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The Idle, Immoral and Profligate Poor: The condition of the poor and the 'taint of pauperism' in Huddersfield between 1834 and 1874, with particular reference to the 'undeserving poor'

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**The Idle, Immoral and Profligate Poor:**

**The condition of the poor and the 'taint of pauperism' in  
Huddersfield between 1834 and 1874, with particular reference  
to the 'undeserving poor'.**

**John Wilson Barrett.**

**A thesis Submitted to the University of Huddersfield in partial  
fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of  
Philosophy.**

**The University of Huddersfield.**

**September 2012**

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## Abstract

The purpose of this research is to examine the use of popular political language and its consequence on the poor, especially the *undeserving poor*. The study examines how, such ‘anti-pauper language’ affected social outcomes for the poor, and how certain authoritarian groups used language to remove the ‘taint’ of pauperism from the town of Huddersfield between 1834 and 1874.

Over the past forty years, the focus of urban history has tended to centre on the cultural processes and localised identities, leaving important questions concerning the context of poverty to be centred on the experiences of major British towns and cities. However, this thesis extends that form of research, by focusing on a town’s response to poverty and how language shaped the response of an emerging industrialised town. The thesis focuses on how Huddersfield managed these responses to poverty and how the town used language to try and halt the spread of pauperism throughout the town.

The study concentrates on the various uses of authoritarian language under the old Poor Law and how the same forms of language were reinterpreted after 1834, under the new Poor Law. It suggests that although the context of authority changed, the language remained the same and was used toward the same outcomes. Furthermore, this study witnesses how these various groups and organisations, used their authority to maintain social order and to enforce such behaviour amongst the deserving poor, whilst at the same time undermining the undeserving. This study assesses the uneasy alliance between these groups, whose aim and intention, was divided between helping the deserving poor and improving the image of the town, whilst at the same time, openly opposing and largely ignoring, the undeserving poor.

A recurring theme within this study surrounds the negative, often bigoted language, used against the Irish migrants who settled in the town in the late 1840s. By concentrating on the Irish, this study is able to suggest that they were a more ‘degenerate strand of the undeserving poor’ and therefore, they are used as a prime example of the kind of power and influence, language had over the poor.

This study illustrates the importance of language in a study on local responses to poverty and how, it is a way of articulating authority and shaping the way the undeserving poor were treated during the nineteenth-century in Huddersfield.

## **Acknowledgments**

Without the guidance and assistance of the following people, it would have been difficult to complete this thesis.

Foremost amongst these are my supervisors, professors Keith Laybourn and Barry Doyle. Their patience and expertise has been invaluable to me in completing this study. I am also grateful for the assistance afforded me by the Kirklees District Archives, particularly Lynn Maclean, whose knowledge of the local archive was both impressive and invaluable.

Thanks also to my wife Pauline, who has been a source of unwavering support and common sense. Without her continued encouragement and patience, this work would remain incomplete.

Ultimately, this thesis is dedicated to my son Alexander, my wife Pauline and to the memory of my parents Harry and Emily.

## **Introduction**

*The question of poverty is that of death, disease, winter or that of any other natural phenomenon. I don't how either is to stop.<sup>1</sup>*

One of the major challenges that faced nineteenth-century Britain was how to respond to poverty and its related social problems. The reality for much of the period of this study was that the ‘causes of poverty and the solutions to it’ were little understood and often ignored. Generally, the attitude toward poverty was either thought of as a personal failing or an unforeseen tragedy. For many, the general consensus in the nineteenth century equated poverty with morality. Some saw poverty almost as a crime and those who suffered it were essentially ‘immoral people’ who had brought the problem on themselves through indolence. Such victims were known as the *undeserving poor*. However, there was recognition that some others suffered poverty through no fault of their own often as a result of ill health, old age, or infirmity. These were known as the *deserving poor*.

This study concentrates for the most part on the West Riding town of Huddersfield and tracks its growth from a market town in the 1820s to a prominent centre for textile production in the 1850s and 1860s. Neither a particularly poor, nor wealthy town, Huddersfield, nevertheless, experienced the economic challenges that emerged from the 1820s onwards.<sup>2</sup> Alongside the town’s growth there emerged a number of local-elites; manufacturers, tradesmen and shop-keepers, who used the changing economic and political climate to improve their own status and that of the town. As part of this change, this study

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<sup>1</sup> G.N. Ray (ed.) *Letters and Private Papers of W.M.Thackeray* (London,1945), 345.

<sup>2</sup> A period described by many historians as the ‘classic period of industrialisation’; see G.B.A.M. Finlayson, *England in the Eighteen Thirties: Decade of Reform* (London, 1969).

will argue, that some of these local elites used the language of a period framed by changes in the economy and politics, to further their interests and the interests of the town.

Of chief importance in this study, is a consideration of the ‘anti-pauper language’ that was generated before and immediately after the implementation of the new Poor Law Amendment Act of 1834. After 1834, this language was seemingly legitimized from two distinct sources, first, the emerging authorities that were created by the new Poor Law, and second, by the rising number of agitators from the radical ‘anti-Poor Law’ movement. The use of authoritarian language and anti-pauper rhetoric soon became an essential part of the process of removing the town’s taint of pauperism. It is important to establish that this taint of poverty was in effect the ‘tainting’ of Huddersfield’s present and future reputation, and by legitimizing such rhetoric against the undeserving poor, attempts were clearly being made to suppress and eradicate the pauper element in Huddersfield.

This thesis looks at ‘popular political language’ as a way in which the local elites of the town constructed their power, by identifying and classifying the poor of the town in certain ways so as to assert their authority. In turn, this use of a particular dialogue meant that language then shaped how the poor were treated. If they were branded as undeserving then they did not deserve improvement in their conditions, but punishment and constraint.

One of the reasons why the town’s elite took control was that Huddersfield was a town that resisted central control following the implementation of the new Poor Law Amendment Act in 1834. Through the anti-Poor Law movement, a small number of radical shop-keepers and manufacturers attempted to rally support against the new Act. They fought for its abolition and in doing so empowered their working-class neighbours to join the revolt. However, these attempts at local subversion were often defeated and their opponents, many of them tradesman, shop-keepers and manufacturers of the pro-Poor Law faction, took effective control of the newly- formed Poor Law Union. The emergence of these controlling



elites and the formation of a small army of administrators, within the union, helped shape the way the town dealt with the issue of poverty. Consequently, from the late 1830s there developed a whole new language of civic and social power.

This study covers the period 1834 to 1874, which saw the removal of an established and somewhat entrenched system of poor-relief and the installation of a whole new concept of support.<sup>3</sup> During the same period, towns and cities began to gain civic control and autonomy, which largely passed from central government to these urban towns. The problem with any emergent change was that up to 1834 there existed, throughout England and Wales, an arrangement subject to local custom and practice, and in Huddersfield and her surrounding parishes this system was rigidly adhered to.<sup>4</sup> This study ends during the 1870s, when the Huddersfield Union was beginning its fourth decade under an amalgam of both local and central control. By the early 1870s the union was beginning to finally rid itself of its radical past and was beginning, to some extent, to bend to the will of government and the Poor Law authorities.

By using and legitimizing the language of these emerging authorities, this study seeks to explore the important responses to the problems of pauperism and the poor, in doing so it pays particular attention to the undeserving poor. The mid-nineteenth century was relatively untouched by any true scientific analysis of the causes of poverty, despite the fact that economically and politically the second third of the century was a rapidly changing environment. Any changes that were made came about as the result of changes in national and local policy, and the emergence of improvements in public health, and the organisation of a visible force of law and order. Yet for Huddersfield, and significant for the purposes of this

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<sup>3</sup> Finlayson, *England in the Eighteen Thirties*, p.51.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid, p.52.

study, change came about, and was maintained for the good of the town's image and future prosperity, effectively paying little attention to the 'human' needs for reform.

A critical period in the town's history came between 1834 and 1840, when Huddersfield experienced a large-scale revolt against the implementation and operation of the new Poor Law; indeed the town became one of the most radical of all the town's involved in the anti-Poor Law.<sup>5</sup> During this period the town became supportive of factory reform and the increasing working-class population took to the streets, at times in violent opposition.<sup>6</sup> Huddersfield became renowned for its unanimity and fighting spirit and as a hotbed of radical politics. The Tory radical Richard Oastler regarded the centralisation of the new Poor Law as a profound challenge to the traditions of English communal life. In 1835, he complained that 'the constitution of England knows nothing of such modern trash'.<sup>7</sup> Oastler's moral paternalism was influential within the anti-Poor Law movement; its rhetoric of rights and duties, cast the new Poor Law as an attack on the moral economy of the local community.<sup>8</sup> This was all too evident, when, in 1837, the town refused to elect a clerk to administer the new Poor Law. In doing so, Huddersfield was refusing to implement the direction of central government and to support the rhetoric of Oastler and his followers.

One of the central aims of this thesis is to assess the condition of the poor in Huddersfield, particularly the undeserving poor; and to examine how their circumstances changed during a period of authoritarian change in the town. As the old Poor Law was dismantled to make way for the new, one can see that the emergence of local elites had a direct impact on popular politics in the town. It was this emergence of local power that

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<sup>5</sup> R.J. Morris, *Class and Class Consciousness in the Industrial Revolution 1780-1850* (London, 1979), p.42.

<sup>6</sup> On Industrialism and class conflict see H. Perkin, *Origins of Modern English Society* (London, 1969), pp.178-83.

<sup>7</sup> F. Driver, *Power and Pauperism, The workhouse system 1834-1884* (Cambridge, 1993), p.114.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

impacted on the town's poor. As some of the most significant changes to the new Poor Law occurred in the urban areas of the north of England it is appropriate to base this study in one of the fastest expanding towns in the West Riding, and one which was, after 1838, the largest Poor Law union in the country.

This study aims to add to the knowledge of how the new Poor Law affected the growth of northern urban centres and more importantly, how the use of authoritarian language or political language, impacted on the treatment and condition of the poor in Huddersfield. It is important to illustrate the importance of language and how its use by the authorities shapes the way the undeserving poor were viewed during the nineteenth century.

An appropriate place to start and look at the power of political language and the way it impacted on the people and their identity, is to look at the historiography of 'popular politics'. Rohan McWilliam, in her book *Popular Politics in Nineteenth Century England* argues that political ideas were not class specific, but were 'trans-class'.<sup>9</sup> However, she concedes that class was a:

Fundamental form of social identity and that class consciousness is not a sufficient explanation for the form and language of politics, because there were other kinds of social identity that were often equally important.<sup>10</sup>

Our understanding of politics is important to understand how language can play an important part in history. McWilliam explains that to her, politics is the 'way in which the distribution of power within society is understood and debated'. It follows then, that a study of authoritarian language and its effect on the poor, is about the distribution and the use of local power and the context and its understanding in a local setting.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> R. McWilliam, *Popular Politics in Nineteenth Century England* (London, 1998), p.1.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid,

The emergence of social history as a discipline is directly linked to a period of great historical writing following the end of the Second World War. After 1945, historians began to talk about the sources that they consulted and historians such as E.P. Thompson and Asa Briggs contributed to a sophisticated outpouring of historical texts based on these new sources. According to McWilliam, before 1945, popular politics had manifested itself in a number of different ways.<sup>12</sup> There was the study of political history and the development of political science (Henry Jephson's *The Platform*, 1892) there then followed a series of works concerning the people's place in politics and the emergence of the party system. The Chartist movement was examined by the Fabian, Mark Hovell, who chartered the emergence of democracy. Popular politics has its roots in labour history and works by the Webbs emerged toward the end of the nineteenth century.<sup>13</sup> Their successor was the historian G.D.H. Cole, a socialist, who developed the field of labour history and showed how the labour movement had risen on the back of industrial capitalism.<sup>14</sup> The new discipline of social history was spurred on by the work of J.L. and Barbara Hammond. The Hammond's, concentrated their work on the working class and their experiences in the early industrial revolution.<sup>15</sup> Yet despite these early forays into the new discipline, it was not until after 1945 that the field of social history began to gather momentum:

As late as 1945, it was still assumed that the history of the working class and its politics could not be written, either because the subject was unimportant or the sources did not exist.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Ibid., p.15.

<sup>13</sup> S. Webb and B. Webb, *History of Trade Unionism* (1894).

<sup>14</sup> McWilliam, *Popular Politics*, p.15.

<sup>15</sup> *The Village Labourer*, (1911) and *The age of the Chartists, 1832-1854*, (1930).

<sup>16</sup> McWilliam, *Popular Politics*, p.16.

Under what McWilliam calls the ‘old analysis’, the nineteenth century was neatly separated and assumed a discontinuity in popular politics. During the first two decades of the nineteenth century a factory proletariat emerged ‘that could potentially respond to politics based on class’.<sup>17</sup>

The study of poverty and the historiography of the urban population has been a major area for social historians for many years, from the classic theories on class and market forces by Marx and Engels in the nineteenth century, to the 1960s and Edward Thompson’s influential work on the English Working Class.<sup>18</sup> The body of work relating to more specific studies of class and society within the urban landscape is vast and detailed. *English Poor Law History, part I, The Old Poor Law and part II, The last Hundred Years* by Beatrice and Sidney Webb contains a huge amount of detailed and statistical information on all aspects of the system of relief of the poor,<sup>19</sup> as does the survey *The English Poor Law* by J.J. and A.J. Bagley.<sup>20</sup> Modern society and the growth and consequences of urbanisation and class is surveyed by Harold Perkin in the *Origins of Modern English Society*.<sup>21</sup> Of greater scope is the detailed history of *The English Poor Law 1780-1930*, by Michael Rose and the *Economic History of the English Poor Law 1750-1850*, by George Boyer.<sup>22</sup> A more recent survey of the origins of social welfare is detailed in Bernard Harris’ *The Origins of the British Welfare*

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> K. Marx. and F. Engels, *Articles on Britain* (Moscow, 1871); *Capital: a critique of political economy Vol. I The Process of Capital Production* (London, 2003) and E.P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (London, 1991).

<sup>19</sup> S. and B. Webb, *English Poor Law Policy* (London, 1963).

