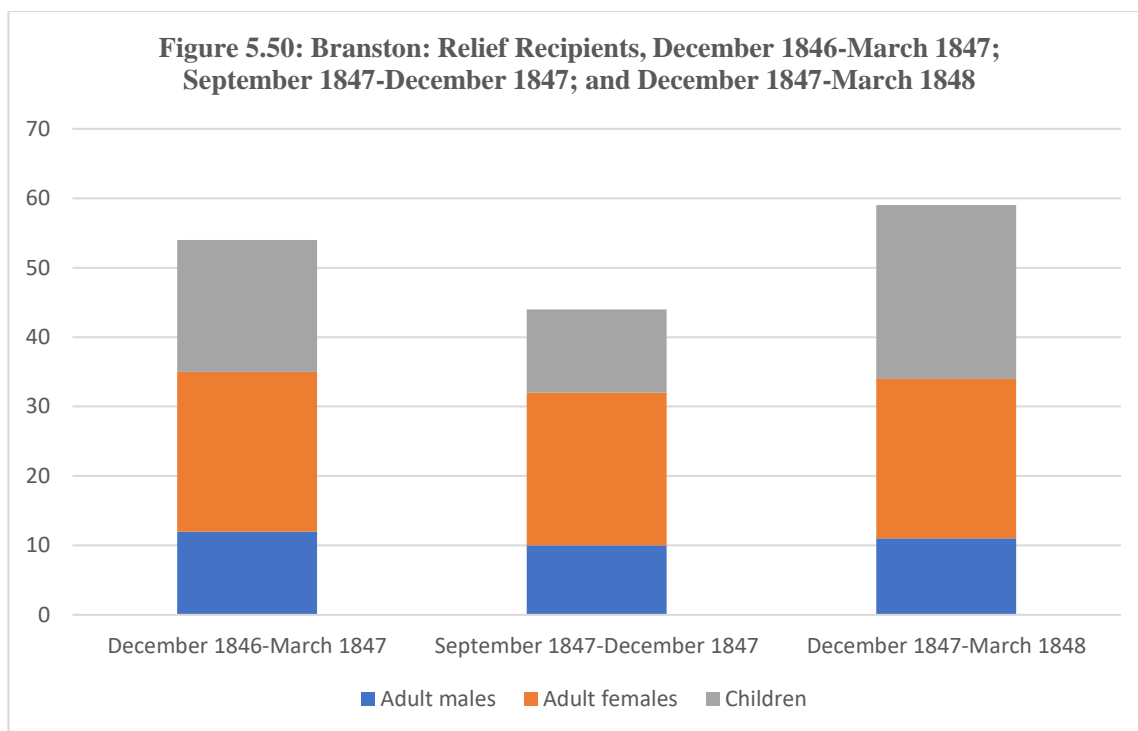


Figure 5.50. Branston: Relief Recipients, December 1846-March 1847; September 1847-December 1847; and December 1847-March 1848. Source: Waddington Parish 13/11, LA.

ii) Metherringham

Extant expenditure and recipient data for Metherringham within the Old Poor Law period of study is given in figures 5.51, 5.52 and 5.53. In 1802, Metherringham spent 4507s in poor relief, the highest in any year with extant data until 1819. All in all, Metherringham relieved 33 individuals in 1802, 31 of which were resident and relating to around 6% of the parish's population when compared to the 1801 census.²⁴ No relief was offered permanently indoors in 1802, suggesting that the parish workhouse identifiable in the later decades of the Old Poor Law was not yet operational. Permanent outdoor relief was given to 13 adult and occasional relief to 4 resident individuals, with 2 of these 17 individuals being over sixty years old, disabled or permanently sick. In regard to children aged up to fourteen, 14 were relieved. Expenditure data does not survive for the parish from between 1802 and 1811; however, by 1812 Metherringham

²⁴ *Abstracts of Answers and Returns under the Act for Procuring Returns Relative to Expense and Maintenance of Poor in England*, pp.272-273

was spending 23% less on relief than it had done in 1802. In 1812, the parish was relieving 19 individuals, around 3% of its population when compared to the 1811 census figures. The majority of recipients in 1812 were relieved permanently within the parish workhouse, denoting a shift in policy towards indoor relief which was seemingly not identifiable in Metheringham at the turn of the nineteenth century. Only 26% of recipients in parish in 1812 were relieved permanently outdoors with a further 21% receiving relief occasionally. Levels of receipt remained generally consistent between 1812 and 1815, sitting between totals of 17 and 19 individuals and where identifiable, given predominantly indoors within the parish workhouse. Within the context of the waning Old Poor Law period, the 1810s was a decade of low expenditure within Metheringham. Despite small peaks and troughs, spending remained roughly consistent within the parish between 1812 and 1819, ranging from 2920s to 4747s per annum.

Spending increased during the initial years of the 1820s, rising by 42% between 1819 and 1820. In 1820, 45 outdoor relief recipients were listed in Metheringham, seeing a marked increase from levels noted between 1812 and 1815 and relating to 7% of its residential population when compared to the 1821 census data. From this total, adult males consisted of 40% of recipients, with the majority seemingly relieved via parish work digging gravel or work on the roads, perhaps suggesting that most were able-bodied. Adult females also made up 40% of relief recipients, with children being 16%. It is unclear how far the parish workhouse was used in Metheringham in 1820 with the overseer accounts not explicitly listing indoor expenditure. Two recipients (William Right and Sarah Newton) are noted as having been moved into the workhouse, suggesting that it was still being used but perhaps not for the majority of recipients as had been the case during the 1810s. Spending reached a peak of 7747s in 1822. In regard to workhouse costs, this constituted 14% of annual expenditure in 1822, sitting at 1053s. Here, the workhouse master was paid 3s 6d for each inmate per week with inmate numbers totalling 6 individuals across 1822, below levels seen in the parish between 1812 and 1814 and confirming a move towards outdoor relief being the dominant type of relief offered by the early 1820s. In 1822, 48 individuals were relieved outdoors with 52% being adult males and 38% adult women. The majority of men were relieved with parish work given on the roads paid at a daily rate with totals of men in receipt of relief fluctuating across the year, being higher in winter months. In contrast,

most female recipients received a weekly cash allowance which was stable across the year, supplemented with rent payments and goods in kind such as coal.

From this expenditure peak in 1822, spending saw a decreasing trend between 1823 and 1825, albeit with levels still larger than seen before the 1820s. Interestingly, more individuals were relieved within the parish workhouse in 1825 than noted in 1822, with between 9 and 12 inmates listed. However, the sum paid to the workhouse master per pauper per week was reduced in 1825 compared to 1822, being 2s 6d in the latter year and 3s 6d in the earlier. Thus, in 1825 indoor relief spending 23% of annual expenditure, sitting at 1168s. Despite this proportional increase in indoor relief spending from 1822 levels, outdoor relief recipients still constituted the majority of those in receipt of poor law relief in Metheringham in 1825, seeing a total of 41 individuals or around 6.5% of the residential population when compared to the 1821 census. Of these, 56% were adult males and 34% adult females.

The highest period of spending in Metheringham in the waning Old Poor Law period was the late 1820s and early 1830s, with expenditure ranging from 8185s to 6960s between 1826 and 1833. Annual spending in any years with extant data peaked in 1830 at 6960s, with 13% of this going on the provision of indoor relief within the parish workhouse. Unfortunately, the overseer accounts do not give information for totals of workhouse inmates in 1830 as had been the case in 1822 and 1825. All in all, 54 outdoor relief recipients were listed in Metheringham in 1830, around 6% of the parish's population when compared to the 1831 census figures. Of these, 52% were adult males and 32% adult females. Thus, explicit poor law relief for males was seemingly dominant in the parish in 1830, albeit with it being unclear if such adult men were able-bodied or not.

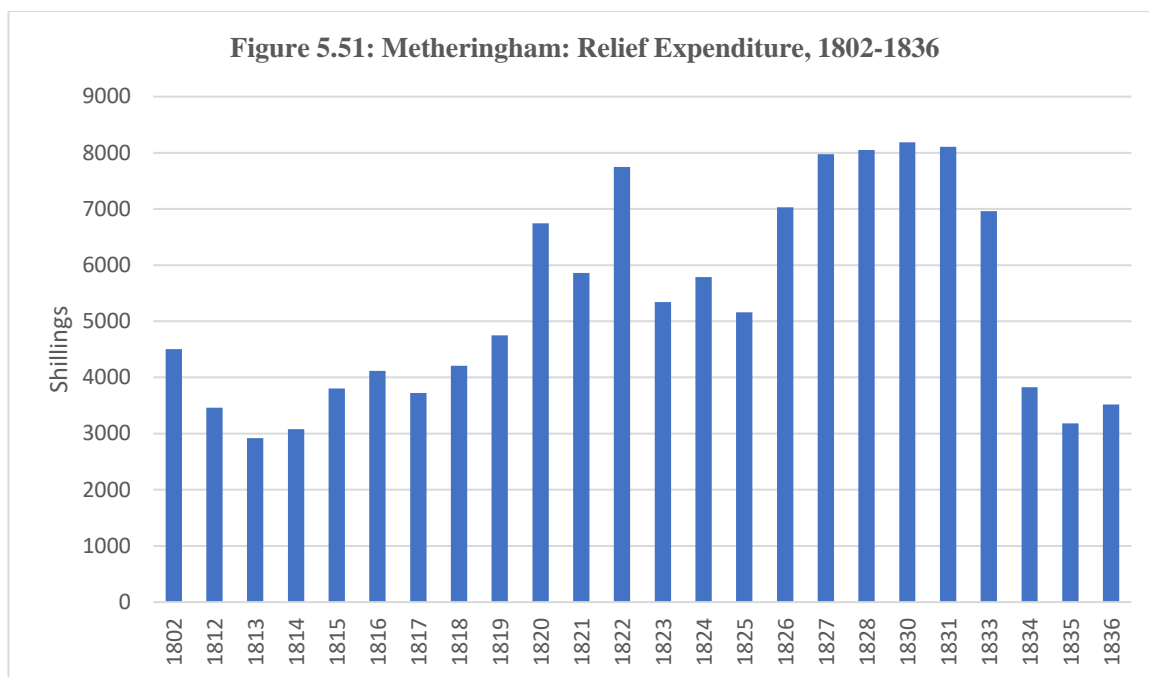


Figure 5.51. Metheringham Relief Expenditure, 1802-1836. Source: *Abstracts of Answers and Returns under the Act for Procuring Returns Relative to Expense and Maintenance of Poor in England* (London: House of Commons, 1803-04), pp.272-273; *Abridgement of the Abstract of the Answers and Returns so Far as Relates to the Poor* (London: House of Commons, 1818), pp.240-241; *Report from the Select Committee on Poor Rate Returns, 1822* (London: House of Commons, 1822), p.90; *Select Committee on Poor Rate Returns: Report, Appendix (1824)* (London: House of Commons, 1825), p.123; *Account of Money Expended for Maintenance of Poor in England, 1824-1829* (London: House of Commons, 1830), p.106; *Account of Money Expended for Maintenance of Poor in England, 1829-1834* (London: House of Commons, 1835), p.103; *Second Annual Report of the Poor Law Commissioners for England and Wales together with appendices A, B, C, D* (London: House of Commons, 1836), pp.192-193; *Third Annual Report of the Poor Law Commissioners for England and Wales together with appendices A, B and C* (London: House of Commons, 1837), p.99.

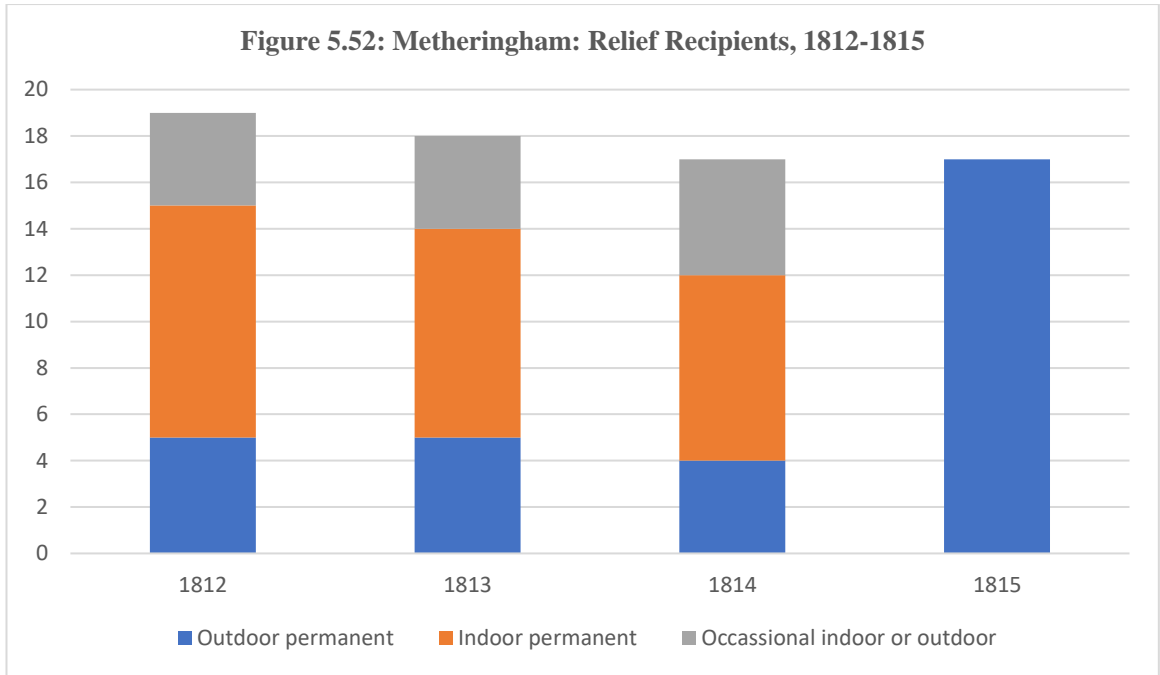


Figure 5.52. Metheringham: Relief Recipients, 1812-1815. Source: *Abridgement of the Abstract of the Answers and Returns so Far as Relates to the Poor* (London: House of Commons, 1818), p.241; *Select Committee on the Education of the Poor (1818)- Digest of Parochial Returns Volumes I, II and III* (London: House of Commons, 1819), p.526

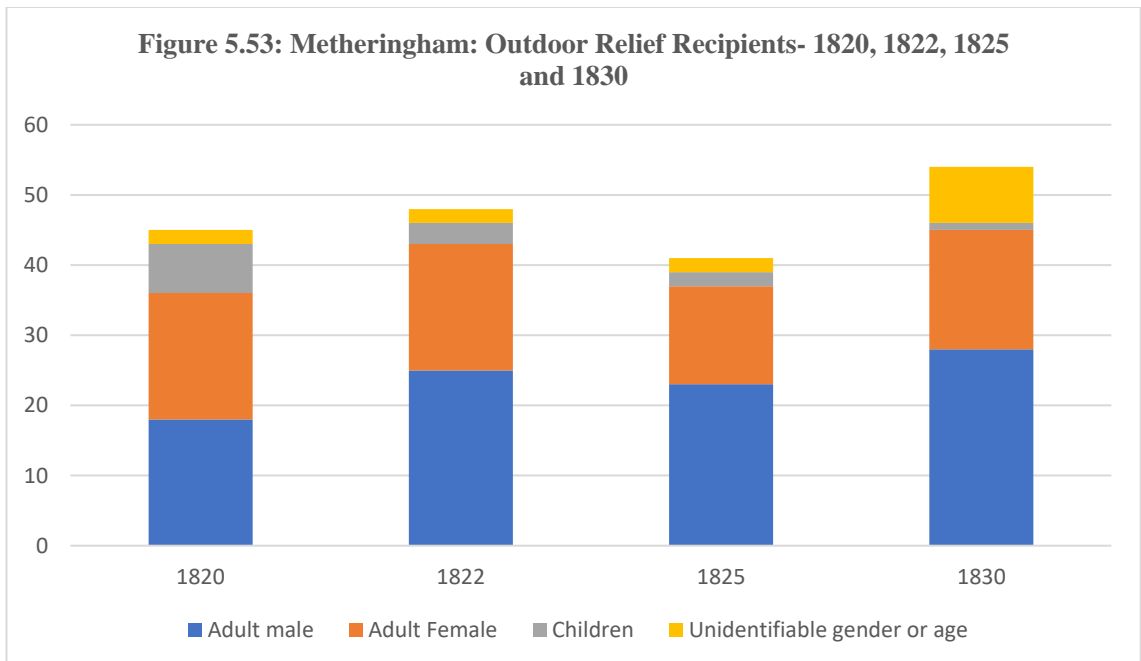


Figure 5.53. Metheringham: Outdoor Relief Recipients- 1820, 1822, 1825 and 1830. Source: Metheringham Parish 13/1, LA.

As stated, extant expenditure and recipient data for parishes of study incorporated into the Lincoln poor law union under the New Poor Law is generally lacking. Two quarterly breakdowns exist for Metheringham in 1839 and 1843 (tables 5.7 and 5.8). In the quarter ending September 29th 1839, the parish spent 524s on outdoor relief. No amount was given for indoor relief; however, only 23% of individuals relieved in that quarter were done so via the union workhouse, meaning that outdoor relief expenditure related to the bulk of spending. Thus, if the sum of 524s for the quarter ending in September 1839 is hypothetically quadrupled to give an annual sum, this sits at 2096s and well below any yearly expenditure exhibited in the parish in years with extant data under the waning period of the Old Poor Law. Using this hypothetical total, it can be suggested that expenditure fell by around 40% between 1836 and 1839, perhaps supporting the conclusion that the advent of the New Poor Law did reduce parish relief spending. Such is also supported by expenditure data for the quarter ending September 29th 1843, when Metheringham spent 655s on outdoor relief. Again, this gives a hypothetically annual sum of 2620s, seeing slight rises from levels in 1839 but still below those seen under the Old Poor Law.

In the quarter ending September 29th 1839, Metheringham relieved 31 individuals, inclusive of dependents, 21 of which were resident and sitting at just over 1.5% of the parish population when compared to the 1841 census returns. Of these 31 individuals, 26% were identifiable as recipients in the parish in 1830, suggesting a continuation in recipient demography between poor laws, at least in regard to certain individuals, with this statistic relating to 8 elderly individuals, predominantly females. In regard to non-resident relief, 42% of outdoor relief recipients were not living within Metheringham in the quarter ending September 1839, albeit with all being residents within the surrounding local area. Out of the total relief recipients noted in the parish in the quarter of analysis, 48% were adult females with 60% of this cohort being single elderly females aged between sixty-three and eighty-nine; 27% female household heads with dependent children; and 13% old women collecting relief in the context of an elderly couple. Children consisted of 32% of overall recipients with a total of 10 individuals, with all but one receiving relief within the context of a female-headed household. Adult men were in the minority of recipients in the quarter ending September 29th 1839, sitting at 20% and with all being non-able-bodied, predominantly elderly males aged between seventy-two and eighty-nine. Thus, no able-bodied men were in receipt of explicit poor

law receipt in Metheringham in the quarter of analysis. Moreover, men were seemingly more likely to be relieved indoors, with 67% of male recipients in Metheringham in the quarter ending September 29th 1839 being workhouse inmates, all being single men. Where outdoor male relief was identifiable in the parish in this quarter, it was made in the context of elderly couples. This composition shows differences to that identifiable at periods under the Old Poor Law, where adult males were clearly in receipt of explicit poor law relief.

Generally, the demographic breakdown of receipt in Metheringham in the quarter ending September 29th 1843 was consistent with that exhibited in the same quarter in 1839. Overall, 43 individuals were relieved, including dependents, of which 32 were resident, constituting around 2.5% of the parish population when compared to the 1841 census figures. As in 1839, females and children dominated. Indeed, 15 individuals who had been in receipt of relief in 1839 were still listed as recipients in 1843. Moreover, 8 recipients in the quarter of study in 1843 had been in receipt of relief from Metheringham in 1830, again suggesting long-lasting interactions with the poor law which bridged the divide into the New Poor Law. Of these, 75% had been in receipt of relief in 1830 and the quarters ending September 1839 and 1843. These were predominantly elderly females aged between sixty-nine and eighty-nine in 1843, giving a potential age range in 1830 of fifty-nine to seventy-six.

However, two male recipients in the quarter of analysis in 1843 (William Baldock and Joshua Fox) had not been in receipt in 1839 but had been in 1830, suggesting intermittent use of the poor law throughout a lifetime. In 1843, the parish paid for William Baldock's coffin and presumably his funeral, with Baldock dying in that year aged seventy. Joshua Fox was relieved for sickness in 1843, being aged sixty and having a dependent wife and either son or grandson. This gives a potential age of forty-seven in 1830, suggesting Fox was collecting relief as an able-bodied male under the Old Poor Law and with outdoor relief given to him in 1843 consistent with the sickness exemption noted for able-bodied males in the special orders given to the Lincoln union by the Poor Law Commission. Indeed, all outdoor relief given to able-bodied men in Metheringham in the quarter ending September 1843 was done so for sickness. Again, males dominated as workhouse inmates, with only 25% of those relieved indoors in the quarter ending September 1843 being females. Two families, headed by presumably able-bodied males, are identifiable; however, they were only in the union workhouse for

between six and eleven days. Those who were inmates for more than a month were predominantly the elderly and individuals identifiable as non-able-bodied.

Outdoor				
Name (age)	Dependents (age)	Resident Parish	Reason for Relief	Amount of relief
Ann Stow (33)	William (12); Mary (10); Frances (5); Ann (3)	Metheringham	Insufficiency of earnings	£3 11s 6d
Mary Clay (42)	John (11)	Metheringham	Insufficiency of earnings	£1 1s 1.5d
Samuel West (75)	Catherine (73)	Metheringham	Infirmity	£3 1s 9d
Sarah Snell (74)		Metheringham	Infirmity	£1 14s 1.5d
Elizabeth Collinson (80)		Metheringham	Infirmity	£1 14s 1.5d
Elizabeth Fox (63)		Metheringham	Insufficiency of earnings	£1 7s 7.5d
Mary Norton (72)		Metheringham	Infirmity	£1 14s 1.5d
Millicent Buff (69)		Lincoln	Infirmity	£1 14s 1.5d
Sarah Baker (74)		North Rauceby	Infirmity	£1 7s
Faith Skeppers (69)		Washingborough	Infirmity	£1 14s 1.5d
Elizabeth Buffham (89)		Dunston	Infirmity	£1 14s 1.5d
Ann Armstead (23)	Mary (4); Elizabeth (3); Thomas (1)	Lincoln	Insufficiency of earnings	£2 18s 6d
Elizabeth Smith (70)		Metheringham	Infirmity	£1 14s 1.5d
Joseph Winter (77)	Jane (74)	Blankney	Infirmity	17s 10d

Table 5.7. Metheringham: Relief Recipients, Quarter Ending September 29th 1839.

Source: Metheringham Parish 13/12, LA.

Indoor			
Name (age)	Dependents in the workhouse (age)	Reason for relief	Number of days in the workhouse
Samuel Newton (47)		Weak of mind	91
Henry Kyme (89)		Age	91
John Tonge (22)		Weak of mind	91
William Sampson (72)		Age	91
Susan Sampson (22)	Mary Ann (infant)	Bastardy	104
Lucy Field (5)		Bastardy	16

Table 5.7 Continued. Metheringham: Relief Recipients, Quarter Ending September 29th 1839. Source: Metheringham Parish 13/12, LA.

Outdoor				
Name (age)	Dependents (age)	Resident Parish	Reason for Relief	Amount of relief
Ann Stow (38)	Mary (14); Joshua (10); Ann (5)	Metheringham	Destitution	£2 6s 7d
Sarah Snell (78)		Metheringham	Infirmity	£1 11s 1.75d
Elizabeth Collinson (84)		Metheringham	Infirmity	£1 11s 1.75d
Elizabeth Fox (66)		Metheringham	Infirmity	£1 14s 1.75d
Elizabeth Smith (76)		Metheringham	Infirmity	£1 11s 1.75d
Millicent Buff (73)		Lincoln	Infirmity	£1 17s 7.75d
Sarah Baker (77)		North Rauceby	Infirmity	£2
Faith Skeppers (73)		Washingborough	Infirmity	£1 11s 1.75d
Elizabeth Buffham (93)		Dunston	Infirmity	£1 11s 1.75d
Jane Winter (78)		Blankney	Infirmity	£1 6s
Ann Armstead (27)	Mary (7); Ann (4)	Lincoln	Destitution	£1 14s 11.25d
Elizabeth Doorman (47)	Sarah (13); Thomas (11); Robert (9); Benjamin (7); Mary (3)	Metheringham	Destitution	£5 3s 8.75d
William Whittaker (78)		Bardney	Infirmity	£1 11s 1.75d
Elizabeth Osgerby (64)		Metheringham	Infirmity	£1 11s 1.75d
Joshua Fox (60)	Lucy (59); John (14)	Metheringham	Sickness	£3 2s 3.5d
Matthew Hodgson (50)	Mary (44)	Lincoln	Sickness	£1 3s 11.5
Mary Norton (76)		Metheringham	Infirmity	8s 5d
William Baldock (70)		Metheringham	Coffin	16s 6d

Table 5.8. Metheringham: Relief Recipients, Quarter Ending September 29th 1843.

Source: Metheringham Parish 13/12, LA.

Indoor		
Name (age)	Dependents in the workhouse (age)	Number of days in the workhouse
Samuel Newton (51)		81 (died in the workhouse)
Henry Kyme (93)		91
John Tonge (26)		91
Thomas Gash (51)		67
Joseph Baldock (52)	Matthew (10); William (8); Joseph (3)	6
William Smith (25)	Martha (28)	11 (William) and 9 (Martha)
Mary Norton (76)		57
Rebecca Clarke (19)		31

Table 5.8 Continued. Metheringham: Relief Recipients, Quarter Ending September 29th 1843. Source: Metheringham Parish 13/12, LA.

5.3 Overall Expenditure and Recipient Trends

A comparison of the parish expenditure and recipient trends noted above will now be undertaken to try to outline some general conclusions across the period of study. Broad overall periods of increased poor law spending may be suggested which were generally applicable across the parish selection, albeit with some fluctuations between individual parishes. These can be identified as the mid-1790s; the early years of the 1800s; the immediate post-1815 period; various points in the 1820s; the mid to late 1830s; and the middle years of the 1840s. These periods roughly correlate with the temporal phases of decreasing wheat prices and poor harvests noted in chapter three, with such factors underpinning wage levels and the availability and access to work. This was something acknowledged by contemporaries, with an 1849 survey of farming in Lincolnshire concluding that low wheat prices had reduced wage levels and employment

opportunities.²⁵ As discussed above when conducting individual parish analysis, rises in male poor law receipt are often identifiable at periods of peak poor law spending, perhaps suggesting increases in able-bodied male pauperism, the dynamics of which will be discussed below in further sections. Although spending and total numbers of recipients generally decreased from Old Poor Law highs in most parishes with the advent of the New Poor Law, these factors could temporarily fluctuate, seeing rises due to periods of economic hardship such as the mid-1840s.

Generally, the highest levels of spending and recipient totals were found in the North Fen Margin parishes of Branston and Metheringham. Both parishes were of a wide open typology and saw the biggest populations in the parish selection by 1831. The Cliff and Heath parishes of study (Leadenham; Navenby; Waddington) also exhibited proportionally high relief spending and recipient numbers. All Cliff and Heath parishes were of varying open typologies and by 1831, had the biggest populations within the parish selection after Branston, Metheringham and Ruskington. Other open parishes of study (Leasingham; Ruskington) generally displayed higher spending totals and recipient numbers within the context of the whole parish selection. Again, both parishes had proportionally large populations with Ruskington having the third biggest population after Branston and Metheringham by 1831 within the parish selection.

Therefore, an open parish typology seems to have generally shared a relationship with higher levels of relief expenditure and totals of individual recipients. It was the wide open parishes of study (Branston; Metheringham; Ruskington; Navenby) which seemingly spent more and relieved more individuals across the period. Divided open parishes (Leasingham; Leadenham; Waddington) usually saw lower levels of expenditure and recipient numbers than their wide open counterparts, however, in the context of the parish selection as a whole, divided open parishes still exhibited mostly higher levels of spending and recipient totals. In terms of the human ecological methodology of this thesis, analysis of soil regions allows an assessment of where parishes of different typologies could potentially be found, with fen-incorporating areas and the Cliff and Heath region having larger proportions of open parishes, as discussed in chapter three.

²⁵ John Algernon Clarke, *On the Farming of Lincolnshire* (London: William Clowes and Sons, 1852), pp.149-151

The lowest levels of spending and totals of receipt across the period were generally found in closed parishes, clustered predominantly in the Central Limestone Heath (Ashby de la Launde; Cranwell) and western limestone zone of the Fen Skirtlands (Digby). These parishes had the smallest populations of the parish selection. However, where identifiable, Digby relieved larger proportions of adult males under the Old Poor Law than seen in Ashby de la Launde or Cranwell, suggesting that perhaps its location in the Fen Skirtlands region differentiated it somewhat from other closed parishes of study. Firstly, it consistently had the largest population of any closed parish of study throughout the period. Secondly, it exhibited a larger total and wider diversity in farm sizes, diversifying employment systems within the parish, with many smaller-acreage, often family-ran tenancy farms evident compared to larger-acreage mixed-agrarian farms employing confined labour which typified the Central Limestone Heath region by the 1830s. Moreover, Digby also showed higher levels of non-agricultural employment than seen in other closed parishes, with 43% of families engaged in non-farming roles in the 1831 census compared to just 7% and 23% in Ashby de la Launde and Cranwell respectively. Thirdly, seemingly a higher proportion of Digby's population was born in the parish when compared with other closed parishes of study, perhaps feeding into customs of eligibility not as explicit in the highly migratory residential populations of Cranwell and Ashby de la Launde, issues discussed in detail in chapter six. Thus, despite categorisation as a closed parish, the socio-economic expression of Digby differed from both Ashby de la Launde and Cranwell, mirroring more closely neighbouring open parishes in the eastern fen-incorporating area of the Lincoln Heath within which it was located, perhaps feeding into the higher levels of male relief receipt noted within it under the Old Poor Law.

Overall, recipient to population percentages across the period within the parish selection generally fell below 10%, except in exceptional cases as in Cranwell in 1802 where it stood at 14% and Digby in 1822 where it lay at 15%. The caveat has to be made that such percentages do not consider the possibility that recipients were non-resident, seemingly an increasingly common condition within the parish selection as the nineteenth century progressed, discussed below. There was no definite link between the advent of the New Poor Law and changes in percentages of populations in receipt of poor law relief, with such percentages instead being dependent on temporal periods of increased need across the period, as was the case with totals of recipients in general.

Evidence from the parish selection supports conclusions already reached in the literature in that levels of poor law receipt within Lincolnshire were generally low by national standards. In 1802, Lincolnshire was part of a broad northern region which saw 0-10% of its population in receipt of relief.²⁶ By 1850, twenty to fifty-nine individuals per thousand of the total population were classified as paupers within the county, still placing it within a general northern area which saw lower levels of poor law receipt than compared to southern and eastern England.²⁷ As stated in chapter three, despite falling wage levels across the first half of the 1800s, Lincolnshire was viewed as a generally high-wage area by national standards with drives towards mixed-agrarian wheat production expanding labour needs within the county, particularly in upland regions such as the Lincoln Heath and the Wolds. Indeed, the Lincoln Heath was known as a high-wage area within the context of the county. Thus, considering the central importance of male employment and wages to the household economy, lower levels of pauperism may perhaps be expected when compared to other areas of rural England.

Government data gives detailed demographic breakdowns of receipt for the year 1802, presented for the parish selection in figure 5.54. How far such data is representational for the broader expression of the poor law in its early nineteenth century form within the parish selection is complicated by the fact that 1802 was seemingly a particularly high spending year, evidenced in parishes with extant expenditure figures for the 1790s and opening decade of the 1800s (Branston; Digby; Leadenham; Metheringham; Waddington). Thus, higher levels of receipt may potentially be anticipated in 1802 than was widely the case in preceding and succeeding years. With this caveat in mind, the largest cohort of receipt across the parish selection in 1802 were adults relieved permanently outdoors, albeit with permanent indoor relief equally used or more dominant in certain parishes (Ashby de la Launde; Digby; Waddington). Importantly, only 23% of adults in receipt of permanent and occasional relief were aged 60 and over, disabled or permanently ill in 1802, suggesting that most adult recipients were able-bodied, perhaps expected if 1802 is seen as a high expenditure year. A detailed discussion of able-bodied relief across the period of study will be conducted below when examining specific recipient cohorts; it is enough here to propose that able-bodied adults were seemingly a conspicuous demographic of receipt within the parish selection,

²⁶ King, *Poverty and Welfare in England*, Map 4.3, p.86

²⁷ Hollen-Lees, *The Solidarities of Strangers*, Map 6.1, p.183

at least in 1802. Children aged up to 14 constituted around a quarter of all relieved in 1802, although in some parishes they were clearly a major cohort consisting of 41% of recipients in Branston; 38% in Leadenham; and 42% in Metheringham. Thus, there were differences in the demography of receipt between parishes of study, emphasised above when conducting specific parish analysis. Non-resident relief was generally uncommon in 1802, with 50% of parishes purely relieving resident poor.

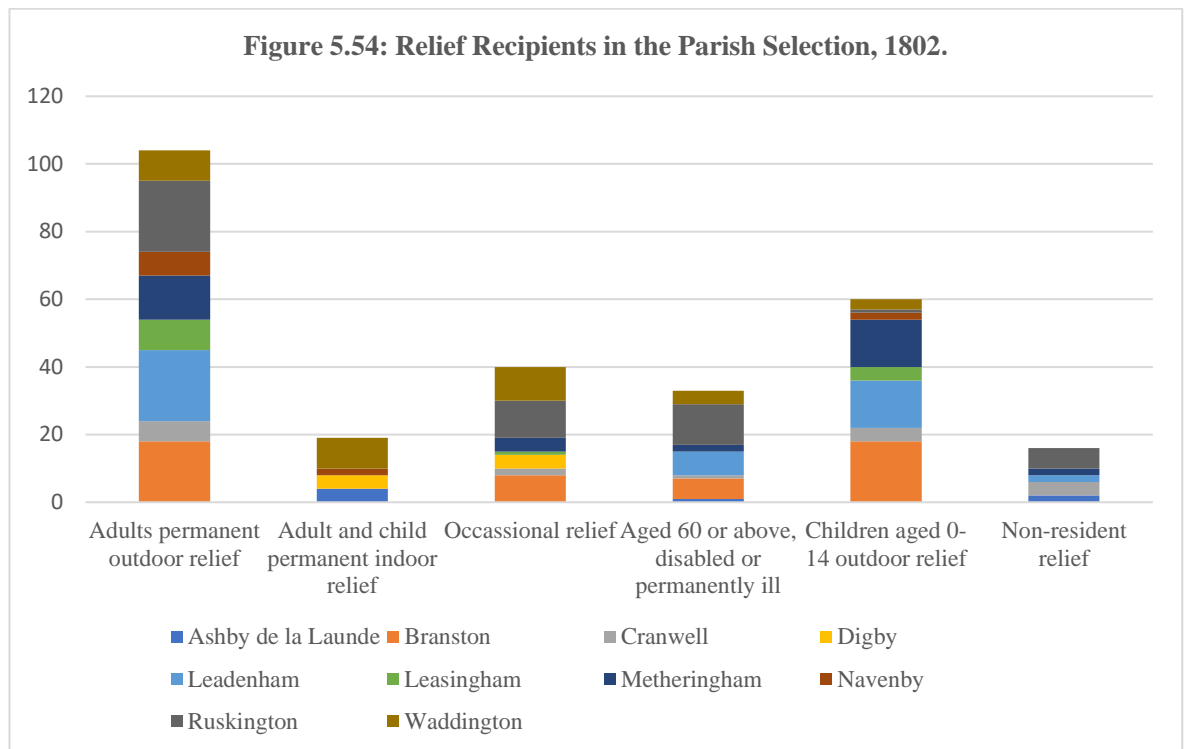


Figure 5.54. Relief Recipients in the Parish Selection, 1802. Source: *Abstracts of Answers and Returns under the Act for Procuring Returns Relative to Expense and Maintenance of Poor in England* (London: House of Commons, 1803-04), pp.270-273 and pp.290-291.

Unfortunately, in depth classification of receipt in terms of age is generally lacking for the parish selection for the remaining Old Poor Law period, with analysis limited to a comparison of gender and recipient totals. Firstly, overall totals of individuals in receipt of poor law relief seemingly increased in the parish selection between 1802 and 1836, particularly during the 1820s, a generally high spending decade within the context of study. However, this needs to be juxtaposed with rises in population noted in chapter three, as increasing totals of receipt could have been influenced by the fact that more people were living within the parish selection in later decades of study. Limiting analysis to the period between 1801 and 1831, parish populations increased by 9% to

239%. Most parishes of study saw rises of above 60%, with only Ashby de la Launde, Leadenham, Leadenham and Waddington seeing increases of between 9% and 31%. Despite this, even in parishes which saw smaller population increases, totals of receipt did seemingly increase as the Old Poor Law progressed, perhaps suggesting that recourse to the poor law potentially became more commonly engrained into support strategies adopted by the labouring population within the first three decades of the nineteenth century. Such may support French's conclusions that by the eve of the New Poor Law 'poor relief became woven...into the fabric of daily life'²⁸ in the final decades of the Old Poor Law. How far data from the parish selection agrees with French's argument of increased male receipt in the last two decades of the Old Poor Law is nuanced.²⁹ Certainly, adult males, whether able-bodied or not, were a conspicuous cohort of receipt within the parish selection across the Old Poor Law period of study, albeit with differences between parishes. Outside of periods of economic depression, how far adult male receipt proportionally increased between c.1790 and 1836 within the parish selection is debatable, with this cohort generally always sitting against a persistent backdrop of female and child receipt which, when combined, was often larger than explicit male aid. What can be said is that adult males were approaching the poor law and being relieved by it within the period up until unionisation of the parish selection in 1836.

Increasing totals of recipients noted in the period between 1802 and 1836 does not necessarily mean that all were resident poor, with available evidence suggesting an increase in non-resident relief as the waning Old Poor Law period progressed. As shown in figure 5.54, in 1802 non-resident relief was comparatively rare within the parish selection. In parishes which have data available for a comparison of non-resident relief to take place, there was seemingly a rise in relieving the non-resident as the nineteenth century progressed. In 1802, Ashby de la Launde relieved 6 individuals of which only 2 were non-resident. However, between 1831 and 1835, the majority of outdoor relief recipients for the parish were non-resident (tables 5.1 to 5.4). Similarly, only 6% of those relieved by Metheringham in 1802 were non-resident, but by 1839 up to 42% of out-door relief recipients were non-resident according to available quarterly data (table 5.7). In Waddington, no non-resident recipients were noted in 1802 but

²⁸ French, 'An Irrevocable Shift', pp.786-787

²⁹ Ibid

according to extant data, around 20% of outdoor relief recipients in 1848 were not living in the parish (table 5.5).

The reasons for this apparent growth may be down to increased migratory labour patterns necessitated by employment structures within the mixed-agrarian agricultural farming system of the Lincoln Heath, largely consolidated in the post-1815 period as discussed in chapter three. Thus, in 1802 labour migrations were possibly less pronounced within the predominantly pastoral economy of the Lincoln Heath, feeding into minimal non-resident relief noted in that year. However, increased migration between parishes within the context of agrarian agricultural labour meant a similar increase in both settlement status gained by hiring and more people living outside their settled parish, necessitating non-resident relief. Male labour patterns were especially important in this respect as a wife took on her husband's settlement status at marriage and status was inherited by children until they assumed a settlement status of their own. Therefore, a wider cache of dependents was involved through male settlement status, perhaps influencing the rises in both non-resident relief and totals of recipients overall noted overall within the parish selection in the waning Old Poor Law period. Although settlement via hiring was discontinued at the passing of the Poor Law Amendment Act, it was still respected after 1834 if gained beforehand, feeding into non-resident relief patterns noted in some parishes of study under the New Poor Law.

The surviving New Poor Law data for the parish selection suggests an initial reduction in total numbers of recipients, at least broadly across the parish selection as some parishes, namely Leasingham, saw high levels of receipt in the late 1830s. As such, recipient numbers were temporally variable under the New Poor Law, seeing rises in most parishes in the mid-1840s. Demographically speaking, levels of outdoor adult male relief seemingly reduced after unionisation, albeit with numbers of men relieved out-of-doors increasing at times of economic depression as had been the case under the Old Poor Law. However, the persistent adult male cohort of outdoor receipt notable in many parishes under the Old Poor Law, particularly those of an open typology, was substantially reduced under the New Poor Law, at least based on years with available data. Thus, the majority of outdoor recipients under the New Poor Law were generally elderly, female or children. This seemingly sits in contrast to the demography of receipt noted overall in the parish selection in 1802, where both the elderly and children were represented less. Despite this, in the period between 1802 and 1836, children and

females, albeit of indeterminate age, were clearly present as recipient cohorts within the parish selection, generally collectively outweighing adult males within overall outdoor recipient demographics.

In regard to indoor relief, it is difficult to ascertain the demography of workhouse inmates within the parish selection under the Old Poor Law due to the nature of surviving evidence which is often numerical in nature and thus void of demographic information. Under the New Poor Law, three demographic snapshots are available for the union workhouses of study: for November 1838 in the Lincoln union workhouse, although it is not clear on which exact date the survey was taken; and from the 1841 and 1851 censuses for both workhouses of study (figures 5.55 to 5.59). Overall, this data generally supports conclusions in the literature about the dominance of children, elderly males and young adult females within workhouse populations under the New Poor Law.³⁰

In November 1838, 48% of inmates in the Lincoln union workhouse were aged 16 or younger, with 61% of these being aged 9 or below. The dominance of children and teenagers as workhouse inmates under the New Poor Law is also seen in the union workhouses of study in the 1841 and 1851 censuses. In the 1841 census, 60% of inmates in the Lincoln union workhouse were aged below 20, with this age group being 66% of inmates in the 1851 census. A similar dimension is also noticeable in the Sleaford union workhouse in these census years, with 54% of inmates being aged below 20 in the 1841 census and 48% in the 1851. In addition to children and teenagers, the elderly were also a prominent cohort amongst workhouse inmates under the New Poor Law. In November 1838, 19% of inmates at the Lincoln union workhouse were aged 60 or above. In the 1841 and 1851 censuses, 17% and 14% of inmates within the Lincoln union workhouse respectively were aged 61 and over. Similarly, within the Sleaford union workhouse, 14% of inmates were aged 61 and over in the 1841 census and 20% in the 1851. In both union workhouses of study, inmates aged 61 and above were predominantly male, with gendered differentiation in regard to poor law outcomes for the elderly discussed below when examining the experience of this cohort in detail. When comparing the genders of inmates aged between 21 and 60 in the Lincoln union

³⁰ Nigel Goose, 'Workhouse Populations in the Mid-Nineteenth Century: the Case for Hertfordshire', *Local Population Studies*, 62 (1999), pp.52-69; Nigel Goose, 'Poverty, Old Age and Gender in Nineteenth-century England: the Case of Hertfordshire', *Continuity and Change*, 20 (2005), pp.351-384

workhouse, males and females were roughly equal in both the 1841 and 1851 censuses. However, females dominated amongst inmates aged in their twenties, perhaps supporting the conclusion that single-mothers with illegitimate children often found themselves within workhouses under the New Poor Law. A similar dimension is found within the Sleaford union workhouse in the 1841 and 1851 censuses, with young women evident as inmates.

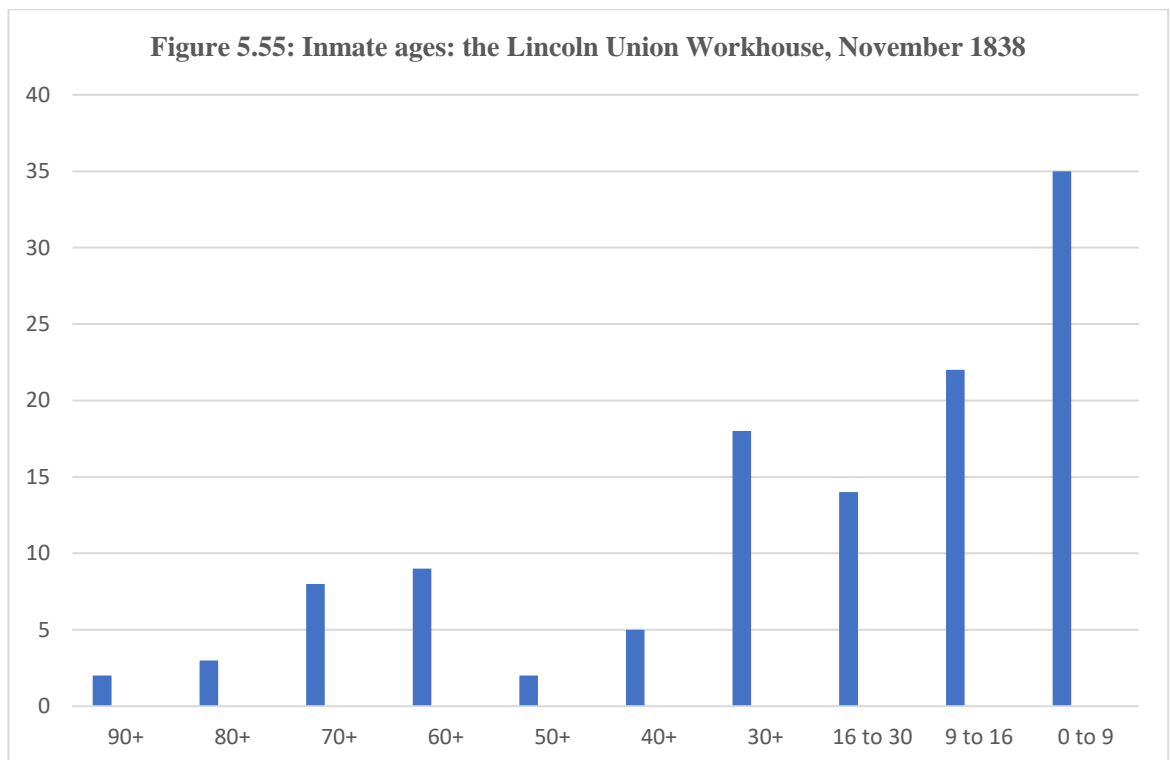


Figure 5.55: Inmate ages in the Lincoln Union Workhouse, November 1838.

Source: 'Lincoln Institutions: No 11- the Union Workhouse', *The Stamford Mercury*, 16th November 1838

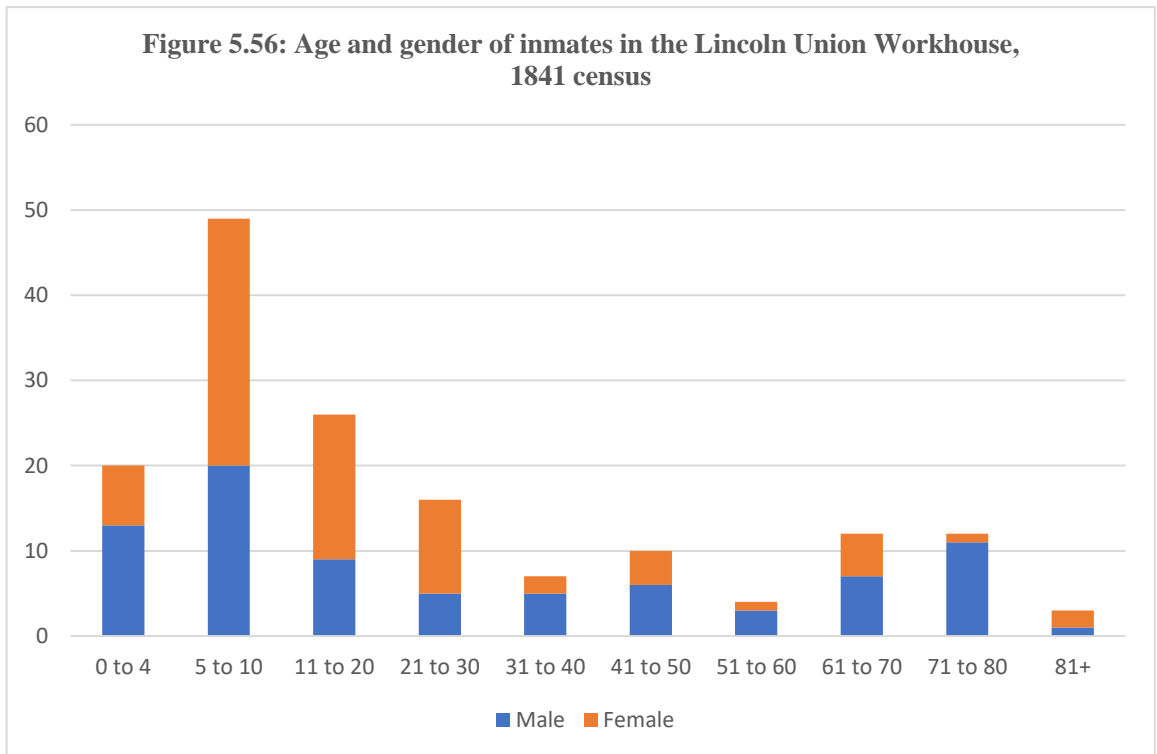


Figure 5.56: Age and gender of inmates in the Lincoln Union Workhouse, 1841 census. Source: the 1841 census.

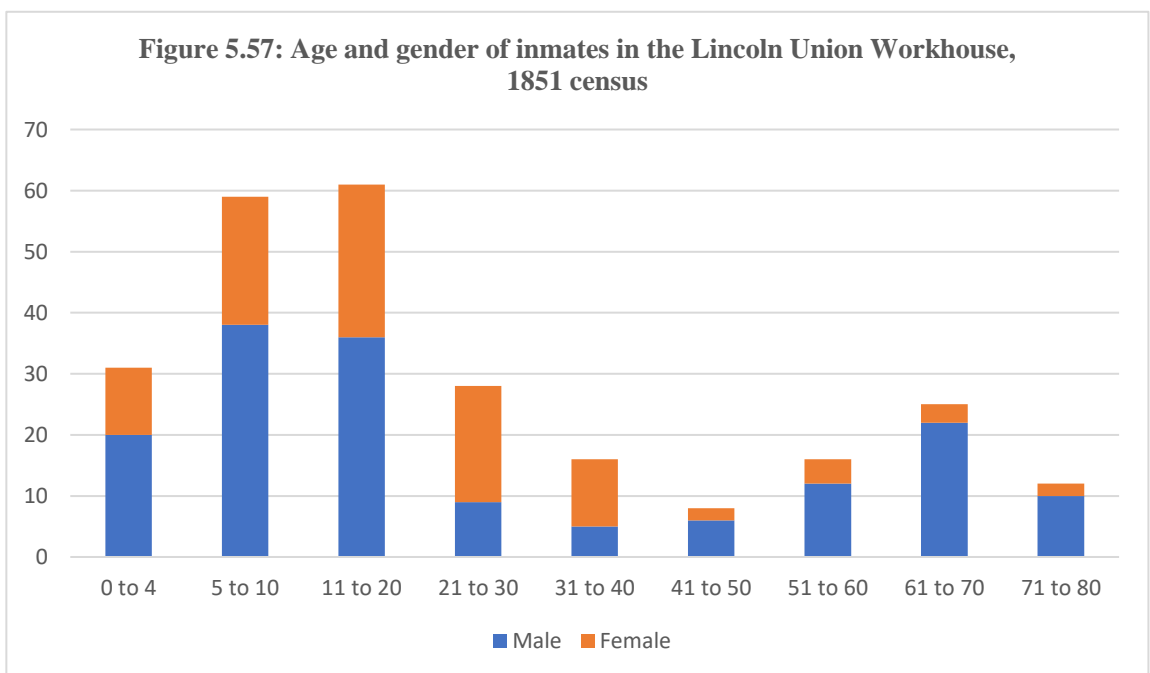


Figure 5.57: Age and gender of inmates in the Lincoln Union Workhouse, 1851 census. Source: the 1851 census.

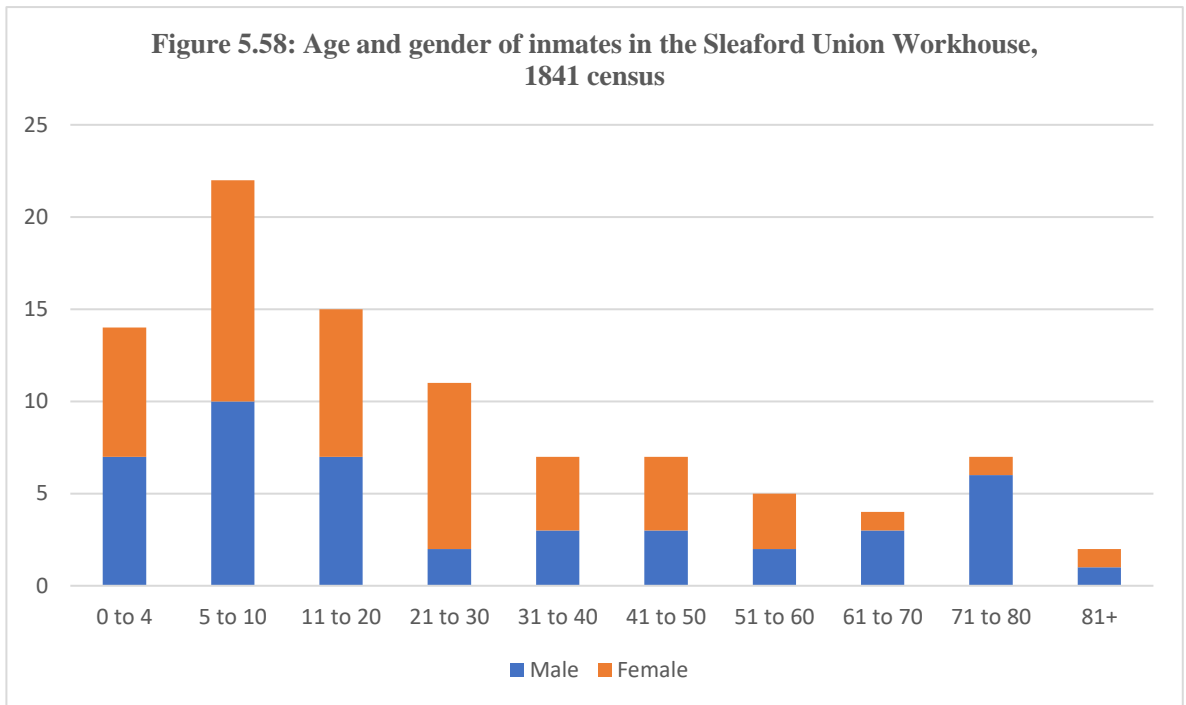


Figure 5.58: Age and gender of inmates in the Sleaford Union Workhouse, 1841 census. Source: 1841 census.

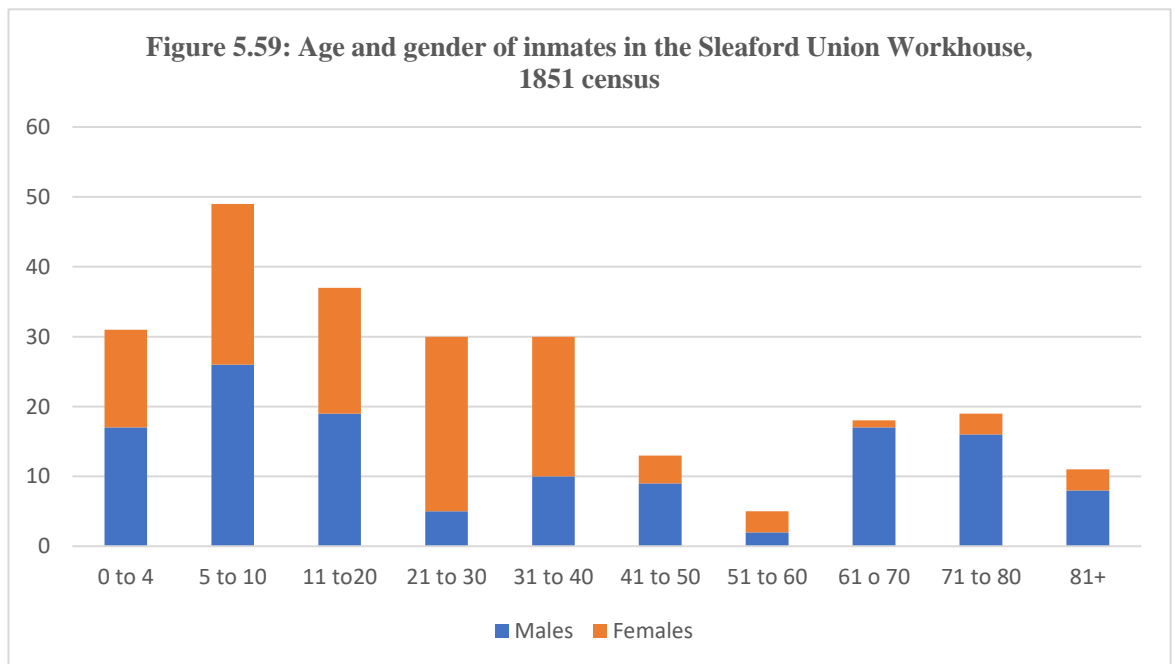


Figure 5.59: Age and gender of inmate in the Sleaford Union Workhouse, 1851 census. Source: the 1851 census.

Of course analysis based on figures 5.55 to 5.59 relates to workhouse inmate populations taken from the whole union. As this thesis is concerned with a specific parish selection, it is necessary to turn back towards parish data in regard to indoor relief recipients under the New Poor Law. As already discussed, due to limited source survival demographic information is only primarily available for parishes incorporated into the Sleaford union (Ashby de la Launde; Cranwell; Digby; Leadenham; Leasingham; Ruskington) for certain quarters across the 1830s and 1840s. This data is presented in figure 5.60. As suggested by the whole union data, figure 5.60 shows that children were generally the dominant cohort amongst workhouse inmates relieved by parishes of study within the Sleaford union, at least across quarters with available figures. There were not significant gendered differences between adult inmates across quarterly figures, with totals of males and females roughly comparable. However, as age data is not available it is not possible to ascertain if the prominence of elderly males and young adult females suggested in whole union figures is evident.

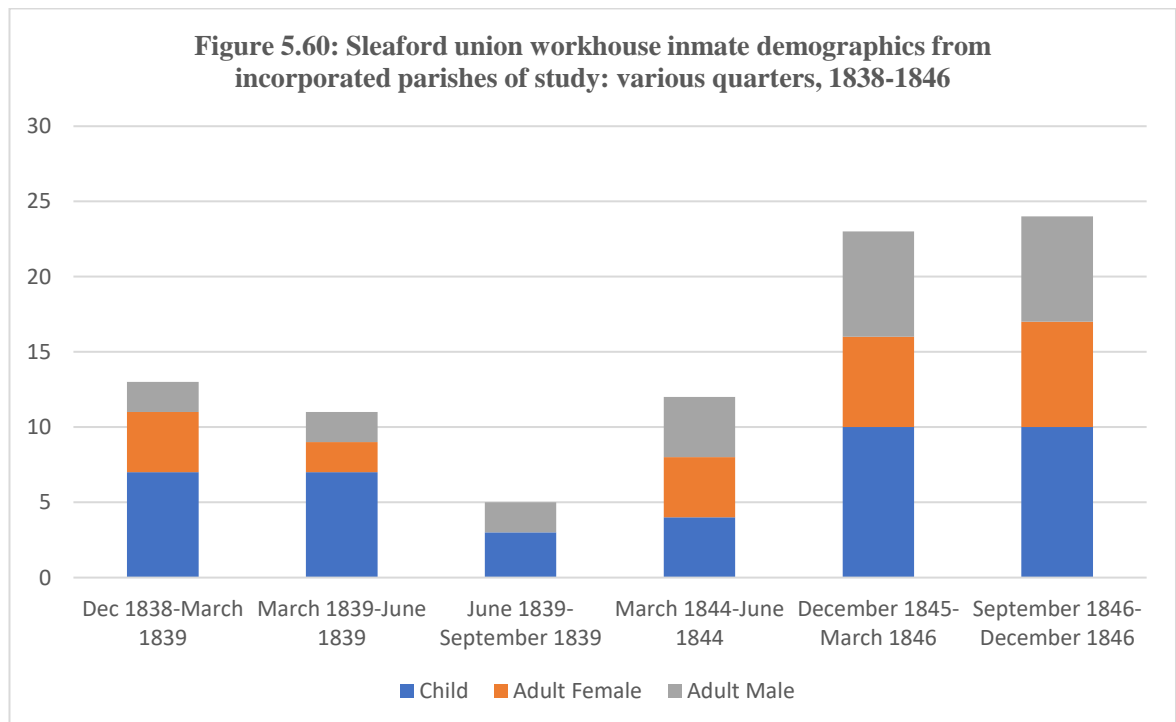


Figure 5.60: Sleaford union workhouse inmate demographics from incorporated parishes of study: various quarters, 1838-1846. Source: Digby Parish 13/24, LA; *Sleaford Poor Law Union Correspondence, 1843-1847*, MH12/6764, NA.

To make sense of the conclusions reached so far, this thesis will now move on to explore the experience of relief for differing cohorts of recipients across the periods of study. Although not all cohorts of relief are explored, for example, the vagrant experience is not explicitly analysed, the major groupings found within the parish selection are. Thus, the next section of this chapter will investigate the able-bodied male; the elderly; the disabled and mentally ill; children; and women.

5.4 Recipient Cohorts

a) The Able-bodied Male

Although the 1834 Poor Law Amendment Act and subsequent special and general orders given by the Poor Law Commission theoretically dealt with limiting out-door relief for both the able-bodied male and female, many commentators have argued that the main targets of the New Poor Law were able-bodied males.³¹ Thus, this sub-section will therefore deal primarily with the experience of the able-bodied male, with that of females included when exploring the relief of women below.

How far the New Poor Law managed to constrain outdoor relief to able-bodied males has been a debated issue.³² Karel Williams in particular has argued for a drastic reduction in able-bodied male relief under the New Poor Law, in part due to the effects of the 1844 and 1852 general orders which limited the provision of outdoor relief to able-bodied males except in clearly prescribed circumstances.³³ Even before 1844, unions were generally acting under special orders issued by the Poor Law Commission to limit outdoor relief to able-bodied males. Thus, for Williams, the New Poor Law meant ‘a line of exclusion was drawn so that from the 1840s onwards able-bodied men did not receive relief in significant numbers.’³⁴ This sits in stark contrast to Williams’ conclusions about the nature of outdoor relief to able-bodied males in the waning Old Poor Law period where ‘able-bodied men were consistently included among the classes obtaining relief.’³⁵ Indeed, Williams’ analysis of the national returns for poor relief in 1802 suggests that nationally around 7% of men aged between twenty and fifty were in

³¹ Karel Williams quoted in King, *Poverty and Welfare in England*, p.231

³² Snell, *Parish and Belonging*, pp.227-309; Karel Williams, *From Pauperism to Poverty* (London: Routledge, 1981), pp.11-90

³³ Williams, *From Pauperism to Poverty*, pp.64-75

³⁴ *Ibid*, p.51

³⁵ *Ibid*

receipt of poor law relief in that year.³⁶ According to Williams, the presence of able-bodied males as recipients continued right up until the passing of the Poor Law Amendment Act in 1834, falling off drastically after this date.

If the 1802 data is examined for the parish selection (figure 5.54), it does seemingly appear that Williams' conclusions ring true. Amongst all recipients across the parish selection, the largest cohort was able-bodied adults relieved outdoors, consisting of 43% of the total. However, it does not follow that all of these were able-bodied males, something acknowledged by Williams, who assumes that a third of recipients nationally within this cohort were 'young widows or temporary sick men with dependents.'³⁷ Using this logic, 33 individuals, when rounded up, can be deducted from the parish selection's total number of able-bodied adults relieved permanently outdoors, leaving a total of 65 individuals who can be hypothetically identified as able-bodied males using Williams' approach. This was still the largest single group of receipt amongst the total numbers of relief recipients within the parish selection and consisted of around 2% of the combined population of the parish selection in the 1801 census. Although there were differences between parishes in regard to recipient totals and cohorts in 1802, as already shown, the outdoor relief of the able-bodied male was evident within the parish selection in the waning period of the Old Poor Law, explicitly so in periods of agricultural depression which resulted in under or unemployment. Thus, Williams' conclusions are generally supported by analysis of the parish selection, albeit with outdoor male relief always sitting against cohorts of female and child recipients who corporately outweighed men, particularly outside of times of economic downturns and high relief spending.

As discussed, levels of outdoor relief to adult males, although temporally variable, were seemingly reduced under the New Poor Law, at least according to the available figures from the parish selection. Thus, men overall were generally less represented in the demography of explicit outdoor poor law receipt in the later 1830s and 1840s than had been the case previously, although with elderly males seemingly over represented amongst indoor recipients. However, such conclusions relate to males generally, with the specific relief of the able-bodied man under the New Poor Law being a nuanced issue. Primarily, the debate hinges on the use of the exemption clauses embedded within

³⁶ Ibid, p.43

³⁷ Ibid, p.42

Poor Law Commission special and general orders to manoeuvre around restrictions on outdoor relief, with those such as Williams arguing that these were not employed to relieve the able-bodied whereas some, notably Snell, arguing the opposing view.³⁸

Evidence from the parish selection possibly shows that sickness exemption clauses were used to relieve the able-bodied male and his dependents outside of the workhouse during the early decades of the New Poor Law, with parishes within their rights to do so. For example, in the quarter ending 25th March 1848, Waddington relieved 7 able-bodied men plus their dependents out-of-doors via the sickness clause, with Metheringham giving outdoor relief to 2 males with dependents due to sickness in the quarter ending September 29th 1843 (tables 5.5. and 5.8). However, the middle years of the 1840s were ones of increased need and relief spending; in other periods of the 1830s and 1840s, outdoor able-bodied male relief via sickness exemptions was comparatively rare. To illustrate, no able-bodied males were relieved out-of-doors by Metheringham in the quarter ending September 29th 1839, with only one given outdoor relief by Waddington in the whole half-year ending 25th March 1849 (tables 5.6 and 5.7). Thus, there was potentially spikes in the use of sickness exemptions clauses at periods of rising male able-bodied need. Such may be supported by examining the totals of able-bodied males relieved outdoors via the sickness and accident exemptions within the parishes of study incorporated into the Lincoln union (Branston; Metheringham; Navenby; Waddington) between 1841 and 1848 (figure 5.61). As shown in figure 5.61, there was an increase in able-bodied males relieved outdoors for sickness and accident between 1844 and 1845, with significant numbers also present in 1842. Unfortunately, extant expenditure data for the Lincoln union is generally lacking, as explained, but where it does exist for Branston, years of increased spending broadly correlate to years of high able-bodied male outdoor relief (figure 5.49). It is particularly notable that 74% of able-bodied males relieved outdoors between 1841 and 1848 within the parishes of study incorporated within the Lincoln union were done so in the three years between 1844 and 1847, a period known locally to have been one of increased unemployment and economic downturn.

³⁸ Williams, *From Pauperism to Poverty*, pp.11-90; Snell, *Parish and Belonging*, pp.227-309

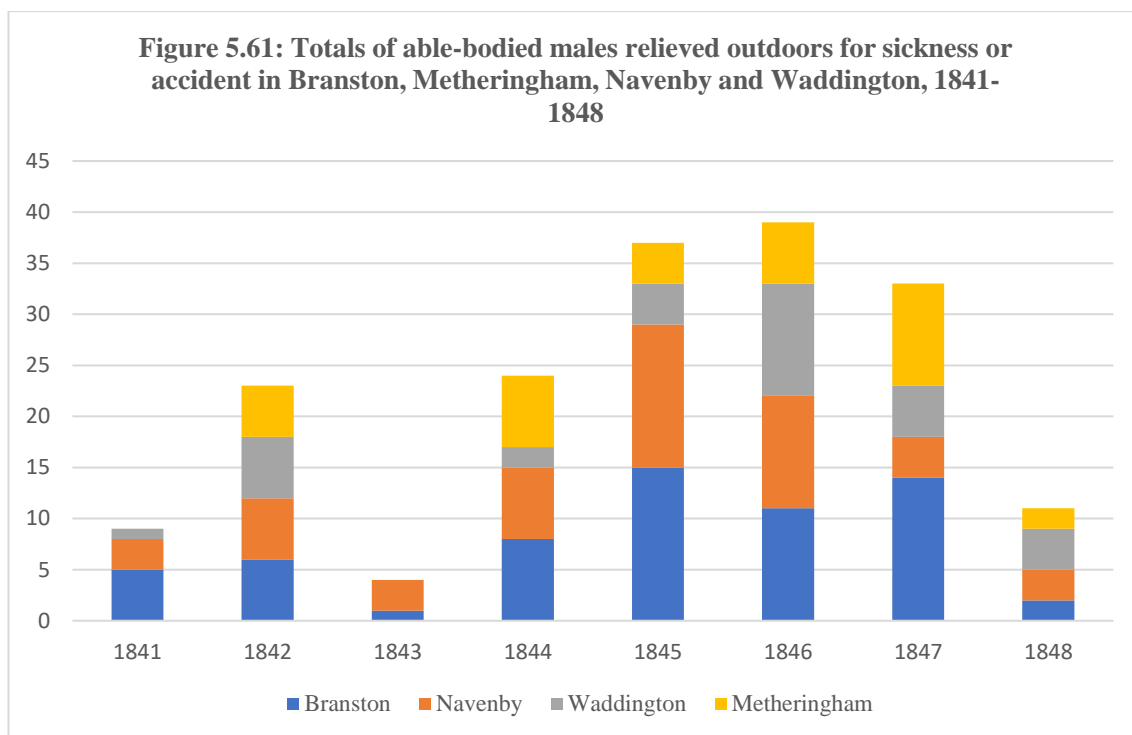


Figure 5.61. Totals of able-bodied males relieved outdoors for sickness or accident in Branston, Metheringham, Navenby and Waddington, 1841-1848. Source: PL10/102/1-3, LA

Of course, evidence for use of exemption clauses to relieve the able-bodied male outdoors fell within the remit of what was allowed within Poor Law Commission special and general orders. The question is whether such were purposely used as an excuse to get around the restrictions on outdoor relief imposed on such orders, with men listed as sick who in actuality weren't, a claim made by Boyer.³⁹ Contemporary evidence may support Boyer's conclusions. In an interview for the 1837 to 1838 Select Committee on the Poor Law Amendment Act, the Assistant Commissioner Edward Gulson, who had been responsible for the formation of the Lincoln and Sleaford unions, argued that the exemption clauses were utilised to circumnavigate rules on outdoor relief and thus provide it to able-bodied males, also stating that parish officers gave relief at times of necessity 'independently of the paid officer of the union.'⁴⁰ When questioned whether male able-bodied paupers and his dependents had a claim to outdoor relief, Gulson answered:

³⁹ George Boyer, *An Economic History of the English Poor Laws, 1750-1850* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), p.204

⁴⁰ *Select Committee on the Poor Law Amendment Act: Fourth Report; Fifth Report 1837-38* (London: House of Commons, 1838), p.2

‘Practically speaking, he has...because the board of guardians...have the power...of infringing the Commissioners’ rules...the guardians practically do give relief, and report it to the Commissioners; and I have never known an instance where the Commission have objected.’⁴¹

Gulson further stated that outdoor relief in kind was given via the route of medical relief, being signed off by medical officers and generally accepted by guardians, with the implication that this was circumnavigating the intentions of limiting out-relief to the able-bodied, a claim also supported by Hurren.⁴²

The able-bodied male played a central role in contemporary awareness of the poor law throughout the period of study due to their generally short-term episodic need acutely increasing both expenditure and the totals of individuals seeking welfare. Any periods of fluctuating corn prices, agricultural depression and associated rises in able-bodied male pauperism brought the poor law to the forefront of local authority concerns more so than the ever-present habitual cohorts of need in that it saw a larger proportion of the labour force applying for support.⁴³ This threatened the wider socio-economic fabric of the Lincoln Heath as farmers generally tried to lower wage levels and limited the availability of employment positions, whilst simultaneously having to provide relief opportunities for a larger total of individuals. Indeed, increased incendiary and rural unrest within the area of study in the 1830s, as discussed in chapter three, was linked by contemporaries with labouring discontent regarding availability of work and wage levels. Thus, there was seemingly a potential appetite to relieve able-bodied males outside of the workhouse under the New Poor Law, either via reliance on exemption clauses in special and general orders, which this thesis suggests evidence for potential usage, or through other means.

On the practice of providing work on the roads to relieve the unemployed able-bodied male under the New Poor Law, the Assistant Commissioner Edward Gulson plainly saw this as a way of providing relief outside of the workhouse but within the remit of special and general orders issued by the Poor Law Commission:

⁴¹ Ibid

⁴² Elizabeth Hurren, *Protesting About Pauperism: Poverty, Politics and Poor Relief in Late-Victorian England, 1870-1900* (Woodbridge: the Boydell Press, 2007), p.98

⁴³ Martin Daunt, *Progress and Poverty: An Economic and Social History of Britain, 1700-1850* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), p.449

‘I know practically...that those roads are made the medium of pauperizing the people, now that other means of pauperizing them from the poor-rate are closed...I have seen [a] man’s relief continued to him out of [the] highway rate six months after the board of guardians have done away with it...the overseer of the parish, he being also the surveyor, has said “Oh no, I will give you relief; you shall have it out of the highway rate” and he has put them upon the highway rate at 10s or 12s a week.’⁴⁴

Such a source is important for several reasons. Firstly, it suggests that conclusions reached about able-bodied relief under the New Poor Law are limited if they rely purely on poor-rate expenditure and official union and Poor Law Commission returns, as has generally been the case within the literature, albeit with Howkins highlighting the extensive use of highway rates as opposed to the poor rate in funding parish work.⁴⁵ There were clearly larger sources of relief funding acknowledged by contemporaries which have been bypassed historiographically, the high-way rate being one of the most important for the relief of the able-bodied male under the New Poor Law. There was a change in practice here as parish work conducted in the parish selection under the Old Poor Law was generally funded from the poor rate, whereas under the New Poor Law, due to limitations imposed through the Poor Law Amendment Act itself and special and general orders, it was often sourced from the high-way rates. Such a practice was seemingly widespread and questions the supposedly decreasing cost of poor law relief in the wake of the Poor Law Amendment Act as noted in 1851 by the rector of Winterton, a parish in north Lincolnshire:

‘For however Poor Law Commissioners may try to make it appear that poor rates decrease it is a delusion...For the highway rate has now in reality become...a poor’s rate...Poor labourers want work and they must not perish. If we sent them all to the Union House...the poor’s rate would swell beyond belief...Therefore to deserving men work is given

⁴⁴ *Select Committee on the Poor Law Amendment Act: Fourth Report; Fifth Report 1837-38*, p.25

⁴⁵ See for example Snell, *Parish and Belonging*, table 5.2, pp.307-308; Williams, *From Pauperism to Poverty*, pp.40-87; Howkins, *Reshaping Rural England*, p.83

on the roads...the highway's rate is increased and the rate for the poor only apparently reduced.'⁴⁶

The provision of parish work lasted well into the New Poor Law. As shown in vestry minutes, Ruskington was paying wages of between 6s to 8s to six unemployed agricultural labourers for road work in December 1849, as well paying 3s 6d a week in pensions to 'the old men...during the time the [road] surveyor has no need of their service.'⁴⁷ Importantly, these men were not listed as poor law relief recipients and so do not appear on official poor law documentation returned to the Sleaford union and then to the Poor Law Board. Aside from the high-way rate, parishes often took it upon themselves to provide short-term work for the unemployed labourer without having to recourse to the poor law. In the winter of 1844, Branston called a special vestry meeting to discuss what should be done about the sharp rises in unemployment in the wake of agricultural depression:

'A...meeting...held [to take into] ...consideration the best means of finding work for the unprecedented number of labourers out of work at this time, and there being more than the Overseers can find work for on the roads without increasing the highway rate to a frightful extent...the occupiers...were of the unanimous opinion that each occupier of land should find work for every labourer...'⁴⁸

This source emphasises a policy commitment to relieve the able-bodied unemployed within the parish well into the New Poor Law, showing a contemporary awareness of the often short-term nature of episodic able-bodied male need. This chapter will now turn to examine the experience of the elderly, a key cohort amongst the demography of poor law receipt.

b) The Elderly

In the 1851 census, a hundred individuals listed as paupers were resident within the parish selection; 73% of these were female and amongst these, 74% were aged fifty and over. Although in a minority, 81% of the twenty-seven male resident paupers across the

⁴⁶ Rodney Ambler (ed), *Lincolnshire Returns of the Census of Religious Worship of 1851* (Lincoln: the Lincoln Record Society, 1979), p.xlviii

⁴⁷ Ruskington Parish 10/1, LA

⁴⁸ Branston Parish 10/3, LA. Underlining in original

parish selection in the 1851 census were aged fifty or over, confirming the prominence of the elderly amongst those in receipt of poor law. Indeed, in 1851, 42% of all poor law relief recipients nationally were elderly.⁴⁹ However, defining historic conceptions of old age has proven contentious, with commentators suggesting a gendered approach to classification.⁵⁰ Botelho has argued for a female old age determined by 'biology, functionality and appearance,'⁵¹ with the onset of menopause physically defining this and leading women to be viewed as elderly at around age fifty and consequently before males. This emphasis on the 'functional capacity'⁵² of the individual has also been used as the benchmark for defining male old age. Goose has suggested that there was a 'greater pressure...upon [elderly] men to find work'⁵³ with reduced relief opportunities open to them. The line between able-bodied and elderly male was often blurred, with old men frequently continuing to work or be relieved via parish-given labour. Thomas Dance was consistently offered work on the roads in Branston between April and September 1823 despite seemingly being in his late seventies.⁵⁴ Dance was also in receipt of aid from Branston's bread charity in 1832, illustrating an amalgamation of differing avenues of relief within an individual's support strategies not directly related to the poor law.⁵⁵ An emphasis on gendered differentiation in access to poor law relief is also helpful when approaching the wider economy of makeshifts as in certain avenues of support outside of a poor law framing elderly males potentially did dominate. This may be seen in charity provision with 59% of recipients of Branston's bread charity between 1832 and 1836 being aged men, averaging at fifteen individuals per year compared to ten females.⁵⁶ Similarly, 80% of dole recipients of Garrett's charity in Branston in January 1849 were old men, with the next largest percentage being elderly widowed females at 17%.⁵⁷ However, the caveat must be made that it is not possible to determine if these elderly males were single men or collecting charity as head of a

⁴⁹ Williams, *From Pauperism to Poverty*, p.231

⁵⁰ Pat Thane, 'Social Histories of Old Age and Aging', *Journal of Social History*, 37 (2003), pp.93-111; Goose, 'Poverty, Old Age and Gender in Nineteenth-Century England', pp.351-384

⁵¹ Lynn Botelho, 'Old Age and Menopause in Rural Women of Early Modern Suffolk' in Pat Thane and Lynn Botelho (eds), *Women and Ageing in British Society since 1500* (London and New York: Routledge, 2001), p.52

⁵² Susannah Ottaway, *The Decline of Life: Old Age in Eighteenth Century England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), p.20

⁵³ Goose, 'Poverty, Old Age and Gender in Nineteenth-Century England', p.353

⁵⁴ Branston Parish 13/7 and 15/54, LA

⁵⁵ Branston Parish 15/54, LA

⁵⁶ Ibid

⁵⁷ Branston Parish 15/5, LA

household with dependent family members, with such members thus also receiving support via charities.

In regard to explicit poor law relief, Goose has claimed that ‘the situation of elderly men worsened...with...the New Poor Law,’⁵⁸ with poor relief for older males increasingly narrowed towards the workhouse. Certainly, older men were disproportionately represented in inmate demographics. For example, 71% of inmates aged fifty-one and above in the Lincoln union workhouse and 67% in the Sleaford in the 1841 census were male. Similarly, in the 1851 census, 80% and 81% of inmates aged fifty-one and above were male in the Lincoln and Sleaford union workhouses respectively. Where it is possible to determine the age of workhouse inmates, elderly males do seem to have been both more prominent and to have been inmates for longer periods of time. Two out of the three Lincoln workhouse inmates aged fifty-one and above chargeable to Waddington between September 1847 to September 1849 were male: John Spalding, aged seventy-nine in March 1848; and George Hales, aged sixty-three.⁵⁹ In the quarter ending September 29th 1839, the two inmates relieved by Metheringham in the Lincoln union workhouse aged over fifty were male: Henry Kyme, aged eight-nine; and William Sampson, aged seventy-two.⁶⁰ In both cases, the reason for relief is given as ‘age’ with Kyme still listed as a workhouse inmate in September 1843.⁶¹

However, indoor relief was seldom the first interaction the elderly had with the poor law. To return to Henry Kyme, relieved within the Lincoln union workhouse throughout the 1830s and 1840s, his experience of relief dated from at least 1817 when he was in his sixties. Kyme’s support under the Old Poor Law involved outdoor payments made by Metheringham and indoor relief within the Lincoln Incorporation’s House of Industry. He was also mentioned in the local press in 1846, having reached his one hundredth birthday:

‘He was an inmate of the house under the Gilbert’s Union system and was...transferred to the present Union-house...Until within the last five

⁵⁸ Goose, ‘Poverty, Old Age and Gender in Nineteenth-Century England’, p.352

⁵⁹ Waddington Parish 13/11/16, 17 and 20, LA

⁶⁰ Metheringham Parish 13/12/1, LA

⁶¹ Metheringham Parish 13/12/2, LA

years, when his eyesight became bad, he used to go into the garden and work when he felt inclined.’⁶²

Similarly, Mary Norton was relieved by Metheringham at the Lincoln union workhouse in September 1843 aged seventy-six.⁶³ However, she had been listed as an outdoor recipient in the parish since at least since 1832, over a decade before entering the workhouse.⁶⁴ Thus, individuals’ personal experiences of relief bridged the transition between poor laws, particularly so for elderly paupers in the immediate decades of the New Poor Law. It was often the same elderly individuals who received relief either side of unionisation, meaning a permeation of demography which influenced relief outcomes, generally generous and conciliatory to the perceived deserving aged poor. This is especially important considering the broad continuity in administrative demography noted in chapter four, meaning that many relief administrators under the New Poor Law had long-standing interactions with elderly relief recipients which pre-dated unionisation. Alongside the elderly, another dominant cohort which often had lasting interactions with the poor law were the disabled and mentally ill.

c) The Disabled and Mentally Ill

Disabled and mentally ill paupers were often categorised by contemporaries as lunatics, idiots and imbeciles. Ritch has suggested two loose definitions: lunatic referring to individuals with a mental illness or epilepsy; and idiot or imbecile corresponding with modern notions of learning disabilities.⁶⁵ Similarly, Eccles has claimed that those labelled idiots had congenital conditions from birth, whereas lunatics were afflicted by mental illnesses which caused a loss of reason, further sub-divided into the categories of mania and melancholia.⁶⁶ Three loci of care existed for disabled and mentally ill paupers: the asylum; the workhouse; and the parish, supported by familial, communal and out-door aid. In regard to the first, Ritch has argued that the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century saw a shift in perceptions in the diagnosis and treatment of mental illness with the asylum becoming ‘the officially approved response to [its]

⁶² *The Stamford Mercury*, March 20th 1846

⁶³ Metheringham Parish 13/12/2, LA

⁶⁴ Metheringham Parish 13/1, LA

⁶⁵ Alistair Ritch, *Sickness in the Workhouse: Poor Law Medical Care in Provisional England, 1834-1914* (Woodbridge: Boydell and Brewer, 2019), p.97

⁶⁶ Audrey Eccles, ‘Furiously Mad: Vagrancy Law and a Sub-Group of the Disorderly Poor’, *Rural History*, 24 (2013), p.29

management.⁶⁷ The use of private asylums to provide care for mentally ill and disabled paupers is evident within the parish selection, with these often being located outside of Lincolnshire. Between 1800 and 1801, Navenby paid for the upkeep of Elizabeth Thorp in an asylum in Yorkshire, with the asylum explaining in correspondence that ‘the people in the house always call her Ruth.’⁶⁸ Similarly, Mary Tears, chargeable to Metheringham, received care in a Yorkshire asylum in 1803, with the parish being informed that ‘she contineus ever much derainged and am afraid not likely to mend.’⁶⁹ Such continued into the New Poor Law, with the Sleaford union sending paupers to five asylums outside of the county between 1836 and 1859, three of which were privately ran.⁷⁰ Within Lincolnshire, the Lincoln Lunatic Asylum, founded in 1820, took patients from the parish selection across the period. In 1852, the Lincolnshire County Pauper Lunatic Asylum, was opened, with most subsequent pauper patients being sent there after this date.

However, at the centre of institutional care choices stood financial cost to parishes.⁷¹ Longmate has stated that caring for the disabled and mentally ill within workhouses often proved cheaper than asylum provision.⁷² Weekly care for a male lunatic in the Lincoln Lunatic Asylum in 1836 cost 9s 1d and for females, 8s 6d.⁷³ In comparison, weekly costs per individual lunatic under the poor law was 3s 5d for males and 3s 1d for females, being even cheaper for those deemed idiots.⁷⁴ Thus, workhouse became intimately linked with the care of the disabled and mentally ill. Although these cohorts consisted of just 2% of all relief recipients nationally in 1851, 80% of those deemed lunatics were also paupers in 1844 with around a quarter of ‘insane poor’ were cared for in workhouses during the nineteenth century.⁷⁵ Indeed, Murphy has suggested that ‘the Poor Law was the administrative rock on which the system of care [for the disabled and

⁶⁷ Ritch, *Sickness in the Workhouse*, p.95

⁶⁸ Navenby Parish 13/1/1, LA

⁶⁹ Metheringham Parish 13/2/42 and 44, LA

⁷⁰ PL12/102/1-3, LA

⁷¹ Ellis, ‘The Asylum, the Poor Law and the Growth of County Asylums in Nineteenth-century Yorkshire’, p.285

⁷² Norman Longmate, *The Workhouse: A Social History* (London: Temple Smith, 1974), p.211

⁷³ *Returns of the Number of Pauper Lunatics and Idiots in Each County of England and Wales; and of Criminal Lunatics, with the Place of their Confinement* (London: House of Commons, 1837), p.4

⁷⁴ *Ibid*, p.5

⁷⁵ Williams, *From Pauperism to Poverty*, p.231; Peter Bartlett, ‘The Asylum, the Workhouse, and the Voice of the Insane Poor in 19th Century England’, *International Journal of Law and Psychiatry*, 21 (1998), p.422; Ritch, *Sickness in the Workhouse*, p.96

mentally ill] was constructed.⁷⁶ Within Kesteven, there were seventy-six individuals reported to the Lunacy Commission as either being lunatics or idiots in 1830.⁷⁷ Only eight were in asylums, with the rest being cared for in the parish or workhouses via the poor law. Similarly, there were fifty lunatics and one hundred and fifty-two idiots within Lincolnshire cared for by poor law in 1836.⁷⁸ In contrast, there were only thirty-seven inmates at the Lincoln County Asylum, all but one classified as lunatics.⁷⁹

The clauses of the New Poor Law were sufficiently vague in discerning if disabled or mentally ill individuals were suitable for care either within a workhouse or asylum. It was confirmed that the mentally ill should not be held in a workhouse for more than fourteen days.⁸⁰ However, these instructions only applied to those ‘who may require habitual or frequent restraint,’⁸¹ meaning that there was wide scope for interpretation. Ellis has suggested that the catalyst for moving paupers to asylums was the risk such individuals posed to themselves and others.⁸² Here, the issue was potential dangerousness. In 1830, all but one male and all female lunatics classified as dangerous within Kesteven were housed in the county asylum.⁸³ Dangerousness as a diagnostic tool is evidenced within workhouses, with the Lincoln guardians enquiring in 1843 for:

‘A medical report be obtained...as to the state of mind of William Whittaker now in the Workhouse...if the pauper is considered dangerous that he be removed to the Lincoln Lunatic Asylum.’⁸⁴

These decisions were embedded within medical contexts, with Edward Parker Charlesworth, physician at the Lincoln County Hospital and Lincoln Lunatic Asylum, invited into the union workhouse to determine if inmates should be sent to the asylum.⁸⁵

⁷⁶ Elaine Murphy, ‘The New Poor Law Guardians and the Administration of Insanity in East London, 1834-1844’, *Bulletin of the History of Medicine*, 77 (2003), p.46

⁷⁷ *Summary Abstract of Numbers of Lunatics and Idiots in England and Wales* (House of Common Papers: 1830), p.64

⁷⁸ *Returns of the Number of Pauper Lunatics and Idiots in Each County of England and Wales*, p.3

⁷⁹ *Ibid*, p.2

⁸⁰ Ritch, *Sickness in the Workhouse*, p.96

⁸¹ Murphy, ‘The New Poor Law Guardians and the Administration of Insanity in East London, 1834-1844’, p.55

⁸² Robert Ellis, ‘The Asylum, the Poor Law and the Growth of County Asylums in Nineteenth-century Yorkshire’, *Northern History*, 45 (2008), pp.283-284

⁸³ *Summary Abstract of Numbers of Lunatics and Idiots in England and Wales*, p.64

⁸⁴ PL10/102/2, p.323, LA

⁸⁵ PL10/102/1, p.77, LA

For paupers deemed idiots or imbeciles, in comparison to the dangerous lunatic, care was overwhelmingly given within the workhouse or parish. Two of the six adult inmates chargeable to Metheringham in the Lincoln union workhouses for the quarter ending 29th September 1839 were described as ‘weak of mind.’⁸⁶ Both were still there in 1843. Within the Lincoln and Sleaford union workhouses in 1861, all eleven inmates who had been resident for over twenty years or more would now be designated as having some sort of disability, with descriptors ranging from ‘blindness’; ‘weak of mind’; ‘crippled’; ‘idiot from birth’; and ‘imbecile and paralysed.’⁸⁷ Four had been in the Sleaford workhouse since its opening in 1838, experiencing twenty-three years of indoor relief. Sarah Swinton, born in September 1831 and chargeable to Ruskington, was described as an ‘imbecile from birth.’ Her disability meant a lifetime of care in workhouses and asylums. In the 1841 census, she appears aged ten as a lone inmate in the Sleaford union workhouse, still listed as an inmate in 1853 until she was moved to the Lincolnshire County Lunatic Asylum after being deemed dangerous for ‘biteing another pauper with whom she slept.’⁸⁸ Swinton appears on the 1871 census at the asylum and seemingly died there in 1881 after at least forty years of institutional care provided by the poor law. Indeed, individual experiences of workhouse relief could bridge the divide between poor laws. Disabled inmates in the Lincoln Incorporation’s House of Industry under the Old Poor Law were moved into the new union workhouse in 1838. The example of Ann Burley, resident in the Lincoln House of Industry from 1818, illustrated this in 1853:

‘In the...previous house [the House of Industry] [Burley]...had been thirty-five years, and during the whole of that time confined to bed. She was deaf, dumb and blind. Since the opening of the new union she had constantly a nurse to attend upon her.’⁸⁹

Lincoln union workhouse did have a separate ward with supervised care given to disabled inmates, circumstantially discerned by the inquest into the death of Charlotte Bingley in 1840 as she was described as an ‘inmate of the idiot’s ward.’⁹⁰ However,

⁸⁶ Metheringham Parish 13/12, LA

⁸⁷ *Return from each Workhouse in England and Wales of Every Adult Pauper who has been Inmate for Five Years* (London: The House of Commons, 1861), p.82

⁸⁸ PL12/302/14, LA

⁸⁹ *The Lady’s Newspaper and Pictorial Times*, no.332 (1853), p.295

⁹⁰ *The Lincolnshire Chronicle*, October 23rd 1840

within the Sleaford workhouse, disabled or mentally ill inmates were seemingly lodged with the general population. In December 1839, Hannah Green and Hannah Potterton were punished for burning Elizabeth Woodcock, an idiot pauper, for ‘exposing her person,’⁹¹ suggesting that Woodcock was lodged with other females. This can also be seen in the male ward. Thomas Green was sentenced to two years imprisonment for ‘an attempt to commit...assault on William Russell...[a] pauper of weak intellects’⁹² in the Sleaford union workhouse in 1839. Indeed, Ritch has noted that only 10% of workhouses under the New Poor Law provided insane wards by 1859.⁹³

The disabled and mentally ill pauper also continued to be cared for within the parish throughout the period. Despite calls for his movement into the Lincoln Lunatic Asylum in 1837, the Sleaford union continued making non-resident payments for the support of Robert Thatcher, ‘an insane Pauper’ living with his father in Nottingham, on the importunes of the Sleaford overseers.’⁹⁴ A Relieving Officer in the Sleaford union described three disabled individuals living in the parish selection in receipt of out-relief in 1837:

‘Elizabeth Southwell, aged 56, Lunatic...living at Digby ...Mary Ogden aged 38 Lunatic Slightly or I should say an Idiot from a fright some years ago, living at Digby at the charge of 1s and 4 [loaves] of bread per week...Mathew Cooling aged 36 an Idiot Deaf and Dumb and harmless living at Ruskington.’⁹⁵

Disabled individuals are also clearly evidenced in the 1851 census. In Leadenham, Elizabeth Exton, aged eighteen, was described as an invalid and living with her parents. Similarly, Thomas Hunt, aged twenty-four, was listed as a cripple and was living with his mother Elizabeth Hunt, a seventy-year-old widow in receipt of poor law relief, in Navenby. Mary Stublely, described as an ‘idiot from birth’, was cared for at home in the parishes of study of Leasingham and Cranwell. Mary was born in Aslackby in 1836, the fourth of eight children to Charles and Susan Stublely. In 1841, Mary was living with her family in Leasingham and by 1851, in Cranwell. With the death of her mother in

⁹¹ PL12/102/1, p.389, LA

⁹² *The Lincolnshire Chronicle*, October 11th 1839

⁹³ Ritch, *Sickness in the Workhouse*, p.96

⁹⁴ PL12/102/1, p.57 and pp.61-62, LA

⁹⁵ PL12/118/1, LA

1879, Mary lodged with the Bristow family in Cranwell, possibly because her aged father, aged seventy-nine, could not provide comprehensive care for her. However, Mary stayed resident within the parish, living with the Bristows until her death in 1886 and seemingly never entering the workhouse. The Sleaford union administration was clearly aware of Mary's situation, reporting her case to the Commissioners of Lunacy in 1884,⁹⁶ and so her relief within the parish cannot be viewed as an aberration. Therefore, the disabled and mentally ill were a visible demographic in the parish selection, further evidenced by an individual case described at the parish of study of Ruskington:

‘He was an idiot, unable to talk, but would make the most frightful noises in his attempt to do so- he was the terror of many...in consequence of his attempting to shake hands with everybody.’⁹⁷

Necessarily due to their condition, care for the disabled and mentally ill was intimately tied-up with the sympathies and attitudes of others, a point noted by Ellis.⁹⁸ However, Bartlett has approached the issue of agency on the part of the insane poor, stating that ‘there is no reason to assume that patients in history were...more complacent or passive in their attitudes to their fate.’⁹⁹ Unfortunately, case books for the Lincolnshire county asylums do not exist for the period of study. However, these do survive for the latter nineteenth and twentieth century which, although out of the remit of this thesis, may allow for future research on agency and attitudes of asylum inmates themselves. What is clear for the period of study within the Lincoln Heath area is that the experiences of need for the disabled and mentally ill depended widely on individual circumstance, as well as the inclination from those holding authority, including poor law officials and families, to provide support. Another cohort of need whose experience was intimately tied to dependency on others was children.