<sup>20</sup> A.J. and J.J. Bagley, *The English Poor Law* (London, 1966).

<sup>21</sup> H. Perkin, *Origins of Modern English Society* (London, 1969).

<sup>22</sup> M.E. Rose, *The English Poor Law 1780-1930* (Newton Abbot, 1971) and G. Boyer, *An Economic History of the English Poor Law 1750-1850* (Cambridge University Press, 1990).

*State* and with a central focus on Huddersfield and the politics of power under the Poor Law there is the survey by Felix Driver.<sup>23</sup>

The old Poor Law compared with the new, is surveyed by Mark Blaug in 'The Myth of the Old Poor Law and the Making of the New', similarly, Peter Mandler's, 'The Making of the New Poor Law Redivivus' is a study of the failings of both the Old and New Poor Laws.<sup>24</sup> The issue of financial responsibility and the bastardy clauses are discussed in the essay 'Illegitimacy, paternal financial responsibility, and the 1834 Poor Law Commission Report' by Thomas Nutt.<sup>25</sup> More locally, the political economy and issues surrounding local power in Huddersfield during the 1820s, is examined in David Griffith's *Partisans or Politicians*.<sup>26</sup> The historiography of the Anti-Poor Law Movement is generally divided between those who have concentrated solely on the topic and those who have divided attention between Chartism and the Factory Movement and the biographers of some of the leading northern radicals such as Richard Oastler, Joseph Rayner Stephens and the Reverend G.S.Bull.<sup>27</sup> Michael Rose, Mark Hovell, Nicholas Edsall, Felix Driver and J.P.Knott deal with the subject head-on.<sup>28</sup> Mark Hovell's book, remarks on the violence of the anti-Poor Law rhetoric, arguing that the opposition to the new Poor Law was 'extreme vehemence and

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<sup>23</sup> B. Harris, *The Origins of the British Welfare State; Social Welfare in England and Wales 1800-1945* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2004) and F. Driver, *Power and Pauperism, 1834-1884* (Cambridge University Press, 1984).

<sup>24</sup> M. Blaug, 'The Myth of the Old Poor Law and the Making of the New', *The Journal of Economic History*, Vol.23, No.2 (June 1963) p.152 and P. Mandler, 'The Making of the New Poor Law Redivivus', *Past and Present*, no.117 (Nov 1987) p.131.

<sup>25</sup> T. 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', *Economic History Review*, 63, 2 (2010).

<sup>26</sup> D. Griffiths, *Pioneers or Partisans? Governing Huddersfield 1820-1848* (Huddersfield, 2008).

<sup>27</sup> C. Driver, *Tory Radical. The life of Richard Oastler* (New York, 1946); J.C. Gill, *The Ten Hours Parson* (London, 1959); Ibid., *Parson Bull of Byerley* (London, 1963); G.J. Holyoake, *Life of Joseph Raynor Stephens* (London, 1881); D. Read and E. Glasgow, *Feergus O'Connor, Irish-man and Chartist* (London, 1961).

<sup>28</sup> M.E. Rose, 'The anti-poor law agitation' in J. Ward (ed.), *Popular Movements 1830-1850* (London, 1970); N. Edsall, *The Anti-Poor Law Movement, 1834-1844* (Manchester, 1971); J. Knott, *Popular Opposition to the 1834 Poor Law* (London, 1986).

violence, appealing not to reason, but to passion and sentiment'.<sup>29</sup> Hovell compares the Chartist Movement and the anti-Poor Law movement, describing the latter as a fully-fledged national movement, which advanced an unambiguously progressive political programme based on a national diagnosis of social problems. The anti-poor law movement seemed to Hovell to be everything the Chartist movement was not. The problem with this is that such an easy distinction between the two is no longer tenable today.<sup>30</sup> Where we might find common ground is around the topic of there being an overlap between Chartism and the anti-Poor Law movement. There were similarities between the two movements and Chartism learnt a lot from the anti-Poor Law movement's ability to mobilise its support – indeed some modern historians believe that Chartism was more of an extension than a rejection of the anti-Poor Law movement.<sup>31</sup> More recent work on this area is lacking, and as such, chapter two in this study provides a more contained and up to date review of the movement.<sup>32</sup> A more local study of political radicals is documented in John Hargreaves' 'A Metropolis of Discontent', here, Hargreaves argues that during the late eighteenth-century and early nineteenth-century, Huddersfield had earned notoriety as a hotbed of disaffection. Similarly, Vivien Hemingway's study of Parliamentary Politics in Huddersfield between 1832 and 1853 offers an excellent survey of the popular politics in the town during the turbulent years following the Reform Act. She argues that during the 1830s and 1840s, politics in Huddersfield was often boisterous and corrupt and marked by divisions amongst the various political parties

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<sup>29</sup> M. Hovell, *The Chartist Movement* (London, 1925), p.86.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.,

<sup>31</sup> D. Thompson, *The Chartists* (London, 1983), p30, 258. and S.Weaver, *John Fielden and the Politics of Popular Radicalism* (Oxford, 1989).

<sup>32</sup> N.C. Edsall, *The anti-Poor Law movement 1834-1844* (Manchester University Press, 1971) and G. Stedman Jones, 'The Language of Chartism' in J. Epstein and D. Thompson (eds.), *The Chartist Experience* (London, 1982).

contesting the elections, as well as amongst factions in the majority of the population who could not vote.<sup>33</sup>

The study of poverty and poor-relief in urban centres is studied by Michael Rose in *The Relief of Poverty 1834-1914*; here Rose discusses the attitude that pervaded throughout the nineteenth century, whereby poverty was seen as an accepted part of life.<sup>34</sup> In this important work, Rose discusses the attitude experienced by many men and women, that only by feeling the pinch of poverty could they be inspired to do something about their situation. He gives equal treatment to the issues of the extent and the cause and treatment of poverty. The philosophical problems of poverty and relief are extensively covered in *The Idea of Poverty* by Gertrude Himmelfarb.<sup>35</sup>

The small, yet relatively well established Irish community of Huddersfield developed quite quickly during the 1840s. Their history and the conditions in which they lived is an important aspect of this study. By examining the kind of language that was used to malign them, and by using the experiences, and examining how the Irish were both perceived and treated in the town, one can demonstrate that there existed a further sub-divided section of the undeserving poor that suffered under the language of authority. As a largely demonised and put-upon section of the community, they were often at odds with authority and often viewed with suspicion by their neighbours.

The history of the Irish and their experiences of migration to Britain is extensive, particularly over the past thirty years or so. Much of this research is of course triggered by the

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<sup>33</sup> J.A. Hargreaves, 'A Metropolis of Discontent': Popular Protest in Huddersfield c.1780-1850' in E.A.H. Haigh (ed.) *Huddersfield a most handsome town* (Kirklees Cultural Services, 1992) and V.W. Hemingway, 'Parliamentary Politics in Huddersfield, c.1832-53' in E.A.H. Haigh (ed.), *Huddersfield a most handsome town* (Kirklees Cultural Services, 1992).

<sup>34</sup> M.E. Rose, *The Relief of Poverty 1834-1914* (Basingstoke, 1972), p.6.

<sup>35</sup> Rose, *The English Poor Law 1780-1930* (Newton Abbot, 1971) and G.Himmelfarb, *The Idea of Poverty: England in the early Industrial Age* (London, 1984).



causes and effects of the Great Irish famine. However, this study concentrates on the consequences of migration and integration, and the conditions experienced by the Irish who settled in Britain.

Since the 1970s, there has been a great deal of interest in Ireland and the forced migration of the indigenous population, especially during the early part of the nineteenth century. This early period of Irish migration is particularly well described by Ruth Harris' study of the dynamics of Irish migration. Harris looks at the period between 1800 and 1845 and generally concludes that the Irish migrant who ignored 'abroad' was a failed migrant and that 'emigrants are failed migrants'. In essence, she argues that by the 1830s, there was an accelerated expansion for the kinds of jobs which the Irish performed and fundamentally, the Irish made a significant contribution to the British economy in the early decades of industrialisation. However, her study is controversial for taking Engels at face value and for arguing that the majority of the Irish in Britain were temporary sojourners.<sup>36</sup> *The Irish in Britain* is a collection of essays focused on the mid-nineteenth century and illustrates the numerous issues associated with migration to the various areas of Britain prior to the great influx - post famine.<sup>37</sup> An earlier study of the Irish migrant, by the same authors, examines the experiences of the migrating Irish to the Victorian city. The study examined the degree of demoralisation and the disadvantages faced by Irish migrants, and set these experiences against the positive influence of the Catholic Church. The study argues that the Church helped to institute a strong sense of community in cities where the Irish were living and also helped to foster and promote political activity.<sup>38</sup> The national aspects of the 'Irish Diaspora' in Britain are dealt with in W.J. Jones' study of the enclaves that some Irish migrants formed. Here, Little Ireland's, Irish labour, and the relationships between Catholics and Protestants

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<sup>36</sup> R.A. Harris, *The Irish in Victorian Britain, the Local Dimension* (London, 1999).

<sup>37</sup> R. Swift and S. Gilley, (eds.) *The Irish in Britain 1815-1839* (London, 1989).

<sup>38</sup> R. Swift and S. Gilley, *The Irish in the Victorian City* (London, 1985).

are studied against the backdrop of Chartism and nationalism in many English towns and cities.<sup>39</sup>

At a more local and regional level, Jones' earlier work on the Irish experience in the industrial north, investigates the communities in Liverpool and Manchester, and particularly the relationships around community and social welfare.<sup>40</sup> More recent research in this area suggests that in some respects, the Irish urban experience was much more complex, diverse, and dynamic than earlier historians had believed, with their emphasis on a rather drab, static and uniform experience. Thus the Irish, coming from a variety of backgrounds in Ireland met with a variety of receptions in the many British towns and cities they settled in. These complexities are examined by Carl Chinn, who concentrates on Birmingham, and the strengths, weaknesses and complexities of Irish-family networks. Chinn uses the common experience of whole families and lodgers living together in the common lodging house, and argues that despite the hardships such living brought, they were self-supportive of each other.<sup>41</sup>

One area of Britain, that was largely ignored as a place of settlement was the north east of England. In 'Irish settlement in the North East and North West of England', Frank Neal takes as his study the counties of Cumberland, Westmoreland, Northumberland and Durham. Neal, like Chinn, argues that smaller Irish enclaves often lived in extended family groups and that by taking in lodgers, usually from the same part of Ireland as the head of the family, assisted in family economics, benefiting both.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> W.J. Jones, *The Irish in Britain, 1815-1914* (Dublin, 1991).

<sup>40</sup> W.J. Jones, *The Irish in Mid-Victorian Lancashire* (London, 1989).

<sup>41</sup> C. Chinn, 'Sturdy Catholic Emigrant' *The Irish in Early Victorian Birmingham*, in Swift and Gilley (eds.) *The Irish in Britain*, pp.52-74.

<sup>42</sup> F. Neal, 'Irish Settlement in the North East and North West of England', in Swift and Gilley (eds.) *The Irish in Britain*.

The role of religion in Irish migrant communities has always attracted the attention of historians, particularly the role and influence of the Catholic Church. The Irish Catholic experience is particularly well explored in Steven Fielding's study of the Irish Catholics in Manchester and Liverpool. He asserts that the Irish Catholic experience found more echoes in Manchester than in Liverpool, which was once thought to be the spiritual home of Irish Catholicism. He believes that the Catholic Church played an important role in sustaining an Irish identity in the city. The church was seen as an organic and accepted feature of Irish working-class life in the city.<sup>43</sup>

There are two pieces of research into the Irish of Huddersfield, both of which explore the experiences of the Irish migrant. Michael Nolan's unpublished dissertation from the 1970s explores the responses to the Irish from both a local and national perspective and is particularly strong in portraying the negative side of migrant life during the mid-nineteenth century. A much more recent piece of research, by Esther Moriarty, examines the identity and cultural structure of the town's Irish migrant population and is particularly strong in discussing whether the Irish integrated with the host population.<sup>44</sup>

A thesis that explores responses to poverty requires an understanding of charitable and philanthropic actions in relation to the poor. Nineteenth-century philanthropy and the work of charitable organisations has been the subject of considerable research during the twentieth century. A portion of this research, over the past forty years, has concentrated on charities in the regions, and the often thorny issue of charities as methods of 'social control'. Some of the leading authorities on class and charity over the past forty years have been Brian Harrison, Alan Kidd, Robert Morris, David Owen, Frank Prochaska and Gareth Stedman

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<sup>43</sup> S. Fielding, *Class and Ethnicity: Irish Catholics in England, 1780-1939* (Birmingham, 1993).

<sup>44</sup> M. Nolan, 'The Irish in Huddersfield 1831-1871' (unpublished BA Dissertation, Huddersfield Polytechnic, December 1975). E. Moriarty, 'The Great Famine: an Irish tragedy and its impact on the English town of Huddersfield from 1845-1861' (unpublished PhD Thesis, University of Huddersfield, 2010).

Jones. On the working class, the last of these, Stedman Jones, in his 1971 work, *Outcast London*, questioned the status of class and social control in Victorian society. Focusing on the last third of the nineteenth-century, Jones looks at the labour market and the undeserving poor and the powers by which the Charitable Organisation Society slowly lost its grip on poor relief policy. He considers incidents of social control through the efforts of the C.O.S and the replacement of self-help remedies against poverty by a socially interventionist state; he provides an explanation of the disembodied view of how class relations engender ideological change. Jones later modified his position on social control in two later studies. Similarly, Anthony Donajgrodzki and Robert Morris have written detailed studies on this topic.<sup>45</sup> In *Social Control in Nineteenth Century Britain*, Donajdrodzki discusses the concept of social control and the implied notion that 'order is the product of many social processes, relationships and institutions'.<sup>46</sup> He uses the analogy of humanitarians, clergymen and social workers and educators as 'policemen without boots'.<sup>47</sup> Donajgrodzki states that the social police were characterised by a number of assumptions. It was believed that social order was a product of common morality, sustained and diffused throughout the institutions of society. Subsequently social order must include legal systems, police forces and prisons as well as religion and morality.<sup>48</sup> However, in order for these to work for the good of all, there should a strong guiding hand held over the poor, who were assumed:

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<sup>45</sup> Stedman Jones, 'From Historical Sociology to Theoretical History', *British Journal of Sociology*, 27 (1976), pp.295-305, and 'Class Expression versus Social Control? A Critique of Recent Trends in the Social History of Leisure', *History Workshop*, 4 (1977), pp.162-70. See also, A.P. Donajgrodzki, ed., *Social Control in Nineteenth century Britain* (1977); R.J. Morris, 'Voluntary Societies and British Urban Elites, 1780-1850: An Analysis', *Historical Journal*, 26 (1983), PP. 95-118.