⁹⁶ PL12/102/6, p.228, LA

⁹⁷ Gillian Corsellis, *Notorious Disorderlies and other 19th Century Ruskington Residents: From the Recordings Made by Thomas Ogden between 1826 and 1878* (Lincoln: Tucann Design & Print, 2007), p.57

⁹⁸ Ellis, ‘The Asylum, the Poor Law and the Growth of County Asylums in Nineteenth-century Yorkshire’, p.280

⁹⁹ Bartlett, ‘The Asylum, the Workhouse, and the Voice of the Insane Poor in 19th Century England’, p.421

d) Children

Snell has suggested that by 1800, adulthood was conceived as beginning between the ages of eighteen and twenty-one.¹⁰⁰ Such conclusions generally correspond with the historic definition of childhood recently used by King and Beardmore, who argue that by the late nineteenth century childhood lasted until around age sixteen.¹⁰¹ Legislation under the New Poor Law provided definitions of childhood which were at odds with contemporary conceptions; bastardy payments were limited to children aged below thirteen in 1844.¹⁰² Thus, relief offered was not via any blanket definition of childhood but rather through specific circumstance, with children being relief recipients due to their position as dependents within families, abandonment or as orphans. Within the Lincoln union, over the course of the administrative year of 1847, 36% of those relieved in Branston were children; 53% in Navenby; and 54% in Waddington.¹⁰³ Within these parishes, outdoor relief predominated. Only two children were relieved within the Lincoln union workhouse by Branston out of a total of nineteen child recipients in the quarter ending 25th March 1847; and in Waddington, only one was relieved indoors in the same quarter out of a total of thirty-six children. Navenby was seemingly more likely to relieve children indoors; however, even here such recipients only constituted 23% of the eighty children receiving support from the parish in 1847. The same can be evidenced in the Sleaford union, where children consisted of 37% of relief recipients within the parishes of study incorporated into the union in the quarter ending 21st September 1839.¹⁰⁴ None of the eighteen children relieved by Ashby de la Launde and the seven in Digby were done so indoors.

This suggests a discrepancy with the dichotomous demography of young and old noted in union workhouses. In November 1838, 48% of inmates within the Lincoln union workhouse were aged below sixteen.¹⁰⁵ However, this may be squared by both the transitory nature of workhouse experiences and the circumstances which necessitated

¹⁰⁰ Keith Snell, *Annals of the Labouring Poor: Social Change and Agrarian England 1660-1900* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), p.333

¹⁰¹ Steven King and Carol Beardmore, 'Contesting the Workhouse: Life Writing, Children and the Later New Poor Law', in Lauren O'Hagan (ed), *Rebellious Writing: Contesting Marginalisation in Edwardian Britain* (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2020), pp.65-94

¹⁰² Ursula Henriques, 'Bastardy and the New Poor Law', *Past and Present*, 37 (1967), p.119

¹⁰³ Waddington Parish 13/11/10-12, LA

¹⁰⁴ Digby Parish 13/24, LA

¹⁰⁵ *The Stamford Mercury*, November 16th 1838

relieving children indoors. Goose has suggested that child inmates were generally orphans, abandoned or accompanied by a lone parent.¹⁰⁶ From July to December 1850, 21% of pupils in the Lincoln union workhouse school were orphans, abandoned or illegitimate children.¹⁰⁷ Experiences of the workhouse were often brief; three children from Metheringham receiving indoor relief in the Lincoln union workhouse in the quarter ending September 29th 1843 had done so for only six days and were accompanied by their father.¹⁰⁸ Moreover, children could also end up in the workhouse if they had been abandoned by their parents. Elizabeth Smith, resident in the parish of study of Waddington, was prosecuted on multiple occasions for deserting her children in the 1840s. In 1848, she was sentenced to a month's hard labour for neglecting 'to maintain her two bastard children, she being able in part to do so.'¹⁰⁹ Three years earlier, in 1845, a warrant was issued for Smith's arrest due to her:

'Having...ran away and left her two illegitimate children locked up in her house without food or even a bed to lie upon...they were rescued by forcing open the door. The woman...has been the mother of several other illegitimate children.'¹¹⁰

It seems probable that James and Rhoda Smith, listed as lone child inmates in the Lincoln union workhouse in 1848, were the children in question.¹¹¹

However, for most children in the parish selection, the New Poor Law still meant relief within the familial household, often clearly linked to female need. In December 1834, the five payments made in support of children by Navenby were done so in the context of children being dependents of lone females, either due to illegitimacy or as members of female-headed households.¹¹² This is seen across the period. In Waddington, payments were made for 'Mary Staples' two children'; 'Widow Walkers' two children'; 'Elizabeth Smith's boy'; and 'Elizabeth Crawford's child' in early 1836.¹¹³ This

¹⁰⁶ Goose, 'Workhouse Populations in the Mid-Nineteenth Century', p.54 and p.58

¹⁰⁷ Henry Farnall, *Correspondence and Papers Related to the Midland District, 1848-1852*, MH32/22, NA

¹⁰⁸ Metheringham Parish 13/12/2, LA

¹⁰⁹ *The Lincolnshire Chronicle*, August 11th 1848

¹¹⁰ *The Lincolnshire Chronicle*, May 9th 1845

¹¹¹ Waddington Parish 13/11, LA

¹¹² Navenby Parish 10/1, LA

¹¹³ Waddington Parish 13/2, LA

continued into the New Poor Law; all recipients aged below sixteen in Metheringham in the quarter ending September 29th 1843 were aided as dependents within five households, four of which were female-headed.¹¹⁴ Thus, the dominance of children amongst poor law recipients was tied intimately to the equally dominant position of women.

e) Women

Howkins has suggested that most adult relief recipients under the New Poor Law continued to be women.¹¹⁵ Female need generally correlated to male abandonment, widowhood and illegitimacy. Fatherless families consisted of 25% of all national relief recipients in 1851 with Apfel and Dunkley concluding that in Berkshire in the initial decade of the New Poor Law ‘nearly every case [of relief was] widows or deserted wives with dependent children.’¹¹⁶ In the parish of study of Metheringham, 41% of outdoor recipients consisted of three single-mother-headed families within the quarter ending 29th September 1843.¹¹⁷ Male abandonment is evidenced across the period. Robert Doughty left his family chargeable to Leadenham in 1791 with appeals made to his moral sensibilities to return; ‘if [he] will return to his Family, he will be well received.’¹¹⁸ At times of economic depression, such the mid-1840s, spikes in abandonment can be discerned. In 1847 alone, three cases of fathers deserting their families were listed in parishes of study within the Lincoln union, the same amount as recorded in the seven years previously.¹¹⁹ This could lead to their dependents entering the workhouse, as was the case of Mary Thorpe and her children, abandoned by her husband and relieved in the Lincoln union workhouse by Navenby in 1848.¹²⁰ Such conclusions were reached by contemporaries and poor law administrators alike; with a Poor Law Inspector concluding ‘as to the able bodied women...the burden of their families obliges them to enter the workhouse.’¹²¹

¹¹⁴ Metheringham Parish 13/12/2, LA

¹¹⁵ Howkins, *Reshaping Rural England*, p.86

¹¹⁶ Williams, *From Pauperism to Poverty*, p.231; William Apfel and Peter Dunkley, ‘English Rural Society and the New Poor Law: Bedfordshire, 1834-47’, *Social History*, 10 (1985), p.44

¹¹⁷ Metheringham Parish 13/12/2, LA

¹¹⁸ *The Stamford Mercury*, July 29th 1791

¹¹⁹ PL10/102/1, p.390, LA; PL10/102/2, p.359 and p.521, LA; PL10/102/3, p.268, p.319 and p.358, LA

¹²⁰ PL10/102/3, p.358, LA

¹²¹ Farnall, *Correspondence and Papers Related to the Midland District, 1848-1852*, MH32/22, p.476, NA

Widowhood was a common marker for relief, a fact acknowledged by the Poor Law Commission as widows were legally entitled to outdoor aid within the first sixth months after the death of their husband under the New Poor Law, with this period being extended in 1846 and again in 1848. In April 1801, individuals clearly identifiable as widows consisted of 17% of relief recipients within Leadenham; named widows comprised 21% of outdoor recipients at Ruskington, in 1810; and all female recipients of the Branston bread charity between 1833 and 1836 were described as such.¹²² This continued into the New Poor Law with 51% of resident paupers in the parish selection in the 1851 census being widows aged fifty and above. Indeed, the five resident individuals in receipt of poor law in Digby in the 1851 census were all widows aged between fifty-five and seventy-eight. However, not all widows were elderly women, with nine widows aged between thirty-three and forty-nine living in the parish selection in the 1851 census, all having dependent children. Ann Stow, residing in Metheringham, received parish relief for herself and children in 1839 and 1843 due to widowhood whilst in her thirties.¹²³

Widows and abandoned mothers were generally viewed with a positive sentiment by contemporaries; however, the single mother with illegitimate child provided the counterweight to this. In 1841, the Sleaford guardians were so concerned about the rise in bastardy in the union that they devised a scheme for ‘showing...degradation attached to the mothers of illegitimate children,’¹²⁴ distinguishing them via their caps which did not have the borders of other inmates. The aim of this was to make women ‘so ashamed...as to cause several to voluntary quit the house.’¹²⁵ As the Poor Law Commission had banned differentiation of dress for moral stipulations in 1839, with many workhouses having distinctive yellow uniforms for single mothers before this,¹²⁶ these actions highlight a localised policy embedded within judgments around the issue of illegitimacy. Although Harvey has suggested the prevalence of economic concern in parish dealings with single mothers, there was a clear moral dimension permeating attitudes to and policy towards illegitimacy.¹²⁷ Marginalia in Cranwell baptismal

¹²² Reeve 10/2, LA; Ruskington Parish 13/1, LA; Branston Parish 15/54, LA

¹²³ Metheringham Parish 13/12/1-2, LA

¹²⁴ *The Stamford Mercury*, June 11th 1841

¹²⁵ *Ibid*

¹²⁶ Longmate, *The Workhouse*, p.157

¹²⁷ Ben Harvey, ‘The Putative Fathers of Swinton, England: Illegitimate Behaviour under the Old Poor Laws, 1797-1835’, *Journal of Family History*, 40 (2015), pp.373-398

records from 1808 illustrate this. The baptism of Henry Muxlow, an illegitimate child, had been omitted from the parish register only to be added in the margins by the curate:

‘Henry Muxlow born 11th September 1808 and christened 29th October 1808. This baptism being omitted in this register...after serious enquiry of respectable persons resident in this Parish at the birth of the said Henry Muxlow.’¹²⁸

Throughout the first decades of the 1800s the legislative discussion of illegitimacy was intense.¹²⁹ Cody has argued that anxieties in regards rising levels of bastardy became more conspicuous from the 1820s, in part due to an embedding of population theories into poor law reform debate.¹³⁰ Shoring-up the boundaries of obligation and support was enforced through the Bastardy Act of 1809, concerned with compensating parishes for financial aid by making putative fathers chargeable for costs incurred. Fathers could now be apprehended by warrant with magistrates allocated powers to imprison parents who refused to make payment. In 1822, the Kesteven magistracy issued a warrant for the arrest of George Hales, putative father of Winifred Walker’s illegitimate daughter, for non-payment to the parish of Waddington.¹³¹ Once an affiliation order had been made, mothers were entitled to a weekly cash allowance from parishes regardless of co-operation from fathers.¹³² In the fifteen affiliation orders recorded from parishes of study in the Sleaford Petty Sessions Bastardy book between 1824 and 1832, the biggest expenses constituted of the lying in of the mother and the cost of care before the affiliation order was raised, ranging from between £2 to over £5 per case.¹³³ Parishes were obligated to pay such fees if the father was not forthcoming. In March 1830, Cranwell’s overseers complained to the Kesteven magistracy regarding non-payment:

¹²⁸ Cranwell Parish 1/4, LA

¹²⁹ Ginger Frost, *Living in Sin: Cohabiting as Husband and Wife in Nineteenth-Century England* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2011), pp.9-32; Thomas Nutt, ‘Illegitimacy, Paternal Financial Responsibility, and the 1834 Poor Law Commission Report: the Myth of the Old Poor Law and the Making of the New’, *The Economic History Review*. 63 (2010), pp.335-361; Lisa Cody, ‘The Politics of Illegitimacy in an Age of Reform: Women, Reproduction and Political Economy in England’s New Poor Law of 1834’, *Journal of Women’s History*, 11 (2000), pp.131-156

¹³⁰ Cody, ‘The Politics of Illegitimacy in an Age of Reform,’ p.136

¹³¹ Waddington Parish 13/9/4, LA

¹³² Nutt, ‘Illegitimacy, Paternal Financial Responsibility, and the 1834 Poor Law Commission Report’, p.337

¹³³ Sleaford PS/Bastardy Order Book 1824-1839, LA

‘John OXBY... was adjudged the reputed father of a female child then lately born in...Cranwell on the body of Susannah TOPPS and was Ordered to pay...5l for the lying-in...and...to pay 2s weekly...during the time the child is chargeable... Oxby has for some time neglected to pay.’¹³⁴

The payment of support regardless of cooperation from parents was a key criticism made of bastardy legislation. The Bastardy Clauses of the New Poor Law have been seen by Brundage as a culmination of a growing negative sentiment towards single mothers, with Nutt concluding that they portrayed men as ‘victims [and]...unmarried mothers...as occupying a position of superior disgrace.’¹³⁵ Indeed, Cody has stated that the Bastardy Clauses meant that ‘for the first time in English history, single women were made legally and economically responsible for their illegitimate children.’¹³⁶ The repealing of earlier legislation meant the process of affiliation was tightened. It now took place at quarter sessions as opposed to petty; more scrutiny was placed on the mother’s claim of putative father; parishes again became liable for the cost of affiliation cases; and fathers could no longer be imprisoned for non-payment.¹³⁷ Although affiliation and parish payments continued, the new route of relief was in theory the union workhouse.

The new legislative landscape of illegitimacy faced fierce criticism after 1834, with Henriques concluding that ‘the Bastardy Clauses were among the most unpopular in the whole of [the New Poor Law].’¹³⁸ This is evidenced within the unions of study, with a Lincoln guardian complaining in 1841:

‘The fact that the Law does makes no provision for the maintenance of a Bastard Child after the age of 7 years is to me preposterous...why not to the age of 14 years or until the child acquires a settlement in its own right or is otherwise able to provide for itself.’¹³⁹

¹³⁴ KQS/Sleaford Petty Sessions/1829-1830/Vol 1, p.275, LA. Capitals in the original

¹³⁵ Anthony Brundage, *The English Poor Laws, 1700-1930* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2002), pp.68-69; Nutt, ‘Illegitimacy, Paternal Financial Responsibility, and the 1834 Poor Law Commission Report’, p.338

¹³⁶ Cody, ‘The Politics of Illegitimacy in an Age of Reform,’ p.131

¹³⁷ Nutt, ‘Illegitimacy, Paternal Financial Responsibility, and the 1834 Poor Law Commission Report’, p.340

¹³⁸ Henriques, ‘Bastardy and the New Poor Law’, p.114

¹³⁹ PL10/118/1, LA

Similarly, an 1844 letter from the clerk of the Sleaford union was clearly antagonistic to the Bastardy Clauses:

‘The Bastardy Law which holding out...so slight a responsibility on the father is causing a great increase in the number of illegitimate children...the Board [of guardians] beg to suggest the necessity of the Commissioners using all their influence to get the Bastardy Laws altered.’¹⁴⁰

At the heart of these criticisms was ‘the contested issue of parental responsibility.’¹⁴¹ For many, the New Poor Law had placed finances back at the door of the parish. Moreover, the Bastardy Clauses did not decreased levels of illegitimacy, which continued to rise between 1831 and 1841.¹⁴² Such criticism prompted legislative amendments in 1844, limiting the amount allowed in weekly maintenance; placing more emphasis on support from mothers; and placing the magisterial process back within petty sessions.¹⁴³

Under the New Poor Law single mothers and illegitimate children were disproportionately represented within union workhouse populations.¹⁴⁴ In 1843, single mothers with illegitimate children consisted of a large cohort of national workhouse populations, despite proportionally being only 20.7 per thousand paupers.¹⁴⁵ Indoor relief was a policy pursued in the parish selection; out of the thirty single women listed in the Sleaford Union workhouse in 1844, 57% had illegitimate children with them.¹⁴⁶

However, the extent that single mothers applied to the poor law has been questioned, with Crawford identifying two common support strategies of support: baptising children with the putative father’s surname to publicly acknowledge parental obligation; and marriage.¹⁴⁷ Within the parish selection, the number of illegitimacy cases engaging with

¹⁴⁰ Robert Weale, *Correspondence and Papers Related to the North and South Midland Districts, 1840-1844*, MH32/86, p.421, NA

¹⁴¹ Nutt, ‘Illegitimacy, Paternal Financial Responsibility, and the 1834 Poor Law Commission Report’, p.343

¹⁴² Cody, ‘The Politics of Illegitimacy in an Age of Reform,’ p. 150

¹⁴³ Henriques, ‘Bastardy and the New Poor Law’, p.119

¹⁴⁴ Jack Perkins, ‘Unmarried Mothers and the Poor Law in Lincolnshire 1800-1850’, *Lincolnshire History Archaeology*, 20 (1985), p.21

¹⁴⁵ Ibid

¹⁴⁶ Charles Ellis, *Mid-Victorian Sleaford* (Sleaford: Lincolnshire Library Service, 1981), p.158

¹⁴⁷ Patricia Crawford, *Parents of Poor Children in England, 1580-1800* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), p.48 and p.51

poor law were in a minority compared to the actual amounts of illegitimate children listed in baptismal registers. Therefore, application to the poor law not a given, with wider support strategies adopted, largely revolving around familial co-residence, work and marriage. Resorting to poor law may have generally only become an option when these strategies failed. This is seen in the case of Ann South, a mother of an illegitimate child in the parish of study of Digby. In 1837, the parish overseer wrote to the Sleaford guardians to outline South's case:

‘I make application today for the purpose of swearing an illegitimate child of Ann South's of Digby whom she says that Samuel Walley...is the father. She...says that he gave the child a sovereign & told her she had better not swear the child as he really intended to marry her...He also caused the Banns to be published 3 Successive Sundays in Scopwick Church in the month of May last.’¹⁴⁸

It is unclear how sincere Walley's intentions were, especially since he gave South money not to swear him in as the father. However, Sumner's letter to the Sleaford guardians was dated August 1837, meaning that South had waited over a year in approaching the poor law authorities to obtain support, presumably because she had anticipated marriage. Therefore, illegitimacy did not necessarily lead immediately to the poor law. Indeed, seeking relief was often dependent on specific circumstance across a lifetime, with explicit poor law relief often amalgamated with wider avenues of support.

5.5 Lifecycles of Need

For most, interaction with the poor law was episodic and dependent on circumstance across a lifespan. The literature has recently been apt to stress this with the imperative to focus on reconstructing life cycles of need being emphasised by such commentators as Williams, Shave and Wales.¹⁴⁹ Interaction with avenues of support varied immensely between individuals and such can be evidenced by examining the life cycles of need of some relief recipients from the parish selection.

¹⁴⁸ PL12/118/1, LA

¹⁴⁹ Samantha Williams, *Power, Gender and Life-Cycle under the English Poor Law, 1760-1834* (London: Boydell Press, 2013); Samantha Shave, ‘The Dependent Poor? (Re)Constructing the Lives of Individuals ‘On the Parish’ in Rural Dorset, 1800-1832’, *Rural History*, 20 (2009), pp.67-97; Tim Wales, ‘Poverty, Poor Relief and Life-Cycle: Some Evidence from Seventeenth Century Norfolk’, in Richard Smith (ed), *Land, Kinship and Life-Cycle* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1985), pp.351-404

Lucy Fields was listed as a lone five-year old illegitimate child inmate at the Lincoln union workhouse in September 1839, chargeable to Metheringham.¹⁵⁰ However, apart from her experience as an infant, Fields seemingly lived with no other interaction with the poor law. She married James Shepperson in 1858 and ran numerous inns with her husband in the Sleaford area before dying in 1894. Alongside Fields within the Lincoln union workhouse in September 1839 was Susanna Sampson, aged twenty-two and with her illegitimate daughter, Mary Ann.¹⁵¹ Sampson, alongside Mary Ann and a new baby Sarah, appear as inmates in the Sleaford union workhouse in the 1841 census. Sampson had been removed from Metheringham, incorporated into the Lincoln union, to Walcot, a parish in the Sleaford, emphasising the permeability of administrative boundaries within individual experiences of need. Her 1841 settlement examination stated:

‘I am now of the Age of twenty four years...[and] am a singlewoman...I have one illegitimate Child who is of the Age of two years...whose name is Mary Ann. I was born at Walcot...My Parents died when I was ten years of age...I then went to Mr John CLAYTON of Walcot Fen, and the Parish agreed to give him one shilling a week with me...I went with him to Coddington...and stayed with him there till July, and during all that time...Walcot paid him one shilling a week with me, as I was not a hired servant but placed with him by the overseers.¹⁵²

Therefore, Susanna had had multiple interactions with the poor law over the course of her life, beginning as an orphan who was hired-out by the parish and as a single-mother in early adulthood. However, in the 1851 census, Susanna and her children were out of the workhouse and living in Sleaford where Susanna worked as a housekeeper, again illustrating the transitory nature of interaction with the poor law widely dependent on episodic need with more permanent support options centring on work.

Such is also evidenced by the experience of the Hubbard family resident in Ruskington. Richard Hubbard married Susannah Hudson in 1832, with the couple living on their own farm with four children and two live-in farm servants in the 1841 census. However, by 1851 Richard had died and Susannah was a widow, with the lack of a male

¹⁵⁰ Metheringham Parish 13/12/1, LA

¹⁵¹ Ibid

¹⁵² Metheringham Parish 13/3/17, LA. Capitalisation as in original

breadwinner necessitating parish relief for the family. In the 1861 census, Susannah was no longer a recipient and was working as a laundress. She was, however, again listed as a pauper in 1871, living alone and aged sixty-two. By 1891, Susannah, now aged eighty-two, was living with her son and daughter in Ruskington. She was no longer in receipt of poor law but described as keeping a mangle, emphasising the laundress role she had adopted after the death of her husband forty years previously. Here, poor law relief was not exclusive but combined with other avenues of support which included work and familial co-residence. These experiences support Williams' conclusions of three main periods of susceptibility to need which were applicable across the period: childhood; adulthood when beginning to raise children; and old age.¹⁵³ As identities of need were fluid across an overall lifetime, individuals moved between groupings used by the literature to categorise recipients.

5.6 Conclusions

The advent of the New Poor Law can be surprisingly understated within extant documentation. Waddington was incorporated into the Lincoln union in November 1836; however, the only hint of this in the overseer's accounts is the payment made for a 'new rate book according to act of Parliament' in January 1837.¹⁵⁴ Waddington's accounts for the administrative year of 1836-37 show a clear continuity with previous practice. Thirteen individuals were in receipt of regular weekly allowances over this period, 77% of which were females with 40% of these claiming for illegitimate children or dependent families. Ten named individuals received irregular payments throughout the period, 50% of which are identifiably male. One-off casual relief was also given to four vagrant families, generally consisting of foodstuffs such as bread, cheese and milk. The parish also continued paying for the care of two individuals (George Shepherd and Jane Bugg) in the Lincoln Asylum and giving non-resident relief to 'Widow Nixon', who lived in Manchester.

There were strands of continuity between poor laws regarding the dynamics of need which has allowed King to conclude that the New Poor Law 'failed to eliminate [the] basic characteristic of the relief system.'¹⁵⁵ Firstly, a link between high relief spending.

¹⁵³ Williams, *Poverty, Gender and Life-Cycle under the English Poor Law*, pp.12-13

¹⁵⁴ Waddington Parish 13/2, LA

¹⁵⁵ King, *Poverty and Welfare*, p.255

increasing recipient numbers and drops in corn pricing can be seen across the period, meaning that periods of increasing need were temporally variable under both poor laws. The administrative system of the New Poor Law did little to change this with a geographical embedding to temporal periods of increased need noted within and between poor law unions as distinct human ecological environments continued to define the socio-economic experience need and relief were embedded within. As such, Langton's conclusions about the impact of internal county geography on the expression of need and relief are supported.¹⁵⁶

Despite a clear drop in levels of explicit poor law relief to males under the New Poor Law, an attitude to support able-bodied men seemingly remained albeit with support generally taken out of a poor law framing and thus potentially being under recorded in overt poor law documentation. However, under both poor laws it was children, females and the elderly who consisted of the bulk of relief recipients. Indeed, in the early years of the New Poor Law it was often the same individuals receiving relief as had done so under the waning period of the Old, providing a demographic continuity which bridged the divide between poor laws and paralleled similar trends noted in chapter four regarding administrative demography, at least at parish level. Such must have fed into attitudes, sentiment and policy towards the poor, a point expanded in the following two chapters. Similarly, recourse to the poor law continued to be based primarily on circumstantial need within an individual's life cycle, with the bulk of recipients only having transitory interactions with the poor law and aid generally given in conjunction with other avenues within a wider economy of makeshifts. Therefore, unlike the administrative structure and processes of the poor law discussed in chapter four, where the extent of change and continuity was more nuanced, the dynamics of need remained remarkably stable across the period and were clearly influenced by local socio-economic realities embedded in the human ecological environment of study more so than any changing legislative tenets. This thesis will now turn to examine the process of acquiring relief, analysing notions of eligibility and interactions between administrators and relief seekers across the period.

¹⁵⁶ Langton, 'The Geography of Poor Relief in Rural Oxfordshire', pp.193-235

Chapter six: Pathways to Relief

6.1 Overview

Boulton has outlined a three-part schematic for categorising the poor law application process.¹ Firstly, an individual decided whether to apply to the poor law or seek aid from other relief avenues. Secondly, once poor law relief was sought, the applicant was assessed by administrators. Thirdly, a decision on the relief outcome was made.

However, Boulton has also noted that access to relief was discretionary and that ‘not all applications for relief were successful.’² This overview points to many of the main features relevant to the process of acquiring relief across the period within the parish selection which this chapter examines.

Initially, the chapter looks at identity, outlining the importance of presenting a rhetoric of deservingness on the part of the needy in their interactions with administrators and an individual’s settlement status regarding eligibility. This section also highlights a heretofore unexamined familial aspect in eligibility to the poor law, mirroring that seen in the administrative demography of relief and suggesting that certain families were conceived as more eligible to the poor law due to notions of communal belonging. Although much of the evidence for this claim is based on nominal comparison of surnames due to the restrictions of extant documentation, some genealogical reconstitution has been attempted where possible to strengthen claims. Moving on from this, the potential marginal identity of poor law recipients, using the geographical placing of the infrastructure of relief to emphasise this, will be examined. The chapter then moves on to analyse notions of custom, concluding that accepted conceptions of customary behaviour allowed for opportunities to access aid and were used as ammunition on the part of relief seekers in their dealings with administrators. Wider conceptions of custom are also explored, particularly relevant to charity provision and attitudes towards natural resources. The negotiated process of relief is then examined, seeing a considerable amount of agency on the part of relief seekers across the period which utilised similar strategies in their interactions with administrators under both poor laws despite changes in administrative structures. Finally, conclusions will be made

¹ Jeremy Boulton, ‘Indoors or Outdoors? Welfare Priorities and Pauper Choices in the Metropolis under the Old Poor Law, 1718-1824’ in Chriss Briggs, Paul Kitson and Samantha Thompson (eds), *Population, Welfare and Economic Change in Britain* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2014), Fig 6.6, p.183

² Ibid

about change and continuity in pathways to relief, seeing very similar processes under both poor laws which pivoted on personal interactions despite the administrative rearticulation of the New Poor Law.

Considering the human ecological methodology of this thesis, it is important to recognise from the outset that the interactions and negotiations that made up the pathway to relief were always conducted within the context of relationships formed outside of the remit of the poor law. Relief seekers and administrators were bound together within a localised socio-economic fabric, particularly important considering the highly hierarchical cultural landscape of the Lincoln Heath which pivoted on relationships between landowners, the farming class and the agricultural workforce. Such bonds are often only subtly apparent in extant documentation but went far in defining who received poor law relief and in what types. Thus, the negotiated process of relief was just one aspect within wider social relations that went far in determining access to certain types of welfare.

6.2 Identity

There has been an acknowledgement that the scope and nature of relief was not necessarily dictated but rather formed through a process of negotiation.³ As such, identities presented and appropriated by those seeking aid went far in defining outcomes. King's assessment of parochial correspondence outlines the construction of pauper identities via key rhetorical stances adopted by the needy in their interactions with administrators, repeatedly focussed on connotations of honesty and trust; self-reliance; and communal belonging.⁴ Judgments on the character and conduct of individuals seeking relief, often made outside of a purely poor law framing within local socio-economic systems, went far in defining eligibility to differing strands of support primarily via notions of deservingness. Hindle has stressed a categorisation of deservingness which incorporated such factors as willingness or ability to work;

³ Peter Jones, 'I Cannot Keep My Place Without Being Deascent: Pauper Letters, Parish Clothing and Pragmatism in the South of England, 1750-1830', *Rural History*, 20 (2009), p.31; David Feldman, 'Migrants, Immigrants and Welfare from the Old Poor Law to the Welfare State', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 13 (2003), p.87

⁴ Steven King, *Writing the Lives of the English Poor, 1750s- 1830s* (Quebec: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2019), p.312

deference to authority; and social conduct which met subscribed moral criteria.⁵ This was often discretionary and widely rested on the judgment of local elites, who within the context of the parish selection were the landowning and farming classes, both the dominant employers and the actual administrators of the poor law, at least at parish, guardian and magisterial level. Arbitrary judgments on character could go far in determining outcomes. In 1837, the Branston overseers approached magistrates to prosecute two able-bodied males for the abandonment of their families who had subsequently been sent to the Lincoln union workhouse. This pivoted on judgment of conduct, citing the very fact that the men would not provide for their families as evidence of ‘bad character:’

‘The magistrates...feel themselves satisfied in committing a man of bad character on his suffering his family to become chargeable the fact of the family being chargeable being sufficient proof of wilful neglect and refusal for the man to provide for them.’⁶

Thus, there were clear gendered assumptions associated with character and conduct with conceptions of maleness incorporating independence and the ability to provide for dependents, sentiments which were often diluted when dealing with able-bodied females and feeding into the gendered differentiation of relief outcomes noted in chapter five. This was also evidenced at the national level, with Henry Farnall, a Poor Law Inspector, stating:

‘In my visits to these workhouses I find...that the men...are generally there either in consequence of...not being good men...as to the able-bodied women, I usually find that the burden of their families obliges them to enter workhouses.’⁷

Despite this, it must be stated that being deemed undeserving or of bad character was not necessarily a bar to relief; individuals still accessed support, albeit in differing and notably less lenient ways which increasingly incorporated indoor relief under the New Poor Law. Here, eligibility was often underpinned by settlement status. This was not

⁵ Steve Hindle, ‘Civility, Honesty and Identification of the Deserving Poor in Seventeenth Century England’, in Henry French and Jonathan Barry (eds), *Identity and Agency in England, 1500-1800* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), pp.38-55

⁶ PL10/118/1, LA. Underlining in the original

⁷ Henry Farnall, *Correspondence and Papers Related to the Midland District, 1848-1852*, MH32/22, p.476, NA

repealed by the New Poor Law and remained a constant for access to the poor law throughout the period.⁸ However, the advent of irremovable pauper status in 1846 in which residence within a parish for over five years guaranteed eligibility did change the nature of settlement and thus conceptions of entitlement. Irremovable paupers were funded by the union as opposed to parish expenditure and were generally found in open parishes where residence was often longer lasting.⁹ In 1848, the Lincoln union was supporting four irremovable paupers in Branston; twelve in Metheringham; and three in Navenby.¹⁰ Out of these, 79% were female. However, the proportion of recipients who were irremovable was small; in the quarter ending 25th March 1848, only 6% and 7% of relief recipients were irremovable in Navenby and Branston respectively.¹¹ As such, for the majority of those seeking relief the importance of settlement status in defining access permeated well into the New Poor Law as removal could have real consequences for experiences of need. This is evidenced in the removal of Charlotte Wrack from Waddington in 1848.¹² Charlotte had married John Wrack in Lincoln in 1837 before moving to London in around 1843, where her husband died in 1847. She then returned to Waddington with three children aged between four and nine. Richard Wrack, the father of her deceased husband, maintained that his son had gained settlement via apprenticeship in Lincoln. Due to this, Charlotte and her children were removed to Lincoln, a city she had not resided in since at least 1843 five years earlier. Thus, when enacted, removal based on settlement status and the potential cost applicants may make on the parish could often enforce arbitrary decisions on recipients which bore no relation to their present circumstances.

Settlement status helped differentiate avenues and outcomes of support within a seemingly homogenous residential community. This was particularly true within the human ecological environment of the Lincoln Heath where frequent localised migration

⁸ Joanna Innes, Steven King and Anne Winter, 'Introduction: Settlement and Belonging in Europe, 1500-1930s: Structures, Negotiations and Experiences', in Steven King and Anne Winter (eds), *Migration, Settlement and Belonging in Europe, 1500s-1930s: Comparative Perspectives* (New York and Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2013), p.1; Lorie Charlesworth, *Welfare's Forgotten Past: a Socio-Legal History of the Poor Law* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2010), p.3; David Englander, *Poverty and Poor Law Reform in 19th Century Britain, 1834-1914: From Chadwick to Booth* (Abingdon on Thames: Routledge, 1998), p.13

⁹ Brian Holderness, 'Open' and 'Close' Parishes in England in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries', *The Agricultural History Review*, 20 (1972), p.130

¹⁰ Lincolnshire Family History Society, *Extracts from the Minutes of the Board of Guardians of the Lincoln Union Workhouse, 1836-1845* (Lincoln: Lincolnshire Family History Society, 2010), pp.43-44

¹¹ Ibid; Waddington Parish 13/11/10-12, LA

¹² Waddington Parish 13/6/30, LA

within the context of agricultural employment meant that many applicants were not residing in their parishes of settlement. Thus, the payment of non-resident relief to recipients living outside of their settled parish was a constant throughout the period. Between 1825 to 1836, forty-six individuals in the parish selection were collecting regular weekly payments from the Lincoln Incorporation, 54% of which were not living within their settled parish.¹³ Although Ashby de la Launde was the only parish of study officially incorporated into the Lincoln Incorporation, individuals holding settlement status within other incorporated parishes resided throughout the parish selection. The wide-spread provision of non-resident support meant that the Incorporation had a broader scope in defining relief outcomes than allowed for when just focussing on its member-parishes. For example, in 1832 Elmer Holder and Robert Moore were able to secure 5s and 3s per week respectively from the Lincoln Incorporation through holding settlement in the incorporated parish of Bracebridge, despite both residing in the parish of study of Waddington which was not incorporated.¹⁴ Although Snell has argued for a reduction in non-resident relief under the New Poor Law, evidence from the parish selection suggests otherwise.¹⁵ In the quarter ending 29th September 1839, 38% of outdoor relief recipients chargeable to Metheringham were living outside of the parish, a picture not significantly altered for the same period in 1843 when 34% of outdoor recipients lived elsewhere.¹⁶ Similarly, 20% of outdoor recipients relieved by Waddington in the quarter ending Christmas 1847 resided outside of the parish.¹⁷ This was a consequence of employment structures which necessitated movement within the context of the mixed-agrarian agricultural economy, with the continuing payment of non-resident relief being a pragmatic approach to providing relief within the socio-economic realities of the parish selection.

The cost of providing relief also fed into the use of settlement legislation and cohorts of relief seekers removed from parishes. Conducting removals was often a high financial burden; in 1834, Digby paid £23 5d in seeking removals, the highest poor rate

¹³ Multiple annual reports, first Wednesday in June to the following Wednesday in June. *State of Accounts of the Lincoln House of Industry* (Lincoln: R.E Leary and T.J.N Brogden, 1825-1836)

¹⁴ *State of the Accounts of the Lincoln House of Industry from the First Wednesday in June 1832 to the First Wednesday in June 1833*, 36th Annual Report (Lincoln: R.E Leary, 1833), p.13

¹⁵ Keith Snell, *Annals of the Labouring Poor: Social Change and Agrarian England 1660-1900* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), p.123

¹⁶ Metheringham Parish 13/12/1-2, LA

¹⁷ Waddington Parish 13/11, LA

expenditure for that year.¹⁸ Due to this, removal was sporadic but targeted. King's acknowledgment of 'differential use of the laws of settlement'¹⁹ highlights that it was part of a policy toolkit applied dependent on circumstance. Removal was more likely to be pursued for those who would create a larger expense for the parish. For some cohorts of needy, particularly for the short-term able-bodied male unemployed, removal was generally.²⁰ Within surviving settlement documentation, 56% of removal orders across the period within the parish selection were made on families or married couples; 37% on single women or illegitimate mothers; and only 7% on single males.²¹ Therefore, settlement law per se did not necessarily underpin policy decisions; rather, removal or the provision of relief based on settlement bore a closer relationship to potential cost.

However, removals could be contested before magistrates, usually by potential recipient parishes concerned about financial burden. In 1834, the elderly couple George and Alice North were removed from the parish of study of Metheringham to North Kyme, the legal place of settlement for George due to a year's employment forty-three years previously despite the couple having lived in Metheringham for the previous thirty-eight years of their married life.²² North Kyme appealed against the removal in 1835, arguing that the couple had resided in property with an annual rental value of more than £10 and had, consequently, gained settlement in Metheringham.²³ The same argument was later used by North Kyme to appeal against the removal of John North (George and Alice's son), his wife Mary and their two children from Metheringham, stating that: 'such settlement so acquired by the said George North in your Parish was communicated to his son the said John North.'²⁴

Such emphasises the dual nature of removals; parishes were obliged to accept those removed from another parish as well as enact removals themselves. All parishes of study accepted removed individuals over the course of the period. Although enacting

¹⁸ Digby Parish 10/1, LA

¹⁹ Steven King, 'Poor Relief, Settlement and Belonging in England, 1780s to 1840s', in Steven King and Anne Winter (eds), *Migration, Settlement and Belonging in Europe, 1500s-1930s: Comparative Perspectives* (New York and Oxford: Berghahn books, 2013), p.85

²⁰ Ibid, p.87; Larry Patriquin, *Agrarian Capitalism and Poor Relief in England, 1500-1860* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), p.129; Boyer, *An Economic History of the English Poor Law*, p.204

²¹ Lincolnshire Family History Society, *Lincolnshire Settlement Examinations and Removal Orders, 1688-1865* (Lincoln: Lincolnshire Family History Society, 2014)

²² KQSA/2/486/140, LA

²³ Metheringham Parish 13/3/14, LA

²⁴ Metheringham Parish 13/4/1, LA

removals was rare within closed parishes of study, they had to provide for individuals removed to them. The settlement examination of Edward Brelsford, removed from Washingborough to Cranwell in 1852 alongside his wife and children, hints at other ways aside from removal that could be used to get rid of those who may become a financial burden:

‘Edward BRELSFORD acquired a Settlement in your Parish of Cranwell by Apprenticeship...in the year 1833 when he was between thirteen and fourteen years of age...[he] remained therein for about...six years when he and his Master disagreed and the Indenture was destroyed by being burned in the fire in the presence of the said pauper Edward Brelsford who on payment of...four pounds was set at liberty.’²⁵

Here, Brelsford was offered a one-off payment of four pounds to leave the parish. Crucially, his apprenticeship indenture was destroyed, perhaps aiming to erase any paper trail that may have been used to argue for settlement and make Cranwell financially liable for relief. Financial liability and the potential cost of relief often played a large role in defining policy towards the needy.