<sup>46</sup> Donajgrodzki, *Social Control in Nineteenth Century Britain*, p.9.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

normless, or at least insufficient if left to themselves; liable to be led astray by agitators or to form perverted social systems.<sup>49</sup>

Whilst we are warned that the concept of ‘social control’ is rather ‘murky and reductionist’ and one which some historians tend to avoid, there is no doubt the idea of its links to common morality existed. It is therefore reasonable to expect certain authorities and individuals to exercise some sort of control, even through the largely humanitarian use of philanthropy and the outlet of charity. Donajgrodzki concludes by indicating that the ‘social police’ was a state of mind which contributed to Benthamite thinking on social policy. But it was one element competing with others:

During the 1850s and 1860s the social unrest which had led Tremmenheere and Chadwick to their aggressive assertions on social solidarity, declined sharply, and with it the frame of mind itself passed away: so completely, indeed, that it was forgotten.<sup>50</sup>

As an introduction to the topic of philanthropy, David Owen provides an interesting survey over 300 years; whereas Brian Harrison presents the reader with a detailed accumulation of sources relating to social and political cohesion in Britain since the industrial revolution. Fundamentally, he examines what is a class society and what draws people together rather than what pushes them apart.<sup>51</sup> The historian, Frank Prochaska, has written widely on the topic of philanthropy and charity, particularly during the nineteenth century. Of particular note is his *Women and Philanthropy in Nineteenth-Century England*.<sup>52</sup> Here Prochaska expands on the work of David Owen, which Prochaska describes as a distinguished account

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<sup>49</sup> Ibid., p.52.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid., p.73.

<sup>51</sup> D. Owen, *English Philanthropy, 1660-1960*, (London,1964), B.Harrison, *Peaceable Kingdom*, and Prochaska, ‘Philanthropy’.

<sup>52</sup> F. Prochaska, *Women and Philanthropy in Nineteenth-Century England*, (Oxford, 1980).

of the history of philanthropy, by crediting the formation, up-keep and success of many charities to the efforts of middle-class women.<sup>53</sup> He concentrates on the middle classes as philanthropy by the poor was usually informal and undocumented, making any systematic analysis of their benevolence difficult.<sup>54</sup> In *Women and Philanthropy*, Prochaska outlines the development of the early emancipation of women and their ability to organise themselves into an effective force for good. Philanthropy, he says, was the vocation most suitable for such women that most sprang to mind and throughout the nineteenth century it was seen as the leisured woman's most obvious outlet for self-expression.<sup>55</sup> Throughout his study Prochaska examines the role of women and the effect their charitable work had on their lives and the lives of others, particularly the poor and destitute.<sup>56</sup> His work goes much further than the broad definition of Owen's work, by examining the development of the work of women in the field of charity, and particularly, how they developed both a sense of worth for their own gender and a sense of value for those they helped. Whilst the study illustrates the detail of charitable societies and the efforts of women to improve conditions for the poor, it also illustrates the development of women's work and progress, particularly as part of the wider moral reform movement and the inclusion of women in politics and the suffrage societies of the latter decades of the century.

However, it is in the field of regional charity that many historians have tended to focus on in recent years. Alan Kidd's response to the issues surrounding charity has left us with a wealth of responses to issues concerning charity, society and the industrial north.<sup>57</sup> In 'Outcast Manchester', Kidd talks about the 'pervasive influence' of the Poor Law and the

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<sup>53</sup> Prochaska, *Women and Philanthropy*, p.vii.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, p.viii.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, p.5.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 97-138 and 182-222.

<sup>57</sup> A.J. Kidd, 'Philanthropy and the *Social History* Paradigm', *Social History*, May 1996.

framework of organised charity, but more importantly discusses the independence of action that was ‘enjoyed by voluntary charities’.<sup>58</sup> Through a range of examples which illustrate the themes of voluntary charitable aid, Kidd mixes the influence of such organisations with the success of the COS and its influence on social policy and poor relief. However, on the issue of relief by the smaller charitable groups Kidd states that:

The utilitarian predilections of the charity organisation movement and the gap created by the contraction of the Poor Law provision might well have heightened social unrest during winters of high unemployment and distress.<sup>59</sup>

The topic of public health and sanitation is an area closely allied to poor relief and its effects. Richard Dennis’ ‘The social Geography of Huddersfield’ discusses the town’s expansion during the mid nineteenth century and Richard Morris’ survey of the Cholera epidemic of 1832 is a particularly detailed account of the outbreak and its impact on British society. On specific areas of public health reform, Tom Crook’s study of common lodging houses is a detailed study of the often derided lodging house and its place in Victorian society, once again the common lodging house is an area of social history that is relatively un-discovered and under researched; subsequently, the discussion of Huddersfield’s lodging houses in chapters 3 to 6 add to the knowledge of this particularly interesting area of urban history.<sup>60</sup> Academic interest in public health reform has always held a particular interest for the historian of social and urban spaces. There are a number of historians who have, over the years contributed to the major themes within the study of public health reform and its effect

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<sup>58</sup> Kidd, ‘Outcast Manchester’: Voluntary charity, poor relief and the casual poor 1860-1905, cited in A.J. Kidd (ed.) *City, Class and Culture* (Manchester University Press, 1985), p. 48.

<sup>59</sup> Kidd, ‘Outcast Manchester’ p.67.

<sup>60</sup> R. Dennis, ‘The Social Geography of Victorian Huddersfield’ in E.A.H. Haigh (ed.), *Huddersfield a most handsome town* (Kirklees Cultural Services, 1992), R.J. Morris, *Cholera 1832: The Social Response to an Epidemic* (Croom Helm, London 1976) and T. Crook, ‘Accommodating the outcast: common lodging houses and the limits of urban governance in Victorian and Edwardian London’ *Urban History*, 35, 3 (2008).

on society.<sup>61</sup> One particularly detailed study of the health of the nation is contained in a work by Anthony Wohl. In *Endangered Lives: Public Health in Victorian Britain*, Wohl produces a detailed analysis of both the central and local administration of public health in Britain as well as an examination of the social and physical environment in which people lived and the effects of those surroundings on the populations health.<sup>62</sup> An earlier study of the work and processes undertaken by the various Committees and Inspectors of public health and sanitation is taken up in David Roberts' account of the origins of the *British Welfare State*.<sup>63</sup> Here, Roberts traverses the complex area of social reform and the day- to-day work carried out by England's new bureaucracy, analyzing the inspectors investigations and reports and the complex process of the formation of policy and its execution through the cooperation of central inspectors and local officials.<sup>64</sup>

Issues concerning vagrants and tramps and the destitute poor and the rise of the police and the role of law and order are yet another well documented area of social history. Margaret Crowther's study of the 'The Tramp' in the *Myths of the English* approaches the topic from a different angle discussing both the romantic and often fanaticised perception of the tramp and the world they inhabited setting these ideas within the context of Victorian society. A quite recent social survey of the police in Britain is covered in Clive Emsley's *The*

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<sup>61</sup> See especially A. Briggs 'Cholera and Society in the Nineteenth Century', *Past and Present*, 19 (1961) 76-96; R. Hodgkinson, *The Origins of the National Health Service: The Medical Services of the New Poor Law, 1834-71* (London, 1967); E.C. Midwinter, *Social Administration in Lancashire, 1830-1860: Poor Law, Public Health and Police* (Manchester, 1969); M.Flinn, 'Medical Services under the New Poor Law', in D. Fraser (ed), *The New Poor Law in the Nineteenth Century* (London, 1976), 45-66; U.R. Henriques, *Before the Welfare State: Social Administration in Early Industrial Britain* (London, 1979); M.A. Crowther, *The Workhouse System* (London, 1981).

<sup>62</sup> A.S. Wohl, *Endangered Lives: Public Health in Victorian Britain* (London, 1983).

<sup>63</sup> D. Roberts, *Victorian Origins of the British Welfare State* (Yale, 1960). See also G. Finlayson, *Citizen, State and Social Welfare in Britain 1830-1990* (Oxford, 1993), particularly chapter one 'Providence, Paternalism, and Philanthropy, pp.19-107.

<sup>64</sup> Roberts, *Victorian Origins*. ix.



*Great British Bobby*, which illustrates very well the rise of uniformed authority since the eighteenth century. Emsley is considered one of the foremost historians of police history and his latest study provides an interesting history of the rise during the nineteenth century of the police as a British institution (p118).<sup>65</sup> The role of the police in the provinces and their rise to prominence is studied in David Taylor's *The new police in the nineteenth-century* and also in Carolyn Steedman's *Policing the Victorian Community*.<sup>66</sup> Steedman argues that perceived inefficiency of the police was wrong and that during 1850s the police became more efficient year on year. This was largely due to the certificates of efficiency that were issued every year to individual forces. By receiving certificate of efficiency, the force was subsidised by government.

The above historiography offers a varied and comprehensive view of just some of the works completed over the past forty or so years. What many of the above works have in common is that they demonstrate the rise in social history as a discipline, but more importantly they point to the importance of 'popular politics' and its relationship with the people. As this thesis concerns itself with the 'power' of language and its importance in asserting the authority of Huddersfield's local elites upon the poor, it is important to dwell upon the use of the 'linguistic turn' in historical writing. According to Katrina Navikas, the linguistic turn 'has sharpened historians' attention to the power of language'.<sup>67</sup> Similarly, McWilliam believes that the linguistic turn and its relationship to popular political language

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<sup>65</sup> C. Emsley, *The Great British Bobby: A History of British Policing from the 18<sup>th</sup> Century to the Present*, (London, 2009).

<sup>66</sup> M.A. Crowther, 'The Tramp' in R. Porter (ed.) *The Myths of the English* (Oxford, 1992), D. Taylor, (ed.) *The new police in nineteenth-century England, Crime, conflict and control*, ( Manchester University press, 1997) and C. Steedman, *Policing the Victorian Community: The formation of English provincial police forces 1856-80* (London, 1984).

<sup>67</sup> K. Navickas, review of Structures and Transformations in Modern British History, (review no.1082)

URL: <http://www.history.ac.uk/reviews/review/1082> - Accessed 22/08/2012.

was essential in interpreting the ‘new intellectual history’ after 1945.<sup>68</sup> For McWilliam, language has its own autonomy:

changes in historical circumstances were not always accompanied by changes in language, although traditional forms of language could acquire new meanings in different historical circumstances.<sup>69</sup>

From this explanation one might assume that the authoritarian language used against the undeserving poor under the old Poor Law, was the same language, but in a different historical context, however, after 1834, and the different historical context experienced, the same language was being used to denigrate and punish the poor. In other words, the language was the same, but used in a different historical setting.

Apart from the often negative political language that will be examined in this thesis, this study will explore the support mechanisms available to the poor of Huddersfield. In order to accumulate the information and alongside the importance of language throughout the period, this study, will look at a number of varied sources and primary material. Predominantly, the bulk of the material used, has been archive material relating to the minutes and records held by the collections division of the Kirklees District Archive (KDA), as well as with some material from the county archives in Wakefield (WYAS). The G.H.Wood archive in the University of Huddersfield has also been used, principally the pamphlet collection of mid-nineteenth century studies of the Poor Laws. The Roman Catholic Archive at Hinsley Hall, Leeds, was most useful in accessing documents relating to the Catholic Church in Huddersfield, chiefly the letters between local priests and the Bishop of Leeds, Bishop Briggs. There are also records obtained from the National Archives at Kew as well as government records, such as Hansard and various Acts of Parliament. Supporting many of the

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<sup>68</sup> McWilliam, *Popular Politics*, p.98.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid.

arguments under discussion in this thesis are the secondary sources provided in the established histories referred to in this study.

As this study intends to examine the way language framed and shaped the use of the new Poor Law and the effect that this had on the poor, the work is divided into two sections. The first section deals with the Old Poor Law and the responses relating to the need for change both locally and nationally. Following the implementation of the new Poor Law in Huddersfield there follows an exploration of both the local and national politics that managed that change, and more importantly the rise and demise of the anti-Poor Law movement, and the near disastrous start encountered in establishing the Poor Law Union in the town.

The second section deals with three distinct areas that affected Huddersfield and the poor. The first of these deals with the poor themselves, particularly the Irish migrants resident in the town from the middle of the 1840s onwards. This section also covers organised charity and private philanthropy, public health improvements and the role of law and order. The background that frames both sections is the often disturbing, often negative use of language by the local elites through the civic authorities - the Huddersfield Poor Law Union and the Improvement Commissioners and the local and regional newspapers and the effect this had on the poor, particularly the Irish poor and their overall status in the town.

Chapter one examines the conditions encountered by both the deserving and undeserving poor. Primarily this chapter looks at how both groups were relieved and treated before the implementation of the Act of 1834. A study of this period under the later years of the old Poor Law is necessary in order to assess the provisions that were in place in the outlying villages and the township of Huddersfield itself. This part of the study will rely on material from between 1780 and 1820, looking at both the paternalistic attitude of the parish overseers and the often derogatory language used to describe the poor.

Chapter two, deals with the initial impact that the 1834 Act had on the poor and the town. There will be a brief exploration of the political landscape during this period followed by a more detailed evaluation of the part played by the anti-Poor Law movement.