Settlement legislation underscored parish responsibility for providing poor law relief. As shown, financial anxiety often provided the rationale for policy and as such, Feldman has stated that ‘welfare systems...[required] hard lines to be drawn between insiders and strangers.’²⁶ Therefore, alongside settlement, categorisation as belonging to a parish community was central to conceptions of identity and eligibility.²⁷ The needy often presented a rhetoric of communal belonging in their interactions with administrators, ‘elaborating where they could a shared history’²⁸ with the wider parish. However, notions of community have received wide semantic breadth in their use. At its most basic, communal belonging has been affixed to temporal and spatial residency, the importance of this as a source of support being stressed by Hollen-Lees.²⁹ However, Snell has argued for an idea of community not necessarily bound by residency but

²⁵ Washingborough Parish 13/15/40/1, LA. Capitalisation in the original

²⁶ David Feldman, ‘Migrants, Immigrants and Welfare from the Old Poor Law to the Welfare State’, *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 13 (2003), p.79

²⁷ Innes, King and Winter, ‘Introduction: Settlement and Belonging in Europe, 1500-1930s: Structures, Negotiations and Experiences’, p.8

²⁸ King, *Writing the Lives of the English Poor*, p.315

²⁹ Lynn Hollen-Lees, *The Solidarities of Strangers: The English Poor Law and the People, 1700-1948* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), p.177

geographically fluid dependent on acknowledgment from other members of the parish.³⁰ This is supported by the wide-spread use of non-residency payments already shown; non-residency was not a bar to accessing relief, meaning a wider conception of communal belonging must be acknowledged that surpassed the physical boundaries of the parish, particularly considering the highly migratory labouring population of the Lincoln Heath. As such, King and Jones have argued that ‘parishes...forged...bilateral agreements...to support “their” paupers in a host community.’³¹ Here, the language of affiliation may be apt when exploring these issues. Individuals could be affiliated to a parish despite not being resident and thus in some sense continue to be classed as part of the community.³² Communal belonging thus incorporated settlement status; notions of deservingness and attitudes built via personal interactions between administrators and relief seekers; all juxtaposed against the financial anxieties of leading ratepayers.³³

The parish selection also potentially suggests new ideas of belonging which were emphasised by familial lineage, suggesting multi-generational experiences of receipt that permeated into the New Poor Law. This is a novel observation which has been overlooked within the literature. However, this is not to suggest that such families were necessarily permanently poor. Rather, familial lineage seems to suggest that certain families were more likely to incorporate poor law into multi-faceted support strategies. Multi-generational interactions between familial lineages, both in regards relief receivers and administrators, may have fostered cultures of belonging and eligibility, feeding into the fact that certain families were more likely to receive poor law support because they were known as belonging in a familial sense to the parish.

It seems that certain families were known to relief administrators, generally having long-term residential links to parishes and being deemed particularly eligible for poor law relief. Such was particularly true in parishes of study where had over 50% of residents in the 1851 census were born in the parish (Digby; Leadenham; Metheringham; Navenby; Ruskington) which were generally, although not exclusively, of an open typology where the populations had longer residential links. Familial lineage

³⁰ Keith Snell, *Parish and Belonging: Community, Identity and Welfare in England and Wales, 1700-1950* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), p.4

³¹ Steven King and Peter Jones, ‘Testifying for the Poor: Epistolary Advocates and the Negotiation of Parochial Relief in England, 1800-1834’, *Journal of Social History*, 49 (2016), p.787

³² Keith Snell, ‘Cultures of local xenophobia’, *Social History*, 28:1 (2003), p.4

³³ Feldman, ‘Migrants, Immigrants and Welfare from the Old Poor Law to the Welfare State’, p.87

in poor law receipt can be evidenced by comparing the surnames of relief recipients at various dates within extant documentation. Although these links are purely nominal and therefore not conclusive, with an exploration of the literature on family reconstitution given when analysing familial lineages of administration in chapter four, the large percentages of recipients who shared surnames across the period of study is in theory potentially strong evidence for familial lineages of receipt, especially in light of the increases in population size noted in the parish selection during the first half of the nineteenth century.

In Leadenham, overseers' accounts exist for the period between 1801 and 1818. Here, 36% of named recipients in 1818 shared surnames with those receiving relief in the parish in 1801.³⁴ Indeed, four of those receiving relief in 1818 were either the same person or a namesake of a listed receiver in 1801. Key families dominated recipients within Leadenham in 1818: 6% were Spencers; 6% Bakers; and 12% Rawdings, with both Spencers and Rawdings also evidenced as relief recipients in 1801. Unfortunately, it is hard to conduct detailed genealogical reconstructions for individual recipients within Leadenham as the overseer accounts generally only list surnames, meaning that analysis is widely limited to nominal comparison. In Digby, 26% of named recipients in 1830 shared surnames with those receiving relief in 1812, with individuals from the Cam family noted in in both 1794 and 1830.³⁵ Although not conclusive proof of a direct familial link due to the wide use of a limited cache of first names, Thomas Cam, in receipt of relief in 1830, was potentially the son of John Cam, a recipient in the parish in 1794, evidenced by a baptismal entry in the parish in 1798.³⁶

Such nominal patterns are also observable under the New Poor Law. In Metheringham, 40% of recipients in the quarter ending September 29th 1843 shared a surname with an individual in receipt of relief in 1817.³⁷ If this 1843 data is compared to recipients in the parish in 1832, this percentage increases to 51%, perhaps showing a strand of continuity in regards familial lineage between poor laws. Again, such evidence is nominal with exact genealogical reconstitution difficult due to limited records and the fact that the majority of recipients within Metheringham under the New Poor Law were women,

³⁴ Excluding workhouse paupers, who are not named. Reeve 10/2, LA

³⁵ Digby Parish 13/1, LA

³⁶ Digby Parish 10/1, LA

³⁷ Metheringham Parish 13/1 and 13/12/2, LA

meaning that they were often listed with their husband's surname. However, where male recipients are identifiable, genealogical links can potentially be made, as in the case of John Tonge, a workhouse inmate in both 1839 and 1843 chargeable to Metheringham, who judging by baptismal records was the son of William Tonge, with an individual carrying this name listed as a recipient of out-relief in the parish in 1830.³⁸ Matrimonial links are also evident between recipients between poor laws; for example, Elizabeth Osgerby received out-relief in Metheringham in 1843, being the widow of Thomas Osgerby who died in 1842 and who in turn was in receipt of out-door relief via parish work in 1830.³⁹ Thus, both nominal and matrimonial links can be suggested between recipients across poor laws, perhaps suggesting that certain families were more likely to both approach and be relieved via the poor law across the period of study.

The Baker family within Ashby de la Launde were auspicious recipients over the period, with members noted as workhouse inmates under both poor laws. In the 1851 census, Ann Baker was a seventy-six-year-old widow in receipt of relief, living with her son John Baker; grand-daughter Harriet Black; and her great-grandson Felix Black, illegitimate child of Harriet. Interestingly, John Baker's occupation is listed as a shoemaker, meaning he was not working within a confined agricultural labouring position which generally categorised male employment within closed parishes. As such, the Bakers were perhaps not as prone to economic migration, meaning longer residency within the parish. Indeed, John Baker was born in Ashby de la Launde in 1795, dying there in 1871. When it is noted that only 31% of Ashby de la Launde's residential population in the 1851 census was born in the parish, the Bakers were evidently in a demographic minority. Another Ann Baker was listed as an inmate chargeable to Ashby de la Launde in both the Lincoln House of Industry under the Old Poor Law and the Sleaford union workhouse under the New, alongside a William and John Baker as inmates in the Lincoln House of Industry in 1836.⁴⁰ It is difficult to pin-point the exact familial relationships between all individuals named Baker who were in receipt of relief from Ashby de la Launde under both poor laws but attempts can be made. Ann Baker, listed as a 22-year-old inmate at the Lincoln House of Industry in 1835, was potentially the illegitimate daughter of another Ann Baker. The younger Ann Baker had a potential

³⁸ Ibid and Metheringham Parish 1/5, LA

³⁹ Metheringham Parish 13/1 and 13/12/2, LA

⁴⁰ PL10/307/1 and PL12 102/1,4,6, LA

birth date of 1813, with only one reasonable baptismal entry made in that year for an Ann Baker observable in the proximate local area, that being made in Welbourn, a neighbouring parish, for the illegitimate daughter of a woman also named Ann Baker in 1813, listed as a servant. If this older Ann Baker was the same individual listed as resident widowed recipient in Ashby de la Launde in the 1851 census is impossible to say, but is probably unlikely as Baker was her married and not her maiden name. Although familial evidence is again nominal in the case of the Bakers, the smaller population size of Ashby de la Launde and the fact that only a minority of its resident population in 1851 was born in the parish may suggest some kind of familial link between recipients named Baker under both poor laws, albeit with analysis not being conclusive.

Identity as a recipient was often underscored by geographical and cognitive notions of marginality, emphasised by the placing of the infrastructure of relief such as parish housing and workhouse sites generally away from the centre of settlements. This suggests the gradation of parishes into distinct neighbourhoods, a point noted by Hobsbawm and Rude.⁴¹ Both the workhouse and parish-owned cottages in Leadenham were located at the northern edge of the parish away from the main village.⁴² Similarly, Ruskington's workhouse was in the southern limits of the village with the parish also having a specific 'poor hill' where parish-owned housing was located.⁴³ Moreover, many resident paupers within Ruskington in the 1851 census lived next door to each other: William Minnett and William Clarricoats were neighbours, as were Catherine Bunnis and Mary Padmore. This observation is notable across the parish selection. Many recipients in Navenby in the 1851 census resided next door to each other on Stone Pit Lane on the northern edge of the village, suggesting this was a primarily location for parish-owned housing.⁴⁴ The continuing use of parish infrastructure to provide relief well into the New Poor Law, discussed in chapter seven, underscored a geographical stratification of the built environment, perhaps feeding into sentiments towards and the

⁴¹ Eric Hobsbawm and George Rude, *Captain Swing*, (Pimlico: London, 1993, first published 1969), p.58

⁴² Their location was on the modern street named 'Poor Row, reflecting the area's history

⁴³ This is based on notes in MISC DON 1338, LA. In the 1930s, it was stated that the old workhouse was near the YMCA hut which is now the site of the village Garden of Remembrance on Sleaford Road; Gillian Corsellis, *Notorious Disorderlies and other 19th Century Ruskington Residents: From the Recordings Made by Thomas Ogden between 1826 and 1878* (Lincoln: Tucann Design & Print, 2007), p.40

⁴⁴ The current street named 'East Road'

perceived identity of relief receivers. This can also be emphasised by the position of union workhouses under the New Poor Law, often located at the edge of urban centres. The Sleaford union workhouse was located on the town's eastern edge.⁴⁵ Similarly, the Lincoln House of Industry, which served the Lincoln Incorporation up until 1836 and the Lincoln Poor Law Union until the opening of the new union workhouse in 1838, was 'a large building, situated a short distance without the town.'⁴⁶ The Lincoln union workhouse was located near this on a site on the north-west edge of the city. Such positionings cognitively underlined the differentiation of those in receipt of relief, at least in an indoor form, from the rest of the community. This was further emphasised by the fact that union workhouses were in urban centres located outside of most parishes within the union, meaning those in receipt of indoor relief had to physically leave their residential parish, a situation generally unparalleled under the Old Poor Law. Thus, the New Poor Law made this separation from residential parish a potential reality for all who applied to the poor law, with identities of pauperism underscored by geographical marginality.

However, even upon union workhouse sites, differentiation between inmate cohorts was also explicit, supporting Walton's recent conclusions in regards 'pauper hierarchies' within union workhouses which may have fed into notions of perceived and self-defined identities.⁴⁷ Again, this was reinforced by geographical space with the example of vagrants, located in casual wards away from main workhouse blocks, emphasising this. For example, in 1840 the casual ward at Lincoln union workhouse was described as 'quite apart from the walls of the house.'⁴⁸ Vagrants often presented a cognitive other within relief cohorts, emphasised by the short time periods they spent at workhouses; their physical separation within workhouse sites; and status as outsiders within localities. However, it may be suggested that an internal sense of community was fostered amongst vagrants, using the example of workhouse graffiti to illustrate this. Andrew Doyle, writing in the nineteenth century, stated that:

⁴⁵ The site is on 'Eastgate' roughly opposite Cogglesford Mill.

⁴⁶ William Wylde, *Report from His Majesty's Commissioners for Inquiring into the Administration and Practical Operation of the Poor Laws: Appendix A Part II* (House of Commons: London, 1834), p.132

⁴⁷ Caroline Walton, 'Taking Control: Gossip, Community and Conflict in the Basford Union Workhouse, 1836 to 1871', *Family and Community History*, 23 (2020), pp.23-41

⁴⁸ *Hertford Mercury and Reformer*, January 25th 1840

‘Professional “tramps” ... “work” particular districts, generally in couples...[or] in small bands of three and four. For information and guidance of their associates their visits [in vagrant wards] are generally recorded, their destination indicated.’⁴⁹

Vagrants often travelled in groups around specific ‘circuits’ within a geographical area, utilising union workhouses as waystations. Doyle’s transcription of vagrant graffiti within union workhouses suggests a clear strategy of communication between members of a self-identifying community, as evidenced by just one example of many: ‘Notice to our pals- Bristol Jack and Burslem was here on the 15th of April, bound for Montgomeryshire for the summer season.’⁵⁰ Although the workhouse buildings of study unfortunately do not survive, inmate graffiti has been noted at multiple surviving union workhouse sites.⁵¹ How far communal identities were held amongst recipients and what affect this had on experiences of need is hard to tell, mainly due to the opaqueness and bureaucratic nature of extant documentation. However, it may be assumed that interactions and conversation between paupers influenced knowledge transmission of support options available and likely treatment to be faced, a point stressed by Walton who has noted the permeation of information amongst paupers within and without workhouses under the New Poor Law.⁵² Such is evidenced within the parish selection. George Hales, an inmate in the Lincoln union workhouse in 1843 and chargeable to the parish of study of Waddington, agreed to enter the workhouse on the testimony of Jacob Franklyn, a fellow seventy-three year old Waddington pauper, who stated ‘he was very much more comfortable than when out of the house...[with] the persuasion of [Franklyn] which had induced Hales to go into the Union.’⁵³ However, interactions between paupers may have influenced a general fear of entering the workhouse noted under the New Poor Law. Walton has concluded that ‘inmates brought with them...very negative assumptions about what life was like indoors’⁵⁴ which did not necessarily square with the actualities of treatment. In Lincolnshire, it was noted at the inquest of the death of seventy-two-year-old Edward Rubeon in 1842 that ‘he was impressed with

⁴⁹ Michael Rose, *The English Poor Law, 1780-1930* (Newton Abbott: David & Charles, 1971), p.211

⁵⁰ *Ibid*, p.211-212

⁵¹ See Southwell Workhouse Museum and Gressenhall Farm and Workhouse Museum

⁵² Walton, ‘Taking Control’, p.26

⁵³ *The Stamford Mercury*, November 10th 1843

⁵⁴ Walton, ‘Taking Control’, p.27

an idea that he should have to go to the Union, of which he had a great horror.’⁵⁵

Therefore, the New Poor Law seemingly instigated a psychological shift towards the poor law, epitomised by a fear of the union workhouse. This was long-lasting. When the Sleaford union workhouse was converted into an old people’s home after 1948, there was a stigma attached to it due to its previous history; as late as 1958, ‘many local people still thought of [the old people’s home] as the workhouse.’⁵⁶ To return to the context of the nineteenth century, it is probable that information about relief moved horizontally between the needy themselves and was not only vertically dictated by administrators. All this has important implications for understandings of support, feeding into expectations in regards relief outcomes, no less through notions of custom.

6.3 Custom

The fact that those seeking aid during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries thought themselves entitled to relief via customary rights is not in doubt, with Gurney arguing that the New Poor Law was formed in part to deconstruct ‘the existing...practices of the poor...widely interpreted from below in terms of entitlement.’⁵⁷ However, whether such entitlements to customary rights to relief had any concrete grounding outside of popular notions is hard to discern, with understandings of such complex and multi-faceted. Charlesworth has questioned the extent of communal custom, arguing that the poor law included a legislative right based on settlement and legally enshrined magisterial duties to certain demographics of needy.⁵⁸ Instead, the same author argues for unconscious legal norms which may have been framed within the language of custom but often developed from legislative accountability.⁵⁹

Acknowledging the political dynamics of the parish may be helpful in approaching such issues. Wrightson has seen the parish as politically defined by dynamic interaction between differing socio-economic stakeholders.⁶⁰ It was within such a forum that the language of custom was defined and codified and as such, often acted as a rhetorical

⁵⁵ *The Stamford Mercury*, January 7th 1842

⁵⁶ *The Sleaford Gazette*, September 19th 1958

⁵⁷ Peter Gurney, *Wanting and Having: Popular Politics and Liberal Consumerism in England, 1830-70* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2015), p.66

⁵⁸ Lorie Charlesworth, *Welfare’s Forgotten Past: A Socio-Legal History of the Poor Law* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2010), p.2

⁵⁹ *Ibid*, p.1

⁶⁰ Keith Wrightson, ‘The Politics of the Parish in Early Modern England’, in Paul Griffiths, Adam Fox and Steve Hindle (eds), *The Experience of Authority in Early Modern England* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1996), pp.10-46

stance within interactive power dynamics. Acknowledging or rejecting appeals to custom was linked to inclusion and exclusion within understandings of community.⁶¹

Although it is difficult to define exact understandings of popular customary rights within the parish selection, the evocation of it as a rhetoric within the negotiated process of relief can be discerned. Notions of custom invoked at touchpoints of interaction between differing socio-economic stakeholders within the parish community can especially be seen regarding acts of philanthropy. Village feasts and the weddings, baptisms and funerals of members of prominent farming and gentry families provided customary periods of aid and gift giving which were expected by the labouring population and offered opportunities to access welfare, particularly goods in kind, food and monetary donations. For example, Sir John Hayford Thorold, dominant landowner in Cranwell, left money to the poor of the parish in his will in 1831.⁶² The marriage of Ann Oxenford in 1862, the daughter of a leading tenant farmer in Cranwell, was celebrated by a village feast where ‘labourers partook of an excellent supper...and...regaled with an ample supply of ale.’⁶³ Similarly, in Branston, the obtainment of majority by Alexander Leslie Melville’s son in 1850 led to:

‘4 lbs. of beef...distributed to each of the labourers, ½ lb. of tea and 1 lb. of...sugar was given to the widows and widowers and...children attending the school...were regaled with plum cake and tea...rewards of clothing and books were distributed to the children.’⁶⁴

Such actions were in part conducted for social cohesion but by displaying generous behaviour within the remit of custom, parish elites were also reenforcing stratified social structures. As such, this emphasised deferential interactions between giver and receiver, supported by a description of Cranwell’s population by the parish cleric in 1846; ‘the people are not so easily feigned but they are respectful and civil.’⁶⁵ There is clear evidence that the needy were aware of and utilised such customary periods of

⁶¹ Scott Phillips, ‘Natives and Incomers: The Symbolism of Belonging in Muker Parish, North Yorkshire’, in Michael Drake (ed), *Time, Family and Community: Perspectives on Family and Community History* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1994), pp.225-240

⁶² 2 THOR 1, LA

⁶³ HOSF 1 Box 2 Village Books- Cranwell, LA

⁶⁴ *The Stamford Mercury*, August 2nd 1850

⁶⁵ Cranwell Parish 5/1, LA

philanthropy. Strategies used by a pauper from the parish of study of Ruskington to access such relief were described:

‘He always pleaded great poverty...at our Village feast he was giving it out that he should not get a taste of Beef ...He always worked his dodges well with the Haverholm people [residence of the Earl of Winchelsea] and was very much noticed by them and was privileged to take his basket for broken Victuals.’⁶⁶

Here, the importance of character and conduct in acquiring relief are again suggested, with the pauper presenting a persona of neediness within customary expectations of aid giver and receiver, approaching dominant resident gentry to access elements of support.

Within open parishes, a more forthright and often confrontational invocation of custom may perhaps be discerned. When in 1834, Richard Ruston refused to be employed at wage levels set by farmers in Ruskington, he stated ‘I don’t care a damn for anybody in the parish; I can maintain myself, but you [the overseer] must maintain my wife,’⁶⁷ emphasising a belief in a right to relief. As shown, open villages had a larger proportion of their residential community born in the parish, suggesting a potential for deep-rooted assumptions in regards relief provision to take hold. This was more difficult in closed parishes where migratory patterns of employment within confined labour systems meant a generally transitory population linked in socio-economic relationships as employees of dominant farmers who doubled as relief administrators. Social structures within open parishes were looser and less deferential than found in closed communities, with Ruskington being described in 1842 as ‘the people [are] in a state of fearful ignorance, and so lawless and violent.’⁶⁸ Such is again illustrated in Ruskington by the following incident from the 1830s:

‘One [labourer] assaulted the late Earl of Winchelsea in the...street, on his way to church and tore the front of his lordship’s shirt...The man who did this is living and boasts of his feat to his lordship’s family when they are entertaining him on public occasions.’⁶⁹

⁶⁶ Corsellis, *Notorious Disorderlies and Other 19th Century Ruskington Residents*, pp.97-99

⁶⁷ *The Stamford Mercury*, July 18th 1834

⁶⁸ CORB5/4/17/1/12, LA

⁶⁹ MISC DON 1338, LA

As the Earl of Winchelsea was the largest proprietor in the parish, as well as being the first chairman of the Sleaford union, such an anecdote is important, suggesting labouring attitudes to authority which were in part different to those in closed parishes. With their larger populations; higher totals of relief recipients; and larger ratepaying proportions which saw a wider demographic involvement with the apparatus of parish secular governance, touchpoints of interaction between relief seeker and administrator within open parishes were broader and potentially less personal, perhaps necessitating the invocation of custom to act as a framework of reference.

However, eligibility via custom was not purely the remit of the poor law. One aspect of relief where this is clear was charity provision which provided customary touchpoints of giving within a ritualised calendar. The peaks in payments from Garrett's Charity in Branston correspond to its distribution on or around St. Thomas' Day and Christmas in December and in March linked to the Easter dole.⁷⁰ At Metheringham, money was 'distributed at Christmas, by the minister and churchwardens, among the widows of the parish.'⁷¹ The mapping of charity distribution onto the annual ecclesiastical calendar is also paralleled on eligibility pivoting on notions of religiosity. The distribution of a bread dole taking place in Cranwell 'every Sunday, at the church [with] persons...nominated by the minister, churchwardens, and overseer.'⁷² Eligibility rested widely on judgments about the character and conduct of relief seekers, developed via personal interaction within parishes and often made by Anglican clergy who controlled the distribution of charity aid. Indeed, the cleric at Branston was responsible for deciding who was 'of honest name and good behaviour'⁷³ and so eligible for charity. Non-receipt of poor law was also a common pre-requisite for charity provision, underscoring notions of respectability and deservingness. Garrett's charity in Branston was given 'to those who do not receive parochial relief'⁷⁴ and stipulations for Key's charity in Leadenham read:

⁷⁰ Branston Parish 15/3 and 5, LA

⁷¹ *Commons Report into Charities in England and Wales: Thirty-second Report, Part IV: Lincoln* (London: The House of Commons, 1839), p.236

⁷² *Ibid*, p.220

⁷³ Branston Parish 15/25/5

⁷⁴ *Ibid*

‘12 of the poorest men...of upwards of 50 years of age, who had not for seven years preceding received parochial relief in any form...and who should be in the habit of regularly attending church.’⁷⁵

Understanding of custom can also be discerned in attitudes towards natural resources, which fed into wider avenues of support utilised within the mixed economy of welfare. In 1765, Branston was enclosed via an act of Parliament. Despite this, a 1797 prosecution agreement suggests continuing popular notions of entitlement to resources which sat at odds with the views of proprietors, describing people as:

‘[Breaking] down destroy or...takeaway any Hedge walls Gates...or Fences or shall destroy or damage any Fruit Trees...or shall rob any Garden...or Orchards or steal of destroy Turnips.’⁷⁶

Similarly, customs in regards gleaning and wild animals are described in Digby at the end of the nineteenth century:

‘The women and the children came to glean the stubble...they would get sufficient to feed the family pig during winter...it was recognised that you could trespass on the farmer’s property and gather [the corn] that was left on the ground...Everybody had the right to kill rabbits in the harvest field.’⁷⁷

Williamson has linked the hedge-dividers of mixed-agrarian landscape to a reduction in forage and fuel opportunities for the poor.⁷⁸ The single species hawthorn hedges of the agricultural revolution lacked the diversity found in earlier hedge rows, where scattered tree planting allowed for fuel and food collection. Indeed, on the Lincoln Heath, new field boundaries were largely marked by stone walls and trees limited to privately owned plantations. Access to these private woodlands was controlled, with timber and wood for fuel having to be bought from landowners. As described in 1838, ‘the loppings of fir trees [were] purchased at a cheap rate [by the poor] out of Mr. Chaplin’s

⁷⁵ *Commons Report into Charities in England and Wales*, p.334

⁷⁶ Branston Parish 23/4, LA

⁷⁷ Fred Greswell, *Bright Boots: An Autobiography and Anthology* (Newton Abbott: David & Charles, 1982), p.48

⁷⁸ Tim Williamson, *The Transformation of Rural England: Farming and the Landscape, 1700-1870* (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 2002), pp.72-75

plantations.’⁷⁹ Changing attitudes to the English landscape have been analysed by Thomas who has stressed the impact of aesthetics and leisurely habits of the landed class on the development of the countryside.⁸⁰ The Lincoln Heath was not a purely agricultural landscape, with land given over for country sports. The planting of gorse and coverts for game meant that it was stocked with a plentiful supply of wild animals. Attitudes towards wildlife within the nineteenth century highlight two dichotomous and often confrontational understandings. Landowners saw game as private property whereas the labouring classes generally conceived access to wildlife as part of a customary right, a point stressed by Howkins and Fisher.⁸¹ As such, poaching was prevalent throughout the period.⁸² An increase in poaching and sheep killing in Lincolnshire during the 1840s has been linked by Hill to rises in unemployment and agricultural depression, therefore being explicitly related to support options utilised by the needy but also notions of custom within the cultural mind of the labouring classes.⁸³ Clearly, understandings and invocations of custom went far beyond a purely poor law context. However, these conceptions were often malleable, being pragmatically defined, nullified or defended through interactions between relief seeker and administrator. As such, the process of acquiring aid was often negotiated, an analysis of which this chapter now turns to.

6.4 Negotiation

Green has stated that ‘paupers were...active participants employing a range of tactics with which to negotiate relief’⁸⁴ and as such were a prominent presence within pathways to relief. There was evidently a sense of determination on the part of relief seekers in their interactions with administrators; as Jones states ‘the poor were...self-conscious and discriminating in their requests for relief.’⁸⁵ This is evident within

⁷⁹ William Hosford, ‘Scopwickiana’, *The Lincolnshire Historian*, 2 (1960), p.31

⁸⁰ Keith Thomas, *Man and the Natural World: Changing Attitudes in England 1500-1800* (London: Penguin, 1991)

⁸¹ Alun Howkins, *Reshaping Rural England: A Social History, 1850-1925* (London and New York: Routledge, 1991), p.125; John Fisher, ‘Property Rights in Pheasants: Landlords, Farmers and the Game Laws, 1860-80’, *Rural History*, 11 (2000), pp.166-167

⁸² See for example anti-poaching announcements in Leadenham and Cranwell, *The Stamford Mercury*, 18th September 1789; *The Stamford Mercury*, 23rd October 1829

⁸³ Francis Hill, *Victorian Lincoln* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1974), p.130

⁸⁴ David Green, ‘Pauper Protests: Power and Resistance in Early Nineteenth-century London Workhouses’, *Social History*, 31 (2006), p.138

⁸⁵ Jones, ‘I Cannot Keep My Place Without Being Deascent’, p.31

correspondence between George Nixon and the Waddington overseer, Richard Coupland. Nixon, aged seventy-six and holding settlement in Waddington but residing in Chorlton-on-Medlock, Manchester, wrote to Coupland in May 1827, asking for a reinstatement of his weekly allowance.⁸⁶

‘I am sorry to be under the necessity of troubling you in consequence of my weekly allowance...for which I have felt grateful it having kept me...from absolute want...My necessity now however is as great as of any former period arising from inability to work owing to age and...infirmity increased by a complaint in my Eyes & a Bad Asthma My Wife also has been long ill.’

Coupland had been overseer of the poor from 1825, meaning at by the time of this correspondence he had had interactions with Nixon for at least two years previously. Indeed, Nixon’s receipt of poor law stretched back to at least 1810 when he was removed to the parish alongside his wife Elizabeth due to his father holding settlement in Waddington.⁸⁷ Therefore, Nixon had a familial link to the parish, and the fact that he felt comfortable in writing a letter to the parish overseer illustrates agency and a belief that correspondence would be heeded. He opened his letter with an apology and an appreciative emphasis on previous relief received, creating a sense of reasonableness which underpins his current request for aid. Nixon then outlined the seriousness of his present situation, drawing attention to the details of his and his wife’s ailments. He continued:

‘I have no alternative if you continue to suspend my allowance but to throw myself & my Wife upon the Parish for our entire support & the present is to enquire whether I must apply to Chorlton Parish ...or you will send for us yourselves your immediate answer is humbly request.’

Nixon’s stance is noticeably more forceful. Although still peppered with the expected language of deference, he presents the parish with an ultimatum and stresses the urgency of his need. To support his application, Nixon’s correspondent was signed by a local doctor who was caring for his sick wife, with further letters being sent separately

⁸⁶ Waddington Parish 13/11/5, LA

⁸⁷ Waddington Parish 13/4/1, LA

by the doctor to Richard Coupland in support of Nixon's application.⁸⁸ Coupland replied: 'the inhabitants of this Parish...have determined not to afford any further relief...[Nixon] must throw himself on the parish and we are ready to receive him.'⁸⁹

However, this apparent failure in acquiring relief was a paper tiger; both Nixon and his wife continued to receive non-resident relief sent from Waddington. Indeed, in June 1834 the parish paid for Nixon's funeral and were still paying a weekly non-resident allowance to Nixon's widow well into the New Poor Law.⁹⁰ The apparent refusal to give relief in 1827 emphasises the delicate interplay of the negotiated relief process, with the parish overseer presenting a rhetoric of resolve to withhold aid which did not play-out. This was a clearly identifiable move across the parish selection, often using the threat of the workhouse as a deterrent and rhetorical ploy. Such can be seen in Navenby through the experience of Christopher Daws; his wife Gertude; and two sons James and Christopher, aged five and two respectively.⁹¹ The family were removed from Lincoln to Navenby in 1808 and were a constant presence as relief recipients in the parish until the 1840s. Navenby vestry repeatedly threatened to send Charles Daws and his family into the parish workhouse throughout the 1830s. In 1835, Navenby vestry decreed 'that Christopher Daws be paid no longer...[he] his Wife and Child go to the Workhouse as no relief to be given them.'⁹² However, despite such threats, a weekly allowance of 3s was continually paid to Daws and he and his family resided in a parish-owned house, with 'the Overseer of the Poor...allowed...straw for thatching a Parish house occupied by Charles Daws, a pauper.'⁹³ Despite the threat of the workhouse, outdoor relief continued, supporting Apfel and Dunkley's conclusions that 'the influence of the workhouse as [an]...institution was disproportionate to its actual use.'⁹⁴ These commentators have also suggested that the threat of the workhouse was particularly used in open parishes to police social behaviour.⁹⁵ In actuality, relief

⁸⁸ Waddington Parish 13/11/16, LA

⁸⁹ Waddington Parish 13/11/5, LA

⁹⁰ Waddington Parish 13/1 and 2, LA

⁹¹ Navenby Parish 13/3/2/2/4, LA

⁹² Navenby Parish 10/1, LA

⁹³ Ibid

⁹⁴ William Apfel and Peter Dunkley, 'English Rural Society and the New Poor Law: Bedfordshire, 1834-47', *Social History*, 10 (1985), p.52

⁹⁵ Ibid, pp.52-53

outcomes often differed from the rhetoric presented by officials during the process of negotiating relief.

Such treatment also resulted from the fact that those seeking relief were generally well known to administrators meaning that interaction happened in the context of relationships formed within local socio-economic contexts. Relief seekers utilised advocations from local authority stakeholders to support their applications, usually testifying to the good character of applicants. Individuals were acutely aware of local hierarchies of power, often going over the heads of parish administrators to approach key gentry or clerics to advocate for their case. Indeed, Emma Muxlow, around forty-eight years old and residing in the parish of study of Metheringham, wrote directly to the Bishop of Lincoln in 1829 to support her application for charity aid. The vicar of Metheringham wrote to the bishop to clarify the situation:

‘Emma Muxlow resides in this parish but belongs to Heighington she is a native of Ireland of good family and married very young a private soldier, at his death she became chargeable to his parish. She is perfectly harmless but of eccentric habits which sometimes draws upon her the ridicule...of idle boys. I think she is mistaken in attributing acts of aggression to “the publicans of Metheringham and Mr. Chaplin’s servants.” The “collection” she mentions is parochial relief. It seems she desires your Lordships interference to procure her some permanent charity...in lieu of an allowance from the parish. This I may presume to add, that from her altered circumstance...her inoffensive conduct and from the state of her mind, she is a person deserving your Lordship’s kind consideration.’⁹⁶

The overarching point must be made that Muxlow’s correspondence were noted and respected, with the case involving a four-way interaction between herself; the vicar of Metheringham; the Bishop of Lincoln; and the charity trustee of Heighington, the cleric Humphrey Sibthorp.⁹⁷ Muxlow is presented as deserving of charity, with a stress on mental instability and the circumstantial nature of her need as evidence for this. Most importantly in regards agency on the part of the relief seekers, Muxlow was seemingly

⁹⁶ CORB5/4/98/3, LA

⁹⁷ Ibid

already in receipt of poor law relief within Metheringham, with the correspondence requesting additional charity aid from her settled parish of Heighington. This shows an awareness that her settled status within a different parish allowed for differing relief avenues to be sought. Muxlow was successful in receiving additional monetary payments from Heighington to complement her poor law relief. However, relief administrators presented Muxlow with an ultimatum, asking her to return to her settled parish; 'if she would only reside in her parish [Heighington] would see that she had proper care bestowed upon her.'⁹⁸ It is unclear if she did so but in the 1841 census she lived in Washingborough, interestingly the resident parish of Humphrey Sibthorp who had been involved in the 1829 case. Muxlow continued to receive poor law relief well into the New Poor Law, appearing in the Lincoln union guardian minutes in 1837 where guardians were aiming to compel her son to support her.⁹⁹

How far the New Poor Law changed the negotiated process of relief is debatable. Certainly, guardian boards had the potential to present a corporate bloc of authority, with unionisation expanding the geo-administrative forum of poor law away from a purely parish framing. As already shown, the expansion of administrative agents under the New Poor Law meant the process of acquiring relief could be a drawn-out affair with the potential for it to be blocked at any stage by differing poor law staff. However, the operation of the New Poor Law was not the same as the legislative clauses of the Poor Law Amendment Act. Knowledge of the personal life-stories of applicants went far in influencing the actualities of practice no matter the cohort of need.¹⁰⁰ Guardians were still fundamentally parish officers whose sentiments were often influenced by parochial concerns. The wide continuity in the demography of administrators, with guardians taken from pools of leading ratepayers who had often also served as parish overseers, meant that individual guardians often petitioned for lenient treatment on behalf of the needy they personally knew. As such, there was a difference in attitudes between the poor per se and individuals known to administrators with Howell concluding that 'the parish poor were different. They were people known.'¹⁰¹ Such sentiments are evident within the unions of study, with the chairman of the Lincoln

⁹⁸ Ibid

⁹⁹ PL10/102/1, p.35, LA

¹⁰⁰ Gurney, *Wanting and Having*, p.76

¹⁰¹ Gary Howells, 'Emigrating and the New Poor Law: the Norfolk Emigration Fever of 1836', *Rural History*, 11 (2000), p.158

union noting in 1841 that ‘country Guardians will not be likely to attend...but there is no difficulty in procuring their attendance...when cases are brought forward affecting their own parishes.’¹⁰² The needy continued to contact those wielding socio-economic power for advocacy and intervention in supporting their case. In 1837, John Tomblin wrote to the Sleaford guardians to request a restatement of out-relief for his granddaughter, Sarah Newton:

‘I am sorrey to trouble you again a boght the Child...Sarah Newton as...is quight out of my Power [to] keep her without I have sum thing...as I am short of breath not able to worke...and am not likely be any better at the Present, I sent you a few lines abought a month a go and never rec’d any answer from it and if you canot allow me anything I hope you will send me worde...Willsford Parish use to a low me 2s per week but I have not rec’d any for sum time on acc’t of the Union if it was in my power to keep the child I would not troube you, answer and you will much oblige me.’¹⁰³

Tomblin’s correspondence was supported by an ex-officio magistrate guardian, who reminded the board that it is within the power to be discretional in the allowance of out-door relief, calling for leniency in this case:

‘At the current request of John & Sarah Tomblin the Grandfather & Grandmother of Sarah Newton an orphan child aged 10...whose late Father & Mother belonged to...Wilsford now in the Sleaford union...I am informed [the parish] used to allow them 2s per week for the child’s maintenance, but that it has been stopped some time past and that the child is ordered into the Poor House of the Union. I beg respectfully to state for the information of the Guardians what I know about their [John and Sarah’s] character. John Tomblin is a steady labourer now nearly past work & is occasionally receiving parish relief, therefore is not in a condition to support the child himself...The Old People are much attached to their Grandchild...and it would be a great hardship to take

¹⁰² Edward Senior, *Correspondence and Papers Related to the Welsh District and the North Midland District, 1838-1847*, p.360, MH32/66, NA

¹⁰³ PL12/118/1, LA

the child from them...you have...a discretionary power to permit out relief in cases where you are satisfied there is no Fraud- take care to submit the case of Sarah Newton to the Board.’¹⁰⁴

In many ways, these correspondence mirrored stances adopted in the negotiated process of relief under the Old Poor Law. Again, the circumstantial nature of the necessity for relief was stressed, as was a reminder of relief formerly given by the parish. Seemingly, Tomblin had already written to the Sleaford guardians and his renewed correspondence, alongside the advocacy of an individual magistrate and guardian, was used to reenforce his request. Throughout this intervention, the deservingness and moral character of the applicants is stressed. The central place of agency on the part of the relief seeker continued. This is also noted in correspondence from a member of the local gentry to the Sleaford guardians in 1837:

‘My principal motive for writing you now is on behalf of poor old Thatcher who has been up to my house and laments exceedingly that you should...think it necessary to remove him, particularly as the charge will cost an additional expense to the Parish...If the Overseer would allow him to remain...he would consent to give up one shilling...[in] weekly pay, and also that he is quite unable to perform any work himself.’¹⁰⁵

Here, ‘old Thatcher’ showed a determination to resist the decision to remove him from the parish, personally visiting a member of the local gentry he knew and presumably asking him to advocate for him. The back-and-forth of the negotiation process is evident, with Thatcher conceding one shilling of his allowance if allowed to stay.

Appealing directly to union staff to make demands known can also be evidenced; in 1837, John Irving complained to a medical officer of the Sleaford union of ‘not having had the ale given him which I [the medical officer] ordered in the weekly returns...He says he has only had 1/6 & 4 lbs of bread during his illness.’¹⁰⁶ Indeed, relief seekers directly approached union officials outside of their union of incorporation. This is seen in the case of Mary Watson who complained about her relief from the Newark union to

¹⁰⁴ Ibid. Underlined text is in the original

¹⁰⁵ Ibid

¹⁰⁶ Ibid

a relieving officer of the Sleaford.¹⁰⁷ Watson's parish of Caythorpe bordered parishes incorporated into the Sleaford union, emphasising a permeability of union borders both physically and cognitively within the relief process. A fundamental point ignored within the literature is that geographical proximity allowed for such interactions to take place, especially true within the Lincoln Heath as the area was located on the junction of three poor law unions. Interactions between the needy and administrators were seemingly less to do with dictated roles and boundaries but more focussed on localised conceptions of authority, with those seeking relief directly approaching individuals that either had local socio-economic capital or were known to be involved in the management of relief in some way, despite administrative role.

Moreover, the needy were not afraid to confront administrators, either to complain about perceived injustice in treatment or as part of a bargaining position from which to obtain renegotiated outcomes. They could do so in three main ways: appeal; protest; and threats. Poor law legislation consistently emphasised the right for claimants to appeal to magistrates against decisions or poor treatment. The use of appeal under the Old Poor Law has been explored by both Taylor and Peter King,¹⁰⁸ with King maintaining that 'very few paupers lost anything by appealing.'¹⁰⁹ Moreover, Dunkley has argued that 'the poor were able to extract more generous relief from overseers by...threatening to take them before the bench.'¹¹⁰ An 1832 appeal to the Kesteven magistracy is outlined below:

'Joseph Kirk, a pauper from Branston...appeared before the bench...to complain of insufficient allowance and want of room for his family. With a wife and six children, this poor fellow, to whom...the Rev. P. Curtois, gave an excellent character, was allowed 12s. a week...[the house] in which this family of eight individuals was lodged was only nine feet square...The parents, with three children...slept in one bed, and three other children in another...corner...The poor man...had been

¹⁰⁷ PL12/102/1, p.97, LA

¹⁰⁸ James Taylor, *Poverty, Migration and Settlement in the Industrial Revolution: Sojourner's narratives* (Palo Alto: The Society for the Promotion of Science and Scholarship, 1989); Peter King, 'The Rights of the Poor and the Role of the Law: The Impact of Pauper Appeals to the Summary Courts, 1750-1834', in Peter Jones and Steven King (eds), *Obligation, Entitlement and Dispute under the English Poor Laws* (Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2015), pp.235-263

¹⁰⁹ King, 'The Rights of the Poor and the Role of the Law', p.258

¹¹⁰ Peter Dunkley, 'Paternalism, the Magistracy and Poor Relief in England, 1795-1834', *The International Review of Social History*, 24 (1979), p.379

offered some increases of wages, but on the condition of going about seven miles...to the work.¹¹¹

The hyperbolic emphasis on Kirk's accommodation supports Jones' conclusions about the use of motifs in interactions with administrators, stressing 'a moral responsibility on the parish to restore [paupers] to a state of decency.'¹¹² Issues of decency and fairness are central within this appeal, with advocacy of character again explicit.

Snell has questioned how far appeal was respected under the New Poor Law.¹¹³ The extent that individual appeals continued to be used within the parish selection after unionisation is difficult to ascertain due to documentation survival. Certainly, appeals to magistrates did continue under the New Poor Law but these were seemingly generally parish-led and predominantly concerned about overriding removal decisions. Despite this, the needy did show an understanding of the administrative process of relief under the New Poor Law, a point noted by Feldman.¹¹⁴ Green has stated that 'armed with...an awareness of the limitations imposed on officials...paupers could challenge those who overstepped their authority.'¹¹⁵ Such is seen in this case from the Sleaford union in 1837:

'Mr. Searson...does not seem willing to give his promise of affording Relief to his Wife's Father before the Poor Law Commission in London have given their opinion as for his liability of not... [the churchwardens told] Mr. Searson his wife's aged Parent was about to be removed to a distant workhouse in the union hoping that he would support the Pauper but in case of his refusal to do so, an appeal would be made to the Poor Law Commissioners for their decision on the subject...I have looked into the poor law act but cannot see at all Searson is liable to maintain his Wife's Father, he would, I think, do something for the poor old man, even if he is not compellable.'¹¹⁶

¹¹¹ *The Stamford Mercury*, January 27th 1832

¹¹² Jones, 'I Cannot Keep My Place Without Being Deascent', p.35

¹¹³ Snell, *Annals of the Labouring Poor*, p.119

¹¹⁴ Feldman, 'Migrants, Immigrants and Welfare from the Old Poor Law to the Welfare State', p.88

¹¹⁵ Green, 'Pauper Protests', p.151

¹¹⁶ PL12/118/1, LA, underlying in original

Such an example underscores multiple factors. Firstly, the genesis of policy under the New Poor Law was overwhelmingly within the parish or sub-union level; the churchwardens talked personally with Searson to try and persuade him to support his wife's father, with the case only gaining union attention through his refusal to do so. Again, the churchwardens use the rhetoric of the union workhouse as a threat to extort support, also adopting the authority of the Poor Law Commission in their stance. This seems to have backfired; Searson refused to maintain his wife's father without the explicit sanctioning of the London body. The central issue here was compellability, with those being pressured to provide support seemingly aware that they could not be legally compelled to do so. The union official writing this correspondence knew this. Thus, the union response is one of compromise, seeking to gain some familial support for Searson's father-in-law whilst most likely combining this with limited poor law aid.

Protest and misbehaviour was a common expression of pauper agency with Green linking this to 'tactics by which all types of paupers questioned authority....and bargained for relief.'¹¹⁷ As such, protest was not necessarily an out-right rejection of the poor law system but was embedded within interactive stances adopted by the needy, a point recently concluded by Williams in the context of misbehaviour within union workhouses.¹¹⁸ Unfortunately, the punishment books for the union workhouses of study do not survive for the 1830s and 1840s. Sleaford's does for the 1850s with twenty-nine offenders listed between 1853 and 1859.¹¹⁹ Most of these were low level affairs generally referring to possession of contraband items such as coffee and alcohol; refusing to work; leaving the workhouse without permission; and 'talking back' to workhouse staff. All types of inmates seemingly engaged in misbehaviour; when ages are listed in the Sleaford punishment book for the 1850s, they range from children to individuals in their sixties. One of the most frequent cohorts to misbehave were vagrants.¹²⁰ Vagrants spent a relatively short time within union workhouses compared to other inmates, lodging in casual wards away from main blocks. Importantly, they generally came from outside of localities and so were detached from the cultural landscape of deference expected from the parish poor to access relief. The two most

¹¹⁷ Green, 'Pauper Protests', p.138

¹¹⁸ Samantha Williams, 'Paupers Behaving Badly: Punishment in the Victorian Workhouse', *Journal of British Studies*, 59 (2020), p.792

¹¹⁹ PL12/302/14, LA

¹²⁰ Green, 'Pauper Protests', p.146

common misdemeanours committed was the refusal to work and the destruction of clothing. In November 1842, William Taylor, James Orton and Joseph Carre, all vagrants, were imprisoned for a month for refusing to work at the Sleaford union workhouse.¹²¹ In 1843 ‘eight men who had slept...in the Sleaford union workhouse refused to work, broke several panes of glass, and behaved in a riotous manner.’¹²² At the Lincoln union workhouse in December 1846 ‘two casual paupers...[were imprisoned] for 14 days...for destroying their clothing.’¹²³ Indeed, Green has stated that ‘the destruction of clothes in anticipation of receiving a new set...[was]...common.’¹²⁴ Such is seen in the case of Robert Miller, a vagrant who destroyed his clothing in the Sleaford union workhouse in 1848:

‘Robt. Miller, a tramp...having cut his clothing to pieces, Mr. Page, the governor [of the workhouse] took him before the magistrates...[he] was committed to Falkingham house of correction for 14 days’ hard labour, and directed that the fragments might be stitched to calico and put together, so that on his next appearance in public he will be very much like “a thing of shreds and patches.”¹²⁵

The fact the magistrate ordered the destroyed clothes to be patched back together suggests a symbolic enforcing of authority on the part of administrators. Such a stance attacked Miller’s personal dignity by making him appear like ‘a thing of shreds and patches.’ As shown, the maintenance of dignity was a common trope in the negotiated process of relief and as such, this magisterial order may be read as a reinforcement of power against an action which all involved understood as a move within such a process.

6.5 Conclusions

Notions of eligibility and accessibility to relief were a multi-faceted processes pivoting on an interplay between identity, custom and negotiation. This was a constant throughout the period with many parallels noted between poor laws despite administrative rearticulation after the Poor Law Amendment Act. Firstly, the centrality of presenting deservingness and belonging on the part of relief applicants was

¹²¹ *The Lincolnshire Chronicle*, November 18th 1842

¹²² *The Lincolnshire Chronicle*, September 29th 1843

¹²³ *The Stamford Mercury*, December 4th 1846

¹²⁴ Green, ‘Pauper Protests’, p.148

¹²⁵ *The Stamford Mercury*, August 11th 1848

preserved, with the rhetorical devices utilised to do so in negotiations with relief administrators looking very similar either side of unionisation. Similarly, another constant was the issue of legally defined settlement status which allowed for access to relief within a certain parish, with financial liability on the part of the parish feeding into decisions to remove or support an individual and their dependents. Although the New Poor Law meant the expansion of the geo-administrative area of the poor law into the poor law union, the general day-to-day process of acquiring relief continued to be overwhelmingly found at the sub-union level within parishes; relieving and medical districts; and workhouses. Despite the potential for the acquisition of relief to be a notably more drawn-out process under the New Poor Law due to an expansion of administrative agents, relief applicants seemingly continued to approach poor law administrators directly and negotiate relief outcomes via personal interaction. Indeed, the ballooning of administrative agents meant an increase in touchpoints of interaction between relief seeker and the poor law, with many approaching union staff to seek aid previously denied or given in insufficient levels by other officers. Thus, the strategies utilised by relief seekers to gain aid looked very similar under both poor laws, albeit working within a new administrative system under the New.

Moreover, administrators continued to advocate for lenient treatment towards the poor that they personally knew, particularly in the case of individual guardians who were fundamentally parish officers generally still concerned with the nature and expression of relief in their own respective parishes. As such, there was a disconnect between the poor per se as presented in Poor Law Commission and Poor Law Board directives and the reality of sentiment and treatment to the known local poor. This is especially important since many relief receivers in the initial decades of the New Poor Law were the same individuals who had been in receipt of relief in the waning period of the Old Poor Law. There was also a potential familial aspect to poor law relief within the parish selection, with the caveat that evidence is primarily based on surname comparison across the period, with certain family names continually presenting as relief recipients across the period and mirroring the familial lineages of authority noted in administration. This parallel may have only reinforced the importance of direct interactions between administrators and relief seekers, perhaps denoting that some were more likely to apply for or receive explicit poor law relief more so than others based on conceptions of customary eligibility and belonging defined by familial lineage. This is a new

observation within the literature and needs further research in the future. Moving on from pathways to relief, support outcomes and options within the diverse economy of relief will be the focus of the next chapter to which this thesis now turns.

Chapter Seven: The Mixed Economy of Welfare

7.1 Overview

Hanly's designation of the poor law as essentially defensive, with provision highly reliant on conceived notions of eligibility, meant that for many explicit poor law relief was denied or provided in insufficient amounts to make ends meet.¹ Indeed, it has been noted that many 'did not come to the poor law, or had to assemble a range of other welfare avenues when they did.'² As French has concluded, 'apart from [the]...disabled, chronically sick or in extreme old age...no one depended 100 per cent on the parish for their subsistence.'³ Hufton's concept of 'economies of makeshifts' has been widely adopted within the literature to categorise the varied support strategies adopted by the needy.⁴ According to King and Tomkins it is 'the organising concept for...historians of English welfare who wish to stress the disparate nature of income for poor households.'⁵ Here, seeking support was an aggregate process which often combined multiple avenues; a mixed economy of welfare, to adopt Innes' phrasing.⁶ It is the focus of this chapter to outline the various support possibilities on offer within the period and area of study. Although analysis could be approached by reconstructing the diverse support avenues an individual appropriated across a life cycle of need, a lack of extant pauper biographies from the parish selection makes this approach difficult for this thesis. King has also noted limitations to such an approach due to its foundation on demographic registration which means large temporal gaps can appear in reconstruction or analysis bypasses those who 'register no demographic events.'⁷ Thus, this chapter structures itself around three broad avenues of support which were most explicitly available for those seeking aid within the parish selection across the period: household

¹ Margaret Hanly, 'The Economy of Makeshifts and the Role of the Poor Law: A Game of Chance?', in Steven King and Alannah Tomkins (eds), *The Poor in England 1700-1850: An Economy of Makeshifts* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003), p.78

² Steven King, *Poverty and Welfare in England, 1700-1850: A Regional Perspective* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000) p.58

³ Henry French, 'How Dependent were 'The Dependent Poor'? Poor Relief and the Life-Course in Terling, Essex, 1762-1834', *Continuity and Change*, 30 (2015), p.195

⁴ Olwen Hufton, *The Poor in Eighteenth-Century France* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1974)

⁵ Steven King and Alannah Tomkins, 'Introduction', in Steven King and Alannah Tomkins (eds), *The Poor in England 1700-1850: An Economy of Makeshifts* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003), p.1

⁶ Joanna Innes, 'The 'Mixed Economy of Welfare' in Early Modern England: Assessments of the Options from Hale to Malthus (c.1683-1803)', in Martin Daunton (ed), *Charity, Self-Interest and Welfare in the English Past* (London and New York: Routledge, 2016), pp.139-181

⁷ King, *Poverty and Welfare in England*, p.128

and family support; poor law relief; and communal aid, such as charities, parish-work, access to parish-owned commodities and benefit societies.

Firstly, it will examine household and family support, arguing that the household acted as an organisational unit within which differing strands of support were organised, with work from household members being the most fundamental avenue of support within this. The importance of family aid will also be stressed, with strategies such as co-residence and marriage meaning that many in need never actually approached the poor law directly. Even when poor law was sought, administrators often aimed to compel familial support for relations before relief would be given or to reach agreements with family members so that the level of aid given was lessened. However, the household unit was not necessarily synonymous with family and included such members as lodgers which provided important means of support for individuals themselves and for the wider household economy through rent payments. Despite this, this thesis will argue that the maintenance of an independent household was the most common residential condition for the needy throughout the period, necessitating recourse to other options of support.

Moving on from this, poor law relief will be examined. Indoor relief will be analysed first due to the centrality of the union workhouse to the claimed radicality of the New Poor Law. Initially, an analysis of indoor relief in its Old Poor Law form will be conducted before moving onto an examination of union workhouses under the New Poor Law. It will be shown that the parish selection had a high proportion of workhouses under the Old Poor Law either at parish level or via utilisation of the Lincoln House of Industry, the workhouse for the Lincoln Incorporation. However, there were significant changes in the experience of indoor relief under the New Poor Law, with union workhouses becoming a clear symbol for the new system. A varied Old Poor Law indoor relief experience within the parish selection was largely standardised within poor law union boundaries, also increasing the potential for indoor relief to become a reality for a larger proportion of relief seekers than had been the case locally before the New Poor Law. Despite such changes, outside of periods of local economic slump, workhouses generally never reached full capacity with most experiences of life indoors being transitory and short-term.

After this, an exploration of outdoor relief will be conducted. Most relief recipients under the New Poor Law continued to receive outdoor relief. Despite elements of continuation in the broad nature of outdoor relief between poor laws, there were important trends in the waning decades of the Old Poor Law which saw an almost exclusive reliance on cash allowances rather than goods in kind as the predominant type of outdoor relief within the parish selection by the eve of the New Poor Law. Monetary payments continued to be the dominant form of relief under the New Poor Law, albeit with the range of amounts given seemingly narrowed to those exhibited under the Old Poor Law. Although outdoor relief was the most prominent form of explicit poor law relief throughout the period, levels given were generally never enough to allow for full dependency and so necessitated interaction with wider support options alongside the poor law.

Next, the chapter will examine communal avenues of relief which encompassed such things as charity relief and philanthropy; parish-given work; allotment and land provision; and self-help via clothing clubs and Friendly Societies. It will be argued that these were generally unaffected by the implementation of the New Poor Law and remained important avenues of support, utilised by a larger proportion of the population than explicit poor law relief. Finally, this chapter will end with a conclusion which tracks trends in change and continuity within the mixed economy of welfare across the period.

7.2 Households and Families

The organisational role of the household was fundamentally important to stratification of support options, with contemporaries judging the household unit as a conduit within which an amalgamation of differing support strategies could be consolidated. Extant relief data, often overwhelmingly statistical in nature, can obscure the fact that many individually listed recipients were collecting relief in support of a wider household, particularly important for the able-bodied female who generally maintained a familial household unit including children without the support of a male wage-earner. For example, 26% of poor law payments made in Metheringham in the quarter ending 29th September 1843 were given to families, with the rest all given to elderly individuals

aged between fifty-one and ninety-three.⁸ In the same quarter four years previously in 1839, 30% of relief payments within the parish went to family households with multiple child members.⁹ Schurer and Mills have stressed the importance of the household unit to historic social organisation, with Snell emphasising its importance alongside marriage within obtaining explicit poor law aid.¹⁰ However, defining the household has been contentious with Finch arguing that the nuclear family within one residential building constituted the most common household unit.¹¹ Johnston has seen an increased dominance of the nuclear-family-centred household within Lincolnshire by 1800 with the most important means of support within this being work, primarily through male wages supplemented by female and child labour.¹² The importance of work has been stressed by Snell who emphasises the importance of wages for the household, 'buttressed only by charity and the poor law'¹³ in times of necessity. Despite the Lincoln Heath seeing proportionally high wage rates for agricultural labour during the first half of the nineteenth century in part due to labour demands within the mixed-agrarian economy and the dominance of confined labour within this, as stated in chapter three wage rates did see a decreasing trend. This is a trend noted at county level, with average monthly male wages in Lincolnshire falling by 33% between 1833 and 1850.¹⁴ Thus, there was perhaps an increased potential for households to seek other strands of support as male wage levels were consistently reduced. Lack of access to sufficient wages clearly links to the dominant cohorts of need within the parish selection, with most lacking stability in work due to episodic unemployment within annual employment cycles or temporal periods of economic depression; due to old age; or due to the lack of a male breadwinner in the case of female-headed households.

⁸ Metheringham Parish 13/12, LA

⁹ Ibid

¹⁰ Kevin Schurer and Dennis Mills, 'Family and Household Structure', in Kevin Schurer and Dennis Mills (eds) *Local Communities in the Victorian Census Enumerator's Books* (Oxford: Leopard's Head Press, 1996), p.280; Keith Snell, *Annals of the Labouring Poor: Social Change and Agrarian England 1660-1900* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), p.355

¹¹ Janet Finch, 'Do Families Support Each Other More or Less than in the Past?', in Michael Drake (ed), *Time, Family and Community: Perspectives on Family and Community History* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1994), p.92

¹² Jack Johnston, 'The Family and Kin of the Lincolnshire Labourer in the Eighteenth Century', *Lincolnshire History and Archaeology*, 14 (1979), pp. 47-51; Jack Johnston, 'Family, Kin and Community in Eight Lincolnshire Parishes, 1567-1800', *Rural History*, 6 (1995), pp.179-192

¹³ Snell, *Annals of the Labouring Poor*, p. 365

¹⁴ Ibid, Table 3.1, p.130

However, household structures and role as a conduit of support were not homogenous across the parish selection. The diversity of a household economy was generally more pronounced in the socio-economic structures which typified open parishes, where a rental market and more varied and often seasonal employment systems existed. As stated in chapter three, most female and child agricultural labour within the parish selection was sourced from the larger populations of open parishes, working in periods of peak labour needs on large acreage mixed agrarian farms and necessitated by the short-term ordinary male agricultural labour noted within open parishes. The tied nature of accommodation and wider male job security, alongside regular wages, which typified the confined labour systems of closed parishes meant contributions from other members of the family to the household economy was less explicit. Despite this, the highly migratory nature of the labouring population of the Lincoln Heath meant that employment was often not secure throughout the life cycle of an individual with males moving between confined and ordinary positions dependent on the ability to find a confined role at hiring fairs due to age, experience and macro-economic circumstance. Thus, the potential for households to need all members to contribute to support was always there, especially if such a household had to move to a differing parish due to employment options available to male breadwinners. Moreover, the level of contribution from members of a household depended widely on the specific structure of an individual household and so a direct correlation between parish typology and household economy was not concrete. Female labour did exist in closed parishes, albeit in narrower ways largely confined to domestic service, perhaps more readily available within the households of tenant farmers and resident gentry within closed parishes. For example, nine women belonging to labouring households were listed as working as domestic servants within Ashby de la Launde in the 1851 census. Female contributions to the household economy in this regard was almost exclusively conducted by unmarried daughters living in the household of their parents. When families were disengaged with agricultural labour within closed parishes, diversity in household economy was seemingly more pronounced. Such can be evidenced in the 1851 census via the household of Ann Baker, a 76-year-old labourer's widow living in Ashby de la Launde, already discussed in chapter six. Alongside Ann, there were three other members of her household: her widower son John Baker, aged 55 and employed as a shoemaker; her 31-year-old granddaughter, Harriet Black, who worked as a servant; and her great grand-son, Felix Black, aged 8 and the son of Harriet. The prominence of the

Bakers as poor law relief recipients in Ashby de la Launde across the period has already been noted. As such, the structure of Ann Baker's household in the 1851 census suggests that poor relief was almost always combined with other avenues of support, which in this case was co-residency and work from household members.

Enacting familial support was a major preoccupation from poor law administrators throughout the period, aiming to compel families to look after relations rather than have them claim relief and thus lessen the amount of explicit poor law relief given and decrease parish expenditure. This was an important aspect to both poor laws, written into the Poor Law Amendment Act and with the Old Poor Law also stating that relations should support paupers.¹⁵ Such is evidenced under the New Poor Law by a letter sent from a Lincoln union relieving officer to the brother of a relief recipient in 1837. The language played heavily on the stigma of receiving poor law relief, particularly the threat of the workhouse, to gain familial support:

‘The pauper list...has been revised & the relief given...to your sister...was the subject of much conversation in as much as it was represented that you out of your ample fortune might provide for your sister without calling upon the Parish to do so. It is for your conscience whether you will provide for your sister or suffer her to go into the Work House as that will be the only Relief offered her after the 1st Feb.’¹⁶

However, such correspondence should be viewed within the negotiated process of relief; as stated in chapter six, rhetoric presented by administrators did not necessarily correlate with actual outcomes, particularly when indoor relief was threatened. Here, Barrett has seen a correlation between the extent of an individual's familial network and access to other areas of support, with those with little or no family receiving substantially more poor law aid for longer periods of time than those with.¹⁷ Under the New Poor Law, Snell has argued for a greater preoccupation with compelling familial support, with administration at all levels pursuing families to provide aid for relatives, often elderly parents in need of aid.¹⁸ This is identifiable within the parish selection,

¹⁵ Peter Higginbotham, ‘The 1601 Act for the Relief of the Poor.’ Available at <https://www.workhouses.org.uk/poorlaws/1601act.shtml> [Accessed 19th April 2022]

¹⁶ PL10/118/1, LA

¹⁷ Sam Barrett, ‘Kinship, Poor Relief and the Welfare Process in Early Modern England’, in Steven King and Alannah Tomkins (eds), *The Poor in England 1700-1850: An Economy of Makeshifts* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003), p.212 and p.221

¹⁸ Snell, *Annals of the Labouring Poor*, p.366

with the positioning of the parish selection in a liminal location between poor law unions and migratory patterns dependent on employment system meaning cross-union communication in respect to familial aid was wide spread. In 1836, the clerk of the Sleaford Union was instructed to write to the clerk of the Lincoln union to ascertain if Thomas Smith was ‘in such circumstances as to enable him to support his son Thomas Robert Smith who is a Lunatic Pauper belonging to Cranwell.’¹⁹ Similarly, the clerk of the Lincoln union notified the overseer of Branston in 1847 to cease aid to Richard Ashley as he was ‘supposed to have a son who is capable of maintaining him.’²⁰ Parish overseers could also apply to magistrates for an order of maintenance to compel relations to care for individuals. Between 1838 and 1843, the Branston overseer obtained such an order for three individuals: on Walter Smalley for ‘refusing to maintain his two children’; on Joshua Hunt for ‘neglecting to maintain his wife’; and on John Moore for the support of his elderly father, Richard Moore.²¹ Here, a subtle emphasis on gendered norms which required males to act as providers can perhaps be deduced. When such expectations were unfulfilled, either via unwillingness or inability to provide support, individuals had to seek recourse to other forms of support which often included the poor law.

The family and wider household economy were key areas of support for many who never explicitly applied for or were unsuccessful in accessing poor law and formalised relief options. Crawford has stated that mothers with illegitimate children were often averse to seeking poor law support due to ‘the terms on which assistance was delivered [and]...many...preferred to manage without...public involvement.’²² The most common types of familial support regarding this cohort were co-residence and marriage. Reconstructing the life cycle of Sophia Byron Mackinder highlights this. Born in 1825 in Timberland, Lincolnshire, in the 1841 census Sophia was living in the parish of study of Digby within the household of Thomas East, her step-grandfather due to her mother’s remarriage to Baker East. This household consisted of six individuals of step and blood relations (table 7.1). In 1847, Sophia had an illegitimate son named William Mackinder and then subsequently married John Henry Cottam in 1850, not William’s putative

¹⁹ PL12/102/1, p.43, LA

²⁰ PL10/102/1, p.208, LA

²¹ Branston Parish 13/13, LA

²² Patricia Crawford, *Parents of Poor Children in England, 1580-1800* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), p.63

father. In the 1851 census, she was living with her new husband and illegitimate child as a nuclear family in Heapham, North Lincolnshire. However, in the 1861 census, three of Sophia's children were living back in Digby in the household of her stepfather Baker East: William Mackinder, her illegitimate child now aged fourteen; and two children from her marriage, Charles and Elizabeth Cottam, aged ten and eleven respectively. This household was made up of six individuals working a variety of jobs who were either non-relations or step and blood relations (table 7.2). In the 1861 census, Sophia herself was living alongside her husband; her two young children aged seven and one; and an eleven-year-old domestic servant in a house and shop in Kirton in Lindsey, North Lincolnshire. By 1871, John Henry Cottam and Sophia were living as a nuclear family with three of their children in Lincoln, with Sophia dying in 1876. As such, Sophia seemingly never approached the poor law for support of herself and children, even when giving birth to an illegitimate child in 1847, utilising instead marriage and co-residence within an extended networks of households of blood and step relatives across Lincolnshire.

Name	Age	Relation to Head of the Household	Relation to Sophia Byron Mackinder
Thomas East	70	Head	Step-grandfather
Baker East	35	Son	Stepfather
Sophia Baker (ne. Byron Mackinder)	35	Daughter-in-law	Mother
George Byron Mackinder	15	Step-grandson	Brother
Sophia Byron Mackinder	15	Step-grandaughter	
John Byron	55	No relation	Grandfather? Father of Sophia Baker (ne. Byron Mackinder)?

Table 7.1: Household of Thomas East, Digby, 1841. Source: the 1841 census

Name	Age	Occupation	Relation to Head of the Household	Relation to Sophia Byron Mackinder
Baker East	54	Builder	Head	Stepfather
John Mackinder	34	Baker	Stepson	Brother
William Mackinder	14	Grocer and Draper	Step-grandson	Son (illegitimate)
Charles Cottam	10	Scholar	Step-grandson	Son
Elizabeth Cottam	11	Scholar	Step-grandaughter	Daughter
Lucy Robinson	22	General servant	No relation	No relation

Table 7.2: Household of Baker East, Digby, 1861. Source: the 1861 census

As the example of the East households in Digby shows (tables 7.1 and 7.2), definitions of the household unit were not necessarily synonymous with the nuclear family or blood relations, including both step relations and non-familial members such as servants. Crawford has claimed that poorer families were ‘more liable to fragmentation, and to remarriages or casual cohabitation.’²³ How far this is true for the parish selection is debatable, with a correlation between male employment types and length of residency in parishes seemingly feeding into household structure. To return to Digby, most

²³ Ibid, p.242

agricultural labourers' households in the 1851 census seem to have been centred on the nuclear family, supporting Johnston's conclusions about family structures within Lincolnshire.²⁴ Again, migratory patterns of agricultural employment in the parish selection and the limited domestic space available in tied cottages, noted in chapter three, may have meant the ability to provide co-residence support to relatives was limited. In contrast, households headed by males not engaged in agricultural labour seem to have shown a more diverse structure, with an increased potential for co-residence due to longer residency periods within parishes, with more non-agricultural workers born in their parish of residence, as well as houses being rented or owned outright. The male members of the East households were not agricultural labourers (tables 7.1 and 7.2). Similarly, the 1851 census household structure of William Harmston, a small-acreage farmer and publican born and living in Digby, supports these conclusions (table 7.3). It included nine members in addition to William with four servants and two lodgers present.

²⁴ Johnston, 'The Family and Kin of the Lincolnshire Labourer in the Eighteenth Century'; Johnston, 'Family, Kin and Community in Eight Lincolnshire Parishes, 1567-1800'

Name	Age	Sex	Occupation	Marital Status	Role in household
William Harmston	31	M	Farmer and publican	Married	Head
E. Harmston	29	F		Married	Wife of head
E. Harmston	4	F			Daughter of head
F. Harmston	1	F			Daughter of head
A. Marriott	19	F	House servant	Single	Servant
A. Gillis (Gillins ?)	17	F	House servant	Single	Servant
R. Weston	29	M	Farm servant	Single	Servant
W. Wilkinson	18	M	Agricultural labourer	Single	Servant
J. Kirk	22	M	Carrier	Single	Lodger
William Thorpe	45	M	Cattle dealer	Single	Lodger

Table 7.3: Household of William Harmston, Digby, 1851. Source: the 1851 census

A wider definition of the household which included lodgers and borders has been noted by Schurer and Mills.²⁵ Lodging was an important means of support both for individual relief seekers and for the residential household unit in the form of rent payments. Such can be seen in the household of Ann Robson, a forty-five-year-old unmarried smock frock maker, in the parish of study of Ruskington in the 1851 census. This household

²⁵ Schurer and Mills, 'Family and Household Structure', pp.281-283

included herself; her eighty-year-old widowed mother who was in receipt of poor law relief; Thomas Cator, a fifty-seven-year-old unmarried lodger; and the lodger Humphrey Curt, a seventy-seven-year-old widower poor law recipient. Again, the household economy presents itself here as an amalgamation of differing avenues, utilising work, poor law payments and rent payments from lodgers. Lodging was also a common means of support for the unmarried, widow or widower relief recipient, with the household of Thomas Cook in Leadenham including two pauper lodgers in the 1851 census; Margaret Cook and Elizabeth Towers, both widows and aged seventy-two and sixty respectively. Similarly, the Harmston household in Digby in the 1851 census included two unmarried male lodgers (table 7.3). However, there needs to be a differentiation between lodging with family members and non-relations. Although females dominated amongst residential paupers lodging in the parish selection in the 1851 census, supporting Goose's claims that female lodgers were generally more attractive in part due to domestic skills,²⁶ a greater proportion of resident male paupers aged over fifty lodged with non-relations (figure 7.1). Such feeds into Finch's suggestion that family support predominated in both the female and aged experiences.²⁷ When lodging with relations, most elderly resident pauper lodgers in the parish selection in the 1851 census were aged parents living in the household of their children, primarily married daughters. There was seemingly less familial support, at least regarding co-residence, for elderly male paupers, particularly the unmarried. This confirms the gendered differentiation of relief outcomes which blurred definitions between elderly and able-bodied males already noted, as well as denoting the importance of the nuclear family, formed via marriage, in support options for the needy, particularly for aged parents.

²⁶ Nigel Goose, 'Poverty, Old Age and Gender in Nineteenth-Century England: The Case of Hertfordshire', *Continuity and Change*, 20 (2005), p.353 and p.368

²⁷ Finch, 'Do Families Support Each Other More or Less than in the Past?', pp.99-104

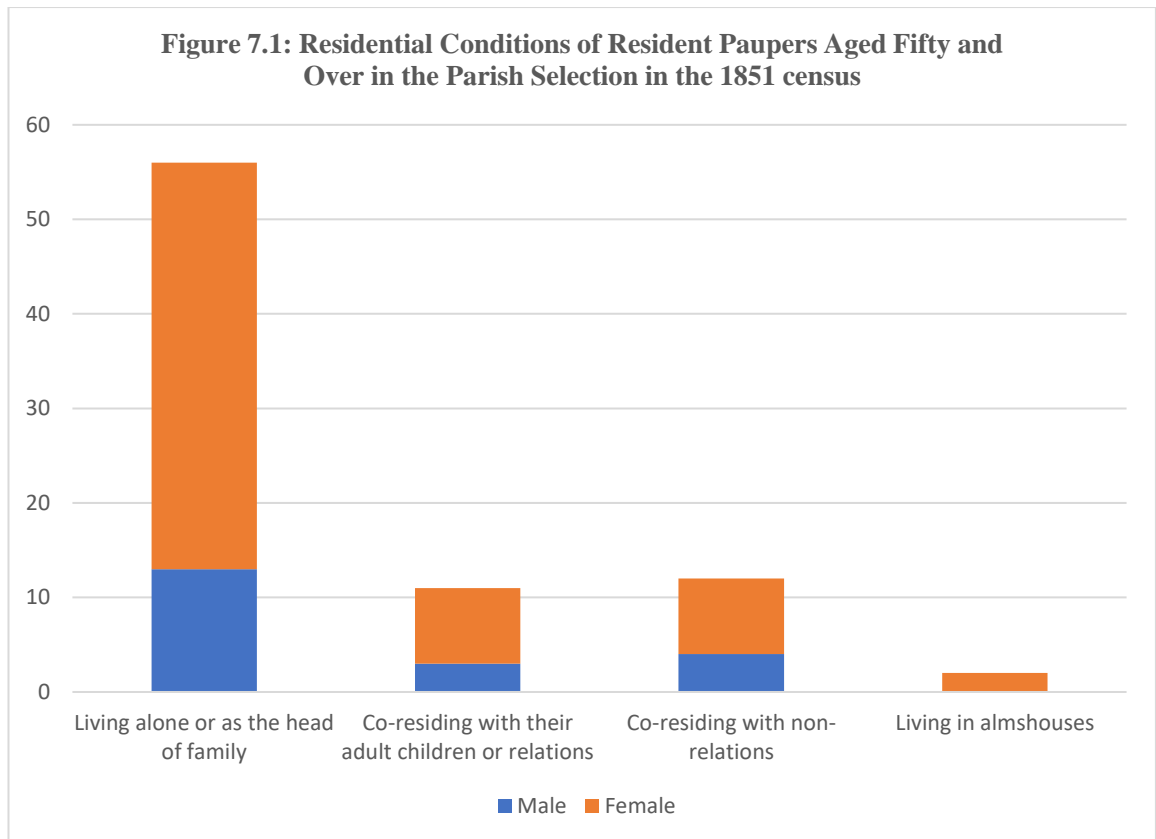


Figure 7.1: Residential Conditions of Resident Paupers Aged Fifty and Over in the Parish Selection in the 1851 census. Source: the 1851 census

However, despite this, independent living, either alone or more commonly as a head of a dependent household, was the most common residential condition for paupers aged fifty and over living within the parish selection in the 1851 census (figure 7.1). Agency on the part of the aged themselves suggests that they ‘placed a high priority on maintaining household autonomy.’²⁸ As stated, the limited and often unsatisfactory nature of housing within the parish selection meant that opportunities for co-residence with relations may have been sparse, particularly in light of the frequent short-distance migration exhibited by the parish selections’ population necessitated by employment structures and the tied nature of much housing. Therefore, the maintenance of a separate household for the elderly may have been a necessity. As shown in figure 7.1, elderly females dominated in this respect, fuelled by the fact that they were a dominant cohort

²⁸ Susannah Ottaway, ‘The Old Woman’s Home in Eighteenth Century England’, in Pat Thane and Lynn Botelho (eds), *Women and Ageing in British Society since 1500* (London and New York: Routledge, 2001), p.113

amongst poor law relief recipients and that aged men were more likely to be provided with indoor relief, particularly under the New Poor Law. The evidence from the parish selection highlights that the maintenance of a separate household was the reality for many relief recipients in the parish selection well into the New Poor Law, necessitating the consolidation of numerous avenues of support to maintain independence, none more so than recourse to the poor law.

7.3 The Poor Law

a) Indoor relief

i) The Old Poor Law

Within Lincolnshire indoor relief was a feature of the poor law well before 1834, with 26% of county parishes having a workhouse by 1815.²⁹ The parish selection saw a high concentration of workhouses under the Old Poor Law with 70% of parishes of study having these and with Ashby de la Launde providing indoor relief in the Lincoln House of Industry from 1796.³⁰ Interestingly, Kang's research on the ecology of workhouse provision in Hampshire has noted a high proportion of parishes in pastoral areas having workhouses under the Old Poor Law, mirroring provision found within the area of study which throughout the latter eighteenth century largely exhibited a pastoral agricultural economy.³¹ The reasons for this apparent link need further research but are perhaps linked to the lower population densities noted in pastoral areas and the smaller levels of poor law relief seen within them.

Definitions of what exactly constituted a workhouse under the Old Poor Law have been debated, as the workhouse space could take multiple forms.³² Indeed, Crowther has concluded that there was discussion between contemporaries about differentiation between a workhouse, where inmates were expected to work, and a poorhouse, where

²⁹ Stewart and Nicholas Bennet, *An Historical Atlas of Lincolnshire* (Hull: The University of Hull Press, 1993), p. 70

³⁰ Parishes with workhouses: Branston, Digby, Metheringham, Navenby, Ruskington, Waddington; and Leadenham

³¹ Myungsu Kang, 'Continuity and Change in a Workhouse System between the Old and New Poor Laws: The Case of Hampshire'. Conference paper. *Poverty, Poor Relief and Policy in Britain and Beyond c.1600-1900*. Canterbury Christ Church University. Tuesday 12th April 2022

³² Steven King, 'Poverty, Medicine, and the Workhouse in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries: An Afterword', in Jonathan Reinarz and Leonard Schwarz (eds), *Medicine and the Workhouse* (Woodbridge: Boydell and Brewer, 2013), p.229

they were not, with both terms generally used interchangeably during the eighteenth century.³³ No matter the semantic debate, within the parish selection, Old Poor Law parish workhouses evidently operated on a much smaller scale than future union ones. An 1816 inventory for Navenby's shows a building of five rooms which contained six beds.³⁴ Working on the assumption that each bed could sleep two individuals, a maximum workhouse inmate capacity of twelve may be suggested. Similarly, an 1820 inventory of goods in the Digby workhouse lists three beds, thus perhaps suggesting a maximum inmate capacity of six individuals. The smaller size of parish workhouses is also supported by the fact the average monthly number of inmates within the Leadenham workhouse was 5.8 between 1808 and 1818.³⁵ Architecturally, these workhouses were essentially converted domestic buildings, with the Navenby vestry purchasing a cottage for conversion into a workhouse in 1789.³⁶ The Ruskington workhouse was described as 'a place of no recent architecture, constituted of...stone timbered with wood...and covered over with reed thatch.'³⁷ Waddington's overseers' accounts give an idea of what the interior of such workhouses looked like.³⁸ In 1825, a ladder was bought 'for the poor House Chamber,' suggesting a building with a second storey accessed via a ladder typical of domestic cottages.³⁹ It was also thatched, with a new roof being paid for in 1822.

There has been surprisingly little work done on the place of workhouses within the economy of makeshifts, with the experience of the workhouse inmate framed as one of institutionalisation rather than as a discrete and often temporary option within overall support strategies. Under both poor laws, the boundaries of workhouses were permeable, with relief recipients moving between indoor and outdoor relief within holistic schemas of support. For example, Mary Webb entered the Digby parish workhouse for around six months in 1806 before being moved by the overseer to lodge

³³ Margaret Crowther, *The Workhouse System, 1834-1929: A History of an English Social Institution* (London: Methuen, 1983), p.24

³⁴ Navenby Parish 13/2/3, LA

³⁵ Digby Parish 13/1, LA; Reeve 10/2, LA

³⁶ Navenby Parish 13/2/1/14, LA

³⁷ Gillian Corsellis, *Notorious Disorderlies and other 19th Century Ruskington Residents: From the Recordings Made by Thomas Ogden between 1826 and 1878* (Lincoln: Tucann Design & Print, 2007), p.66

³⁸ Waddington Parish 13/2, LA

³⁹ Surviving examples of such cottages can be seen at 'Mrs. Smith's Cottage', a heritage site ran by North Kesteven Council in Navenby; and at 'the Village Church Farm', an open-air agricultural museum at Skegness.

in the house of John Winter for a further five.⁴⁰ Three elderly inmates in the Ruskington workhouse in 1800 were in receipt of parish pensions, suggesting individualised support systems incorporating indoor relief and other forms of support.⁴¹ Such fluidity between relief given within and without parish workhouses is also emphasised by material assemblages utilised by relief recipients, with inmates bringing in their own goods and parish-owned amenities leaving the workhouse to be used in the parish. Judging by inventories of Samuel Woods and Robert Pacey's belongings in the Digby workhouse in 1821, inmates had considerably more personal material assemblages than allowed for by the regulated and theoretically depersonalised material experience of the New Poor Law union workhouse (table 7.4). The variety and amount of these goods seems to suggest that relief recipients were taking everything they possessed into workhouses. For example, alongside furniture and other domestic items, Samuel Woods brought a mirror; twelve knives and forks; six tablespoons; three shelves; and four pictures into the Digby workhouse. Similarly, Robert Pacey had 'five glass bottles'; 'a looking glass'; 'half a dozen Knives and Forks'; and a 'Childs chair' with him in the workhouse.

However, some of these items were parish property which had previously been used by inmates within their own residence. This is a new observation within the literature and reinforces the notion of the workhouse boundary as permeable. In Digby, parish goods were lent to Robert Pacey, the same individual who was in the parish workhouse in 1821, by the overseer in November 1820.⁴² These were a significant collection of household furniture and belongings, including a bed, a table and a chest.⁴³ Similarly, at Navenby, furniture belong to the parish which had previously been in the workhouse was listed as being used by two relief recipients (Richard Bodes and Peter Priest) inside their own homes in 1816.⁴⁴ These include beds, blankets and a 'small box.' These assemblages could be substantial with the work of Harley exploring the material culture of the poor law primarily via inventories across the Old Poor Law.⁴⁵ An inventory of

⁴⁰ Digby Parish 13/1, LA

⁴¹ Ruskington Parish 13/1, LA

⁴² Digby Parish 13/1, LA

⁴³ Ibid

⁴⁴ Navenby Parish 13/2/3, LA

⁴⁵ Joseph Harley, *Norfolk Pauper Inventories, c.1690-1834* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2022); Joseph Harley, 'Pauper Inventories, Social Relations and the Nature of Poor Relief under the Old Poor Law, England c.1601-1834', *Historical Journal*, 62 (2019), pp.375-398; Joseph Harley, 'Material Lives of the Poor and their Strategic use of the Workhouse during the Final Decades of the English Old Poor Law', *Continuity and Change*, 30 (2015), pp. 71-103

parish owned goods lent to John Hogdon by Navenby in December 1816 lists among other things seven chairs; six tables; one swill tub; 1 pail for water; two beds; two chests; and a crib.⁴⁶ Thus, parish workhouses, alongside their role of providing indoor relief, seem to have been used as repositories of parish material assemblages, with both goods and individuals moving between the workhouse and residences within the parish.

Samuel Woods	Robert Pacey
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Chaff bed ● Blankets and Bed Clothing ● Three Boxes ● Two Chairs ● Round Table ● Two Panshions ● Bucket and Kettle ● Two tin pans ● Cake pan ● Cloaths Basket ● Tea Cady ● Nine Glass Bottles ● Two Stand Iornes ● Four Pictures ● A Looking Glass ● Small Basket Water pippin ● A Bowl ● Tinderbox Fire Irons ● ½ dozen Knives and Forks ● Three Shelves a Broiler ● Six Tablespoons ● Ten Tea spoons 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Chaff Bed Blankets ● Shetts and Bed Rug ● Two Tables ● Four Chairs ● Chest and Box ● Two Stools ● Cribb and Beding ● Tin Kettle ● Two Tin Pans ● Three Panshions ● A Pipping Tin ● Water Can ● Iron Pot ● Five Glass Bottels ● Delf pots of al Sorts ● Half a dozen Knives and Forks ● A Looking Glass ● One Candle Stick ● Two Baskets ● Tea Cady ● Six tablespoons ● Five Tea Spoons ● Tinder Box ● Two Shelves ● Two wood bottles ● Childs Chair ● A Table Flat Iron

Table 7.4: Inventories of Samuel Woods and Robert Pacey’s Household Goods in the Digby Parish Workhouse, 1821. Source: William Hosford, ‘Digby in 1801’, Appendix III, p.33; Digby Parish 13/1, LA

⁴⁶ Navenby Parish 13/6/2, LA

A focussed policy of parish workhouse use within the parish selection seemingly changed temporally across the Old Poor Law, being more prominent roughly up until the 1820s. In Leadenham, indoor relief seems to have been most pronounced in the early 1800s in the wake of the creation of the parish workhouse in 1804, with average monthly inmate numbers peaking at 10 in 1809 before decreasing to a low of 3 in 1818.⁴⁷ Although in some parishes, the use of parish workhouses lasted until the eve of unionisation, with Navenby having at least 5 inmates in its workhouse throughout 1835,⁴⁸ in most of the parish selection workhouse use under the Old Poor Law seems to have been at its most intense from the 1790s to 1820s, with rising relief levels, increasing costs and a new policy commitment in some parishes to select vestries and salaried overseer positions, as noted in chapter four, seemingly displacing the importance of parish workhouses. As such, workhouse inmates were generally always a minority of relief recipients, particularly in the post-1820 period. For example, in Navenby, there were only 4 within the parish workhouse compared to 19 individuals aided outdoors in December 1834.⁴⁹

Differentiated use of indoor relief may also be explained by the high expense of providing it. In 1802, 53% of Digby's poor law spending went on its workhouse.⁵⁰ This cost continued to increase with the parish paying 175% more in 1813 for the workhouse than it had done in 1802.⁵¹ Parallel to cost was the logistical problem of maintaining standards. As shown in chapter four, responsibility was generally contracted out to workhouse masters who could often prove negligent. Such issues can be seen in the Digby overseer accounts.⁵² The overseer had to stipulate in an 1819 contract with the workhouse master Richard Roberts that he was not entitled to 'the Goods nor Chattels' of deceased paupers and that 'they [the goods] are to remain in the House for the use of the Parish,' suggesting the appropriation of inmates' belongings before that date. Abuses led to a change in the payment system for running the workhouse. From the early 1820s, the workhouse master was paid per pauper rather than by a fixed annual sum; in 1823, the workhouse master Thomas Rooke was paid 2s 11d week for 'the

⁴⁷ Reeve 10/2, LA

⁴⁸ Navenby Parish 10/2, LA

⁴⁹ Navenby Parish 10/1, LA

⁵⁰ William Hosford, 'Digby in 1801: the Anatomy of a Lincolnshire Village', *The Lincolnshire Historian*, 2 (1955-56), p.29

⁵¹ Digby Parish 13/1, LA

⁵² Ibid

young ones' and 2s 8d per week for the 'helpless poor.' This change coincided with the adoption of an assistant overseer within Digby, suggesting alternate policies adopted to deal with the poor. However, these developments were fleeting. By 1828, Digby again had one overseer and was paying annual sums for the maintenance of the workhouse. Therefore, the experience of indoor relief under the Old Poor Law sat in dialogue with other ways of providing relief, seeing peaks and troughs in usage. There was always a tension between a policy commitment towards it and the practicalities of doing so. The creation of the Branston workhouse in 1770 stipulated: 'the Overseer shall not Relieve any Poor...from such time as the said House... be provided for the Reception of the Poor.'⁵³ However, how far such holistic tenets held fast in practice is debatable. The 1792 contract for William Robinson to maintain the Branston workhouse includes so many exceptions to suggest the centralisation of relief indoors was unobtainable:

'The following reliefe to those People Now mentioned...the woman of welingore one shilling per week; and Elizabeth Rook Sen one Shill per week; Gabril Cook one shill'g per week; mary Becket one shill per week; & Elizabeth Holly one shilling per week; and to Give four chaldron of coals to those that stand in the most Need.'⁵⁴

As with the union workhouse under the New Poor Law, work was theoretically central to the indoor experience under the Old Poor Law with Griffin stating that setting the poor to work 'was a major...practice from the...earliest days of the poor law.'⁵⁵ Work could be conducted by inmates outside of the workhouse, being hired out by workhouse masters. An 1812 contract between Navenby and the workhouse master Henry Winton outlined:

'The said Henry Winton shall have the privilege of employing the said poor at any outer Door Work and...to employ the poor people in the said House with work according to their ability...allowing them...the sum of two pence for every shilling they shall...earn to and for their own private use.'⁵⁶

⁵³ Branston Parish 10/1, LA

⁵⁴ Ibid. Punctuation added by the author to aid comprehension.

⁵⁵ Carl Griffin, 'Parish Farms and the Poor Law: A Response to Rural Unemployment in Rural Southern England, c.1815-35', *The Agricultural History Review*, 59 (2011), p.181

⁵⁶ Navenby Parish 13/2/2/1, LA

Here, unlike experiences of under the New Poor Law, inmates were paid for their work. Within parish workhouses in the parish selection, work predominantly revolved around spinning, unsurprising considering the predominance of sheep and wool within the pre-1815 pastoral agricultural economy, with the final product sold and proceeds often incorporated into the parish spending pot. Two ‘gereseey wheels’ were listed in Navenby workhouse in 1816 and the pauper John Lintin had spinning wheels owned by the parish of Branston within his house in 1792.⁵⁷ Ruskington’s overseer accounts for the 1790s to 1810s note multiple entries of sales of worsted created in the parish workhouse and throughout the 1810s, Branston parish lists the sale of cloth spun by the poor as a funding source.⁵⁸ Indeed, this was the second largest source of funding in Branston in 1813 after rate collections, showing that setting the poor to work was an important way of paying for relief. Spinning was also seen in the Lincoln House of Industry, the workhouse of the Lincoln Incorporation, where ‘the women spin the flax for clothing and sheets.’⁵⁹ As with some work conducted at parish level within workhouses, paupers were paid for their work. As stated in the House of Industry rules from 1809:

‘That in Order to excite the Poor to Industry, they shall be rewarded with a Gratuity of one-sixth Part of the Value of their Week’s Work, except in cases of Misconduct.’⁶⁰

The predominance of spinning within Lincolnshire workhouses in the latter eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries can be linked to wider drives from the Society for the Promotion of Industry, formed in Lincolnshire in 1781, which sort to promote spinning industry within the county’s workhouses to stimulate the pastoral economy.⁶¹ As Lincolnshire was a county which saw a high proportion of Old Poor Law workhouses, as well as a late eighteenth century economy dominated by wool production, there was considerable scope to elicit this.

⁵⁷ Navenby Parish 13/2/3 and Branston Parish 10/2, LA

⁵⁸ Ruskington Parish 13/1, LA; Branston Parish 13/7, LA

⁵⁹ Wylde, *Report from His Majesty’s Commissioners for Inquiring into the Administration and Practical Operation of the Poor Laws*, p.132

⁶⁰ Rule XXIII, *Bye-Laws, Rules & Ordinances Made by Virtue of the Powers Granted by An Act of Parliament Intituled An Act for the Better Relief and Employment of the Poor of the several parishes within the City of Lincoln and the County of the same City, and of the Parish of Saint Margaret, Part whereof lies within the said City, and the other part in the Close of Lincoln, in the County of Lincoln* (W. Brooke, 1809), p.19

⁶¹ Charles Brears, *Lincolnshire in the 17th and 18th Centuries* (London: Brown, 1940), p.124

However, the importance of spinning work for the poor seemed to have waned in the Lincoln Heath by the early 1820s, paralleling the decline in the importance of the workhouse in providing relief and changes in economic niche, which saw the rising importance of mixed-agrarian corn production as opposed to pastoral practice. In 1801, ‘cloth spun by the poor’ was the third largest funding source for relief in Leadenham after rate collections and the sale of barley; however, by 1819, it had disappeared as a funding avenue with money sourced almost exclusively from the poor rate.⁶² Amongst other factors, this may also emphasis a shift in sentiment away from the promotion of other types of industry aside from agricultural labour on the part of the mixed-agrarian agriculturalist interest who increasingly staffed the offices of the poor law within the parish selection. Brears has noted this, arguing that farmers disliked the creation of spinning industries because it took away from the available labour force.⁶³ The removal of spinning as a viable funding source for parishes also meant an increased reliance on rates and thus the increased dominance of leading ratepayers, largely taken from the farming class, within the administration of the poor law.