Chapter three looks at the conditions that were endured by the poor. Attention will be paid to two distinct social groups living in the Huddersfield Township from the late 1830s onwards, the Irish migrants and the native English poor. Although the Irish made up a relatively small percentage of Huddersfield's population, their experiences and their history is well documented. As a community, they are extensively referred to by the local newspapers, particularly when describing the lives they lived and the trouble they caused. They were often blamed for a host of wrongs and their moral character sobriety was often questioned. For the purposes of this study they are used to illustrate the existence of a suppressed class of pauper and at times the epitome of the taint of pauperism in the town. Whilst it will be shown that there were no Irish enclaves *per se* in Huddersfield, there existed shared inequalities between the Irish and the English poor. However, this study will show that it was the Irish who suffered the most from the dismissive language displayed by the authorities and the newspapers. Alongside these shared experiences, will be a comparison between the Irish poor of Huddersfield and those residing in the nearby town of Batley, and the much larger Irish communities in Bradford, Leeds and Manchester. As this chapter focuses on the township of Huddersfield, the inadequacies of the old town poorhouse at Birkby play an important part in an examination of the early Poor Law provision under the revised Act of 1834.

The importance of organised charity and philanthropy will be discussed in chapter four. The role of evangelical charity, the Rock Mission will be assessed alongside the efforts brought about by the return of the Catholic Church in the town from the 1830s onwards. The importance of the Charity Organisation Society will also be explored, particularly its scientific and largely unpopular intrusive investigations into poverty and its solutions.

Chapter five will be given over to an exploration of the improvements and methods of control adopted in the town. Issues surrounding public health and sanitary reform, which in isolation, did more to improve conditions for the poor than any welfare provided under the 1834 Act. There will be a particular focus on the role and use of the common lodging house and also the Model lodging house at Chapel Hill, and the various attempts at closing the former and promoting the latter.

Chapter six will examine the provision of law and order in the town. It will also consider the nature and context by which ‘marginalised groups’ such as tramps and vagrants existed within the local community and how they were controlled by the emerging forces of law and order.

#### The maintenance and relief of the poor

Prior to the emergence of the modern welfare state there was no public legislation of greater importance than the laws relating to the management, maintenance and relief of the poor. The attitude of most free-born Englishmen, prior to 1834, was that the poor were a burden on local taxes and were, despite private charity, an ever increasing burden on the state. In broad terms such a drain on the public purse was due largely to that portion of the poor who were generally unemployed, in poor health or too old to work. Apart from these rational conditions there were many more that impacted on unyielding public funds. The laws that measured and scrutinized expenditure on the poor had been in operation for over three hundred years, but by the early decades of the nineteenth century the call for change and an overhaul of the Poor Laws was at its strongest. As important as the Poor Law Amendment Act of 1834 was for its effect on the pauper population for the next one hundred years, it was also a symbol of the ascendancy of the middle class and of that group’s views in public life, ‘as a sort of

incarnation in legislative form of the ideas of the Philosophical Radicals, and specifically, as the first victory of the Benthamites'.<sup>70</sup>

When the Poor Law Amendment Act passed with little hindrance in 1834 it was considered, by some, to be one of the most important pieces of legislation of the nineteenth century.<sup>71</sup> The Royal Commission that examined the reform of the Poor Laws in 1832, as the precursor to the later Act, was by any standard a most comprehensive set of documents enquiring beyond the normal scope of previous enquiries into the mechanism of the Poor Law. The Report by the Royal Commission and the Act of 1834, were considered by many as the beginnings of 'modern welfare' in Britain. Bernard Harris describes the Royal Commission, appointed in 1832, as being responsible for 'the most important single document in the history of British social policy'.<sup>72</sup> Felix Driver similarly describes the Royal Commission as a 'beacon of enlightenment, pointing unambiguously towards rational principles of administration', but, almost in the same breath, tempers this statement by summarising the system that emerged, as one 'which gave rise to a massive archive of paperwork, of books, accounts, correspondence, registers, files, plans, inquiries' the fact that an administrative discourse of such immense dimensions should be so obstinately silent on the views and experiences of paupers themselves, is both surprising and regrettable.<sup>73</sup> Despite the criticism the report and the Act so richly deserved, there is no denying its place in English history.

Many historians have disagreed in their interpretations of the Poor Law Amendment Act 1834. Mitchell Dean argues that the new Poor Law underpinned the development of capitalism in Britain. By withdrawing its support from the masses, the state forced people to

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<sup>70</sup> N.C. Edsall, *The anti-Poor Law movement 1834-1844*, p1.

<sup>71</sup> Finlayson, *England in the Eighteen Thirties*, p.58.

<sup>72</sup> Harris, *The Origins of the British Welfare State*, p.45.

<sup>73</sup> F. Driver, *Power and Pauperism*, p.3.

accept the free market economy as the only alternative to the workhouse. This led to lower wages and the growth of working-class friendly societies.<sup>74</sup> Alternatively, Anthony Brundage claims that the new Poor Law enabled the social elites to regain control of the turbulent and disaffected rural working-class.<sup>75</sup> To some extent these ideas have been brought together by Martin Daunton, who suggests that the landowners continued to dominate politics and control institutions like the Poor Law in the interests of the new capitalist classes.<sup>76</sup> Despite these interpretations there is no denying that the Act of 1834 is one of the most significant historical documents of the nineteenth century and is, according to Checkland and Checkland, one of the classic documents of Western social history.<sup>77</sup> Of its aims, Edwin Chadwick was clear, for he described the new Poor Law ‘as an administrative experiment in the treatment of a “moral plague”’.<sup>78</sup> Here, Chadwick was questioning the morality of a system which allowed pauperism to continue unchallenged. Derek Fraser argues, in his introduction to *The New Poor Law in the Nineteenth Century*, that the Act of 1834 attempted to employ the ‘apparently faultless logic of less-eligibility’ a point which, according to the reports chief author and architect Edwin Chadwick, would persuade voluntary paupers to ‘quit the class of pauper for the more rewarding condition of independent labour’.<sup>79</sup> This assumption of Chadwick’s, as Fraser carefully suggests, was at best optimistic and at worst seriously flawed, for the New Poor Law Act would try and change the outlook of the ‘impotent’ pauper and channel relief into an ordered workhouse and the unpopular measure of outdoor relief would cease.<sup>80</sup> Chadwick first and foremost wanted to separate the poor from the pauper:

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<sup>74</sup> M. Dean, *The Constitution of Poverty* (London, 1991), p.66.

<sup>75</sup> A. Brundage, *The Making of the New Poor Laws 1832-1839* (New Jersey, 1978), p.12.

<sup>76</sup> M.J. Daunton, *Progress and Poverty, an Economic and Social History of Britain 1750-1850* (Oxford University Press, 1995), p.22.

<sup>77</sup> *The 1834 Poor Law Report*, ed. S. Checkland and E. Checkland (Harmondsworth, 1974) p.9.

<sup>78</sup> E. Chadwick, ‘The new Poor Law’, *Edinburgh Review*, 63 (1836), p.490.

<sup>79</sup> D. Fraser (ed) *The New Poor Law in the Nineteenth Century* (Macmillan, 1976), p.1

<sup>80</sup> Ibid.

Every penny bestowed, that tends to render the condition of the pauper more eligible from that of the independent labourer, is a bounty on indolence and vice. We have found, that as the poor rates are at present administered, they operate as bounties of this description, to the amount of several million annually.<sup>81</sup>

#### Defining the undeserving poor.

The personal testimonies of the majority of paupers including the undeserving poor in Britain during the nineteenth century is silent on matters concerning the way they lived and how they were treated. One of the primary reasons for this was the inability of the majority of the poorer classes to read and write. On the lower classes or the undeserving poor, Edward Thompson asks what of the ‘harlots, publicans and thieves...whose souls the evangelists wrestled for?’ Thompson believes that the:

‘inarticulate, by definition, leave few records of their thoughts. We catch glimpses in moments of crisis, like the Gordon riots, and yet crisis is not a typical condition...it is tempting to follow them into the archives of crime. But before we do this we must warn against the assumption that in the late eighteenth century ‘Christ’s poor’ can be divided between penitent sinners on the one hand, and murderers, thieves and drunkards on the other’.<sup>82</sup>

This inability of the poorer classes to better their status says a great deal about expected outcomes for the poor and their inability to progress due to the lack of an inclusive system of education. As Thompson reminds us there was a move to improve the poor and a number of societies did emerge during the last quarter of the eighteenth century.<sup>83</sup> According to Edmund Burke, the message given to the labouring poor in the famine year of 1795 was ‘Patience, labour, sobriety, frugality and religion, should be recommended to them all; all the rest is

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<sup>81</sup> S. Checkland and E. Checkland, *The 1834 Poor Law Report*, p.18.

<sup>82</sup> Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class*, p.59.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*, p.60.



downright fraud.’<sup>84</sup> This position remained in most rural and urban communities and went largely unchecked in Huddersfield until the late 1820s when a more class-conscious labouring poor began to emerge. But such changes were on the whole taken up by the labouring poor, who throughout the early decades of the nineteenth century were becoming slowly absorbed into the growing culture of *ad-hoc* education; unfortunately, the undeserving poor were largely unable to access such opportunities or where the opportunity arose they were often reluctant to try.

Subsequently, the vast majority of the evidence regarding the poor comes to us as a result of archives and local records, newspaper articles, pamphlets and contemporary histories. Yet one cannot discuss the deserving or undeserving poor without mentioning the concept and ideologies relating to class. Similarly, one cannot talk about class and its relationship to the industrial revolution, without talking about the ideas and philosophy of two of the nineteenth century’s greatest thinkers on the subject, Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels. As far as defining the undeserving poor in the context of this study, both Marx and Engels had quite strong views on certain groups within society. Whilst in this study the term ‘undeserving’ might cover a broad category of the poor, there is a further sub-division of this group that might fit the description given by Marx and Engels - the lumpenproletariat. The term ‘lumpenproletariat’ literally means ‘ragged proletariat’, and according to Nicholas Thoburn, the term was seen as *déclassé* and a break with an incorporated working-class, the class of those who refuse to work.<sup>85</sup> Peter Stallybrass expands on this, and explains that the term suggests ‘less the political emergence of a class than a sartorial category’. He states that both Marx and Engels suggested that they were a class immune to historical transformation

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<sup>84</sup> E. Burke, *General View of the Agriculture of the County of Lincoln* (1799), p.439, in Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* p.61.

<sup>85</sup> N. Thoburn, ‘Difference in Marx: the Lumpenproletariat and the proletarian unamable’, *Economy and Society*, Volume 31 No.3, August 2002, p.435.

and at times, they both used the term as a racial category, which simply repeated one of the commonplaces of bourgeois social analysis in the nineteenth century, the description of the poor as a nomadic tribe, innately depraved.<sup>86</sup> In the *Communist Manifesto*, both Marx and Engels are extremely negative toward such a group; according to David McLellan they are :

The dangerous class, the social scum, that passively rotten mass thrown off the lowest layers of old society.<sup>87</sup>

This Marxist view of the Lumpenproletariat is appropriate to that which might describe some of the poorest and destitute sections of the poor that lived in Huddersfield. Yet it is a bold assertion to make, and it is generally not true of the majority of paupers in the town. However, it might be true of those that were caught up in the fervour and agitation, brought about by the activities of the anti-poor law movement, though there is no direct evidence to associate the two.

In defining the undeserving poor within the context of this study there are several areas that need be examined. The most important of these is the kind of language used to describe such a class. It will be argued here that a similar language was used to describe the poorest classes and this ran in agreement with the terms and language also used in local politics, particularly that used by the anti-poor law movement. It was the case in most developing industrial areas that the language, and the terms and actions of those in control of the poor, ran alongside the language of promoting the town and the themes of civic duty and future prosperity. By promoting the town and its best assets, the political elites controlled the

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<sup>86</sup> P. Stallybrass, 'Marx and Heterogeneity: Thinking the Lumpenproletariat', *Representations*, No.31, Special Issue: The Margins of Identity in Nineteenth-Century England (summer, 1990), p. 70.

<sup>87</sup> D. McLellan, (ed.) *Karl Marx: selected writings* (Oxford, 1977), p.229. Such a group might however be cajoled into joining the proletariat cause in revolution "its conditions of life," continued Marx and Engels, "prepare it far more for the part of a bribed tool of reactionary intrigue." And this description found empirical confirmation in the role that Marx conceived the lumpenproletariat to have played in the 1851 coup d'état of Louis Bonaparte (1808–1873) in France.

prosperity of the town. This was largely achieved by imposing a harsh system of intolerance toward the pauper population. This study will ask who were responsible for such a system and those who were not, in particular, those whose aim it was to promote civic pride largely at the expense of the poorest classes, and those whose aim it was to try and promote social welfare within the town.

The early Victorian attitude suggested that the undeserving poor were those who were considered to be 'poor' as a direct result of their moral failings. The emergent position in the 1850s concerning the working class, a portion of which might include the deserving poor, was often characterised by the representation of an 'increasingly prosperous and cohesive community bound together by the chapel, the friendly society, and the co-op'.<sup>88</sup> Against this dominant climate of moral and material improvement, was a minority of the still 'unregenerate poor; those who had turned their backs on progress, or had been neglected by it - were believed to be the dangerous class' a term used by Marx and Engels.<sup>89</sup> Such a group were also known as the casual poor or more characteristically the 'residuum'.<sup>90</sup> Any assistance that was given to this emerging undeserving class of pauper was often short-lived and was, by design, intended to punish in order to force the recipient into mending their ways. Conversely, the deserving poor were those who through no fault of their own were plunged into poverty and as a group had a greater moral claim to support in times of need. Gareth Stedman Jones argues that the problem was largely moral; 'The evil to be combated was not poverty but pauperism; pauperism with its attendant vices, drunkenness, improvidence, mendicancy, bad language, filthy habits, gambling, low amusements, and ignorance'.<sup>91</sup> Of course, this was the opinion of the middle-class and illustrates clearly the use

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<sup>88</sup> G.S. Jones, *Outcast London* (Oxford University Press, 1971, pp.10-11.

<sup>89</sup> Jones, *Outcast London*, pp. 10-11.

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*, p.11.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*

of anti-poor rhetoric aimed at improving morals and eradicating the taint of poverty. Jones admits, during the 1840s and 1850s, the period of 'self-help', London's views turned toward the north, and the increasingly changing opinion extolled the virtues of the northern working class, especially in the towns of Lancashire and the West Riding of Yorkshire.<sup>92</sup> This is not to say that there was a lack of the casual pauper or a residuum in towns like Huddersfield, there was, but the sheer difference in population made Huddersfield's problems small, compared with the growing anxiety experienced in the capital.<sup>93</sup>

The mid-nineteenth century was a period when no scientific studies of the poor or the causes of poverty were carried out; as far as London was concerned, no rigorous studies existed before Charles Booth. Booth distinguished between the 'deserving' and 'undeserving' poor, he understood that poverty was not just a moral frailty but was related to conditions of existence and the circumstances of the individual; 'the most unfit were the most in want'.<sup>94</sup>

Crucially the conditions of the undeserving poor are many and complex. In defining them for the purposes of this study they will be grouped according to the events and archive material that existed between 1834 and 1874. In the following chapter the operation of the old Poor Law in several local areas in and around Huddersfield will be studied and alongside this, the kind of language engaged in by the parish and vestry officials who adopted a largely paternalistic attitude to the poor in need.

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<sup>92</sup> Ibid., p.13.

<sup>93</sup> Stedman Jones relates this growing anxiety to have existed 'from the onset of the Napoleonic wars until the decline of Chartism' he goes on to explain that social debates during this period hinged upon a new society, forged by the industrial revolution and the outlook of the northern factory proletariat – 'Manchester was the great symbol of the hopes and fears of the age' and extolled to such a position that it attracted the attention of middle class opinion in London. p.11.

<sup>94</sup> W. Booth, *In Darkest England and the Way Out* (London, 1881), p.149.

## Chapter One.

### The Operation of the old Poor Law in Huddersfield.

The purpose of this chapter is to examine the kind of language that was used when referring to certain classes of the poor of Huddersfield under the 'old' Poor Law prior to 1834. It has been established in the introduction that the system that existed under the old Poor Law in Huddersfield, was an arrangement that was largely paternalistic and localised parish by parish.<sup>95</sup> This chapter will examine this paternalism together with the kind of rhetoric used in the official language of the church wardens and overseers, when dealing with paupers in their charge between 1770 and 1834. It will also touch on the emerging language which developed under the early years of the new Poor Law, when a small army of civil servants were employed alongside their Guardian masters in administering the new Act of 1834. The expectation was that the Union would have a unified voice and the Guardians would enforce the Poor Law under a united organization; however, the reality was very different to the wishes of the Poor Law authorities in London.

The Old Poor Law - the '43<sup>rd</sup> of Elizabeth' - allowed individual parishes to oversee and regulate their own poor rate. The Act of 1601 made it compulsory for each parish to provide for its poor by 'levying a rate on all occupiers of property within its bounds'. The duty of the parish overseer was to regulate this rate and to provide a dole for those in the parish, who were aged or infirm, and to apprentice to a trade the children of paupers and set to work those who were considered able-bodied. And for around 233 years this was how welfare for the poor was managed.<sup>96</sup>

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<sup>95</sup> See p.9.

<sup>96</sup> M.E. Rose, *The English Poor Law 1780-1930* (Manchester University Press, 1971), p.12.

It will be argued here that even under a system that was popular with the poor, and moreover, one which was flexible and in many cases fiscally astute, especially in the north, it was, regrettably in many ways, a dysfunctional system based on an over use of the rigid principles of localism and paternalism. The overseers charged with distributing poor relief were often guilty of tarnishing individual paupers by their use of morally judgmental language in the official parish documents. It will be further argued that it was these parish and vestry officials who, by their use of such language, imposed certain moral standards upon those paupers seeking relief and because of the terms used to describe certain paupers, the overseers were guilty of formalizing such language in order to categorize certain paupers. By defining the status and place in society of the poor, prior to the Act of 1834, one is able to identify both the role of the parish and the social standing of the poor themselves.

The Poor Law Act of 1601 and the Act of settlement of 1662 formed the basis of what came to be known as the Old Poor Law. By the middle of the eighteenth century the squeeze on the parish and the relief it was able to provide hit the rural gentry particularly hard. Landowning farmers employed farm labourers, and it was these men and women who depended on their masters to feed them and their families. As the poor rates increased, the effects were passed on to the landowning farmers. According to Philip Harling, the 1834 Report of the Poor Law Commissioners, identified that one of the chief flaws in the old Poor Law, was the way it was administered in the 'localities'.<sup>97</sup> The report identified the parish officer as the 'linchpin of the system'.<sup>98</sup> Overseers who were vital in assessing need and collecting the poor rate for forward distribution, were almost unilaterally unpaid and served a maximum of one year in the role. Being local men, once in the role, many 'discovered ways of making their positions more worthwhile – by ignoring proper procedures and engaging in

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<sup>97</sup> P. Harling, 'The Power of Persuasion: Central Authority, Local Bureaucracy and the New Poor Law' *English Historical Review*, vol.107 (1992), p.32.

<sup>98</sup> Ibid.

various forms of peculation.’<sup>99</sup> The twelve-month tenure was, for some overseers, all about gaining anything that was ‘on offer’ for a man in such a position. Incidents of embezzlement were regularly practised and often over-looked. Generally though, and in the case of those who wanted to extend their careers in the higher ranks of the parish, it was all about gaining the respect of the local poor, or at the very least, an avoidance of stirring up resentment against himself.<sup>100</sup> According to Mark Blaug, the Old Poor Law created a system which was ‘exaggerated’ especially when popular opinion believed that a ‘universal system of pauperism’ was being shaped full of ‘indolence and vice’.<sup>101</sup> In some areas of the rural south, the poor rates were high, but this was due to the weak and fragile state of the rural economy, which brought about unemployment amongst farm labourers, who when idle, became an increasing strain upon the parish. The effect on the landowning farmers was referred to by Peter Mandler as a ‘country ideology’.<sup>102</sup> Mandler illustrates this fact, by arguing that although gentlemen farmers were significant land owners and employers, they had little to do with the day to day administration of relief under the old Poor Law. In other words they were unable to decide, or ultimately levy the new increased rate, which they had to pay, because the levying of the poor rate was decided upon by the magistracy. Only when the same land owning farmers were also magistrates was there any sense of a level playing field.<sup>103</sup>

Throughout the late eighteenth century the rural economy began to contract as the urban economy expanded. In truth, the rural economy would never fully improve and the nineteenth century heralded a period of agricultural depression from which it never fully recovered.<sup>104</sup> The rural poor got poorer and as the rural poor relief rate increased the cost was

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<sup>99</sup> Ibid.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid.

<sup>101</sup> M. Blaug, ‘The Myth of the Old Poor Law and the Making of the New’, *The Journal of Economic History*, Vol.23, No.2 (June 1963), p.152.

<sup>102</sup> P. Mandler, ‘The Making of the New Poor Law Redivivus’: *Past and Present*, no.117 (Nov. 1987), p.131.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid.

<sup>104</sup> R. Allen, ‘Agriculture during the industrial revolution’, in R. Floud and D. McCloskey (eds), *The Economic History of Britain since 1700: Volume 1 1700-1860* (Cambridge University Press, 1994) pp.96-123.

passed on to the landowners. There were numerous systems of allowance available to the poor and they were as varied and many, as they were often versatile and ineffectual. The better ones were tried and tested by parishes the length and breadth of the country; however, there were only about three or four systems that were relatively operable and to some extent appropriate to local conditions. The first of these was Gilbert's Act of 1782, a largely unsuitable system that was far from universally adopted.<sup>105</sup> Its aim was to try and solve the problem of 'the poor parish' and its inability to build a poorhouse. Using a system of cooperation between parishes the fundamental idea revolved around the pooling of parish resources, enabling joint enterprise in the provision of a poorhouse for the local poor of the co-opted surrounding parishes. The obvious weakness of such a process was that it was not compulsory and parishes only cooperated if they wanted to, leaving the poorer parishes' without the means to house their poor. The Act also largely condemned the practice of giving outdoor relief to the able-bodied, without 'testing' their ability to carry out manual labour, a concept of which the Poor Law Commissioners after 1834 would have approved.<sup>106</sup>

A later innovation of allowance was developed following the shockwaves which hit the economy in 1789, with the outbreak of the French Revolution. The subsequent wars between France and Britain contributed to a general economic downturn in the 1790s. Faced with increasing poverty and fearing that the same political upheaval might happen in England as was happening in France, magistrates in some parishes began to look for new ways to reduce the problems faced by the poor. In 1795, in the parish of Speenhamland, Berkshire, magistrates decided to subsidise low wages, by paying agricultural labourers an allowance which increased according to the number of children they had and the price of bread. The practice of subsidising the wages of those in work, rather than just supporting those without

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<sup>105</sup> The system was adopted by some Pennine parishes, but nowhere was it used in the parishes associated with Huddersfield. F. Driver, *Power and Pauperism*.

<sup>106</sup> Michael Rose defines the Act as permissive and that by 1830 less than 1,000 of the 15,000 parishes in England and Wales had placed themselves under it: M.E. Rose, *The English Poor Law*, pp.18-9.



work, has subsequently become known as the ‘Speenhamland system’.<sup>107</sup> Historians now largely agree that this is a misleading name, because it implies that what happened at Speenhamland was new and was the system adopted in all rural areas.<sup>108</sup> In fact the system was used sparingly in the shires and hardly at all in the industrial regions. These forward-thinking, sometimes redundant acts of allowance all had one thing in common. They were genuine attempts at dealing with poverty in one given area, and more importantly they reflected a tradition whereby the ruling groups in society accepted more responsibility for the welfare of the poorest in the parish. Consequently, these ruling groups benefitted by retaining labour in the parishes’ during times of growing labour mobility.<sup>109</sup> As such, the old Poor Law was regarded by the poor themselves as an essential safety net in times of destitution and one from which they might claim to have a right to benefit from.

By the beginning of the nineteenth century the Old Poor Law was giving grave cause for concern. The attention of those in power turned to new writers and commentators for their views on the big social issues such as rural poverty. One of these new commentators was the economist Adam Smith, who suggested that governments should play only a minimal role in economic and social matters. Smith’s classical model of economy was one of reaching existing standards of efficiency and equipment. He believed that market forces would solve most problems and that government had no right to interfere in individual liberties and that

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<sup>107</sup> Mandler comments upon the system along with the ‘Berkshire table’ which he asserts was more readily used and suggests that such systems were based on traditional paternalistic attitudes towards the labouring population. ‘In certain sections of the landowning class, the theory and practice of paternalism undoubtedly took on a sharper focus. More relevant to the making of the New Poor Law, however, were signs, from the 1790s onwards, of a new understanding of rural poverty and of a new programme to treat it’. P. Mandler, *The Making of the New Poor Law Redivivus*, pp.135-6.

<sup>108</sup> For a broader and more detailed discussion of the allowance system see, J.R. Poynter, *Society and Pauperism: English Ideas on Poor Relief, 1795-1834* (London, 1969) pp. 46-67 and Michael E. Rose, ‘The Allowance System under the New Poor Law’, *The Economic History Review*, Vol. 19, No.3 (1966) pp. 607-620.

<sup>109</sup> Other lesser known systems were – *Whitbread’s Wage Regulation Bill*, *Pitts Poor Law Bill* and the *Justices’ Poor Law Bill*.

the people should be left to make their own decisions regarding living and working.<sup>110</sup> In essence the ideals of *laissez-faire* suggested that the government should do nothing to resolve the problems of poverty, and yet it was clear that poverty was worsening in the wake of fundamental transformation.<sup>111</sup> This economic change was tending to focus on the industrial north, where the system of allowances rarely featured during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, although some of these systems were present in the largely rural counties of Cumberland and Westmorland and in some parts of the North Riding of Yorkshire. In Lancashire and the West Riding of Yorkshire, although the allowance system may have been considered, it was rarely pursued or acted upon. In Huddersfield, there were no such examples of the kind of allowances experienced in the largely rural economies of the south. Instead there existed a largely unitary system of the parish and the manor, a collective, paternalistic system.

Relief for the poor in Huddersfield was financed through the poor rates, which was a local tax, based on property values. The regulators of this rate were the parish overseers, men appointed by the parish at vestry meetings and accountable in most cases to local magistrates for the effective operation of the local Poor Law.<sup>112</sup> According to Allan Place, four overseers were appointed in most parishes and townships.<sup>113</sup> Their posts were unpaid and their tasks onerous; and so it was not surprising to find a default list of farms in Honley in the eighteenth

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<sup>110</sup> D. McCloskey, '1780-1860: a survey', in R. Floud and D. McCloskey (eds), *The Economic History of Britain*, p.262. See also R.H. Campbell, A.S. Skinner and W.B. Todd (eds), *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations* (Oxford, 1976).

<sup>111</sup> P.F. Speed, *British social and economic history from 1760* (Wheaton, 1977), pp. 72-7, 166-71, 292-7; P. Murray, *Poverty and Welfare 1830-1914*, pp.18-21. See also J.R. Poynter, *Society and Pauperism, English ideas on Poor relief, 1795-1834* (London, 1969), pp.106-85 particularly his discussion of Bentham, Malthus and the lesser known 'gentleman economist' Sir Frederick Morton Eden. There is also a detailed analysis of the decline of the old poor law in J.D. Marshall, *The Old Poor Law 1795-1834* (Macmillan, 1968) whilst in an account of the new Poor Law Anthony Brundage covers the ground introduced by Marshall, A. Brundage, *The Making of the New Poor Law 1832-1839* (Hutchinson, 1978).

<sup>112</sup> P. Murray, *Poverty and Welfare 1830-1914* (Hodder and Stoughton, 2004), pp.15-17.