The other main locus of indoor relief relevant to the parish selection during the Old Poor Law was the Lincoln House of Industry, workhouse for the Lincoln Incorporation. Located on the outskirts of Lincoln and converted from a former glue factory, it opened in the late 1790s and operated on a much larger scale than parish workhouses, being able to hold 260 people. Inmate numbers within the House of Industry were seemingly high in the early nineteenth century, being 248 in the 1801 census and suggesting a policy emphasis on indoor relief in the immediate aftermath of the Lincoln Incorporation’s creation in 1796. However, numbers petered out over the first decades of the 1800s being 112 in 1811; 120 in 1821; and 101 in 1831.⁶⁴ By the end of the Old Poor Law, ‘the average number persons in the house for the last four years [1830-1834] was 100.’⁶⁵ Thus, as highlighted above in regard to parish workhouses, a reduction in the use of indoor relief may also be suggested in parishes incorporated into the Lincoln Incorporation. Ashby de la Launde was the only parish of study which used the House of Industry to provide indoor relief. As shown in chapter five, there was seemingly a

⁶² Reeve 10/2, LA

⁶³ Brears, *Lincolnshire in the 17th and 18th Centuries*, p.124

⁶⁴ William White, *History, Gazetteer and Directory of Lincolnshire* (Exeter: David and Charles, 1856. Reprint 1969), p.64

⁶⁵ William Wylde, *Report from His Majesty’s Commissioners for Inquiring into the Administration and Practical Operation of the Poor Laws*, p.132

reduction in the use of the workhouse between 1802 and the 1810s. In this earlier year, no permanent relief was given outdoors.⁶⁶ However, between 1812 and 1814, those relieved permanently within the Lincoln House of Industry constituted just 16-33% of total recipients. As with the union workhouses under the New Poor Law, by the early 1830s the majority of the House of Industry's long-term inmates were seemingly the non-able-bodied:

‘The only able-bodied persons there when I visited it were the mothers of illegitimate children, and two lads who had been put out to service with farmers...but had been sent back for bad behaviour.’⁶⁷

Analysis of Old Poor Law urban workhouses has been conducted, with the work of Green, Boulton, Schwarz and Black primarily examining the experience of indoor relief within Georgian London.⁶⁸ Boulton and Schwarz have noted an increase in workhouse provision in London during the 1720s and 1730s, arguing for ‘repeated bursts of institutional provision for various categories of poor persons.’⁶⁹ These were generally large institutions; to use the workhouse of St. Martin in the Fields as an example, this had over nine hundred inmates at some points after the 1770s.⁷⁰ Green has stated that within a London context, many of the key tenets of the New Poor Law in respect to indoor relief were already in place by the 1820s, with many London parishes introducing measures ‘that were later enshrined in poor law policy, including...a greater reliance on indoor relief and...an increase in workhouse provision.’⁷¹ The same author has seen a restructuring of poor law practice and administration within London within

⁶⁶ *Abstracts of Answers and Returns under the Act for Procuring Returns Relative to Expense and Maintenance of Poor in England* (London: House of Commons, 1803-04), pp.270-271

⁶⁷ Wylde, *Report from His Majesty's Commissioners for Inquiring into the Administration and Practical Operation of the Poor Laws*, pp.132-133

⁶⁸ David Green, ‘Pauper Protests: Power and Resistance in Early Nineteenth-Century London Workhouses’, *Social History*, 31 (2006), pp.137-159; David Green, ‘Icons of the New System: Workhouse Construction and Relief Practices in London under the Old and New Poor Law’, *The London Journal*, 34 (2009), pp.264-284; Jeremy Boulton and Leonard Schwarz, ‘The Comforts of a Private Fireside? The Workhouse, the Elderly and the Poor Law in Georgian Westminster: St. Martin-in-the-Fields, 1725-1824’ in Pamela Sharpe and Joanna McEwan (eds), *Accommodating Poverty: The Housing and Living Arrangements of the English Poor, c.1600-1850* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), pp.221-246; Jeremy Boulton and Leonard Schwarz, ‘The Medicalisation of a Parish Workhouse in Georgian Westminster: St. Martin in the Fields, 1725-1824’, *Family & Community History*, 17 (2014), pp.122-140; Jeremy Boulton and Jonathan Black, ‘Paupers and their Experience of a London Workhouse: St. Martin-in-the-Fields, 1725-1824’ in Jane Hamlett, Lesley Hoskins, Rebecca Preston (eds), *Residential Institutions in Britain 1725-1950: Inmates and Environments* (London: Routledge, 2015), pp.79-91

⁶⁹ Boulton and Schwarz, ‘The Medicalisation of a Parish Workhouse in Georgian Westminster’, p.123

⁷⁰ *Ibid*, p.124

⁷¹ Green, ‘Icons of the New System’, p.265

the 1820s, linked to moves to tackle rising expenditure.⁷² Although examinations of indoor relief within the metropolis may not be representational of the nation as a whole, particularly within a rural context, there were seemingly precedents to the nature of indoor relief as experienced under the New Poor Law well before 1834, with Digby and Shaw's work on rural Incorporations within East Anglia also arguing for far-reaching changes in the maintenance of relief pivoting on workhouse provision under the Old Poor Law.⁷³

Unlike parish workhouses, the Lincoln House of Industry housed paupers from across a multi-parish administrative area, was ran by a master and matron and was overseen corporately by the directors of the Lincoln Incorporation. It also provided work for inmates, as shown, and proscribed such things as dress and diet. Thus, in many general respects it mirrored the experience of the union workhouse of the New Poor Law. The rules of the House of Industry exist in printed form from 1809.⁷⁴ The diet of inmates in 1809 consisted of milk porridge for breakfast; two meat days served with vegetables, two days of pease soup and one day each of beast cheek stew, rice furmentry and yeast dumplings for dinner; and alternating days of broth, potatoes or bread and cheese for supper. This was essentially the same as the dietary of the House of Industry in 1832.⁷⁵ Meals were taken communally within a dining hall, as was the case in later union workhouses. Entrance rituals to the House of Industry noted in the 1809 rules read very similar to those imposed in workhouses under the New Poor Law, focussing on disinfection and the giving of new clothes to inmates:

‘That to avoid Distempers....[paupers to be] carefully examined and washed and...new clothed...the old Cloaths to be well cleaned; and, if there be a Probability that such a Person will be discharged from the House, her or her old Cloaths shall be kept, in order to be re-delivered.’⁷⁶

In the late 1820s, the clothing of inmates was described:

⁷² Ibid, pp.269-270

⁷³ Anne Digby, *Pauper Palaces* (Boston: Routledge, 1978); John Shaw, *The Loes and Wilford Poor Law Incorporation 1765-1826: A Prison with a Milder Name* (Suffolk: The Boydell Press, 2019)

⁷⁴ *Bye-Laws, Rules & Ordinances*

⁷⁵ *State of the Accounts of the Lincoln House of Industry from the First Wednesday in June 1832 to the First Wednesday in June 1833*, 36th Annual Report (Lincoln: R.E Leary, 1833), p.417

⁷⁶ Rule X, *Bye-Laws, Rules & Ordinances*, p.14

‘All inmates of the House [should] be...clothes with the dress of the Institution...That the dress for every female inmate...consist of a black bonnet or...white cap, dark cotton gown and slip, a red flannel petticoat, black stockings and blue neckerchiefs...the dress of male inmates consist...of a complete suit of grey cloth.’⁷⁷

Similarly, the ability for paupers to absent themselves from the House of Industry was controlled with the 1809 rules stating that inmates needed the permission of the master or matron to leave the house for any reason.⁷⁸ Restrictions on leaving the house, alongside constraints on food, were used as punishments within the House, as would later be the case within union workhouses, discussed in detail below. In 1832, it was described that:

‘The inmates are not allowed to leave the house...without permission from the directors...the idle and dissolute, if able-bodied, are restricted in their diet and employed in laborious work: by these means, paupers...seldom remain long at the house.’⁷⁹

Ottaway and Mason’s recent work on the House of Industry at Gressenhall, Norfolk gives some insight into the character of indoor relief within an Old Poor Law rural Incorporation.⁸⁰ They have noted ‘a remarkable fluidity’⁸¹ in pauper movement within the building with differing cohorts of inmates mixing together, particularly in communal areas such as family rooms and the dining room. However, the same authors have shown that this was de facto reality of life within the institution rather than intention as the ‘building sought to carve out unique spaces for different types of poor’⁸² albeit failing in practice. Thus, there were seemingly similar theoretical underpinnings to workhouse architecture between Old Poor Law Incorporations and New Poor Law unions, pivoting on the division of space to separate differing pauper groupings. Issues of segregation were apparent in the Lincoln House of Industry with it being noted in the

⁷⁷ Peter Higginbotham, ‘Lincoln, Lincolnshire.’ Available at: <https://www.workhouses.org.uk/Lincoln/> [Accessed 31st March 2022]

⁷⁸ Rule XXVII, *Bye-Laws, Rules & Ordinances*, p.20

⁷⁹ Wylde, *Report from His Majesty’s Commissioners for Inquiring into the Administration and Practical Operation of the Poor Laws*, p.132

⁸⁰ Susannah Ottaway and Austin Mason, ‘Reconsidering Poor Law Institutions by Virtually Reconstructing and Re-viewing an Eighteenth-Century Workhouse’, *The Historical Journal*, 64 (2021), pp.557-582

⁸¹ *Ibid*, p.559

⁸² *Ibid*

1830s that the building was ‘deficient in the means of separation, classification and discipline’⁸³ due to its conversion from a glue factory, meaning inmates were not separated by gender or pauper-type and therefore the institution was ‘not conducive to the moral improvement of the inmates.’⁸⁴ This focus on the moral improvement of the poor was noted in Lincoln from at least the 1820s with the House of Industry described in 1828 as ‘unfavorable to the good morals of the young, from the impossibility of preserving a classification and separation.’⁸⁵ Here, as debates around poverty and the poor law increasingly took a moral dimension in the early decades of the nineteenth century, the Lincoln House of Industry was increasingly seen by some as lacking in the necessary components to run an effective relief system, with a fear of moral contagion between differing paupers classes evident. Such an emphasis on segregation, classification and de-contagion became a central doctrine of the 1834 Poor Law Amendment Act leading Driver to conclude that the New Poor Law ‘encompassed questions of moral regulation as well as administrative efficiency.’⁸⁶ The epitome of such a stance was the union workhouse.⁸⁷

ii) The New Poor Law

One of the biggest changes to the operational framing of the poor law after 1834 and claimed evidence for the radicality of the 1834 Poor Law Amendment Act was the creation of a union workhouse within every poor law union.⁸⁸ Indeed, Darwen has called the union workhouse ‘the...embodiment of pauperism and enduring symbol of nineteenth century welfare provision.’⁸⁹ At the national level, the potential for indoor relief became markedly more pronounced under the New Poor Law, much more so than workhouse provision before which was based on the implementation of enabling legislation and varied widely across the country. Williams has seen the period between 1834 and 1870 as one of a ‘programme for replacing parish workhouses with fewer

⁸³ Wylde, *Report from His Majesty's Commissioners for Inquiring into the Administration and Practical Operation of the Poor Laws*, p.132

⁸⁴ *Ibid*, p.145

⁸⁵ *The Stamford Mercury*, August 29th 1828

⁸⁶ Felix Driver, *Power and Pauperism: The Workhouse System, 1834-1884* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993) p.18

⁸⁷ Snell, *Parish and Belonging*, p.211; David Green, ‘Icons of the New System: Workhouse Construction and Relief Practices in London under the Old and New Poor Law’, *The London Journal*, 34 (2009), p.264

⁸⁸ Samantha Williams, ‘Paupers Behaving Badly: Punishment in the Victorian Workhouse’, *Journal of British Studies*, 59 (2020), p.765

⁸⁹ Lewis Darwen, ‘Workhouse Populations of the Preston Union, 1841-61’, *Local Population Studies*, 93 (2015), p.33

larger union workhouses.⁹⁰ The same author has seen this process as most intense in rural areas, particularly in the mid to late 1830s.⁹¹ The building of one substantially larger centralised workhouse in every union, as opposed to multiple parish workhouses within a proximate area, has been linked by Crowther to the deterrent purpose of indoor relief in the Poor Law Amendment Act, culminating in an explicit shift in regard to both workhouse provision and purpose, with the union workhouse being ‘a more potent symbol of the new law than a series of familiar parish poorhouses.’⁹² This is a view shared by Driver who has also seen deterrence as central to the union workhouse, with the building becoming ‘a powerful symbol of an entirely new approach to relief provision.’⁹³ Thus, the issue of ‘less eligibility’ was central to the construction and experience of the union workhouse; indoor relief was to become a deterrent tool, with conditions being theoretically less attractive than the living standards of the lowest independent labourer.⁹⁴ Therefore, the union workhouse played both a symbolic and practical function under the New Poor Law.

Both unions of study opened union workhouses in early 1838. Sleaford union workhouse was the smallest in Lincolnshire, initially designed to hold 181 inmates but with increases in accommodation in the 1840s that meant by 1854 it had a capacity for 265. It had a cruciform layout and was similar in appearance to Ely union workhouse.⁹⁵ Lincoln was built for a capacity of 350, the second largest workhouse in the county in 1838 and with an overall capacity 35% larger than the previous House of Industry. It was designed by William Adams Nicholson who also designed Southwell union workhouse in neighbouring Nottinghamshire.⁹⁶

⁹⁰ Karel Williams, *From Pauperism to Poverty* (London: Routledge, 1981), p.79

⁹¹ Ibid

⁹² Crowther, *The Workhouse System*, p.40

⁹³ Driver, *Power and Pauperism*, p.64

⁹⁴ Peter Jones and Steven King, *Pauper Voices, Public Opinion and Workhouse Reform in Mid-Victorian England: Bearing Witness* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2020), p.3

⁹⁵ Peter Higginbotham, ‘Sleaford, Lincolnshire.’ Available at: <http://www.workhouses.org.uk/Sleaford/> [Accessed on 15th December 2021]. A picture of the workhouse in the latter nineteenth century can be found at Andy Hubbert, ‘Nostalgia with Sleaford Museum: Life in Sleaford’s Workhouse’. Available at: <https://www.lincolnshireworld.com/news/people/nostalgia-with-sleaford-museum-life-in-sleafords-workhouse-2897313> [Accessed on 15th December 2021]

⁹⁶ Peter Higginbotham, ‘Lincoln, Lincolnshire.’ Available at: <http://www.workhouses.org.uk/Lincoln/> [Accessed on 15th December 2021]

Life indoors was often moulded by the deterring purpose of the union workhouse, reflecting a conscious shift towards control, categorisation and moral reform.⁹⁷ This was exemplified by such things as separation, work, clothing and diet, factors which Crowther has called ‘the enduring priorities of the workhouse system.’⁹⁸ Inmates were segregated in wards via gender and pauper type, albeit with rules for separating married couples aged over sixty relaxed in 1847.⁹⁹ Driver has seen the separation of inmates into distinct pauper classes, all with their own areas of habitation and work within the workhouse site, as integral to the operation of the New Poor law, citing its use as a deterrent factor; used in differentiating treatment between pauper type; and an outcome of a moralised view of pauperism, with separation aiming to prevent moral ‘contagion’, particularly in regard to the influence of adults on children.¹⁰⁰ Poor Law Commission workhouse rules outlined seven categories of indoor poor, split but mirrored via gender: old or infirm men; able-bodied men; boys aged 7 to 15; aged or infirm women; able-bodied women; girls aged 7 to 15; and children aged below 7.¹⁰¹ These classes were reaffirmed in the Consolidated General Order of 1847. Such categorisation differed from the experience of indoor relief within the parish selection under the Old Poor Law, where in both parish workhouses and the Lincoln House of Industry inmates of all ages and genders were seemingly mixed. As we have seen, concerns about lack of separation between inmate cohorts and the moral issues this may have engendered were prevalent in regard to the Lincoln House of Industry from at least the late 1820s. Thus, the building of new union workhouses answered such fears, with the New Poor Law rolling such policy out on the national level.

The etymology of the workhouse implied that it was a place of work. In contrast to work conducted in workhouses within the parish selection under the Old Poor Law, which often contributed financially to the cost of providing relief or where paupers received some payment for their employment, work within the union workhouse was to act as a deterrent, it was done ‘not for profit or use, but because it was irksome.’¹⁰² Work was to theoretically be for all able-bodied inmates, although the exact nature of

⁹⁷ Paul Carter, Jeff James and Steven King, ‘Punishing Paupers? Control, Discipline and Mental Health in the Southwell Workhouse’, *Rural History*, 30 (2019), pp.211-212; Driver, *Power and Pauperism*, p.65

⁹⁸ Crowther, *The Workhouse System*, p.41

⁹⁹ *Ibid*, p.43

¹⁰⁰ Driver, *Power and Pauperism*, pp.64-65

¹⁰¹ *Ibid*, p.64

¹⁰² Crowther, *The Workhouse System*, p.198

this was down to local discretion.¹⁰³ A mill was erected in the Sleaford union workhouse by January 1839,¹⁰⁴ described in 1841 as ‘a hard flour mill...with an index showing the progress of work.’¹⁰⁵ In order to discourage vagrancy, the Sleaford guardians ordered in 1844 that vagrants would have to grind corn for 4 hours a day, as opposed to 3 hours as before.¹⁰⁶ Similarly, able-bodied inmates were to pick oakum or grind corn.¹⁰⁷ An 1852 report into workhouse employment shows that at Sleaford, inmates worked at ‘tailoring, shoe making, grinding barley, picking oakum, sewing, knitting, general household work,’¹⁰⁸ as well as cultivating the workhouse garden. In the Lincoln union workhouse inmates ground barley and oats; crushed beans in a hand mill; quarried and broke stones; gardened; sewed, knitted and made clothes for inmates; and did general domestic tasks.¹⁰⁹ However, how far conducting punitive tasks was the typical experience of indoor relief recipients is questionable, with the 1852 report listing only 33 and 15 able-bodied inmates in the Sleaford and Lincoln workhouses respectively.¹¹⁰ The debate here is whether such work was limited to the able-bodied or had a wider remit, with Crowther claiming that most work was done by children, women and the aged.¹¹¹ Certainly, all adult inmates were expected to work within the Sleaford union workhouse:

‘Every adult Person not suffering under any temporary or permanent Infirmary of Body...Work shall not be required from any person to whose age, strength, and capacity it appears not to be suited.’¹¹²

However, as shown in the source above, there were caveats which exempted inmates from work. Often, the decision that a pauper was suitable for work would have been made by workhouse staff, with the lines between the able-bodied and non-able-bodied blurred dependent on context. However, if the definition of work is widened away from prescribed punitive tasks to encompass domestic work, it is clear that a larger section of

¹⁰³ *The Stamford Mercury*, December 2nd 1836

¹⁰⁴ PL12/102/1, p.317

¹⁰⁵ *The Stamford Mercury*, June 11th 1841

¹⁰⁶ *Sleaford Poor Law Union Correspondence, 1843-1847*, MH12/6764, NA

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid*

¹⁰⁸ *Return, from Each of the Poor Law Unions in England, Wales and Ireland, showing, what Kinds of Employment, if any, are carried out in the respective Workhouses, or on Land attached to them* (London: The House of Commons, 1853), p.19

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid*

¹¹⁰ *Ibid*

¹¹¹ Crowther, *The Workhouse System*, p.199

¹¹² *Sleaford Poor Law Union Correspondence, 1843-1847*, MH12/6764, NA

the inmate host were engaged in it. As already suggested in chapter four, inmates themselves were integral to the running of union workhouses due to limitations in staffing. Such is made clear in an episode from the Sleaford union in 1843. In that year, Richard Ward, master of Sleaford union workhouse, was reprimanded for not keeping adequate accounts. He claimed he was too busy with the day-to-day maintenance of the workhouse to do so, with his reply to the Poor Law Commission emphasising the realities of workhouse life:

‘The whole of the food was prepared by us...we had no schoolmaster, no schoolmistress, no porter, nurse, or cook...we had none but pauper assistance.’¹¹³

Thus, work in multiple forms was clearly central to the experience of indoor relief under the New Poor Law.

When entering a union workhouse, an individual would be provided with a new set of clothes, as had also been the case within the Lincoln House of Industry under the Old Poor Law. In 1837, the Lincoln union ordered ‘50 suits of clothes for...men...[of] grey cloth & drab’¹¹⁴ to be used as workhouse clothing, interestingly the same colour as the previous House of Industry pauper clothing. Similarly, clothing given to inmates in the Sleaford workhouse consisted of jackets, waistcoats, striped blue shirts and trousers for men; light grey suits for male children; and dresses, cotton shifts and caps for females.¹¹⁵ Importantly, these were marked with buttons emblazoned with ‘Sleaford Union’, emphasising a hallmarking of individuals with the identity of pauper reminiscent on Hindle’s work on the badging of the poor under the Old Poor Law.¹¹⁶ Thus, there was perhaps a sense that clothing imposed a new identity on relief recipients, advertising that this person was a workhouse inmate, an aspect of indoor relief generally lacking within the parish selection under the Old Poor Law outside of the experience of the Lincoln House of Industry. Indeed, the fact that pauper clothing in the Lincoln House of Industry and Lincoln union workhouse was the same colour potentially enabled cognitive continuity in this respect between poor laws, marking wearers out as workhouse inmates. However, how far workhouse clothing was intended

¹¹³ *Sleaford Poor Law Union Correspondence, 1843-1847*, MH12/6764, NA. Underlining in the original.

¹¹⁴ PL10/118/1, LA

¹¹⁵ PL12/102/1, p.183, LA

¹¹⁶ Steve Hindle, ‘Dependency, Shame and Belonging: Badging the Deserving Poor, c.1550-1750’, *The Journal of the Social History Society*, 1 (2004), pp.6-35

to be a stigmatising ‘uniform’ has recently been explored by Jones, King and Thompson.¹¹⁷ These commentators have argued that clothing was not intended to shame inmates but was instead a practical response to the necessity of maintaining a workhouse, primarily there to stop the risk of disease entering and to provide a robust wardrobe which would be transferable between many different individuals as they entered and left.¹¹⁸ As such, providing new clothing for individuals entering the workhouse, alongside other ‘rituals of entrance’¹¹⁹ to use Crowther’s phrasing, such as inspection by a medical officer and bathing, were perhaps intended as pragmatic responses to administrative necessities rather than a conscious effort to shame and degrade. However, whether conscious or not, the replacement of clothing at entry into a workhouse must have denoted in some respects a new identity as an inmate, with the individual becoming part of the workhouse pauper host.

Inmates’ diets were also proscribed and controlled within union workhouses. The Poor Law Commission published six example dietaries in 1835 which were then used by guardians to form workhouse diets within unions, subject to permission from the Poor Law Commission. Thus, there could be clashes between guardians and the London authorities in regard to workhouse diets. For example, a three meat-day diet imposed on the Lincoln union workhouse by the Poor Law Commission despite guardians voting against this and wanting more meat days, presumably because the previous diet in the Lincoln House of Industry was more generous in this regard, as discussed below.¹²⁰ Similarly, a few months after the opening of the union workhouse, guardians in the Sleaford union asked for an increase in the weight of potatoes allowed to inmates, although it is unclear if the Poor Law Commission sanctioned this request.¹²¹ Table 7.5 shows the Lincoln union workhouse diet in 1838 and illustrates a differentiation based on gender, age and the discretion of workhouse staff. However, workhouse diets were not static under the early decades of the New Poor Law, with the Sleaford union workhouse changing dietary in 1842, albeit not drastically so from that allowed in 1838 with the only major difference seemingly being the removal of rice from the diet.¹²²

¹¹⁷ Peter Jones, Steven King and Karen Thompson, ‘Clothing the New Poor Law workhouse in the nineteenth century’, *Rural History*, 32 (2021), pp.127-148

¹¹⁸ *Ibid*, p.143

¹¹⁹ Crowther, *The Workhouse System*, p.193

¹²⁰ Hill, *Victorian Lincoln*, p.133

¹²¹ PL12/102/1, p.221, LA

¹²² PL12/102/1, p.309, LA; *Sleaford Poor Law Union Correspondence, 1838-1842*, MH12/6773, NA

Breakfast consisted of bread and gruel. Dinner alternated between meat days, served with potatoes or vegetables, and soup and yeast dumpling days. Supper was bread, broth and cheese, which could be substituted by those aged above sixty for tea, butter and sugar by order of the guardians. As in the 1838 Lincoln union workhouse dietary, food revolved predominantly around bread; gruel, porridge and broth; and alternating meat and yeast dumpling days. In both unions, there was differentiation based on gender, age and pauper type, with sickness diets proscribed by medical officers.

Higginbotham has examined the history of workhouse diets and has argued that nutritional value is an anachronistic term for the 1830s, with the Poor Law Commission being more concerned with the weight of food, proscribing how much of each foodstuff was allowed.¹²³ Amongst the able-bodied, females were generally allowed less than men, as shown in the Lincoln workhouse diet from 1838 (table 7.5). Here, bread rations were 5 or 6 ounces, meat set at 5 ounces but with vegetable and dumpling portions ranging from between 12 and 14 ounces. These weights were comparable to the diet adopted in the Sleaford union workhouse in 1842, albeit with the Sleaford dietary being more generous in regard to bread, allowing 6 to 7 ounces dependent on gender.¹²⁴ Thus, there were differences between workhouse diets due to differing weights of food and the fact that multiple example dietaries were available from the Poor Law Commission. If the union workhouses' dietaries are compared to that of the Lincoln House of Industry from 1809, both similarities and differences are apparent.¹²⁵ Firstly, the basic food stuffs between all dietaries were broadly similar, focussing on bread, broth, porridge, limited meat and vegetables, and dumplings. However, the weight of food allowed in the Lincoln House of Industry, particularly in regard to meat, was heavier than that seen in the union workhouses of study, with the House of Industry giving 8 ounces of meat in 1809 compared to 5 in both union workhouses of study. Indeed, a child's portion of meat in the Lincoln House of Industry was of comparable weight to that received by an adult able-bodied inmate in the union workhouses of study under the New Poor Law. Unfortunately, the diets of inmates within parish workhouses of study under the Old Poor Law are difficult to ascertain. However, it appears that in comparison to larger

¹²³ Peter Higginbotham, *The Workhouse Cookbook: a History of the Workhouse and its Food* (Stroud: the History Press, 2008), p.56

¹²⁴ *Sleaford Poor Law Union Correspondence, 1838-1842*, MH12/6773, NA

¹²⁵ *Bye-Laws, Rules & Ordinances*, pp.11-12

institutions such as the Lincoln House of Industry, workhouse diets under the New Poor Law provided smaller quantities of food, at least in regard to meat.

Apart from a pragmatic dietary role, food was seemingly used to maintain discipline within workhouses. Crowther has claimed that additions to or restricting diet was a mechanism for punishment or reward within workhouses.¹²⁶ Such can seemingly be evidenced within the Sleaford union workhouse, particularly in regard to punishment for bad behaviour. Out of the thirty entries between 1853 and 1859 in the union's workhouse punishment book, 60% had the restriction of food listed as part of the punishment administered.¹²⁷ For example, Eliza Lockey had her usual butter and tea allowance removed from her for not attending to her work in October 1854.¹²⁸ Therefore, the control of food within union workhouses did not just play a functional role, but was often linked to authority and punishment.

¹²⁶ Crowther, *The Workhouse System*, pp.213-214

¹²⁷ PL12/302/14, LA

¹²⁸ Ibid

	Breakfast	Dinner	Supper
Monday	A pint of porridge 6 oz of bread (male) 5 oz of bread (female)	Yeast, flour or suet dumplings: 14 oz (male) and 12 oz (female)	Half a pint of milk 6 oz. of bread (male) 5 oz. of bread (female) 1.5 oz. of cheese to be substituted for the milk every alternative night (at the administration's discretion)
Tuesday	“	A pint of broth 6 oz of bread (male) 5 oz of bread (female)	“
Wednesday	“	5 oz of meat and 12 oz of potatoes	“
Thursday	“	A pint of broth 6 oz of bread (male) 5 oz of bread (female)	“
Friday	“	5 oz of meat and 12 oz of potatoes	“
Saturday	“	Yeast, flour or suet dumplings: 14 oz (male) and 12 oz (female)	“
Sunday	“	5 oz of meat and 12 oz of potatoes	“

Additions: Inmates aged 60+ , instead of porridge for breakfast and at the administration's discretion: 1 oz of tea; 5 oz of butter; and 7 oz of sugar.

Children under 9 dieted at the administrators discretion.

Table 7.5: Lincoln Union Workhouse, 1838. Source: *The Lincolnshire Chronicle*, May 4th 1838

Driver has seen one of the purposes of the union workhouse as ‘moral reformation through institutional design.’¹²⁹ Thus, the New Poor Law and the union workhouse in particular included aspirations of moral change within their fabric, underpinned by a laissez fair ideology which would transform paupers into productive and self-controlled labourers.¹³⁰ No clearer was such sentiments expressed than in attitudes towards child inmates.¹³¹ Within the union workhouses of study, an emphasis was placed on education and moral betterment, corresponding to Driver’s conclusions about general poor law policy towards children.¹³² In the Sleaford union workhouse, a small library was formed of religious and instructional texts which was used by the schoolmaster and mistress as well as other paupers.¹³³ Similarly, children from the workhouse were to go to church every Sunday in the company of the schoolmaster and mistress, albeit with this having cognates under the Old Poor Law in the parish selection as the Governor and Governess of the Navenby parish workhouse had to attend church with inmates and children from the workhouse who attended the parish school for free.¹³⁴ By 1850, both union workhouses of study had gardens for male children to learn agricultural skills, emphasising that education within the workhouse could focus on practical skills needed within the primarily farming economy of the area of study.¹³⁵ Notions of improvement, cleanliness and healthiness were stressed for children from the very outset of the opening of the union workhouses of study, in part due to the perceived deservingness of child paupers and in order to appease anti-New Poor Law rhetoric. The treatment of children in the Lincoln workhouse described in 1838:

‘The playgrounds for the young, with a covered area for their gambols in wet weather and gymnastic pole for their healthful recreation... The baths...in which each male child is immersed once a week...boys under 14 are placed two in a bed, but after that age they are separated; while the girls under 16 are placed two in a bed,- the very young female children have a strong and able girl for a partner.’¹³⁶

¹²⁹ Driver, *Power and Pauperism*, p.11

¹³⁰ Ibid, pp.23-25; Crowther, *The Workhouse System*, p.13 and pp.54-55

¹³¹ Crowther; *The Workhouse System*, p.201

¹³² Driver, *Power and Pauperism*, p.96

¹³³ PL12/102/1, p.375, LA

¹³⁴ Ibid, p.385; Navenby Parish 13/2/2/1, LA

¹³⁵ *The Stamford Mercury*, September 13th 1850; *Reports by H.M Inspectors of Schools on Workhouse Schools, 1848-50* (London: House of Commons, 1850), p.60 and p.84

¹³⁶ *The Stamford Mercury*, November 16th 1838

However, to move away from a thematic focus towards a chronological one, it is worth noting that the opening of union workhouses was generally not temporally parallel to unionisation, albeit with the majority of unions nationally, where information on formation date and the launching of a new workhouse existing, opening a new union workhouse within half a decade of unionisation.¹³⁷ This meant there was often a transitional period between unionisation and the opening of a union workhouse which pragmatically affected the maintenance of paupers. The parish selection was unionised in 1836 with the Sleaford and Lincoln union workhouses of study not opening until early 1838. Pragmatically, this meant the continued provision of outdoor relief to the able-bodied, as described in the Sleaford union where ‘many men have received outdoor relief... although possessed of a pig and potatoes, as the workhouse is not completed.’¹³⁸ Moreover, Old Poor Law workhouses were utilised to provide indoor relief until the union workhouses of study were opened in 1838. The Sleaford union also appropriated the Leadenham parish workhouse, a parish of study, to provide indoor relief in 1837.¹³⁹ In the Lincoln union, Waddington continued using its workhouse, paying the workhouse master ‘for the Poor in the House... 3 paupers’¹⁴⁰ in March 1837, six months after its incorporation into the Lincoln union. The Lincoln union also rented the old Lincoln Incorporation’s House of Industry between 1836 to 1838 to provide indoor relief, showing a continuity in infrastructural availability within localities to implement the New Poor Law in the immediate wake of unionisation.¹⁴¹ Additionally, the use of parish workhouses and the Lincoln House of Industry in the immediate year after unionisation sometimes meant a continuation of staffing, with both the master and matron of the Lincoln House of Industry keeping their positions and workhouse masters still often running workhouses at parish level. As shown in chapter four, this meant interaction with new union officials in the provision of relief. In addition, union workhouses in other poor law unions were used to house paupers. The Sleaford union sent individuals to the Claypole workhouse in the neighbouring Newark poor law union. In 1837, payments were made to this union for the indoor maintenance of seventeen

¹³⁷ Jones and King, *Pauper Voices, Public Opinion and Workhouse Reform in Mid-Victorian England*, p.13

¹³⁸ *Return of Salary, Compensation and Allowances to Clerks to Poor Law Unions in England and Wales* (London: House of Commons, 1854), p.117

¹³⁹ PL12/102/1, LA

¹⁴⁰ Waddington Parish 13/2, LA

¹⁴¹ Francis Hill, *Victorian Lincoln* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1974), p.133

paupers, three of which were from the parish selection: Ann and Elizabeth South from Digby; and Henry Felwell from Leasingham.¹⁴²

Despite this, an over emphasis on infrastructural continuation does damage to understanding the drastic changes unionisation brought to the experience of indoor relief for inmates, both pragmatically and as an emblem of policy shift under the New Poor Law as emphasised by Driver and Crowther, as discussed above.¹⁴³ Although the Lincoln union continued using the House of Industry building, life within doors changed, particularly in the provision of work for the able-bodied, a key feature of the Poor Law Amendment Act's deterrent policy. In February 1837, the Lincoln guardians stated that:

'[We] are anxious to have work for the able bodied men & youths coming into the house & thinking that they have 20 paupers able to work are afraid that one mill would not afford sufficient employment have ordered...two hand mills for grinding corn...to be put in the House of Industry... [there are] several able bodied paupers in the House who are at present kept in idleness.'¹⁴⁴

Unionisation meant that the Lincoln House of Industry, now the workhouse for the whole of the Lincoln poor law union, superseded parish workhouses, with paupers removed from these and sent to Lincoln in late 1836 and 1837. Resistance to this from paupers was evident, especially amongst the elderly who had often been long-term residents within Old Poor Law parish workhouses:

'The...[old] Man had some objection to leave the Welton Workhouse and to be sent to Lincoln and that he did make some...resistance to be put into the cart...but it being necessary that the House at Welton should be discontinued and that Provision should be made for those old people the Guardians...ordered that they should be removed to Lincoln.'¹⁴⁵

Rural parishes which had been incorporated into the Lincoln Incorporation and thus utilised its House of Industry to provide indoor relief, often found that they were

¹⁴² PL12/102/1, p.162, LA

¹⁴³ Driver, *Power and Pauperism*, p.64; Crowther, *The Workhouse System*, p.40

¹⁴⁴ PL10/118/1, LA

¹⁴⁵ Ibid

incorporated into differing poor law unions centred on various market towns. Such can be evidenced in the experience of indoor relief recipients from Ashby de la Launde, a parish of study and member of the Lincoln Incorporation but incorporated into the Sleaford poor law union after 1836. Inmates at the Lincoln House of Industry chargeable to the parish were removed to workhouses under the supervision of the Sleaford union. William and John Baker were evicted from the House of Industry in 1837 and taken to the parish workhouse at Wellingore.¹⁴⁶ This was an arbitrary decision, Wellingore being six miles away from Ashby de la Launde and seemingly dependent on where space could be found for them. The experience of Ann Baker, again chargeable to Ashby de la Launde, between 1835 and 1839 emphasises the substantial changes unionisation could mean for the individual workhouse inmate. Twenty-two-year-old Ann and her six-month old baby William were inmates in the Lincoln House of Industry in April 1835.¹⁴⁷ She was then moved to Claypole union workhouse at the expense of the Sleaford union between September 1837 and February 1838.¹⁴⁸ By January 1839, she was listed in an inmate in the Sleaford union workhouse after its opening in 1838.¹⁴⁹ Therefore, over the course of four years, Ann Baker found herself as an inmate at three different workhouses primarily because of the administrative change the creation of poor law unions entailed.

At a basic level, the opening of these union workhouses was a developmental rather than revolutionary act within the context of the area of study, building on experiences of indoor relief prevalent under the Old Poor Law, particularly in larger institutions such as the Lincoln House of Industry, as we have seen. This is a point noted by Driver who states that ‘the strategies of workhouse policy [under the New Poor Law]...were not entirely without precedent.’¹⁵⁰ However, only one parish of study (Ashby de la Launde) provided indoor relief within the Lincoln House of Industry, meaning that experiences of large workhouses ran by local incorporations was generally rare within the parish selection as a whole under the Old Poor Law. The maintenance, use of and experience of parish workhouses varied within the parish selection, and on a wholly smaller scale than institutional life within union workhouses. Moreover, two parishes of study

¹⁴⁶ PL12/102/1, p.102, LA

¹⁴⁷ PL10/307/1, LA

¹⁴⁸ PL12/102/1, p.141, p.162 and p.203, LA

¹⁴⁹ Ibid, p.319

¹⁵⁰ Driver, *Power and Pauperism*, p.65

(Cranwell; Leasingham) had no parish workhouse under the Old Poor Law, meaning that indoor relief was not an especially auspicious feature of the poor law within these parishes before 1836. Thus, the New Poor Law took an extremely divergent local indoor relief landscape and generally standardised it within the confines of the union workhouse, geographically located away from a parish setting.

Therefore, it may be suggested that the advent of the New Poor Law both theoretically regimented the experience of indoor relief and increased the potential for its use across the parish selection, as now all parishes were subject to union policy. Indeed, in the immediate years after the opening of the union workhouses of study in 1838, the workhouse test was seemingly applied liberally. This is most easily evidenced in the Sleaford union due to workhouse inmate numbers existing for the period 1838 to 1847, data used to construct the following analysis for parishes of study incorporated into the union.¹⁵¹ Inmate numbers were particularly high in the late 1830s and opening years of the 1840s, suggesting a policy commitment to applying the workhouse test in the initial years of the New Poor Law. To take Cranwell and Leasingham as examples, two parishes which did not have workhouses under the Old Poor Law, 41% of all workhouse inmates chargeable to Cranwell between 1838 and 1847 were in the period June 1838 to June 1842. Similarly, 45% of Leasingham's indoor relief recipients between 1838 and 1847 were inmates between June 1838 and June 1842. Thus, there was seemingly a zeal in some parishes in the application of indoor relief in the initial years after the opening of union workhouses.

However, the use of indoor relief under the New Poor Law varied between parishes of study; for example, Digby rarely had inmates within the Sleaford union workhouse until the mid-1840s, listing only 5 inmates at two quarters out of eight in the period between June 1838 and June 1842. Likewise, Leadenham relived just 2 individuals within the union workhouse in one quarter in the period between June 1838 and June 1842. Even within Cranwell and Leasingham, parishes with sustained use of indoor relief between 1838 and 1842, many quarters across the 1840s reported no workhouse inmates chargeable to those parishes. The largest inmate numbers and persistent use of indoor relief in the early decades of the New Poor Law may be largely evidenced in wide open parishes, which, as stated in chapter five, generally had the highest number of relief

¹⁵¹ PL12/104/1 and 2, LA

recipients at any temporal point. Again, this can be illustrated in inmate data from the Sleaford union.¹⁵² Ruskington, a wide open parish of study, listed a culminated total of 245 workhouse inmates in all quarters between June 1838 and March 1847, with the caveat that many individuals were presumably counted multiple times due to being resident in the Sleaford union workhouse across quarters. This culminative total was 842% larger than that noted for Digby over the same period. Indeed, there were only two quarters between June 1838 and March 1847 where Ruskington had no relief recipients as inmates in the Sleaford union workhouse. Thus, at parish level, the experience of the New Poor Law union workhouse did differ, with some parishes seemingly more likely to provide relief indoors at various times than others.

Moreover, union workhouses generally never reached full capacity, mainly due to the dominant demographic make-up of long-term inmates, generally the non-able-bodied, and the often short-term, transitory experience of life inside, an issue discussed below. The Lincoln union workhouse was built for a maximum of 360 inmates but saw just 173 and 287 in the 1841 and 1851 censuses respectively. The Sleaford union workhouse, built for a total capacity of 253 by the 1850s, registered just 102 inmates in the 1841 census. However, at times of local economic depression, inmate numbers could swell drastically, a point noted by Driver.¹⁵³ Agrarian depression in the mid-1840s led to a marked increase in workhouse inmates within the area of study; it was reported in 1843 that ‘the union workhouse at Sleaford is so full, that several inmates are sent out to sleep, there being no accommodation for them within the walls.’¹⁵⁴ This necessitated urgent communication to the Poor Law Commission from the Sleaford guardians asking for advice:

‘The Guardians have appropriated the Boardroom & Registrar’s Office as sleeping Wards, and the Entrance Hall as a Dayroom, and that these appropriations have offered accommodation for 45 inmates...[the] Guardians have rented four additional rooms at the Gas House which will comfortably accommodate 30 children, and that in such rooms there

¹⁵² Ibid

¹⁵³ Driver, *Power and Pauperism*, p.141

¹⁵⁴ *The Standard*, January 18th 1843

are now placed 24 children...the Workhouse has not at anytime...been so crowded.’¹⁵⁵

In June 1843, the Poor Law Commission allowed the enlargement of the Sleaford workhouse by the addition of two new sleeping rooms and two day rooms.¹⁵⁶

Workhouse use seemingly remained high across the later 1840s in the Sleaford union; in the 1851 census, the Sleaford union workhouse was nearing full capacity, registering 250 inmates and mirroring the 66% rise in inmate numbers seen in the Lincoln union workhouse between the 1841 and 1851 censuses. Indoor relief data available for parishes of study incorporated into the Sleaford union appears to suggest spikes in inmate numbers during the mid-1840s, particularly in the period between 1843 and 1847.¹⁵⁷ The highest total of indoor relief recipients within the six parishes incorporated into the Sleaford union are clustered around these years, ranging from 6 to 21 inmates per quarter within parishes of study, albeit with Ruskington exhibiting this highest total with the other five parishes showing highs of between 6 and 9. All this suggests a targeted use of indoor relief, with a constant but limited inmate population of the non-able-bodied swollen by the transitory inmate at periods of economic depression.

Under the New Poor Law, Green has stated that ‘paupers could discharge themselves...from the workhouse, and many came and went’¹⁵⁸ meaning that a stay inside was often transitory. Out of the twelve Lincoln union workhouse inmates chargeable to Metheringham in the quarter ending 29th September 1843, the average length of time spent inside was 38 days with stays ranging from 6 to 91 days.¹⁵⁹ It was the elderly; orphaned or abandoned children; the disabled, mentally ill and long-term sick whose circumstances necessitated staying in workhouses for the longest, explaining their dominance in demographic snapshots of inmate cohorts often based around census data, a point noted by both Darwen and Williams.¹⁶⁰ Pauper lists from Waddington in 1849 also illustrate the generally short-term nature of indoor relief for most

¹⁵⁵ *Sleaford Poor Law Union Correspondence, 1843-1847*, MH12/6764, NA

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid*

¹⁵⁷ PL12/104/1 and 2, LA

¹⁵⁸ David Green, ‘Pauper Protests: Power and Resistance in Early Nineteenth-century London Workhouses’, *Social History*, 31 (2006), p.139

¹⁵⁹ Metheringham Parish 13/12, LA

¹⁶⁰ Darwen, ‘Workhouse Populations of the Preston Union, 1841-61’, pp.39-51; Samantha Williams, ‘The Working-age Poor: Ablebodiedness and the Workhouse.’ Conference paper. *Poverty, Poor Relief and Policy in Britain and Beyond c.1600-1900*. Canterbury Christ Church University. Tuesday 12th April 2022

recipients.¹⁶¹ In the half year ending 25th March 1849, Waddington relieved twenty-four individuals within the Lincoln union workhouse with the average stay being 86 days. The number of days ranged from 7 to 182, with nine paupers having been resident for more than 100 days and the majority being inside for between 1 and 9 weeks. Moreover, only nine of these twenty-four paupers were still resident within the Lincoln union workhouse by September 22nd 1849, with one (Mary Maltby) having left and re-entered the workhouse sometime in early September 1849. Of the other eight, most are identifiable as elderly people or abandoned children.

Despite the theoretical emphasis on control and deterrent within the union workhouse experience, personal agency on the part of inmates remained, a point recently noted by Jones, King and Thompson in their study of workhouse clothing.¹⁶² Inmates found ways to circumnavigate workhouse rules. Between 1853 and 1859, 26% of entries in the Sleaford union workhouse punishment book dealt with the refusal to conduct work; 13% with having contraband items; and 7% with refusing to leave the dining hall, not keeping silent or causing disturbances during mealtimes.¹⁶³ Various anecdotes from the punishment book illustrate this. In 1856, Ann Dean ‘told the master she would do no work and afterwards on being required to go to her work she refused to do so for some time.’ Most contraband items were related to food. Elizabeth Codd, Ann Sharpe and Catherine Land were punished in 1853 for having coffee, with Thomas Green also punished for ‘going to town to purchase coffee for the above [women].’ Inmates were also cooking their own food in wards outside of prescribed mealtimes, with Sarah Green reprimanded for ‘setting a soup tin on the fire to cook potatoes.’ Therefore, there was clearly a difference between prescriptive rules and the actual lived experience of indoor relief.