<sup>113</sup> A. Place, *Pray Remember the Poor* (Holme Valley Civic Society, 2004), p.6.

century whose owners had not served the office of overseer.<sup>114</sup> In Huddersfield under the old Poor Law, relief was concentrated mainly on those unable to work, such as the aged, the long-term sick, and the infirm, but relief was given to the able-bodied poor during times of personal crisis such as births, sickness and death. Between May 1769 and April 1770, expenditure for relief of the poor in Huddersfield covered much more than the weekly payments for their relief and included the following:

Chimney sweeping, shoes mending, thread, a chamber pot, nutmeg and various other foodstuffs. Surprisingly there was also the provision of tobacco and gin, as well as some tongs, a poker, a pair of breeches and stays, burial dues and a child's coffin.<sup>115</sup>

Apart from the child's coffin, these somewhat miscellaneous supplies might indicate the apparent benevolence of the local parish, but as early overseers records are sparse for Huddersfield, it is difficult to assess whether one parish was more compassionate than the other. What one might learn in the light of Place's research is that the job of an overseer was not popular amongst local land-owners and might be an indication as to the attitude adopted by some overseers toward the poor, when reluctantly they took up the tenure.<sup>116</sup>

During the early years of the nineteenth century, the manor and parish of the township of Huddersfield and some of the outlying townships, such as Thurstonland and Honley, were firmly under the control of two major landowning families, the Ramsdens and the Dartmouths. These well established minor aristocratic families had owned large tracts of land in and around Huddersfield since the late sixteenth century, and their position within Huddersfield up to the 1830s was well established. During the first quarter of the nineteenth

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<sup>114</sup> KDA CP/HO/OP/2&3.

<sup>115</sup> KDA KX/160.

<sup>116</sup> In the Guide to Parish Law, the predicament of overseers who had to learn how to handle administration of poor relief whilst continuing to earn their own living, and account for their actions at year end, the Guide states: 'Because the office of overseer is so blended and mixed with the poor themselves, that they are inseparable, and that is impracticable to treat one without the other...' KDA P/HO.

century, due in part to economic pressures within the town and a major population increase, the woollen industry was plunged into a sudden crisis in 1826, resulting in bankruptcies and unemployment. Consequently, relief expenditure soared amongst the growing population of Huddersfield.<sup>117</sup> These increasing economic pressures not only increased the need to regulate poor relief, but asked the question whether the old Poor Law was an adequate and effective source of relief for a town such as Huddersfield.

Naturally then, it is necessary to examine how the Old Poor Law operated in and around Huddersfield and to compare that with the national picture, particularly in the rural communities of southern England. In this chapter much of the primary material will come from some of the outlying townships of Honley and Thurstonland, places which in the late eighteenth century would have been considered as rural communities. Alongside these outlying areas there will be a comparative study of the township of Huddersfield and further comparison with some of the smaller towns that lay outside the area, the towns of Liversedge and Dewsbury. These towns will be studied, in an attempt to discover if there was any significant difference in similar centres away from the township of Huddersfield. Within these communities the important aspects of the use of language and its negative effects on the poor will be considered.

All of these areas, particularly the outlying villages of Honley and Thurstonland had a similar agro-industrial background, before the mills began to dominate the Holme and Colne valleys. Huddersfield, Liversedge and Dewsbury, on the other hand, had been relatively large textile centres well before the 1830s. Dewsbury had been the centre of woollen manufacture since the middle of the eighteenth century and had developed along

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<sup>117</sup> At a meeting in the George Inn, Huddersfield, the Earl of Dartmouth contributed £300 to the crisis and the Ramsden family contributed £450. Reductions were made in the sale of oatmeal and clothing was distributed amongst those in need by the town's ladies committees: Source, Place, *Pray Remember the Poor*, p.84.

with the towns of Batley, Cleckheaton and Heckmondwike into an area synonymous with the production of Shoddy and other textile reclaiming processes.

The villages of Honley and Thurstonland under the Old Poor Law.

The parish was at the heart of local governance in all things religious and worldly. It played an important part in the community, and with the accompaniment of the vestry committees the parish was often the centre of local politics.<sup>118</sup> By looking at the parish system, pre-1834, in Huddersfield and the surrounding townships, one can gain a sense of the extent of localised relief exercised toward the general poor of these areas. Honley, the first of these centres was a fairly small township situated about five miles from Huddersfield, sitting at the foot of the Holme valley.<sup>119</sup> During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, Honley was a self-sufficient village manufacturing trade crafts and textile products alongside the more traditional agriculture. Like many similar smaller townships, Honley felt the effect of industrial change and the area became directly involved in the Luddite disturbances of the early nineteenth century.<sup>120</sup> In an industrial context, Honley was relatively close to Huddersfield and during the expansion of the textile industries in Huddersfield, some of the emerging mills extended along the Holme valley and came within easy reach of workers living in the village.<sup>121</sup> The close proximity of these much larger centres of manufacture might have benefitted those thrown out of work due to the demise of the more localised cottage industries. The fact that manual dexterity was a significant requirement in the weaving of cloth might have suited

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<sup>118</sup> It was often the case that secular vestry committees held their meetings in public houses whereas vestry committees dealing with ecclesiastical matters met at the parish church for the township.

<sup>119</sup> See MAP No.2 p.257.

<sup>120</sup> Honley, along with other textile areas were greatly affected by the Luddite disturbances of 1812. Most of the raids were small scale, well organised and highly successful and were aimed mainly against small clothiers who had installed cropping frames on their premises; John Garner of Honley was one such recipient of an attack during the spring of 1812. See A. Brooke, and L Kipling, *Liberty or death, Radicals, Republicans & Luddites, 1793-1823* (Workers History publications, 1993).

<sup>121</sup> Brooke's Mill at Armitage Bridge, Honley was a fulling mill and dye-house and had been in force since the later sixteenth century. In the 1840s the Brooke family extended their operations to cope with the textile expansion in the area.

those already used to the process, albeit on a much smaller scale. Between 1790 and 1834, there is evidence that Honley had an effective parochial system for the relief of the poor, though there is little evidence as to its attitude toward the undeserving poor. The poorest in the township came under the direct control of the parish of Almondbury until the 1830s, when Honley became a separate parish. Amongst the parish records there are signs of a paternalistic process of giving relief to the worst off. Any change in attitude toward the poor was due to the individual parish. Though this was not the case in all rural areas and was very different to the growing problems experienced in the town of Huddersfield, with its expanding population, worsening housing conditions, and diverse demographic. In Honley the population had been settled in and around the village for many generations, families who were better off lived next to those not so fortunate. Each would have been known to each other and a more paternal attitude existed in times of need; whereas in the township of Huddersfield, a more complicated system existed. An example of this apparent paternalism is illustrated in the occasions when the parish entered into arrangements with certain individuals, the parish would shoulder the responsibility of their kin, in return for a small dole which enabled the one, to look after the other. On 14 April 1777, the overseer for the poor of Honley, Joseph Armitage (1733-1785), examined George Woodhouse, whose brother Joseph was found to be 'destitute and without a home and means'.<sup>122</sup> It was the duty of the overseer to examine the circumstances of Joseph the 'applicant' and his brother George Woodhouse, who, was deemed to be responsible for him. As in many such cases, though by no means all, George entered into an agreement with the overseer, to provide 'meat, drink, washing and lodging' for his brother, in return for the sum of £0-3-0 a week from the poor rate.<sup>123</sup> In this

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<sup>122</sup> Joseph Armitage's family were involved in the textile industry and one of his forebears became a magistrate and Poor Law Guardian during the 1830s and 1840s (see p47).

<sup>123</sup> The Overseers Accounts for Honley, Kirklees District Archive, (hereafter cited as KDA) CP/HO/10-18.

version of local out-relief, the parish was saved from supporting the brother by any more expense than was necessary and Joseph Woodhouse was spared the poorhouse.

A different kind of relief was offered to the deserving poor. The wives of those, whose men were serving in the local militia, many of whom were fighting overseas were provided for out of the parish poor rate. Thus, Nancy, the wife of Richard Taylor, was paid 4 shillings every month while he was serving under Colonel Fawkes. Similarly, Lydia, wife of Thomas Littlewood and Mary, wife of Jonathan Ely, were given 4 shillings every month as support for themselves and their children. This rate was over and above anything else they received from the poor rate and meant that potentially, these women and their dependent children could receive a further 2 or 3 shillings a week, on top of their militia allowance. These women appeared to have been able to survive, on their small income, since none of them appear as being in receipt of poor relief between 1796 and 1810.<sup>124</sup> Significantly there were no pensions for the widows of militia-men and those left widowed, would have had to rely solely on the poor-rate, or the assistance of extended family.<sup>125</sup> It is apparent from the archives that these women and their dependants were considered deserving of the extra money given to them during their time of need and whilst many of them were not further supported by the poor rate, they may have been supported from other charitable sources.

There were several parish charities established in Almondbury for the relief of the poor of that district, Bentley's gift of 1821, Feney's charity of 1765 and Firth's dole of 1624, though there are no records of who benefitted from these charities, and one can therefore only assume that some of these charities were available to deserving cases.<sup>126</sup> It is apparent from the case of Joseph Woodhouse and the wives and widows of those men serving in the militia,

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<sup>124</sup> The Overseers Accounts for Honley, KDA, CP/HO/10-18.

<sup>125</sup> Between 1798 and 1805 in Honley alone there were some 12 women recorded as being the widows of men fighting in the Militia overseas, Honley Township 1750-1807, KDA.

<sup>126</sup> Rigby, E.A. (Clerk to Guardians) Paper on Local Charities (*Huddersfield Examiner*, 22 February 1908).

that there was a willingness to support the more deserving cases and that such relief was particularly prevalent in smaller communal rural communities. In other words the smaller parish looked after its deserving poor. This assumption is illustrated by the lack of any insulting or derogatory language when detailing the relief given to those deemed deserving. Unfortunately, such a paternalistic attitude, did not characterise those who were the mothers and fathers of illegitimate children.

Traditionally the parish assisted un-wed mothers, but the economic strain on society due to the wars with France, coupled with a failing rural economy had a significant effect on the availability of parish funds. And so it was only right and proper that the 1834 Poor Law Commission Report, considered what had happened during these early years of the nineteenth century. Their assumption, that the Old Poor Law and the way that it dealt with unmarried mothers, was a branch of the 'Old' Poor Laws that was 'distinguished from the rest both as to the principles on which it is founded and the evils which it has produced'.<sup>127</sup> Such observations were chiefly aimed at the Old Poor Law statutes that in effect granted an unmarried mother a right to relief on behalf of her child, in the expectation that the putative father was financially responsible for the cost.<sup>128</sup> In an historical context, the system of parochial relief provision to unmarried mothers had existed for some three hundred years.<sup>129</sup> Despite the rights of an Act of 1576, the administration became more streamlined during the eighteenth century and the roles of 'filiation and maintenance became more defined in specific parental roles'.<sup>130</sup> An Act of 1733, declared that 'any single woman [who] shall be

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<sup>127</sup> *The Poor Law Commissioners' Report of 1834*: Copy of the Report made in 1834 by the Commissioners for inquiring into the Administration and Practical Operation of the Poor Laws, Part II, section 3, (London, 1905).

'*Report of the Royal Commission on the Poor Laws*', p. 258.

<sup>128</sup> T. 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', *Economic History Review*, 63 2 (2010) p. 335.

<sup>129</sup> An Act of 1576 referred to 'Bastards now being left to be kept at the Charge of the Parish where they be born' – 18 Eliz c.3 s.1, *An Act for the setting the poor on work and for avoiding idleness* (1576)

<sup>130</sup> Nutt, 'Illegitimacy, paternal financial responsibility', p. 337.



delivered of a bastard child who shall be chargeable or likely to become chargeable, was to be brought by the parish to be examined on oath before two magistrates'<sup>131</sup> whereupon the mother was expected to name the father.<sup>132</sup>

The practical operation of bastardy clauses and an understanding of such, is a relatively new area of research according to Thomas Nutt. He states that there is hardly any research in print that relates to the 'extent to which the poor law was able to recover the cost of supporting illegitimate children from putative fathers'.<sup>133</sup> What is clear from Nutt's research, is that the 1834 Poor Law Commission effectively put a stop to an unmarried mother's right to parish support for her illegitimate child and, furthermore, 'severely curtailed the ability of mothers and parishes to enforce paternal responsibility through recourse to the law'.<sup>134</sup> The contested issue of parental responsibility for the maintenance of illegitimate children was at the heart of the changes made to the bastardy clauses between 1834 and 1844. For as long as anyone could remember, it had been the aim of the overseers to try and restrict financial responsibility on the parish, but the New Poor Law had disrupted the particular emphasis upon paternal financial responsibility. Nutt asks the obvious question as to how the Poor Law Report Commissioners could have got their assessment of the old poor law and their prognosis so wrong.<sup>135</sup> Running counter to this, was the position adopted by J.R. Poynter, who suggests that the Commissioners of Inquiry could be forgiven some 'crudities' and 'generalisation' in their reforms, and points out that they were merely 'laying down a

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<sup>131</sup> Whilst there is evidence in the Honley Township records relating to mothers being examined there is no reference to them being examined in front of two magistrates, though the archive does record a fragmentary piece relating to a George Kaye who was pursued by the overseer in 1800 to a parish near Halifax and was then taken before a justice of the peace where he was bound over to appear before a magistrate in the parish of Almondbury. The name or any further record regarding Kaye or his fate is not recorded, Honley Township 1750-1807, KDA.

<sup>132</sup> 6 George II c.31, *An Act for the Relief of Parishes and other Places from such Charges as may arise from Bastard Children Born in the same* (1733)

<sup>133</sup> Nutt, 'Illegitimacy, paternal financial responsibility' p. 335.

<sup>134</sup> Ibid, p.336.

<sup>135</sup> Ibid., p.336

general policy and planning an authority to carry it out.’<sup>136</sup> To this end, Nutt points to the data gathered in the ‘Rural and Town Queries’, which was a questionnaire sent to English and Welsh parishes between 1832 and 1833. By using this material and comparing some rural towns and villages in Essex, with some of the more prominent towns of the West Riding of Yorkshire, one can compare the rural ability of recouping monies from putative fathers with that of the industrial towns of the West Riding.

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<sup>136</sup> J.R. Poynter, *Society and Pauperism, English Ideas on Poor Relief, 1795-1834* ( London,1969).

**Table 1.1 Comparative town and parish**

<i>Parish/Township</i>	<i>County</i>	<i>Survey</i>	<i>Period</i>	<i>Bastardy expenditure</i>	<i>Total paid by father</i>	<i>Percentage bastardy recovery rate (%)</i>
Braintree	Essex	Rural	1 year	£76 0s 0d	£22 2s 0d	29.1
Great Henny	Essex	Rural	1828-32	£95 15s 0d	£34 14s 0d	36.2
Leyton St Mary	Essex	Rural	1828-32	£352 0s 0d	£117 15s0d	33.5
Rochford	Essex	Rural	1827-31	£324 16s 0d	£117 3s 6d	36.1
Springfield	Essex	Rural	1827-32	£207 0s 8d	£49 9s 4d	23.9
Stanford Rivers	Essex	Town	1828-32	£56 19s 10d	£48 18s 10d	85.9
Barnsley	Yorkshire W.R	Rural	1828-32	£1,307 3s 0d	£718 7s 4d	55.0
Batley	Yorkshire W.R.	Rural	1828-32	£813 2s 9d	£681 6s 4d	83.8
Liversedge	Yorkshire W.R.	Rural	1828-32	£784 19s 3d	£580 7s 7d	73.9
Halifax	Yorkshire W.R	Town	1828-32	£2,257 17s 0d	£2081 9s 0d	92.2
Huddersfield	Yorkshire W.R.	Town	1831	£605 15s 10d	£569 9s 10d	93.3
Sheffield Township	Yorkshire W.R.	Town	5 years	£6,679 0s 0d	£5,547 0s 0d	83.1

**Source ‘Rural queries’ (P.P. 1834, XXXIV): ‘Town queries’ (P.P. 1834, XXXVI)**

From the table above it can be seen that the rate of recovery was low from rural Essex. The exception to this was the town of Stanford Rivers, where the recovery rate was quite good.

Conversely, the rural areas in the West Riding had a good recovery rate from putative fathers, though these rates were not as successful as those recovered from the urban centres of Halifax, Huddersfield and Sheffield. Caution should be used in accepting these figures and against the notion that the parochial experience was determined by regional environment. If any elements of these statistics are to be of any use at all, it shows that the industrial north had a far better recovery rate than the rural villages of Essex, yet whether such a conclusion might point to the old poor law being more effective and better administered in the north is a matter of opinion.

From the evidence in and around Huddersfield, it would seem that the overseers were keen to recover what they could from errant fathers of the parish. In Honley, the parish officers went so far as to classify their putative fathers as ‘vagrants’.<sup>137</sup> These errant men, faced with the financial responsibility of their children, would often leave the area, which for many of them had been their home since birth. Men employed locally would leave their employment and take to the road in an attempt to escape the parish. As the townships around Huddersfield offered opportunities of further work for these men, they did not have to travel far. Perhaps because of these short distances and the effective communication networks employed by each parish, these men, were much easier to pursue than absent fathers in larger rural areas. The parish overseers and churchwardens, often the same person, would actively seek such men with a view to restraining their earnings and making them contribute toward their children. In some areas, and as was the case in Honley, bastardy bonds were drawn up by the overseers, here the needs of the expectant mother and the rate of relief she was entitled to were assessed. During 1822, one such putative father Jonathon Senior, termed ‘a wayward vagrant’ by the overseers, was traced to a neighbouring parish and made to sign papers

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<sup>137</sup> Honley Township 1750-1807, KDA.

agreeing to pay £0-2-3 a week for the maintenance of his child. Betty Sykes, 'whose child would no doubt become a burden on the township of Honley', told the overseers who the father of her unborn child was and though the father's name is un-recorded, he entered into a similar agreement of regular payments.<sup>138</sup> These mothers and fathers who had crossed the boundaries of moral respectability were, as was the case of both Senior and Sykes, often considered undeserving by the parish authorities. If these errant fathers could not pay or refused to pay, they could be imprisoned for anything up to three months and then still pursued by the parish. Expectant mothers were examined thoroughly by the parish. Thus, if they were approached by a mother in need, she was expected to prove that she was from the same parish and that her children were born in the parish, and if the father was from the same area, they should likewise name him. Where putative fathers were from other parishes the overseers would direct their enquiries on to the foreign parish, seeking proof of his birth and more importantly his whereabouts. There existed an effective system of local intelligence between parishes, with posters being placed in villages asking about the whereabouts of certain fathers. If they could not be found, then the parish would continue to support the mothers, until such times as she either re-married or moved away. After 1834 however, the responsibility often lay with the mother's family, who were always expected to support the mother and illegitimate child, where they could not, the mother and child were placed in the workhouse.

In the majority of cases recorded in Honley, those seeking relief gave up the name of the father and there is no record of any women being imprisoned due to their reluctance, though this was always possible, as unmarried mothers were often liable to imprisonment. Such a punishment had been in place since the seventeenth century, however, by the beginning of the nineteenth century this punishment was deemed too severe and was toned

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<sup>138</sup> Honley Township 1750-1807, KDA.

down by an Act of 1810, resulting in the maximum sentence of 12 months being set, a term rarely carried out, except in exceptional circumstances.<sup>139</sup>

The rights and wrongs of this area of relief were seemingly poorly resolved by the *Report of the Commissioners* in 1834, and, according to Nutt, the report employed - ‘markedly gendered and discriminatory language, with men being portrayed as victims of the system’.<sup>140</sup> This was certainly a marked change from the opinion of the parish of Honley, who had described Jonathan Senior as a ‘wayward vagrant’ leading one to believe that the language under the old poor law seems to have cast both parents in a poor light and those who were destitute as a result of such actions were indeed considered to be part of the undeserving poor, with the mother often reliant on relief. The Poor Law Report Commissioners tried to manage the outcome of their report on bastardy, as in one area the popularity of false swearing to paternity was presented as rife. Such acts often involved corrupt parish officials who would collude with women to pick out a good man from the parish who could easily be made to pay; it was even reported that ‘from ignorance and wilful perjury combined nine bastards in ten are falsely sworn in Towns’.<sup>141</sup> It is perhaps the case in Honley that these changing attitudes to relief brought about, by acts of such impropriety, had an effect on the men and women, and in the case of those who ended up in the poorhouse, it was the mothers of illegitimate children who suffered far greater distress and financial restraint than the fathers.

One can say, then, with some certainty that both from the perspective of the central authorities and the local attitude of the parishes of Almondbury and Honley, the actions of so called ‘lewd’ women and ‘vagrant’ fathers and their unconstrained progeny, was an act which was morally repugnant to the community and to society at large. Whilst the mothers would

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<sup>139</sup> Nutt, ‘Illegitimacy, paternal financial responsibility’, p.337.

<sup>140</sup> Ibid., p.338.

<sup>141</sup> ‘Report of the Royal Commission on the Poor Laws’, p.263-4

have been at some point a drain on the parish, the detrimental language used to describe them and their illusive partners, is designed to enforce a code of behaviour and was a direct attempt at removing such a moral taint from the parish; for just as the taint of pauperism was a slur on the town in later years, so it was, for the individual parishes.

Of similar relevance are the records relating to the township of Thurstonland, which is situated some 6 miles from Huddersfield, on a hill above the village of Brockholes. According to the enclosure award for Thurstonland in 1805, there were 10 quarries in the township, a school and a manor house.<sup>142</sup> The census of 1821, records the following trades within the township: agriculture, handicrafts, woollen weaving and quarrying.<sup>143</sup> The archive is quite extensive and gives an accurate account of how the poor law operated on a day to day basis, prior to the formation of the vestry committee in 1834. As in the case of Honley, the poor law in Thurstonland did not operate in a vacuum, it was affected and shaped by social and economic factors and contemporary attitudes. As Anne Digby points out, ‘the old poor law was a diverse institution’.<sup>144</sup> Of particular interest is the case of a farm-hand named Joseph Haigh. Haigh worked from time to time, for the same family, for over forty years in the district of Wooldale. He had lived in and around the district for most of his life, but during the winter of 1797, had been given shelter in a barn on his employer’s land. When Haigh died, his funeral was paid for out of the poor rate for Thurstonland. He had been in receipt of £0-3-0 a week and there exists an account slip, which records the costs incurred for his funeral; – Ale £0-2-6, biscuits £0-1-0 and the coffin cost £0-10-0, the total cost coming to £3-1-5½. The amount was to be paid at Mayday and the funeral took place on 20 April 1798. Initially it would seem that Haigh was a colourful, but a hard working man, who was deemed worthy of the parish relief and yet the same accounts record a general reluctance in paying for

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<sup>142</sup> Thurstonland (Enclosure and miscellaneous papers) KC271/126, KDA.

<sup>143</sup> 1821 Census, KDA.

<sup>144</sup> A. Digby, *The Poor Law in the Nineteenth Century* (London, 1982), p.5.

his funeral from the parish rate. The overseers describe Haigh in life, as a ‘dubious character in and out of work as often as he was in and out the Ale house’. By this, we can assume that he was considered undeserving of the assistance he received and yet not only was he buried by the parish but they paid for the wake.<sup>145</sup> Such incidents are indicative of the language used to describe the poor and yet, despite his doubtful antecedents, Haigh must have been considered worthy of assistance. This example also illustrates the slight variations between the poor being considered deserving or undeserving.

As with many townships and indeed Huddersfield itself, the matter of settlement was a significant concern for the overseers and the various parishes. Thurstonland was particularly keen to see that those in need, who came to their township, and who were not born there, or married to local men or women, were moved on to their town or village of origin. In 1798, a ‘vagrant and destitute’ woman, Hannah Buckley, turned up in Thurstonland claiming to be of that township. It was discovered that she was pregnant with ‘a bastard child and had other dependent children’ it was also discovered that she was originally from Huddersfield. She was quickly despatched back to Huddersfield, the cost of transporting her home being borne by that town.<sup>146</sup> Issues surrounding the cost of settlement often had a direct impact on the town bearing the cost of relief, so it is hardly surprising that smaller townships were prudent and exacting in their enquiries into new incomers claiming relief. Such an impact on Thurstonland is borne out by the case of Elizabeth Mains, a native of that township; who, on 23 November 1808, was released from Wakefield gaol after serving seven days. It was stated that Mains was a ‘Rogue and a Vagabond and had been found wandering and begging in Wakefield’. She was sent back to Thurstonland on her release and the township was ordered to pay for her transportation from Wakefield.<sup>147</sup> Thurstonland as a

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<sup>145</sup> Thurstonland Township Overseers Accounts (1798-1810), KDA.

<sup>146</sup> Ibid.

<sup>147</sup> Ibid.



township, responsible for its own paupers, sometimes resorted to forceful methods to save money and cut costs in respect of the poor rate. Like Honley they pursued putative fathers of illegitimate children according to the law, and again like Honley, those who refused or were unable to pay for support of their children, were chased, apprehended and threatened with imprisonment. One such father, Thomas Skilbeck, who was termed by the parish a ‘vagrant and itinerant farm labourer’, worked on many local farms during the year 1797. Skilbeck was sought after and found living near Darton, where he was detained and then brought before a magistrate at the County Court in Huddersfield. He was questioned about his relationship and sentenced to two months in the house of correction at Wakefield. Yet according to records in 1802, Skilbeck, was still being sought by the Thurstonland overseers and had not been seen for nearly three years, whilst the mother of his child was still ‘at cost to this parish’.<sup>148</sup> It would seem that Skilbeck was termed as a vagrant, not from his behaviour, but from his lifestyle as an itinerant labourer. His behaviour toward the mother of his child and his reluctance to pay what was due to her raises questions about his moral outlook. It would be this reluctance to support the mother that would have coloured the parish overseer’s opinion of such a man. His sentence was indicative of his undeserving position in society and was justly reflected by the sentence imposed upon him. However, one should question the language used to describe Skilbeck, as by his vagrant ways, he was not undeserving, he was however punished for what he did and for not meeting his responsibilities toward the mother and the parish.

In Dewsbury, some six miles to the North east of Huddersfield, there operated a similar system in respect of bastardy claims and orders.<sup>149</sup> The parish vestry in that town met every Easter in order to appoint overseers and the vestry members. Thereafter, their

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<sup>148</sup> Ibid.

<sup>149</sup> The accounts relating to Bastardy are recorded between 1813-1833, KC 1042/4/1 – KDA.

fortnightly meetings were held either in the free school in Daw Green, or at the poor house, and on occasions above the George Hotel in the town centre. Once again the vestry committee took a dim view of both applicant and errant father. In the claim of a mother, Judith [Thwaites], in December 1829, the archive records that she named the father of her illegitimate child as one Joshua Blackburn.<sup>150</sup> Unlike the townships of Honley and Thurstonland the accounts in Dewsbury were made up every 26 weeks and show that the amount collected by the overseer from Blackburn, was passed on to the mother. Initially, the father paid a regular sum and in April 1830, we see that he paid £0.16.3 toward her relief. However, some 12 months later, he had only paid £2.10.0 and at the beginning of 1832, the account was closed, with Blackburn having only paid £3.5.0. The vestry committee reported that Blackburn had moved to another district and that owing to his failure to pay on a regular basis, the vestry committee had written to the parish where he was now resident and asked that he be brought before a magistrate. A warrant was obtained from the courts in Wakefield and Blackburn was brought before the courts, and sentenced to 3 months in the house of correction. The vestry committee report that Blackburn should be further pursued 'for any outstanding cost to this parish and is by the unanimous agreement of this committee - no better than the thieves and common vagrants that this town is plagued with'.<sup>151</sup> The case of Joshua Blackburn illustrates a similar position to that taken by the overseers in Thurstonland, but also shows the overseers being concerned by thieves and vagrants in the town and they include Blackburn in this definition of the most undeserving residents of the town.

This pattern of irregular payments was a constant feature in Dewsbury between 1827 and 1833. In the case of John Law and the mother of his child, Elizabeth Denton, we learn that initially, Law paid reasonable amounts, but this soon began to reduce significantly and

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<sup>150</sup> Dewsbury Township Bastardy Accounts, KDA.