This was mirrored in a discrepancy between the sentiments underpinning union workhouse construction and the actualities of workhouse life. Fowler has stated that union workhouses were ‘largely designed for able-bodied paupers...[but] became the refuge of the elderly, the sick, orphans and those...incapable of earning a living.’¹⁶⁴

¹⁶¹ Waddington Parish 13/11, LA

¹⁶² Jones, King and Thompson, ‘Clothing the New Poor Law workhouse in the nineteenth century’, pp.127-148

¹⁶³ PL12/302/14, LA

¹⁶⁴ Simon Fowler, *The Workhouse: The People, the Places, the Life Behind Doors* (Barnsley: Pen & Sword History, 2014), p.2

Thus, indoor relief overwhelmingly dealt with the non-able-bodied, often leading to a softening of practice under the New Poor Law. As Driver has concluded, there was ‘a gap between central policies and local realities.’¹⁶⁵ Such can clearly be seen in attitudes towards the aged, a dominant cohort amongst the inmate host. From its opening in 1838, the Lincoln union workhouse set aside private accommodation for elderly couples, described as ‘comfortable and retired rooms.’¹⁶⁶ The aged were also allowed more freedom in leaving and entering the premises, circumstantially evidenced by the death of Jacob Franklin, chargeable to Waddington, who died in the Lincoln union workhouse in 1843 after an accidental overdose of laudanum which ‘the deceased, having leave of absence, went out...[and] procured.’¹⁶⁷ Similarly, lenient treatment to the old can be evidenced in the Sleaford union. In 1838, the Sleaford guardians ordered that:

‘All Male paupers past Labour in the Workhouse be allowed four hours liberty each day- two hours before, and two hours after Dinner- the aged Females to have liberty when they ask for it...the length of time not to exceed that allowed to the Males.’¹⁶⁸

This motion was opposed by an Assistant Commissioner and the Poor Law Commission and although the Sleaford board respected the wishes of the central London authorities, amending their order so that the aged had to apply to the board via the workhouse master to have recreation outside of the workhouse, their reply to the Poor Law Commission is telling of local attitudes to the New Poor Law:

‘The Commissioners have decided with unnecessary harshness; the Board being firmly of the opinion that all the advantages which should be derived from the Poor Laws may be accomplished without confining the aged and infirm within the precincts of the Workhouse...the decision of the Commissioners must be particularly severe, and in fact unjust because under the late law [the Old Poor Law], and be it remembered the Law under which they arrived at their old age, the aged and infirm were not deprived of their liberty...taken as a whole the Board...are satisfied the Poor Law Amendment Act is a good Law, but there are some things

¹⁶⁵ Driver, *Power and Pauperism*, p.9

¹⁶⁶ *The Stamford Mercury*, November 16th 1838

¹⁶⁷ *The Lincolnshire Chronicle*, November 10th 1843

¹⁶⁸ PL12/102/1, p.360, LA

mixed up with it which if removed would make it more palatable to the Country...and amongst those Items the great confinement if the aged and infirm is one.’¹⁶⁹

As this source suggests, the aged were generally incorporated into the ranks of the deserving poor, with the Sleaford guardians clearly uncomfortable about treating them the same as those deemed undeserving. There was also local acknowledgement of continuation between poor laws, with the guardians noting that many elderly paupers had become old before 1834, with perhaps many being recipients under the Old Poor Law, as suggested in chapter five. Arguments reappeared in 1841 in regard to the issue of elderly inmates being allowed leisure time. In that year, the Sleaford guardians were still allowing elderly workhouse inmates ‘the privilege of enjoying, before and after dinner, one or two hours of recreation out of doors.’¹⁷⁰ This decision was opposed by the Poor Law Commission, who tried to disallow it and threatened to close the workhouse. However, the affair ended in a conciliatory manner, with ‘the...Commission seeing we [the guardians] were determined to carry our point’¹⁷¹ allowing applications to the board for recreation meaning that in principle ‘the infirm paupers in the Sleaford Union still take their out-door recreation.’¹⁷²

However, despite sources such as outlined above, it was not necessarily the case that all guardians unanimously agreed with indulgent sentiments towards certain cohorts of inmates. In 1838, inmates in the Sleaford union workhouse were allowed a celebratory meal of roast beef and plum pudding with ale for the coronation of Queen Victoria.¹⁷³ However, this move was questioned by two guardians who stated:

‘Independent Labourers and their Families generally...will not fare better than usual, it is subversive of the discipline of the union to make any difference and that the Paupers [should be] dieted as usual.’¹⁷⁴

This objection did not carry and the inmates were allowed the meal. However, such a source illustrates that there were differing opinions between administrators in how the

¹⁶⁹ Ibid, pp.368-370

¹⁷⁰ *The Worcester Journal*, August 19th 1841

¹⁷¹ Ibid

¹⁷² Ibid

¹⁷³ PL12/102/1, p.270, LA

¹⁷⁴ Ibid

New Poor Law should work, albeit with the corporate authority of the whole board usually resulting in compassionate treatment towards inmates, particularly at times of celebrations such as Christmas. From 1838 onwards, inmates were given a Christmas meal which differed from the normal diet. Subscriptions were donated to the Sleaford union to provide workhouse inmates with celebratory meals or gifts such as tobacco and cakes at Christmas, as described in the Sleaford union workhouse in 1840:

‘The inmates...partook of old English fare...with an allowance of good ale. The old men in the afternoon puffed away their cares...and in the evening, all were regaled with cake and tea.’¹⁷⁵

There was a general local sentiment in support of such acts, with the Poor Law Commission’s calls for Christmas treats to end facing resistance in Sleaford in 1841: ‘we do wish that the Poor Law Commissioners would not interfere in these matters...the poor should not be debarred from their accustomed Christmas fare.’¹⁷⁶ Indeed, philanthropic donations to the elderly at Christmas can also be evidenced at the parish level within the parish selection, with the Ruskington vestry allowing 5s for Christmas boxes for elderly males in 1849.¹⁷⁷

All in all, the experience of indoor relief under the New Poor Law was nuanced. Aside from periods of economic distress such as the mid-1840s, inmate numbers within the union workhouses of study were commonly not at full capacity with many stints inside being short-term and transitory. Despite the Poor Law Amendment Act’s emphasis on the ‘workhouse test’ for the able-bodied, the bulk of inmates at any given time were generally the non-able-bodied. Thus, there was seemingly often a disconnect between theoretical aims and the actualities of workhouse life, softened in practice by the realities of local context. However, the building and running of union workhouses were not an empty gesture. Although there were cognates between experiences of indoor relief between both poor laws, particularly when union workhouses are compared to larger Old Poor Law incorporation workhouses, the breadth and potentiality of indoor relief under the New Poor Law was expanded. Indeed, in many parishes of study there was apparently a zeal for applying the ‘workhouse test’ in the initial years of unionisation, albeit with this differing between parishes and seemingly petering out into

¹⁷⁵ *The Stamford Mercury*, January 1st 1841

¹⁷⁶ *The Lincolnshire Chronicle*, January 1st 1841

¹⁷⁷ Ruskington Parish 10/1, LA

the 1840s aside from periods of economic depression. Moreover, union workhouses became the archetypal symbol of the New Poor Law and as shown in other chapters, influenced negative attitudes towards the poor law. However, in reality most relief recipients under the New Poor Law continued to be relieved outside of the workhouse, influenced by the pragmatic factor that relief within the parish proved cheaper than supporting a pauper within the workhouse. It is to this aspect that the thesis now turns, examining outdoor relief across the period.

b) Outdoor relief

As shown in chapter five when discussing expenditure and recipient trends, outdoor relief generally constituted the dominant form of relief within the parish selection, particularly in the period after the 1820s. Outdoor relief could take multiple forms such as cash allowances; goods in kind such as fuel, clothing and food; medical aid; the paying of rents; and the provision of housing. All forms of out-door relief were observable across the parish selection; it is outside the remit of this thesis, focussing as it does on change and continuity, to give a detailed unpacking of all of these. Thus, overall trends in change and continuity in regard to out-door relief will be analysed in this section.

The fact that outdoor relief continued well after the Poor Law Amendment Act has been well noted in the literature, with Darwen concluding that ‘the experience for most paupers was that of receiving...relief in their own homes.’¹⁷⁸ Snell has stressed the importance of outdoor relief to the New Poor Law, stating that in 1850 those receiving it constituted nearly 90% of all relief recipients nationally.¹⁷⁹ Similarly, Goose has noted that in 1850 there was only ‘one workhouse inmate for every seven in receipt of outdoor payments.’¹⁸⁰ As discussed in detail in earlier chapters, one of the main aims of the New Poor Law was to limit outdoor relief, especially for able-bodied males, not eliminate it per se. Thus, the continuation of outdoor relief is not surprising in and of itself. Outdoor relief was prevalent throughout the parish selection up to the end of the period of study. In the unions of study on the last day of the week of the quarter ending

¹⁷⁸ Lewis Darwen, ‘Implementing and Administrating the New Poor Law in the Industrial North: A Case Study of Preston Union in Regional Context, 1837-1861’ (Unpublished Doctoral Thesis, Nottingham Trent University, 2015), p.95

¹⁷⁹ Snell, *Parish and Belonging*, pp.207-338 and Figure 5.5, p.220

¹⁸⁰ Goose, ‘Workhouse Populations in the Mid-Nineteenth Century’, p.54

September 1853, the number of outdoor able-bodied recipients were 250 compared to 3 indoor in the Lincoln union and 153 as opposed to 18 in the Sleaford union.¹⁸¹ When this data is analysed for non-able-bodied and child relief recipients, 717% more were relieved outdoors as opposed to indoors in the Lincoln union and 874% in the Sleaford on the last day of the week of the quarter ending September 1853.¹⁸²

The extent and scale of outdoor relief varied throughout the country, with Lincolnshire being seen as an area where it was prominent, making up 76-85% of relief given as late as 1875.¹⁸³ Indeed, the Assistant Commissioner Edward Senior commented in 1840 that 'out relief [is] rather profuse'¹⁸⁴ in the Sleaford union with relief levels given described as generous. As late as the mid-1850s, the Lincoln guardians held the discretionary power to allocate out-relief to able-bodied men aged over sixty, which they generally used liberally.¹⁸⁵ The granting of outdoor relief was crucially important to understandings of local autonomy from the earliest years of the New Poor Law and, as shown in chapter four, Assistant Commissioners emphasised this aspect of guardian authority to aid the formation of poor law unions. Thus, authority in granting outdoor relief was a potent issue, often causing policy disputes between union boards and the central London authorities throughout the initial decades of the New Poor Law. As early as February 1837, less than a year after unionisation, the Lincoln guardians commented on outdoor relief instructions from the Poor Law Commission and decided that 'they are too much crippled on their discretionary power of granting Out Door Relief and have...signed a Petition to the House of Commons.'¹⁸⁶ Similarly, the Sleaford guardians sent a memorial to the Secretary of State and Poor Law Commission in March 1842 stating their opposition to the bastardy clauses of the New Poor Law; calling for the discontinuation of Assistant Commissioners; and asking to be able to 'give Out-relief in all cases when two thirds of the Guardians present at any Meeting...may think proper.'¹⁸⁷ A continuing commitment to outdoor relief can be noted even after the general order of 1847. When queried on weekly allowances and bread doles given to

¹⁸¹ John Manwaring, *Correspondence and Papers Related to the North Midland District, 1848-1854*, MH32/53, p.176, NA

¹⁸² Ibid

¹⁸³ Snell, *Parish and Belonging*, Figure 5.8, p.229

¹⁸⁴ Edward Senior, *Correspondence and Papers Related to the Welsh District and North Midland District, 1838-1847*, MH32/66, p.215 and p.240, NA

¹⁸⁵ *Return of Salary, Compensation and Allowances to Clerks to Poor Law Unions in England and Wales*, p.50

¹⁸⁶ PL10/118/1, LA

¹⁸⁷ *Sleaford Poor Law Union Correspondence, 1843-1847*, MH12/6764, NA

Robert and Susan Lund, the board ‘ordered that the Clerk inform the P.L [Poor Law] Board that if the Sleaford Board have done any wrong it was in giving...Relief.’¹⁸⁸ Such sentiments underpin the fact that guardians within the parish selection were generally lenient towards continuing relief practices which were prevalent under the Old Poor Law, at least towards certain perceived deserving needy, both due to financial issues and notions of paternalism embedded within local socio-economic contexts. However, these attitudes had to contend with central policy which prohibited out-door relief to able-bodied males, policies which this thesis suggests was generally respected within both unions of study, evidenced by a reduction in explicit male poor law relief after unionisation as stated in chapter five.

There were elements of continuation between poor laws regarding the expression of outdoor relief. For example, medical care was paid for out of the poor rate throughout the period, with most parishes of study paying subscription fees to the Lincoln County Hospital and the Lincoln General Dispensary. The hospital was founded in 1769 specifically for the relief of the poor and was further supported by the opening of the General Dispensary in 1826 where the poor, with a recommendation, could receive medical advice, surgery and medicine.¹⁸⁹ Such avenues of relief were long lasting with Branston paying a subscription to the hospital and later General Dispensary throughout the whole period of this thesis.¹⁹⁰ An analysis of parish-owned housing, of which a longitudinal study in a rural context has been conducted by Broad,¹⁹¹ also highlights an infrastructural continuation between poor laws regarding outdoor relief outcomes. Sharpe and McEwan have seen the New Poor Law as a decisive change in the accommodation of the poor.¹⁹² However, although many parishes did sell housing stock after unionisation, with Ruskington selling eleven houses in 1837, there was no legislative grounding for parishes to do so, a point stressed by Wells.¹⁹³ Indeed, despite sales in 1837, Ruskington retained some parish-owned property until 1844 when

¹⁸⁸ PL12/102/3, LA, p.37

¹⁸⁹ White, *History, Gazetteer and Directory of Lincolnshire*, p.94

¹⁹⁰ Branston Parish 13/5 and 13/13, LA

¹⁹¹ John Broad, ‘Housing the Rural Poor in Southern England, 1650-1850’, *The Agricultural History Review*, 48 (2000), pp.151-170

¹⁹² Pamela Sharpe and Joanne McEwan, ‘Introduction: Accommodating Poverty: The Housing and Living Arrangements of the English Poor, c.1600-1850’, in Pamela Sharpe and Joanna McEwan (eds), *Accommodating Poverty: The Housing and Living Arrangements of the English Poor, c.1600-1850* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), p.15

¹⁹³ *The Lincolnshire Chronicle*, September 1st 1837; Roger Wells, ‘The Poor Law Commission and Publicly-owned Housing in the English Countryside, 1834-47’, *The Agricultural History Review*, 55 (2007), pp.181-204

another order of sale, alongside parish housing in Leadenham, was made.¹⁹⁴ Many parishes kept their building stock well into the New Poor Law with previous parish workhouses often converted into housing for the poor, as evidenced in both Navenby and Metheringham. Navenby's vestry minutes give a detailed breakdown of the changing use of parish-owned built infrastructure over the first decades of the New Poor Law.¹⁹⁵ The parish had around twelve parish-owned houses in 1837, with the parish workhouse being divided into four tenements in that year to be rented out to the poor. Seemingly unlike experiences under the Old Poor Law, recipients had to pay rent to reside in these. The vestry charged 1s 6d per week in rent for this with fourteen paupers paying in March 1837 as two houses were split between two individuals and their families each. These continued to be rented out to paupers throughout the 1840s. A vestry notice in 1850 stating that rent had not been paid on parish-owned houses suggests that despite the instigation of rent charges, in practice there were shortcomings in obtaining these with no evictions enforced and that in reality, this aspect of outdoor relief continued to exhibit many similarities to its Old Poor Law form.

However, continuation can be overstressed, with changes in the form, amount of outdoor relief given and ways paupers accessed outdoor relief noticeable under the New Poor Law. Firstly, as stated in chapter four, it was relieving officers who predominantly delivered outdoor relief after unionisation, with changes in the mode and process of obtaining outdoor relief noticeable. In October 1836, the Sleaford guardians ordered that:

‘The pauper in receipt of relief is required to fix upon some person in the parish...to receive the relief from the Relieving Officer weekly, and that they be required to furnish the Relieving Officer with a certificate of their health and circumstances every two months signed by the clergyman or churchwarden.’¹⁹⁶

Thus, theoretically the procedure of obtainment was seemingly more formalised across the union area under the New Poor Law, albeit with presentation of deservingness, advocated by those with socio-economic authority, still a central focus, a point stressed

¹⁹⁴ *Appendices A to C of the Tenth Annual Report of the Poor Law Commissioners* (London: W. Clowes and Sons, 1844), p.301

¹⁹⁵ Navenby Parish 10/1, LA

¹⁹⁶ PL12/102/1, p.5, LA

in chapter six. However, the theoretical framework of obtaining outdoor relief outlined above did not necessarily square with reality, emphasising a disconnect between central motions and the actualities of practice. In 1837, it was noted in the Sleaford union that paupers were negotiating with relieving officers to receive monetary payments for differing periods and at differing times than allowed for within guardian orders.¹⁹⁷ The point that negotiated interactions between staff and paupers happening at the sub-union level often guided poor law processes has already been made in chapters four and six; however, it is worth reiterating here that orders made by both guardians and the London-based central poor law bodies did not inevitably mirror actual procedure.

In regard to the mode of out-relief under the New Poor Law, goods in kind in the form of bread allowances, alongside monetary payments, were applied in both unions of study, changing the nature of outdoor relief away from a predominantly exclusive giving of cash doles as had seemingly been the case in the parish selection by the end of the Old Poor Law, discussed below. However, relief in kind was always a minority of outdoor relief given within the unions of study across the early decades of the New Poor Law. For example, within the Sleaford union, relief in kind within the three relieving districts consisted of below a quarter of out-relief given in the week ending 19th November 1836, and 23-27% of out-relief given in all relieving districts in the half-year ending 25th September 1850.¹⁹⁸ Thus, monetary payments remained the predominant form of outdoor relief given under the New Poor Law perhaps influenced by the fact that in the Sleaford union, from the summer of 1837 relieving officers had to pay for the bread to be distributed to the outdoor poor from their own salaries.¹⁹⁹

Under the Old Poor Law, there was seemingly a general trend of decreasing relief in kind towards a dominance in cash allowances within the parish selection, albeit with some differences in this between parishes. This change was roughly complete by the eve of the New Poor Law, showing that outdoor relief in its Old Poor Law form was neither homogenous nor unchanging. Such is emphasised in an examination of overseer accounts which cover the whole period of study of the Old Poor Law, limited in the parish selection to Branston, Metheringham and Waddington.²⁰⁰ In 1802, Branston

¹⁹⁷ Ibid, p.176

¹⁹⁸ Ibid, p.25; PL12/104/3, LA

¹⁹⁹ PL12/102/1, p.141, LA

²⁰⁰ Branston Parish 10/2; 13/2, 5, 7 and 13, LA; Metheringham Parish 13/1, LA; Waddington Parish 13/1 and 2, LA

bought a variety of material goods to be used by three relief recipients in their own homes, including three beds; two tables; chairs; various household implements; and a spinning wheel. Similarly, the parish paid for clothes for four male paupers in 1822 including jackets, trousers, waistcoats, breeches and smocks. However, by 1835 all outdoor relief expenditure entries related to cash allowances or the paying of rents.

Metheringham's overseer accounts for 1816 to 1832 also illustrate a similar trend. In 1816, 25 individuals received cash payments, although these were seemingly irregular with no weekly allowances discernible. There was also considerable relief given in kind in this year, particularly in coals, clothing and building materials such as mortar and lime. Medical and rent payments were also made for paupers, as was the buying and moving of furniture. However, in 1832 most relief in Metheringham was given in cash allowances with a reduction in the amount of relief given in kind. Fifteen regular weekly allowances ranging from 1s 6d to 10s were recorded, with the modal average being 1s 6d. In addition, nineteen sporadic payments for specific time periods, ranging from between three and thirteen weeks at sums of 2s 3d to £1 19s, were listed. Three one-off payments were also made, being between 3s and 7s with all recipients being men. Payments in 1832 were seemingly lower than seen in 1816; at this earlier date, the average weekly allowance was 3s compared to 1s 6d in 1832. However, relief in kind was still discernible in Metheringham in 1832, albeit with less frequency than seen in 1816, with two payments made for a shirt and a waistcoat; one rent payment; and the buying of a bedstead. Three paupers were also paid for completing work given by the overseer, with Joseph Fox paid a regular weekly allowance to look after Henry Kyme until the latter's entry into the Lincoln County Asylum in June 1832; and Sally Baker and Charles Newton being paid to prepare the body of George Norton, another pauper, at his death.

An analysis of out-relief in Waddington can be made for the period between the 1790s and 1830s, with a point of comparison taken from each decade to map general trends. The majority of spending in 1791 went on the provision of indoor relief via the workhouse master, Thomas Blythe. In that year, explicit out relief given as weekly allowances sat at either 1s or 2s dependent on individual. A decade later in 1801, relief outcomes in Waddington were generally similar, with the highest proportion of spending going to the workhouse master and outdoor relief primarily being in cash allowances, sitting at between 1s and 2s per week in most instances, albeit with limited

goods in kind such as barley given. However, in 1811 outdoor allowances were significantly higher than seen in 1791 and 1801, with the modal weekly average being 3s 6d, albeit given to fewer individuals who were primarily female. Indoor relief was still seemingly a conspicuous feature of the poor law in Waddington judging by 1812 governmental data, where 57% of those permanently relieved were done so in the parish workhouse.²⁰¹ By 1821, payments to the workhouse master had proportionally declined in regard to overall annual spending, although still present, with weekly out-relief allowances sitting at between 1s and 3s 6d, supplemented by goods in kind which were primarily grain. A decade later in 1831, most relief in Waddington was given in weekly cash allowances with totals of outdoor recipients being significantly larger than seen in the 1820s, rising by 114% between 1824 and 1830. Weekly allowances varied between individual recipients, ranging from 1s to 6s.

Thus, over the course of the waning period of the Old Poor Law outdoor relief varied in regard to both prominence and amounts. There were also differences between parishes, as can be seen in the analysis above of Branston, Metheringham and Waddington's overseer accounts, with relief in kind seemingly being more prominent in Branston and Metheringham when compared to Waddington. However, the general conclusion that by the end of the Old Poor Law the dominant form of outdoor relief within the parish selection was given in monetary form still generally holds, as does the fact that amounts of relief given varied between individuals, reinforcing the fact that the poor law was discretionary.

Unfortunately, due to the nature of surviving sources, records relating to individual out-relief payments under the New Poor Law are limited. Average payments per individual could be deduced for parishes incorporated into the Sleaford union for various quarters between 1838 and 1846. However, such mean averages would distort the reality of relief payments, which varied in amount and longevity between individual recipients. Thus, to explore the nature of outdoor relief payments after the Poor Law Amendment Act, it has been decided to focus on two parishes, both incorporated into the Lincoln union, which have extant pauper lists with named individuals for the New Poor Law period: Metheringham and Waddington.

²⁰¹ *Abridgement of the Abstract of the Answers and Returns so Far as Relates to the Poor* (London: House of Commons, 1818), p.259; *Select Committee on the Education of the Poor (1818)- Digest of Parochial Returns Volumes I, II and III* (London: House of Commons, 1819), p.531

Individual breakdowns of out-relief allowances are extant for Waddington for the quarter ending March 25th 1848 and the half-year ending on the same date in 1849.²⁰² In the quarterly data from 1848, 26 outdoor payments were made ranging from 7s 4.75d to £5 8s 4d. The modal average amongst these was £1 12s 2.75d. Presuming that this quarterly modal total related to consistent weekly relief throughout the whole period, this gives a weekly allowance of around 2s. This was generally comparable to some amounts of relief given in the parish in 1831, albeit significantly lower than the 6s high noted in the parish in 1831. In the half-year ending March 25th 1849, Waddington made 19 outdoor payments, ranging from 7s 5d to £10 12s 4d with a modal average of £3 3s 11d. With the assumption that this modal consisted of a total for regular weekly relief, this gives a hypothetical weekly allowance of just over 2.5s, significantly higher than that seen in the quarterly data from 1848 and suggesting that amounts of relief were variable, being generally lower when more people were in receipt of relief. However, this sum was still below the highest amounts of regular weekly relief given in Waddington in 1831, perhaps suggesting a reduction in the range of monetary relief given to the poor after unionisation.

Two points of comparison exist for Metheringham: the quarter ending September 29th 1839 and the same period in 1843.²⁰³ In 1839, quarterly outdoor relief ranged from 17s 10d to £3 11s 6d per payment. It is difficult to precisely ascertain how much such totals were at the weekly level as no time period for the amount of days relieved is given. However, most elderly single females were paid £1 14s 1.5d per quarter, with this sum consisting of 50% of payments made in the quarter. As this cohort was both dominant as recipients, received relief for longer periods and were generally incorporated into the ranks of the deserving poor, it is reasonable to use this total to come to a hypothetical weekly average of just above 2s for those in receipt of a regular allowance.

Interestingly, this is above the modal average of 1s 6d noted in the parish in 1832. However, the highest quarterly payment in 1839 sat at around 4s per week, well below the highest weekly allowance of 10s seen in Metheringham in 1832, perhaps suggesting a restriction in the range of monetary outdoor relief offered to paupers. In the quarter ending September 29th 1843, quarterly payments sat between 8s 5d and £5 3s 8.75d, with four more payments made in this quarter than compared to the same period in

²⁰² Waddington Parish 13/11, LA

²⁰³ Metheringham Parish 13/12, LA

1839. In this quarter, the sum of £1 11s 1.75d consisted of 39% of payments made, again going to single elderly women. Using this total, a hypothetical weekly allowance of just under 2s is suggested, below that seen in 1839 but again slightly above the modal average 1s 6d noted in the parish in 1832. However, the weekly calculations given for 1839 and 1843 need to be approached with caution as they assume that individuals received relief throughout the whole of the quarter in question. The data from Metheringham suggests that outdoor payments under the New Poor Law were temporally changeable, being seemingly less generous at times of increased recipient numbers, as also highlighted in Waddington.

This can be evidenced by tracing individual life-cycles of relief. Elizabeth Buffham was a 93-year-old single elderly woman collecting non-resident out-relief from Metheringham in 1843, living in the neighbouring parish of Dunston and having been in receipt of relief since at least 1825, when she was aged 75.²⁰⁴ Such a life-cycle reinforces the point that individual experiences of relief bridged the divide between poor laws, with paupers under the New Poor Law often having deep-rooted interactions with the relief authorities. Buffham was seemingly in receipt of outdoor relief throughout the period between 1825 and 1843, meaning a continuation in mode of relief which was not radically altered by the New Poor Law. However, the amounts of Buffham's relief payments were variable. In 1825, she was paid 1s weekly, rising to 1s 6d by 1832. Under the New Poor Law, in the quarter ending September 29th 1843, Buffham received £1 11s 1.75d, a figure nearly 3s below that from the same period in 1839, when she received £1 14s 1.5d in total. Thus, Elizabeth Buffham's relief payments sat at around 1s to 2s per week between 1825 and 1843, being temporally variable under both poor laws. Of course, how far Buffham is representational for all paupers under the New Poor Law is questionable. Even in 1825, she was already an old woman and presumably incorporated into the ranks of the deserving poor. By 1843, she had had nearly two decades of interaction with the poor law authorities, with such potentially influencing relief practice. Moreover, the relief she received, although temporally variable, was not drastically different in range under both poor laws. To those that had received the highest weekly allowances, the advent of the New Poor Law meant a reduction in the

²⁰⁴ Ibid; Metheringham Parish 13/1, LA

amount of outdoor relief given as the range of monetary payments was seemingly tightened.

The low sums given as outdoor relief in both its Old and New Poor Law forms, even to those deemed deserving such as elderly females, may question the real buying power of cash allowances, particularly when paralleled with male wage levels, the bedrock of support for most labouring households within the parish selection. Thus, it is necessary to place outdoor relief in the context of just one avenue amongst many in the multi-faceted household economy, especially considering the maintenance of a separate household seems to have been the most common residential condition for relief recipients within the parish selection. Darwen has stressed this approach, analysing outdoor relief provision in comparison with aggregate incomes and other streams of support such as kinship.²⁰⁵ Outdoor allowance levels were always negligible in proportion to wages. Average male weekly wages for agricultural work stood at around 10s in the Lincoln Heath in 1850, with most weekly outdoor relief payments given locally being less than 2s.²⁰⁶ These allowance amounts were enough to pay an average weekly rent, which stood at around 1s 6d in 1850, but left little for anything else.²⁰⁷ Such conclusions have led King and Tomkins to maintain that the poor law never engendered full dependency as amounts given were not enough for complete survival, necessitating an engagement with ‘a complex strategy of making do...to supplement the relief given.’²⁰⁸ As shown, the household and familial aid were important means of support alongside the poor law; however, there were also wider communal avenues of support available to the needy to which this chapter now turns.

7.4 Community

In parallel to poor law relief were broad communal avenues of support; as King has stated, the poor law always operated ‘against the backdrop of...of other means

²⁰⁵ Darwen, ‘Implementing and Administrating the New Poor Law in the Industrial North: A Case Study of Preston Union in Regional Context, 1837-1861’, pp.95-126

²⁰⁶ Henry Farnall, *Poor Law Inspector, on the Condition of the Labouring Classes in his District which comprises Derbyshire (part of), Lincolnshire, Nottinghamshire, Staffordshire (part of), and the East Riding of Yorkshire*, MH32/118, NA

²⁰⁷ Ibid

²⁰⁸ Steven King and Alannah Tomkins, ‘Conclusions’, in Steven King and Alannah Tomkins (eds), *The Poor in England 1700-1850: An Economy of Makeshifts* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003), p.258

of...addressing poverty.'²⁰⁹ Communal support could take multiple forms including charity and philanthropy; access to parish-given work; allotment and land provision; and self-help via benefit, sick and friendly societies. All will be discussed within this section within the context of the parish selection.

Charity provision was an important expression of organised relief practice which paralleled the poor law with both King and Broad criticising the literature for failing to fully integrate it into analysis of support strategies.²¹⁰ Charities had a separate legislative chronology distinct from the poor law, meaning that provision largely continued unchanged after 1834 and was still centred upon a parish framing. Indeed, many parish charities still exist today.²¹¹ Except for Leasingham, all parishes of study had charities, ranging from just one in Ashby de la Launde and Digby to seven in Leadenham (figure 7.2). These provided a range of provisions within original stipulations but most often cash and bread doles; paying for education; and providing apprenticeships (figure 7.3). Between 1829 and 1833, the accounts for Garrett's charity in Branston show that most aid was given as a cash dole for the sick poor followed by coal distribution, mirroring the dominant forms of outdoor relief within the parish selection (figure 7.4).

²⁰⁹ King, *Poverty and Welfare in England*, p.236

²¹⁰ Ibid p.59; John Broad, 'Parish Economies of Welfare 1650-1834', *The Historical Journal*, 42 (1999), p.986

²¹¹ See the Dame Margaret Thorold's Apprenticing Charity which continues to be distributed in Cranwell. Available at: <https://lincoln.ourchurchweb.org.uk/cranwell/about-us/page10> [Accessed 3rd March 2022]

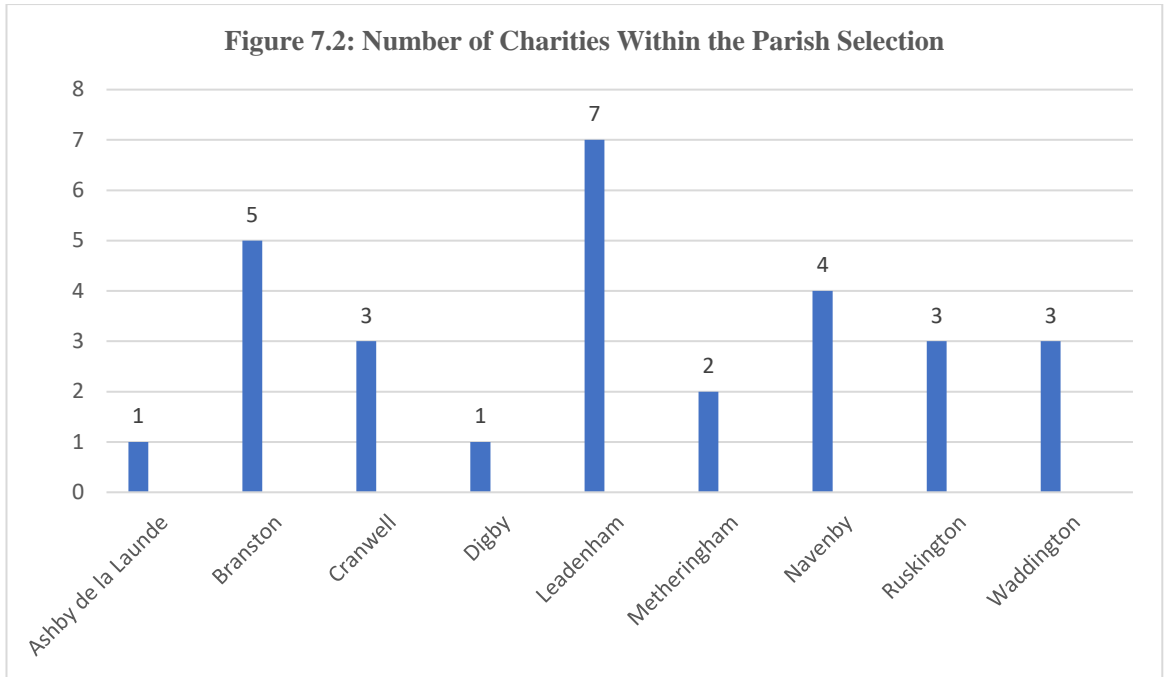


Figure 7.2: Number of Charities Within the Parish Selection. Source: *Commons Report into Charities in England and Wales: Thirty-second report, Part IV: Lincoln*, (London: The House of Commons, 1839)

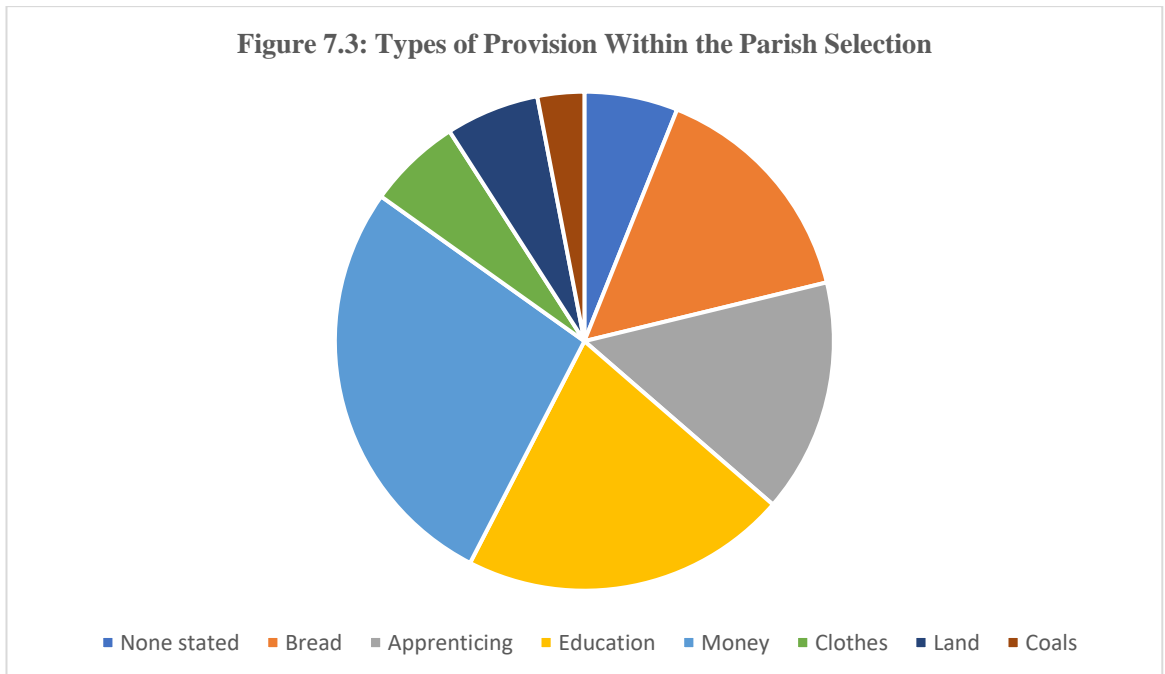


Figure 7.3: Types of Charity Provision Within the Parish Selection. Source: *Commons Report into Charities in England and Wales: Thirty-second report, Part IV: Lincoln*, (London: The House of Commons, 1839)

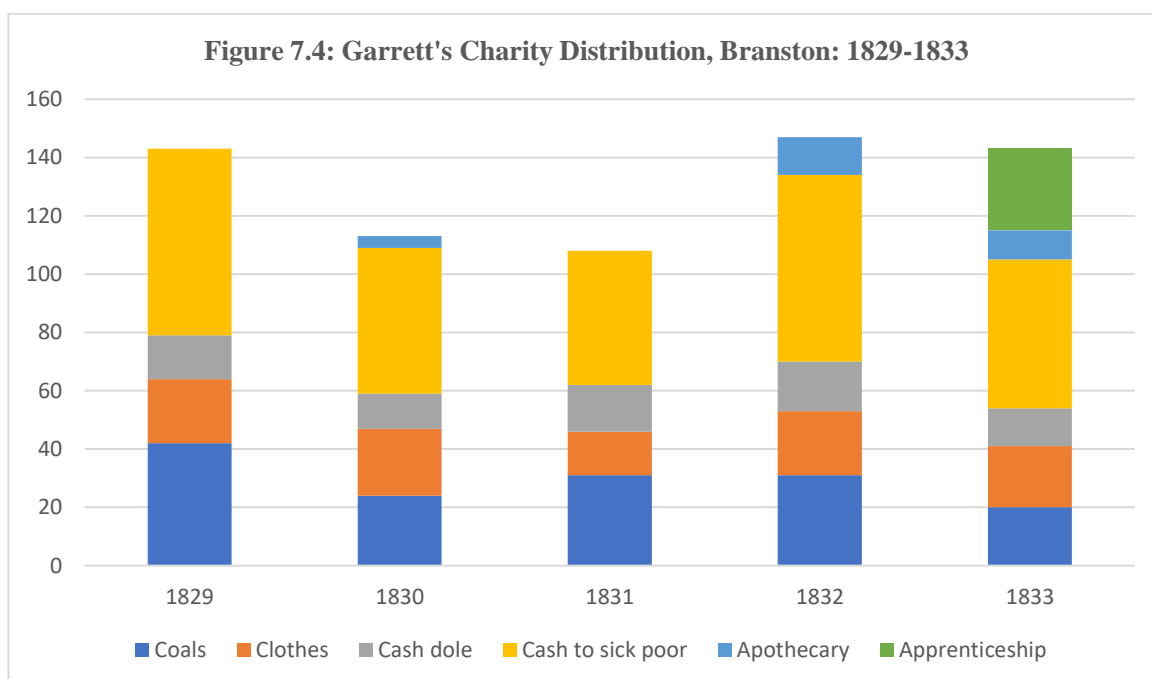


Figure 7.4 Garrett's Charity Distribution, Branston: 1829-1833. Source: *Commons Report into Charities in England and Wales: Thirty-second report, Part IV: Lincoln*, (London: The House of Commons, 1839), p.375

However, a single charity often provided relief across several parishes dependent on stipulations created in original foundations, often made by landed gentry who owned land in multiple parishes within an area. For example, the Sir William and Dame Thorold charity in Cranwell was joined with Marston with Cranwell entitled to 30s per annum to be distributed by the churchwardens to five poor widows.²¹² Such a multi-parish framing to charity provision often meant that one parish was favoured over the rest, meaning a differentiation in outcomes. For example, as described at Ruskington for Hogdson's charity 'three poor women [who are] inhabitants of Rowston and Ruskington, but Rowston chiefly.'²¹³ These situations could often mean prolonged arguments between parishes. In 1836, the management of Garrett's charity, applicable to the parish of study of Branston, Heighington and Washingborough, was contested. A

²¹² *Commons Report into Charities in England and Wales: Thirty-second Report, Part IV: Lincoln* (London: The House of Commons, 1839), p.220

²¹³ Robert Yerburgh, *Sketches, Illustrative of the Topography and History of New and Old Sleaford, in the County of Lincoln, and of Several Places in the Surrounding Neighbourhood* (Sleaford: James Creasey, 1825), p.331

petition, signed by twenty-four parishioners from Branston, was sent to the Dean of Lincoln stating:

‘No perceptible benefits had been received for several years them last past by the poor ... we do not think it fit that the Rents and profits of the lands in Branston should be laid up in a chest in the...chapel at Heighington with those locks and keys.’²¹⁴

This led to a change in the management of the charity, with money divided equally between the three parishes to be distributed to the poor and sick, as well as providing apprenticeships. Therefore, charity provision was versatile and often based on a pragmatism relevant to contemporary situations as original stipulations became obsolete. This can be seen regarding the issue of apprenticeships within the parish selection. In 1843, the money designated by Garrett’s charity for apprenticeships in Branston was distributed to the poor instead due to a lack of suitable candidates; as stated, ‘for years we have not found a boy willing to be bound.’²¹⁵ This was explained due to the practice of hiring teenage boys as farm servants, meaning that the original provision of the charity was redundant by the mid-nineteenth century as the change towards mixed-agrarian agriculture had redefined dominant employment systems within the area. Such is also seen in Cranwell in 1839, with the parish having not apprenticed a child for a decade:

‘Whenever this parish has had a boy or girl to apprentice, which seldom happens oftener than once in four or five years, they have applied to the steward of Sir John Thorold...the last boy apprenticed was in 1829.’²¹⁶

Similarly, in 1856 it was noted that ‘in this part of the county [apprenticeships]...have fallen into desuetude from the more general hiring of yearly servants.’²¹⁷ In this year, Branston transferred £20 from the apprentice fund of Garrett’s charity to the sick and poor distribution. Therefore, the nature of charity provision was often tied to changing socio-economic experience, clearly grounded in a wider human ecological environment.

²¹⁴ Branston Parish 15/25/18-19, LA

²¹⁵ Ibid

²¹⁶ Ibid

²¹⁷ Branston Parish 15/25/29, LA

Charities were largely administered and controlled by boards of trustees, usually with a heavy clerical involvement. However, individual trustees were generally synonymous with those involved in the wider parish offices and thus the administration of the poor law, namely dominant ratepayers heavily taken from the farming class. For example, Handley's Charity in Leadenham drew its funds from rents on an allotment which by 1839 was owned by Audley Mucklow who had been overseer of the poor four times between 1801 and 1818.²¹⁸ Similarly, Robert Greesham, a member of Branston's select vestry in 1836 and overseer of the poor for the parish in 1833, was listed as a feoffee for Garrett's charity in 1844.²¹⁹ The rector of Branston, Peregrine Curtois, was highly involved with the parish's charities, being the main trustee for all five and thus having considerable power in the distribution of charitable aid. Alongside the churchwardens, he selected children who could attend the poor school at Heighington, also controlling the dole of bread bought from the proceeds from Lowrie's and Read's charities.²²⁰ Such figures could also be influential in providing private philanthropic initiatives. In Branston, Curtois established a coal club for paupers in 1838 'to enable the needy...to procure [coal]...at half price' and during the 1840s, a private subscription was made in the parish to provide discounted food and goods in kind to the poor.²²¹ The charity school in Navenby was created in 1816 via private subscriptions from leading personalities with:

'The whole of the poor children belonging to the parish...admitted free of expense, upon the recommendation of the minister, churchwardens, or overseers...They [the pupils] are taken in from six upwards, and are taught reading, writing, and the first rules of arithmetic.'²²²

This new school building was located next to the church, again reinforcing notions and customs of religiosity that were found within charity and philanthropic provision, noted chapter six.²²³ Under the New Poor Law, children sent out as apprentices from the Lincoln union workhouse were given 'a Bible and a prayer book.'²²⁴ As such, much

²¹⁸ *Commons Report into Charities in England and Wales*, p.335; Reeve 10/2, LA

²¹⁹ Branston Parish 15/25/24, LA

²²⁰ Branston Parish 15/43, LA

²²¹ *The Stamford Mercury*, March 2nd 1838 and February 19th 1847

²²² *Commons Report into Charities in England and Wales*, p.212

²²³ The school is now a private residence called The Old School on Church Lane in Navenby.

²²⁴ Hill, *Victorian Lincoln*, p.135

charity and philanthropy provision was envisaged in moralising tones, emphasised by the fact eligibility was often limited to the deserving poor of ‘good character.’

Paradoxically, Himmelfarb has suggested that philanthropy ‘flourished most when public relief was most generous,’²²⁵ envisioning charity and philanthropy as parallel to poor law relief in conceptions of a moral duty on the part of the well-off towards some cohorts of deserving needy. Howkins has seen ‘a raised paternalism on the part of the rich’²²⁶ during the 1840s with an increase in philanthropic gift giving being noted. Often, this was female led with affluent women playing a leading role in distributing goods in kind.²²⁷ Initial subscriptions to create the Cranwell Parish Clothing Club in 1850 featured the wives and daughters of leading tenant farmers and the vicar, with these collecting money and distributing clothes to members.²²⁸ In 1867, it was reported in Ruskington that the wife of the dominant landowner the Earl of Winchelsea gave aid in goods in kind:

‘During this late inclement season, the Countess of Winchelsea has kindly distributed cloaks to the girls of the Sunday school, given dinners and one shilling each to the poor old men and pieces of flannels to the widows and necessitous poor.’²²⁹

Alongside charity and philanthropic aid, the parish community could provide other means of support. Parish-owned land could be used to aid the needy either in the form of allotments or in rent charges which were then placed into the parish funding pot. Burchardt has traced the development of allotment provision for the poor over the course of the later eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.²³⁰ Within the parish selection, accessing allotments was a constant in support strategies across the period. In 1825, Branston rented allotments to fund ‘the accommodation of the Poor’ and Leadenham’s church grass lands were described in 1839 as ‘12 acres...let, in plots of two acres each,

²²⁵ Gertrude Himmelfarb, *The Idea of Poverty: England in the Early Industrial Age* (London: Faber and Faber, 1985), pp.5-6

²²⁶ Alun Howkins, *Reshaping Rural England: A Social History, 1850-1925* (London and New York: Routledge, 1991), p.75

²²⁷ Theresa Deane, ‘Old and Incapable? Louisa Twining and Elderly Women in Victorian Britain’, in Pat Thane and Lynn Botelho (eds), *Women and Ageing in British Society since 1500* (London and New York: Routledge, 2001), pp.168

²²⁸ Cranwell Parish 23/11, LA

²²⁹ MISC DON 1338, LA

²³⁰ Jeremy Burchardt, *The Allotment Movement in England, 1793-1873* (London: The Royal Historical Society, The Boydell Press, 2011)

to six poor men.²³¹ From 1840, Ruskington let gardens to ‘the most needy and deserving poor of the Parish’ and at Navenby, around forty-seven acres were rented in allotments in 1856, the proceeds of which paid the school master’s salary; were spent on coals for the poor; with the remainder added to the poor rate collection.²³² In addition to parish-owned land, landlords could offer allotments or gardens in order to attract labour as well as aim to reduce both poor rates and wage levels by providing a means for self-provision. Perkins has stated that Lincolnshire was ‘an area in which agricultural labourers ...were...provided with allotments’ and was one of only four English counties in which 70% of parishes provided allotments in 1833.²³³ Land was used to grow vegetables and raise animals, particularly pigs. This was commented on by the Assistant Commissioner Edward Gulson who stated in the mid-1830s that in many agricultural areas ‘labourers...[keep] a pig...[and are provided with] cottages and gardens at little or no rent.’²³⁴ Records for Cranwell show that many villagers rented allotments alongside cottages in the nineteenth century, with the parish also providing land for the use of the poor.²³⁵ The use of allotments in providing a means of household support is noted at Waddington during the 1860s:

‘The demand for allotments is very great. Every one is eager to get land...No doubt allotment gardens are in every way beneficial. They furnish vegetables, keep the pig...I believe allotments are to be found, more or less, in most parishes about here.’²³⁶

Parishes also created clothing, benefit and sickness clubs to provide support to members. By the 1840s, both Ruskington and Waddington had clothing clubs with Cranwell instigating one in 1850.²³⁷ These provided clothing to subscribers and accounts from Cranwell’s club show it initially consisted of twenty-seven members who contributed 3d weekly.²³⁸ The Leadenham benefit society was formed in 1804 with

²³¹ Branston Parish 10/2, LA; *Commons Report into Charities in England and Wales*, p.334

²³² Ruskington Parish 10/1, LA; White, *History, Gazetteer and Directory of Lincolnshire*, p.338

²³³ Jack Perkins, ‘Allotments in 19th Century Lincolnshire’, *Lincolnshire History and Archaeology*, 18 (1983), p.21

²³⁴ Edward Gulson, *Correspondence and Papers relating to the West and South Midlands Districts, 1834-1838*, MH32/28, p.580, NA

²³⁵ 2 THOR1/87-90, LA

²³⁶ *Royal Commission on the Employment of Children, Young Persons and Women in Agriculture* (London: House of Commons, 1867), p.291

²³⁷ CORB 5/4/38/11/4; CORB 5/4/61/2/5; Cranwell Parish 23/11, LA

²³⁸ Cranwell Parish 23/11, LA

eighty members, rising to 273 by 1833, with the aim to relieve sickness and infirmity.²³⁹ Navenby's, formed to aid relieve members who were sick, was in existence from 1811 until 1886. In 1856, it had 234 members or around 22% of the parish's 1851 population, evidently interacting with a larger proportion of the population than who were in receipt of explicit poor law relief which was generally below 9% across the period within the parish selection.²⁴⁰ In the 1851 census, two eighty-year-old men in Navenby (William Russel and John Bellamy) were described as 'a pensioner of the...benefit society.' Such clubs were long-lasting; Metheringham's benefit society was still in existence in 1932.²⁴¹ The numbers of those involved with parish clubs meant they generally had a more diverse reach than explicit poor law or charity aid, emphasising a continuum of need which questions binary distinctions of pauper and non-pauper. Moreover, under the New Poor Law, medical and benefit societies could be formed at union level. In 1837, the Lincoln union formed a medical club for all the parishes of the union, with families paying an annual subscription to join, seemingly irrespective if they were in receipt of poor law support or not.²⁴²

Such organisations were paralleled in Friendly Societies, clubs formed to provide mutual aid to members in times of need. Gorsky has traced the distribution of Friendly Societies in the early nineteenth century and Russell has claimed that by 1855 in Lincolnshire 'there existed at least one Friendly Society within...walking distance of every village.'²⁴³ Lord has seen the creation of Friendly Societies in the East Midlands as starting in the latter eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.²⁴⁴ By the 1840s, several national societies were found within the Lincoln Heath area; for example, the Manchester Unity Oddfellows had a lodge in Sleaford by 1837.²⁴⁵ In Ruskington, two lodges are identifiable by the 1850s: the Spring Comfort Lodge and the Priory Lodge Benefit Society, formed in 1840 and affiliated with the Loyal Rose of Lincolnshire

²³⁹ *The Stamford Mercury*, June 7th 1833

²⁴⁰ *The Stamford Mercury*, September 17th 1886; White, *History, Gazetteer and Directory of Lincolnshire*, p.338

²⁴¹ *The Lincolnshire Echo*, December 19th 1932

²⁴² *The Lincolnshire Chronicle*, May 26th 1837

²⁴³ Martin Gorsky, 'The Growth and Distribution of English Friendly Societies in the Early Nineteenth Century,' *The Economic History Review*, 51 (1998), pp.489-511; Rex Russell, *Three Lincolnshire Labourers' Movements* (Barton upon Humber: Worker's Educational Association, 1994), p.65

²⁴⁴ Evelyn Lord, 'The Friendly Society Movement and the Respectability of the Rural Working Class', *Rural History*, 8 (1997), p.165

²⁴⁵ *The Stamford Mercury*, June 6th 1845

Society of Odd Fellows, Manchester Unity.²⁴⁶ Friendly Societies could play a role in providing relief, as seen in the case of Thomas Gilbert, an inmate in the Lincoln union workhouse in 1847:

‘The Clerk was directed to inform the Overseers of Waddington that Thomas Gilbert...who is sick and chargeable to that parish is represented to be a member of an Odd Fellows Club in order that they may enquire into the matter.’²⁴⁷

However, they also focussed on leisure activities, creating a ‘community of friends...who...spent their money also on social gatherings and festivities.’²⁴⁸ In a society meeting at Sleaford in 1845, there was a communal meal and a procession in which the town’s brass band played.²⁴⁹ As such, societies, in complement to their role in providing relief, were often an important part of the social fabric of parishes, emphasised by their infrastructural presence in the form of lodge buildings, particularly during the latter nineteenth century. As Hobsbawm and Rude conclude: ‘Friendly Societies were...village organisations...exercising communal ceremonial functions.’²⁵⁰ Contemporary attitudes towards societies were generally favourable, being seen as an expression of autonomy and self-help which decreased the numbers applying for poor law relief.

Evidently, there were a wide range of communal support structures available to the needy throughout the period. Predominantly, these focused on charity provision and philanthropy; access to parish-given work and amenities such as allotments; and expressions of self-help such as parish clubs and Friendly Societies. Again, these were seemingly never exclusive but used in combination with the poor law, work and the household economy to unify diverse strands of aid within individual support strategies.

7.5 Conclusions

Longitudinally, there were broad areas of continuity in the types of support options available to the needy within the parish selection across the period. Firstly, the

²⁴⁶ MISC DON 1338, LA

²⁴⁷ PL10/102/3, p.204, LA

²⁴⁸ Russell, *Three Lincolnshire Labourers’ Movements*, p.77

²⁴⁹ *The Stamford Mercury*, June 6th 1845

²⁵⁰ Eric Hobsbawm and George Rude, *Captain Swing*, (Pimlico: London, 1993, First published 1969), p.68

importance of work within the household economy remained central, with the inability to work, fluctuating wage levels or a lack of a male breadwinner forcing many to seek relief from the poor law or wider communal avenues. The household unit itself was an important forum in the amalgamation of various aspects of support, as well as means of aid via co-residence and rent payments brought in by lodgers. Branching out from this was often a familial aspect to support, explicitly highlighted by both poor laws with administrators often trying to compel families to look after relations rather than have them claim poor law relief. Family aid, particularly the use of co-residence and marriage, meant that many never applied for formalised relief options such as the poor law.

For those that did, outdoor relief given within the parish continued to be the most common form of relief throughout the period, despite the means of obtaining it changing with new administrative systems after unionisation. However, outdoor relief was not homogenous throughout the period, with a trend of decreasing levels of goods in kind towards exclusive reliance on cash allowances noted in the parish selection throughout the waning decades of the Old Poor Law. Although the New Poor Law seemingly reintroduced greater relief in kind via bread allowances, monetary payments continued to be the most dominant form of outdoor relief given within the area of study in the late 1830s and 1840s. However, the range in the amounts of monetary out relief given seems to have narrowed under the New Poor Law, meaning that for some the amounts of relief on offer were lower than seen in earlier periods. Despite this, across both poor laws the nature and amounts of outdoor relief varied between parish and individual recipient, emphasising the discretionary nature of the poor law with relief outcomes often formed through the negotiated process of relief unpacked in chapter six. Thus, any broad conclusions about restrictions in amounts of monetary payments need to be paralleled with this variation; for some, the New Poor Law meant a drastic reduction in outdoor relief, for others continuity in mode and amount are notable. However, under both poor laws levels of outdoor relief were never enough for full dependency, necessitating interaction with wider communal areas of support such as charity provision and philanthropy; parish-given work; allotments and land; and parish benefit clubs and Friendly Societies. These remained broadly consistent across the period and beyond, being administratively and logistically detached from the poor law and thus presenting continuity in the types of relief options available for the needy

across the period, also widely being utilised by those never formally categorised as paupers.

The creation of union workhouses has been framed as a radical move in the operational framing of the poor law by contemporaries and commentators alike. However, the parish selection had deep-rooted experiences of indoor relief well before the New Poor Law, pivoting on high numbers of parish workhouses and the Lincoln Incorporation's House of Industry. A policy emphasis on the workhouse seems to have been at its most intense in the area of study from the late eighteenth century to 1820s, declining in the last decade or so before unionisation. Therefore, unionisation placed indoor relief back at the forefront of relief options available in the early period of the New Poor Law in a way that was not as explicit in the immediately preceding years. Whether the experience of indoor relief was synonymous either side of unionisation is also questionable. Certainly, there were cognates between later union workhouses and large institutions such as the Lincoln House of Industry, with an emphasis on control and deterrent noted in both. Even at the parish level, work was a key feature of indoor relief as it theoretically was under the New Poor Law, albeit with the types of work able-bodied paupers were assigned to changing. However, the workhouse under the New Poor Law was a larger institution located away from residential parishes which housed substantially more inmates taken from across the whole poor law union. As such, the scale and potential for indoor relief was magnified under the New Poor Law, with the experience of it being more standardised across the whole union area than had been the case with an extremely varied workhouse experience under the Old Poor Law. Although workhouse inmates were always a minority of those in receipt of poor law aid across the period, with experience of the workhouse often short-lived and transitory, the nature of life indoors was increasingly segregated via physical categorisation into different areas of the workhouse and subscribed through such things as clothing, work and food. Despite this, the dominance of the non-able-bodied as inmates often softened policy in practice under the New Poor Law, with sentiment towards perceived deserving cohorts meaning the day-to-day experience of the workhouse was not the same as theoretical directives. Moreover, to return to the parish level, there were variations in the experience of indoor relief temporally and between parishes, with some parishes seemingly being more likely to offer relief in the workhouse than others.

Overall, the types of support available for the needy pivoted on three main avenues across the period: the household and family; the poor law; and community support. Although the details of these avenues did change, notably so within the poor law, individuals always amalgamated options from across these to provide discreet support strategies dependent on life cycles of need. This thesis will now move on to outlining its overall conclusions about the extent and change and continuity in experiences of need and relief vis a vis the New Poor Law and wider human ecological factors across the period

Chapter Eight: Conclusions

This thesis aimed to examine the extent of change and continuity in experiences of need and relief in the transitional period between poor laws within a localised context, pivoting analysis within a temporal period where debates about the purpose of the poor law were intense and the expression of relief variable. It has focussed on ten proximate parishes within the Lincoln Heath area of Lincolnshire which were split between two poor law unions under the New Poor Law. As Lincolnshire's presence within English welfare historiography is minimal, a study grounded in the county has already brought something new to the literature and is an important addition considering Lincolnshire's large county size; complex internal geography; and disunified historic administrative structures. Similarly, the thematic structure of this thesis, with each chapter longitudinally examining a specific aspect of need and relief across both poor laws, moves away from approaches dominant within the literature which tend to analyse each poor law in isolation. Such a move is related to the thesis' methodological framing, rejecting focussing analysis around a legislative chronology and administratively defined units of observation as seen in other studies, which it is argued potentially lack a holistic grounding in the local socio-economic conditions within which relief and need played out. As such, a human ecological approach was adopted to ground conceptions of the local within the geographical, utilising the broad interconnected observational landscapes of habitat, niche and culture to form a historic human ecological environment within which the realities of need and relief were experienced, as outlined in chapter three. This has been a novel approach which, as will be argued within this chapter, has provided some new and interesting results. There were multiple possible ways that this conclusion could have been structured such as chronologically; via chapter focus; or around the key questions of research. Each was tested but proved insufficient for the focus on change and continuity in experiences and expressions of need and relief which sits at the centre of this thesis. As such, this conclusion is framed around broad thematic loci which became explicit over the course of research and writing, tracing change and continuity across the period of study.

Across the period, there were longitudinal developments in the mechanics, expression and outcomes of the poor law within the parish selection; however, these did not necessarily solely pivot on the implementation of the New Poor Law, with the Old Poor Law being far from a homogenous entity within the parish selection. During the latter

eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, an emphasis on indoor relief can be seen, evidenced by a high concentration of workhouses within the parish selection and the opening of the Lincoln House of Industry in the late 1790s. Within the geographical underpinning to a human ecological methodology, this observation is important because it parallels the large numbers of parish workhouses noted under the Old Poor Law by Kang within pastoral areas of Hampshire, with the Lincoln Heath also being a predominately pastoral agricultural area up until the consolidation of mixed-agrarian agriculture in the immediate post-1815 period.¹ Thus, there seems to be a correlation between land-types, agricultural systems and relief policies which may be applicable to a national framing, helping approach questions of regionality in poor law practice previously raised by King in a fresh and perhaps more nuanced way.² Clearly, this observation deserves further research, with a larger study grounding relief regimes into geology and topography at the national level needed; it is hoped that the initial conclusion reached by this thesis will act as starting point for such a study to take place.

Moreover, a policy emphasis on the workhouse led to important and understudied substrata of administration at the parish level under the Old Poor Law, notably workhouse masters who were often contracted to provide relief. These individuals generally had a longer presence than the annual or biannual turnover of overseers which typified the parish selection up until the 1820s, often lasting for decades. Therefore, the actual overseer involvement in the day-to-day running of relief was seemingly light in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century in some parishes of study. In addition, Ashby de la Launde's membership of the Lincoln Incorporation from 1821 differentiated its administrative experience from the rest of the parish selection, with the position of director theoretically superseding that of overseer of the poor. Thus, such conclusions question the literature's primary focus on overseers and vestries as the quintessential organs of management for the Old Poor Law, necessitating analysis which looks beyond these to encapsulate other administrative agents. Although an emphasis on 'history from below' and the experiences of paupers themselves has been an important historiographical move within the literature, it is clear than a refocussing

¹ Myungsu Kang, 'Continuity and Change in a Workhouse System between the Old and New Poor Laws: The Case of Hampshire'. Conference paper. *Poverty, Poor Relief and Policy in Britain and Beyond c.1600-1900*. Canterbury Christ Church University. Tuesday 12th April 2022

² Steven King, *Poverty and Welfare in England 1700-1850: A Regional Perspective* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000)

on the administrative mechanics is needed, particularly regarding practice under the Old Poor Law where the presumed hegemony of overseer and vestry has been strongest.

The 1820s seem to have seen crucial changes in the administration of the poor law in the parish selection, confirming the temporal importance given to the decade by commentators such as Hollen-Lees and Eastwood.³ This was the period where select vestries and salaried overseer positions were instigated under the Sturges Bourne's Acts, with around 40% of the parish selection identifiably adopting these. As little has been said about the impact of this enabling legislation outside of a southern English context, this thesis has added something new to the literature by tracing its adoption within the English midlands.⁴ More generally, a professionalisation and stabilisation in the staffing of parish offices can be seen, confirming King's observation regarding increased permanence in overseer staffing from the 1820s.⁵ Such increased overseer involvement in the day-to-day management of the poor law in many parishes of study as a policy emphasis on the workhouse waned, with outcomes focussing primarily on outdoor relief which by the eve of the New Poor Law was generally in cash allowances. Moreover, the 1820s was seemingly a decade of proportionally high relief spending throughout the parish selection, feeding into decisions for the administrative changes already noted. Recourse to the poor law also ostensibly increased in this period, albeit with such rises having to be approached in light of population increases seen in the parish selection across the first half of the nineteenth century due to the labour needs of mixed-agrarian agriculture. Furthermore, there was apparently an increase in non-resident relief in the period between 1802 and the 1830s, which this thesis suggests was potentially instigated by migratory labour patterns necessitated by employment structures within the mixed-agrarian agricultural economy of the Lincoln Heath, largely consolidated in the post-1815 period. Thus, by the eve of the New Poor Law, the administration and expression of the poor law had seen many changes when compared to its appearance in the 1790s.

³ Lynn Hollen-Lees, *The Solidarities of Strangers: The English Poor Law and the People, 1700-1948* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), pp.82-113; David Eastwood, *Governing Rural England: Tradition and Transformation in Local Government, 1780-1840* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), p.181

⁴ Samantha Shave, 'The Impact of Sturges Bourne's Acts in Rural England', *The Historical Journal*, 56 (2013), pp.399-429; Roger Wells, 'Poor-law Reform in the Rural South-east: The Impact of the Sturges Bourne Acts During the Agricultural Depression, 1815-1835', *Southern History*, 23 (2001), pp.51-115

⁵ Steven King, *Writing the Lives of the English Poor, 1750s- 1830s* (Quebec: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2019), p.6

The demographic categorisation of parish governance by the literature as ‘the middling sort’ says little about what this cohort looked like in actuality, with this thesis perhaps aiding French’s search to define this.⁶ Here, the dominance of leading ratepayers in staffing parish offices is well noted, with this group within the parish selection generally taken from the farming class across the period.⁷ Despite this, the ratepaying cohort within a parish population was neither homogenous nor unchanging. Within the parish selection, significant redefinitions of ratepaying hierarchies are noted in the 1820s and 1830s linked to developments in the area’s human ecological environment, with an increased resident gentry presence alongside new individuals moving into the area to farm larger acreage mixed-agrarian farms consolidated on improved heathland soils. In turn, these individuals took their place within the mechanics of parish governance, within which the poor law was a part, due to their influence as ratepayers but more importantly because of the socio-economic dominance engendered by conceptions of land-use and landownership. Thus, ratepayer trends can be approached via a human ecological methodology with changing values given to land and property types internally within parishes going far in denoting who became leading ratepayers and thus staffed the offices of parish administration. However, such changes always sat against a potential familial expression to relief administrators, with familial lineages of authority, generally linked to land-use and proprietorship, perhaps observable within the demography of administration throughout the period, albeit with such conclusions approached cautiously as they are broadly evidenced by nominal linkage of surnames. Again, these were versatile, with members of dominant families exhibiting differing positions in ratepaying hierarchies across the period; however, they were persistently present. This is a new observation within a literature which has generally not concerned itself with a biographical or genealogical focus at the administrative level. It remains to be seen whether the conclusions reached here are applicable to a larger national stage, with more research needed on relief administrators explicitly embedded in the methodologies of family reconstitution.

⁶ Thomas Sokoll, *Essex Pauper Letters, 1731-1837* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), p.11; Henry French, ‘The Search for the ‘Middle Sort of People’ in England, 1600-1800’, *The Historical Journal*, 43 (2000), pp.277-293

⁷ David Eastwood, *Government and Community in the English Provinces, 1700-1870* (London: Palgrave, 1997), p.43

The impact of the 1834 Poor Law Amendment Act on the mechanics of local relief administration was nuanced. Firstly, the parish remained central as a main stage on which relief processes, policies and outcomes were formulated and delivered. Financing relief continued to be generally framed within it, meaning ratepaying preoccupations with economy was a constant throughout the period, often providing the rationale for policy. Secondly, the extent and timing of unionisation was largely laid down in a process of negotiated interaction between Assistant Commissioners and leading local personalities, who within the Lincoln Heath were mostly embedded in an agriculturalist authority bloc. Thirdly, demographic continuity between poor laws in the individuals who staffed administrative offices was evident, particularly for parish officers, union guardians and magistrates, with such individuals often performing simultaneous roles across the disparate organs of administration which in practice softened the divides between such. This was explicit regarding magisterial interactions with poor law unions, especially within the Sleaford union where all incorporated parishes came under the jurisdiction of the Kesteven magistracy and with all chairman and vice-chairmen of the union's guardian board also being magistrates. Often, individual administrators at parish, guardian and magisterial level were linked in socio-economic relationships outside of the remit of the poor law, pivoting on landownership and land-use within the mixed-agrarian agricultural economy. Thus, administrative demography, clearly embedded within authority hierarchies constructed out of underlying human ecological environment and widely framed within the parish, proved a somewhat cohesive element between poor laws.

However, this only went so far. The ballooning of administrative agents under the New Poor Law had real effects on experiences of need and relief. Although appointments of new union staff were made at the discretion of guardians, the actual day-to-day practice of such roles had a wider impact on experiences of relief than the somewhat detached and generally supervisory corporate function of union boards. This was particularly important in respects to relieving and medical officers considering the continued dominance of outdoor relief and the long-lasting presence of the same individuals as union officers in the initial decades of the New Poor Law. These officers played a more pronounced union presence in the life of the parish much more so than guardians who were mostly taken from the ranks of leading ratepayers, often being the same individuals who had been parish officers under the Old Poor Law and thus presenting a

clear element of continuity albeit in new administrative guises. The fact that relieving and medical officers did not necessarily have to communicate with parish officers in forming policy only intensified such a presence. Moreover, relieving and medical districts, alongside union workhouses, formed sub-union loci in the administration and distribution of relief, a point noted by Snell.⁸ However, relieving and medical districts were still multi-parish geographical areas and as such, still denoted an expansion away from the parish administrative framing which generally typified the Old Poor Law. The advent of the New Poor Law also theoretically standardised parish officers' involvement in the poor law, limiting them to giving relief at times of necessity and incorporating them in a larger unionised system. Moreover, the logistics of acquiring relief could be confused within the initial decades of the New Poor Law, with remits and responsibilities between differing administrative agents often being vague in actual practice. Thus, the local mechanics of relief under the New Poor Law seemed less to have been about clearly defined roles than flexible spheres of communication with actions and responsibilities dependent on context and circumstance.

Despite this, the ways relief seekers themselves navigated such rearticulated administrative mechanics seemingly remained remarkably consistent to those seen under the Old Poor Law, with the necessity of presenting a rhetoric of deservingness and belonging noted across the period. Although the New Poor Law did mean an expansion of administrative agents, interactions between these and relief seekers continued to be overwhelmingly personal in nature despite the process of acquiring relief being notably more drawn out in some instances after unionisation. Such interactions still largely pivoted on a negotiated process with paupers using advocacy from local elite figures to support applications, as had been the case under the Old Poor Law. Again, the realities of relief processes across the period seem less to do with clearly defined roles than a navigation of hierarchical authority structures within which relief seeker and administrator sat at differing levels, necessarily embedded within human ecological environment.

The geographical forum within which spheres of communication operated proved versatile across the period, not necessarily limited to administrative units such as the parish and poor law union often used as foundational framings of analysis within the

⁸ Keith Snell, *Parish and Belonging: Community, Identity and Welfare in England and Wales, 1700-1950* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), p.226

literature. Such can be evidenced under both poor laws. Firstly, this thesis has added to previous work on multi-parish incorporations and Gilbert unions under the Old Poor Law.⁹ The existence of these within localities presented larger administrative structures outside of a purely parish framing which affected poor law relief, paralleling the conclusions stressed by Digby and Shaw in their studies of rural incorporations in East Anglia.¹⁰ The presence of the Lincoln Incorporation meant that unionisation under the New Poor Law was not the first time a multi-parish system of administration was in place within the Lincoln Heath. Although only one parish of study was officially incorporated into the Lincoln Incorporation, frequent localised economic migration within the context of the dominant mixed-agrarian economic niche meant that non-resident relief was common, particularly by the eve of the New Poor Law. Thus, many non-incorporated parishes of study had residents relieved by the Incorporation. Such a situation is mirrored under the New Poor Law with the Lincoln Heath having been situated at a liminal position between three poor law unions and with the proximate parishes of study split between two. Again, migratory patterns in labour linked to economic niche meant non-resident relief continued to be explicit in the parish selection under the New Poor Law, necessitating communication and cooperation between unions in policy and the delivery of outcomes, alongside recipients often crossing union boundaries to access relief. All this questions the definition of the poor law union as the definitive geographical area of the New Poor Law, with important sub-loci of administration already noted within it and with management also often extending far beyond a single union's borders. Such highlights the limitations of many current studies which are focussed on a single poor law union, with framings of analysis obscuring the fact that administrative borders were generally pragmatically permeable in practice due to their geographical positioning.

Therefore, administrative structures were superimposed on human ecological environments, with the expression of these going far in defining experiences of need and relief, perhaps supporting Langton's conclusions about the importance of

⁹ Anne Digby, *Pauper Palaces* (Boston: Routledge, 1978); John Shaw, *The Loes and Wilford Poor Law Incorporation 1765-1826: A Prison with a Milder Name* (Suffolk: The Boydell Press, 2019); Samantha Shave, *Pauper Policies: Poor Law Practice in England, 1780-1850* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2017), pp.56-111

¹⁰ Digby, *Pauper Palaces*; Shaw, *The Loes and Wilford Poor Law Incorporation 1765-1826*

geography in defining the socio-economic realities such were nestled in.¹¹ This can explicitly be seen in internal union variation in relief expenditure and recipient numbers under the New Poor Law. However, this thesis is the first study to show that proximate parishes split between differing poor law unions often shared similarities in expenditure and recipient trends because they were embedded in a shared human ecological environment which union administrative boundaries intersected. For example, the parish selection exhibited high levels of relief spending and recipient numbers in the mid-1840s due to the impact of agricultural depression linked to fluctuating corn prices. Indeed, the relationship between corn price trends, underpinning wage levels and the availability of work, and increased periods of episodic need, often exhibited by higher levels of able-bodied male relief, was a constant throughout the period and was not negated by the New Poor Law. Several periods of increased relief spending and rising recipient numbers were noted under both poor laws: the mid-1790s; the opening years of the 1800s; the immediate post-1815 period; various years throughout the 1820s; the early 1830s; and the mid-1840s. Thus, the dynamics of need in regard to spending and recipient levels were temporally variable across the period of study, generally dependent on local economic conditions.

Moving towards an analysis of relief recipients across the period, there was a clear drop in male outdoor relief recipients under the New Poor Law, suggesting that Poor Law Commission special and general orders which aimed to limit outdoor relief for the able-bodied were respected. However, an appetite to relieve the able-bodied male remained under the New Poor Law, with this thesis suggesting that at times of rising need there was potential evidence that exemption clauses within special and general orders were utilised to provide outdoor relief to able-bodied men, albeit in much lower levels than seen under the Old Poor Law. Similarly, men were provided with parish work throughout the period of study, although with this not being listed as explicit poor law relief under the New Poor Law as had been the case before unionisation, with funds for this often coming from the highway rate under the New Poor Law and thus removing men as recipients from official poor law documentation. Therefore, it is suggested here that to make sense of overall patterns of need and support, a wider pool of documentation needs to be engaged with alongside from official poor law data,

¹¹ John Langton, 'The Geography of Poor Relief in Rural Oxfordshire', in Peter Jones and Steven King (eds), *Obligation, Entitlement and Dispute under the English Poor Laws* (Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2015), pp.193-235

particularly in the case of able-bodied males who seemingly were offered other kinds of non-poor law support under the New Poor Law.

Despite a reduction in explicit poor law receipt for men under the New Poor Law, under both poor laws most recipients were the elderly, children and females, with factors that influenced susceptibility to need remaining consistent across the period, being for the most part linked to episodic circumstance across a life cycle. Indeed, in the early decades of the New Poor Law many recipients were the same individuals who had received relief in the waning period of the Old, particularly in the case of the elderly, paralleling elements of demographic continuation noted at administrative level and confirming that individual experiences of relief could bridge the divide between poor laws. Potential nominal genealogical linkages can also be discerned amongst relief recipients, with certain families, based on surname evidence, having members that continually exhibited as recipients across the period of study. Such may suggest customs of eligibility based on notions of belonging linked to genealogical ties which meant that certain families were either more likely to apply for or to receive poor law relief. Where identifiable, such families had seemingly longer residence within parishes with many members born in their parish of residence. These two strands of a potential familial dimension to the demography of the poor law may have fed into the negotiated process of relief and the importance of belonging to notions of eligibility, noted by such commentators as Innes, King and Winter.¹² Suggestions of a genealogical aspect to poor law receipt is an important observation which warrants further research. Particularly considering the crucial work done on life cycles of poverty at the individual level, this thesis may suggest exploring such in the context of genealogical linkages of receipt which may have also gone far in denoting who applied for and was likely to receive explicit poor law aid.¹³ There was also seemingly a broad link between levels of receipt and parish typology across the period, a relationship already noted in the literature.¹⁴

¹² Joanna Innes, Steven King and Anne Winter, 'Introduction: Settlement and Belonging in Europe, 1500-1930s: Structures, Negotiations and Experiences', in Steven King and Anne Winter (eds), *Migration, Settlement and Belonging in Europe, 1500s-1930s: Comparative Perspectives* (New York and Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2013), pp.1-28

¹³ Samantha Williams, *Power, Gender and Life-Cycle under the English Poor Law, 1760-1834* (London: Boydell Press, 2013); Samantha Shave, 'The Dependent Poor? (Re)Constructing the Lives of Individuals 'On the Parish' in Rural Dorset, 1800-1832', *Rural History*, 20 (2009), pp.67-97; Tim Wales, 'Poverty, Poor Relief and Life-Cycle: Some Evidence from Seventeenth Century Norfolk', in Richard Smith (ed), *Land, Kinship and Life-Cycle* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1985), pp.351-404

¹⁴ Byun Khun Song, 'Parish Typology and the Operation of the Poor Laws in Early Nineteenth-century Oxfordshire', *The Agricultural History Review*, 50 (2002), pp.203-224

Open parishes of study generally saw larger totals of recipients and higher levels of spending, with the socio-economic structures and bigger populations of these parishes perhaps influencing increased recourse to the poor law.

The impact of the New Poor Law on experiences of indoor relief within the parish selection was multi-faceted. Despite the high frequency of parish workhouses in the parish selection during the Old Poor Law, a declining focus on indoor relief by the eve of the New Poor Law meant that unionisation and the subsequent founding of union workhouses brought such back into the forefront of relief outcomes, with the potential for indoor relief expanding. This is a conclusion recently drawn by Carter, James and King in their study of the Southwell workhouse.¹⁵ Moreover, the provision of indoor relief under the New Poor Law was on a much larger scale than seen under the Old Poor Law within the parish selection. Union workhouses were purpose-built institutions which acted as a clear symbol for the New Poor Law system, contrasting with workhouses under the Old Poor Law which were often converted from domestic architecture at parish level and in the case of the Lincoln House of Industry, an old glue factory. Thus, the New Poor Law took a varied Old Poor Law indoor relief experience and standardised it across union areas. Although there were some cognates between union workhouses and larger institutions such as the Lincoln House of Industry, with dress and diet proscribed in both, a focus on classification and separation between pauper cohorts was much more pronounced under the New Poor Law. Under both poor laws, indoor relief was generally linked to work, with spinning evident in workhouses within the area of study under the Old Poor Law. However, unlike work conducted by inmates under the Old Poor Law which often allowed for limited remuneration, proscribed tasks under the New Poor Law went unpaid and were clearly linked to the deterring principle of 'less eligibility' which underpinned union workhouses. Having said this, if definitions of work are extended away from prescriptive tasks laid towards domestic duties, it is clear that a wider proportion of the inmate population was engaged in work with inmates themselves having an integral role in the day-to-day running of workhouses.

Importantly, this thesis has noted that unionisation was often not synonymous with the opening of union workhouses, with a temporal gap seen between both at the micro-level

¹⁵ Paul Carter, Jeff James and Steven King, 'Punishing Paupers? Control, Discipline and Mental Health in the Southwell Workhouse', *Rural History*. 30 (2019), pp.161-180

which meant that union workhouses were often opened years after unionisation had taken place. Indoor relief within this transitional period overwhelmingly utilised pre-existing infrastructure such as parish workhouses and the Lincoln House of Industry, alongside lodging paupers in other union workhouses in neighbouring poor law unions. Although a temporal disconnect between unionisation and the opening of union workhouses has been noted in a northern English context, generally linked to a more pronounced opposition to the Poor Law Amendment Act in the north, little has been said about it in other areas where pragmatism seems to have been the main driving force.¹⁶ Such is an important aspect for the literature to focus on especially given the often drastic changes this engendered for indoor relief recipients at a short-term level. However, workhouse inmates were always a minority of those aided by the poor law across the period and apart from increased temporal periods of episodic need, workhouses never reached full capacity. For most, experiences of union workhouses were short-term and transitory with long-term inmate demographics being dominated by the non-able-bodied such as the elderly, sick, disabled and mentally ill.

As such, outdoor relief experienced within a parish framing continued to be the main stay of relief outcomes across both poor laws. After a waning emphasis on indoor provision by the 1820s, outdoor relief became the dominant form of explicit poor law aid within the parish selection, seeing a trend away from goods in kind towards an almost exclusive reliance on cash allowances by the eve of the unionisation in 1836. Such carried on into the New Poor Law with monetary outdoor aid always being the most widespread form of explicit poor law relief given. However, allowance levels were seemingly less generous by the eve of the New Poor Law than had been the case earlier periods, perhaps influenced by the fact that seemingly more people were in receipt of outdoor relief by the 1830s than had been the case in earlier periods of the Old Poor Law, with overall rises in totals of recipients particularly noticeable from the 1820s. Under the New Poor Law, despite a general reduction in the range of monetary relief given out-of-doors, levels of aid remained temporally variable, seemingly being less substantial at times of rising totals of relief recipients. Moreover, levels of outdoor relief given across both poor laws were generally never large enough to provide sustained

¹⁶ John Beckett, 'Politics and the Implementation of the New Poor Law: the Nottingham Workhouse Controversy, 1834-43', *Midland History*, 31 (2016), pp.201-223; Lewis Darwen, 'Workhouse Populations of the Preston Union, 1841-61', *Local Population Studies*, 93 (2015), pp.33-53

support, questioning the buying power of such and necessitated interaction with streams of support outside of the poor law, a point already made within the literature.¹⁷

The poor law was always discretionary and limited in its scope, sitting alongside other avenues of support collectively summarised within the mixed economy of welfare. As in Darwen's Lancashire, the importance of the aggregate household economy and familial aid was central to support across the period, with many never formally receiving explicit poor law relief.¹⁸ However, there were differences in household structures across the parish selection, generally conforming to parish typology. The aggregate household economy seems to have been strongest in open parishes of study which were susceptible to rental accommodation and higher periods of under or unemployment. Ordinary agricultural labouring households within open parishes utilised female and child agricultural seasonal work as a means of support, a system generally consolidated in the post-1815 period as labour demands within the mixed-agrarian economy increased. Within the confined labouring household of closed parishes, the aggregate household economy was seemingly less pronounced due to the tied nature of accommodation; stability in employment; and proportionally high male wage levels, despite falls across the first half of the nineteenth century. When female work is noted in the context of agricultural labouring households in closed parishes, it was almost always domestic service conducted by unmarried daughters living within their parents' home. Households where male heads were not engaged in explicit agricultural labour seemingly saw a wider diversity in household economy, incorporating lodgers; exhibiting co-residence with larger degrees of relation; and having more household members working. Such households were most explicit within open parishes but were also identifiable as a minority in closed. Opportunities for co-residence were also seemingly less auspicious in closed parishes, where a finite amount of tied accommodation and the dominant household structure of nuclear family headed by a male confined agricultural labourer seemingly limited it. Regarding co-residence with relations, resident paupers within the parish selection in the 1851 census suggest this was generally elderly parents living with children, particularly widowed mothers

¹⁷ Steven King and Alannah Tomkins, 'Conclusions', in Steven King and Alannah Tomkins (eds), *The Poor in England 1700-1850: An Economy of Makeshifts* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003), p.258

¹⁸ Lewis Darwen, 'Implementing and Administrating the New Poor Law in the Industrial North: A Case Study of Preston Union in Regional Context, 1837-1861' (Unpublished Doctoral Thesis, Nottingham Trent University, 2015), p.222

residing in the households of married daughters. Such feeds into Goose's conclusions about gendered differentiation in relief outcomes, underpinning the dominance of females as explicit poor law recipients and the higher numbers of elderly males noted as workhouse inmates under the New Poor Law.¹⁹ However, the maintenance of a separate household was seemingly the reality for most paupers across the parish selection under both poor laws, necessitating interactions with a variety of support opportunities.

Within the parish selection, there was a diverse range of communal opportunities for aid which broadly remained consistent across the period, pivoting on charity relief and philanthropy; utilisation of parish resources such as land and housing stock; and communal clubs and Friendly Societies. Such were embedded into a differing legislative chronology than the poor law and in many ways exhibited long-lasting continuity, explicitly engaging with a larger proportion of parish populations than purely poor law receipt and thus questioning the synonymy between need and pauperism. This perhaps supports Hindle's differentiation between conjunctural and structural modes of poverty with King also stating that the risk of needing support was ever present for many more so than allowed for when purely concentrating on poor law recipients.²⁰

Overall, approaching these main findings via the key questions permeating this thesis, namely the extent of variation, change and continuity in experiences of the poor law juxtaposed against human ecological factors and the advent of the New Poor Law, and the core aims of the 1834 Poor Law Amendment Act, clearly the extent of change and continuity in experiences of need and relief during the waning period of the Old Poor Law and the opening decades of the New Poor Law was nuanced. Firstly, this thesis has claimed that the clauses of the Poor Law Amendment can be categorised as either administrative or restrictive, primarily aiming to curtail outdoor relief for the able-bodied, with commentators such as Williams arguing that such restrictions were aimed mainly at able-bodied men.²¹ Broadly, the advent of the New Poor Law was seemingly successful in implementing these changes within the parish selection. Despite an

¹⁹ Nigel Goose, 'Workhouse Populations in the Mid-Nineteenth Century: The Case for Hertfordshire', *Local Population Studies*, 62 (1999), pp.52-69; Nigel Goose, 'Poverty, Old Age and Gender in Nineteenth-Century England: The Case of Hertfordshire', *Continuity and Change*, 20 (2005), pp.351-384

²⁰ Steve Hindle, *On the Parish? The Micro-Politics of Poor Relief in Rural England c.1550-1750* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), pp.1-4; King, *Poverty and Welfare in England*, p.77

²¹ Williams, *From Pauperism to Poverty*, pp.40-87

increasingly stabilised and professional cadre of poor law officers in many parishes from the 1820s onwards, the administrative variations that generally existed at parish level under the Old Poor Law were negated to an extent through unionisation and the creation of union salaried staffing positions, with the remit of parish officers within the management of the poor law theoretically curtailed and with important administrative positions such as workhouse masters and in the case of Ashby de la Launde, director for the Lincoln Incorporation, nullified as the New Poor Law progressed outside of its immediate years. Similarly, there seemingly was a reduction in explicit outdoor relief to males under the New Poor Law when compared to levels observable in the period between 1790 and unionisation in 1836, perhaps suggesting that the restrictive clauses of the 1834 Poor Law Amendment alongside special and general orders issued by the Poor Law Commission were largely successful in their aims. In addition, the presence of union workhouses, embedded within the deterring principles of the Poor Law Amendment Act and a strong physical symbol of the new system, increased the potential for indoor relief across the parish selection and roughly standardised its experience within the geo-administrative area of the poor law union, erasing an extremely varied Old Poor Law indoor relief expression within the area of study.

However, such changes always sat against a backdrop of continuation.

Administratively, there were clear demographic strands of continuity in relief administrators between poor laws, primarily due to the leading position of dominant ratepayers in staffing offices under both poor laws, with ratepaying hierarchies embedded in conceptions of land-use and landownership, albeit with such conceptions being flexible, seeing marked changes in many parishes of study in the 1820s and 1830s as the consolidation of mixed-agrarian agriculture changed the cultural value of differing land types. As such, administrative guises may have changed under the New Poor Law but demographic continuity brought memories of best practice across the date line from the Old Poor Law, also playing a somewhat cohesive element between the disparate elements of the New Poor Law unionised system, with such elements often approached via a flexible pragmatism which crossed legislatively defined administrative boundaries. Although the expansion of staffing under the New Poor Law certainly changed the process of acquiring relief, the filling of such staffing roles was down to local discretion, with new union staff joining a rearticulated forum of local administration which had roots stretching back into the Old Poor Law.

As stated, there was an apparent reduction in the amount of outdoor relief given to able-bodied males under the New Poor Law. However, this was temporally variable and in periods of local economic depression such as the mid-1840s, there is some evidence that exemption clauses in special and general orders were utilised to give outdoor relief to the able-bodied man and his dependents. Moreover, the appetite to relieve able-bodied males did not disappear after unionisation, primarily due to the often short-term nature of their need generally linked to cycles of under or unemployment. What did change was the avenues of support on offer to this cohort. Under both poor laws, relief for most able-bodied man came via parish work which under the Old Poor Law was listed as explicit poor law relief within much of the parish selection but under the New Poor Law was not, instead being funded primarily through highway rates. Thus, the absence of able-bodied men from poor law documentation during the 1830s and 1840s does not necessarily correlate with an absence of support, with it therefore being necessary for studies to engage with a larger range of source material than purely poor law records to make sense of the actualities of need and relief.

Under both poor laws, the highest rates of relief spending and totals of recipients were generally found in open parishes of study, located away from the central limestone heath on the eastern and western boundaries of the Lincoln Heath. Moreover, the majority of recipients were female, elderly and children across the period of study. Thus, the core demography of receipt did not readily change with the advent of the New Poor Law with recourse to the poor law generally being linked to specific circumstances across individual life cycles of need across the period. Moreover, trends in recipient totals, percentages of populations in receipt of relief and poor law spending were temporally variable under both poor laws, seeing rises at periods of economic slump which within the parish selection show some correlation with falling corn prices. From the 1820s onwards into the New Poor Law, outdoor relief, primarily through monetary allowances, was the main expression of explicit poor law relief practised within the parish selection, meaning that for most recipients the parish remained central to their experience of the poor law despite administrative changes. The ways relief seekers accessed relief also remained broadly consistent, for the most part pivoting on personal interactions with poor law administrators, albeit with the expansion of these seen under the New Poor Law meaning that the process of acquiring relief was notably more drawn out and temperamental for some. Thus, the necessity of promoting a pauper identity

incorporating rhetorics of deservingness and belonging was integral throughout the period of study. However, the poor law always sat in constant relations with other means of acquiring support, collectively grouped within the mixed economy of welfare. Such an economy was broadly consistent across the period of study and incorporated household and familial support alongside communal avenues of relief.

In sum, conclusions reached about the extent of change and continuity between poor laws are clearly multi-faceted, often dependent on the framings of questions asked. At the macro-level, the New Poor Law instigated a rearticulation of the administrative structure of the poor law which denoted a shift in how relief was maintained and delivered. This could have real effects on experiences of relief, with the expansion of administrative agents being notably important in this regard. However, the ways such a structure was navigated remained broadly consistent across the period, meaning the fundamental underlying dynamics of local experiences of need and relief remained remarkably similar either side of unionisation. Such feeds into the fact that the 1834 Poor Law Amendment Act was never meant as a total negation of previous practice but was rather a reordering of local systems of the poor law meant to tighten administration and supervision into the hands of dominant authorities, as well as limit outdoor relief for the able-bodied. Any implementation had to engage with the socio-economic expressions of locales, which this thesis has tried to explore via a human ecological methodology. The fact that the New Poor Law was mapped onto pre-existing human ecological structures which went far in defining how such a system was traversed. Indeed, need and relief, encapsulated in its poor law and non-poor law forms, was never conceived by contemporaries as detached from the lived experience of localities, rather being an integral part of socio-economic realities. Here, the 1834 Poor Law Amendment Act was appropriated through the lens of the local. If one moves away from legislatively defined tenets towards expression in practice, the New Poor Law seems to have been absorbed into established socio-economic precedents rather than sitting as an imposition upon them

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