<sup>151</sup> *Ibid.*, January 1832.

once again the errant father was sought and brought before a magistrate.<sup>152</sup> In 1821, the vestry committee sought James Backhouse, who having deserted his family to live ‘with another woman’ was brought back from the township of Pontefract. His family, a wife and four dependent children had become ‘reliant on parish funds’ and Backhouse, described as ‘un-godly and a drunk of the worst kind’ was made to return to his family in order to support them.<sup>153</sup>

The vestry committee in Liversedge, a small township, some three miles from Dewsbury, seemed to operate on a similar basis to their counterparts in Dewsbury. The twelve-strong committee met regularly at the Yew Tree Inn at Roberttown between 1819 and 1838.<sup>154</sup> The majority of the poor recorded who were in receipt of relief, seem to be those unable to pay their rent. As some of the committee members on the vestry were local mill-owners and manufacturers, it is likely, though it is not stated, that some of these applicants for rent-relief, may have been employed by these men, or were at least known to be in employment and have dependants reliant on relief. It would have been appropriate then to support those who were good employees. Conversely, the attitude shown toward an unnamed Irishman seems particularly impersonal. The case surrounds a letter sent to the nearby township of Clifton in August 1824, regarding a man only referred to as the ‘Irishman’, who had become dependent upon that township. For some reason the vestry committee wanted reparation for him from the township of Liversedge. We do not know why, for it is not stated, but the overseers in Liversedge refused to pay for the Irishman’s removal. It is recorded that the Irishman was at one time, or another, a drain on the township of Liversedge and that in the weeks after Lent in 1823, he had become ‘a thorough nuisance and a low and [morally]

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<sup>152</sup> Ibid., September 1832. There is no record of Laws fate.

<sup>153</sup> Ibid., 3 May 1821.

<sup>154</sup> Liversedge Vestry Minute Books 1819-1838, KC 120/1-2, KDA.

redundant character of the worst kind'.<sup>155</sup> It would seem that this possible migrant had in the previous year been reliant on the parish rate, and not being from Liversedge, he had either been moved on, or had decided to leave independently. The refusal of the Liversedge vestry to pay for the removal of this man was probably due to the fact that they were not responsible for him. Under the Act of Settlement, Liversedge would not have been his home parish, his original home being in Ireland, the reluctance to both endure his presence and pay for his removal back to Liversedge was not their responsibility. In effect, this luckless man, was seemingly neither the responsibility of Clifton or Liversedge and this says a great deal about how these parishes dealt with itinerant paupers and more importantly the Irish.

During the first half of the nineteenth century, Huddersfield was an area that saw rapid and dramatic change. The small market village of the late eighteenth century with its 'insignificant cluster of irregular built lanes'<sup>156</sup> and 'the houses poor and scattered, the streets narrow, crooked and dirty' was significantly changed by the middle of the nineteenth century.<sup>157</sup> The population of the town grew from 7,268 in 1801 to 30,880 in 1851 and with this growth, according to David Griffiths, came 'unprecedented new problems of urban management, as the town's capacity to cope was strained to the limit'.<sup>158</sup> Because Huddersfield was not an incorporated borough, it emerged in the nineteenth century under the rule of the magistracy, the manor and the parish.<sup>159</sup> As such, poor law relief under the old poor law was regulated by the parish in similar ways to the operations extant in the outer

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<sup>155</sup> Liversedge Vestry Minute Books 1819-1838, KDA.

<sup>156</sup> D. Griffiths, *Pioneers or Partisans? Governing Huddersfield 1820-1848* (Huddersfield, 2008) p.4.

<sup>157</sup> Ibid.

<sup>158</sup> Ibid.

<sup>159</sup> Huddersfield was within the Upper Agbrigg petty sessional division covering the five parishes of Huddersfield, Almondbury, Kirkburton and Saddleworth – according to Griffiths the local magistrates were supported by a High Constable and a salaried clerk based in Market Street in the town (Griffiths, 2008).

townships of Honley and Thurstonland.<sup>160</sup> In the township of Huddersfield accounts there are a few scattered references to some of the characters that inhabited the town. There is an account of a former carter called Brough, who was a native of Lincolnshire, who had until the late 1790s, carried out his trade in and around the Pennine towns around Huddersfield. In 1797, following an injury whilst at work, he ended up in the town poorhouse at Birkby, and due to a serious infection complicated by blood poisoning he was never able to continue with his old trade.<sup>161</sup> He became a regular nuisance in the town and was referred to by one overseer as ‘a stubborn imbecile, and a constant applicant for relief, despite his fondness for strong liquor he would tell tales of his hardship and was regularly caught begging around the town’. Brough was regularly in receipt £0.2.1 from the town parish of St Peters.<sup>162</sup>

Similarly, a native of the neighbouring parish of Almondbury, a man called Thomas Wigglesworth, who had been in the regular army and militia, became, over a period of two years, a regular nuisance in both the township of Almondbury and Huddersfield. The parish had tried to keep him in the poor house, but he would wander and become aggressive when the poorhouse officials tried to coax him in on a night. Like Brough and many others, Wigglesworth’s problem was strong liquor and possibly an element of mental illness. Eventually in 1792, he was sent to the house of correction in Wakefield for six months and is not mentioned again in the township records.<sup>163</sup> The vestry in Huddersfield considered these particular men as undeserving, not from what they once were, but from the lifestyle they had now adopted. Drunkenness and a reliance on strong drink, was considered a great

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<sup>160</sup> A far more detailed study of the parish and town of Huddersfield, its local political structure and those at the forefront of local politics is considered in chapter two.

<sup>161</sup> See MAP no.3, p.258.

<sup>162</sup> Huddersfield Town Poor rate accounts 1787-1794, KDA.

<sup>163</sup> Huddersfield Town Poor rate accounts 1787-1794, KDA. Wigglesworth was housed in the poorhouse for nearly two years and so wasn’t in receipt of any outdoor relief, though expenses were incurred when he was transported to the prison and the accounts record the cost to the parish was £0.2.8.

social and moral ill throughout much of the nineteenth century, and little sympathy was shown to those who showed signs of addiction. To be termed an imbecile and a beggar with a dependence on strong liquor, was often an automatic indication of being undeserving of any private or public sympathy.

In the township of Huddersfield there operated both a system of outdoor and indoor relief; the poorhouse was larger than many of the other poorhouses in the district. There are poor-rate expenditure accounts for 1787 and 1788 and similarly for 1793. The figures for 1787 and 1788, show the poor rate disbursed between May 1787 and February 1788.

**Table 1.2. Huddersfield Town Poor Rate Expenditure (1787- 1794)<sup>164</sup>**

21 May 1787	Expenditure    £6-9-9
6 August 1787	=                    £10-2-7
3 December 1787	=                    £6-17-6
20 February 1788	=                    £11-12-10

Some five years later the expenditure had risen significantly –

**Table 1.3 Huddersfield Town Poor Rate Expenditure (1787-1794)**

January 1793	Expenditure    £7-6-8½
May 1793	£15-8-10
August 1793	£22-10-0½
November 1793	£19-5-4
February 1794	£23-0-1

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<sup>164</sup> Huddersfield Town Poor rate accounts 1787-1794, KDA.

These figures tend to illustrate two significant changes during the period. First, toward the end of the eighteenth century there was a severe economic downturn, due to the wars with France, which impacted on both the local and national economy. Secondly, the figures might also point towards a rise in the number of those applying for relief, together with an increase in the number of those seeking work in the town, due to an upsurge in the numbers migrating from rural parts of the south of England.<sup>165</sup> In the township of Huddersfield during the 1820s there was a slight rise in criminality and disorder.<sup>166</sup> At the Quarter Sessions of the same year, the overseers in Huddersfield decided to they must do something about it and at a meeting of the vestry committee, the town decided to appoint an assistant constable to look into such matters. The officer's duties were to be involved in the 'detection of thieves - taking up vagrants of all kinds [and the] examining of hawkers, peddlers or those likely to have stolen goods in their possession, and to visit public houses and lodging houses regularly'. It is clear from the tone of the meeting that the vestry committee believed that public houses and lodging houses were the haunt of the criminal classes.<sup>167</sup> As the majority of hawkers and pedlars around this time were usually local men, and not Irish migrants, it is unlikely that anti-Irish feeling had crept into the town at this time, although the indication is that the many of the vagrants, were responsible for petty crime and that they might inhabit the lodging houses of the town. The belief that much of the trouble emanated from the roughest parts of town was a common theme and as will be seen, is repeated throughout the years of this study, returned to again and again, without any definitive resolution to the problem.

The principal theme that has emerged here is that local autonomy was adopted by individual parishes, who were in total control of the poor rate prior to 1834. In many cases

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<sup>165</sup> Huddersfield Town Poor rate accounts 1787-1794, KDA.

<sup>166</sup> This may have been due to a number of causes, one of which a large number of itinerant farm labourers who had settled in the town in the previous year and had failed to move on, or it may have been caused by a realisation that the town should improve its image and to do this should rid itself of the criminal element? KC/165/150/KDA.

<sup>167</sup> KC/165/150/KDA.

the opinion of overseers and vestry members were morally critical of those paupers deemed undeserving. It was certainly the position of the parish and vestry committees that those who resorted to poor relief, fell into two distinct categories, the deserving and the undeserving poor. The deserving poor were, as we have seen, those who through illness, age and infirmity, could no longer support themselves. Additionally, there were the wives of those serving in the army and militia, they deserved relief and were often averse in seeking further assistance from the poor rate. Of the undeserving poor, the evidence points to them being characterised as wasteful, idle and in some cases addicted to drink. Errant fathers and ill-fated mothers were often referred to as vagrants, and lewd individuals; morally unworthy of the assistance of the parish. These changing attitudes to the expected responsibilities of mothers and fathers of illegitimate children, is an interesting by-product of the distribution of the poor rate during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Furthermore, it illustrates the moral high-ground invested in by the parish and vestry committees and their rigid attempts in recouping money lost to the parish. More important than the attitude of the parish, is the power that such bodies enjoyed during this period.

#### Local changes after 1834.

Local power structures played a central part in the years immediately following 1834. Those involved in local politics and in the growing secular interests of the vestry committees were at the forefront of any progress in Huddersfield. Indeed, it was these local power bases that were central in the often fraught relationship between the Poor Law Commissioners and the local authorities in Huddersfield. This was particularly so at a time when government required the town to appoint a clerk to the Guardians and effectively form a union according to law. The appointment of a salaried clerk came at the end of a period of unprecedented change in the town and left many of the towns leading elites in a state of conflict. Such was the unstable nature of Huddersfield at the time.



### The Ramsden Family

One cannot ignore the part played in the development of Huddersfield without reference to the Ramsden family and their part in the history and progress of the town during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The Ramsdens political and landowning stakes in the town were strong and remained so for many years.<sup>168</sup> When the Ramsdens and the parish handed over some responsibility for the town, to the Commissioners for Lighting, Watching and Cleansing, in 1821, the Ramsdens played an important part in its organisation and elective procedure.<sup>169</sup> The family's importance stemmed the part played in developing the town; Sir John Ramsden, the 3<sup>rd</sup> Baronet (1699-1769) provided the Cloth Hall in 1766,<sup>170</sup> and was active in all the turnpike trusts, which connected the town and its commerce to other nearby centres of industry. Following his death the family was headed for the next 70 years by Sir John Ramsden the 4<sup>th</sup> Baronet, who was only 13 when he inherited the manor. For much of the early part of the nineteenth century he was absent, only visiting the town on special occasions, though there is evidence that a tight control of the family's interest was maintained.

This chapter has focused on the official language relating to the old Poor Law and its operation in Huddersfield up to the implementation of the new Act in 1834. It has examined the attitudes of the old parish system and the power of the various parishes in and around Huddersfield and those bordering the town. Fundamentally, it is an assessment of the strengths and weaknesses of the old Poor Law and the struggles to maintain attitudes of

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<sup>168</sup> The family owned the majority of the land in the town centre and much of the surrounding area; they sold their interest the County Borough of Huddersfield in 1920, relinquishing over 400 years of local control and patronage.

<sup>169</sup> The initial 59 Commissioners included Sir John Ramsden himself, his four sons, and the agent John Bower. Moreover, any Commissioners who died in office or were poor attendees at official meetings within a 12 month period, could be replaced by a system of co-option, subject to Sir John's approval. From which, one might assume that Sir John must have also approved of the initial 59 members of the committee. Source - Griffiths, *Partisans or Politicians*, p.13.

<sup>170</sup> The building of the cloth hall was a sign of the growing prosperity of the town and its importance as centre for wool production and commerce.

localism and paternalism within parishes that were singularly autonomous. One particular aspect of the old Poor Law has been the attitude toward certain sections of the poor by the overseers of the parish relief. Despite the problems that paternalism creates in an expanding industrial area such as Huddersfield, it is obvious that in the smaller parishes, such as Honley and Thurstonland, it worked relatively well. Evidence shows that widows and the aged and infirm, were taken care of by the parish, for in the main they were considered deserving of relief. The highly moral attitude toward the mothers and fathers of illegitimate children was a different matter. On reflection, the parish was never unduly unfair toward such human affairs. Indeed, it was the case that many local women were offered relief as long as they named the father, and many of them did. It was then the duty of the parish to seek out these putative men and make them pay. Similarly, certain terms used in official documentation was not necessarily used to frame the behaviour of errant members of the community. For example, those at fault were sometimes termed ‘wayward vagrants’, which was a legal term and could be used to describe anyone who was without the means to support themselves. Consequently, such a term was used to describe errant fathers on the run. Similarly the term lewd was used to describe the behaviour of some women who found themselves pregnant. But it was also a term used regularly when referring to issues of morals and acceptable behaviour. Let us not forget that illegitimacy was an issue that carried a universal stigma and one which has only become socially acceptable in the latter decades of the twentieth century. Compared with the more unified attitude of the later Board of Guardians, the parish system, was much more focused on the individual and that individual’s parish. The overseers of the old system were pre-occupied with the relief of ‘elderly paupers, the care of orphan children, and the maintenance of deserted wives...a large proportion of their business was taken up with protecting the financial interest of their township’.<sup>171</sup>

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<sup>171</sup> F. Driver, *Power and Pauperism*, p.134.

After 1834, thirty-four separate townships were incorporated within a single union authority, they were responsible for the direction of relief and the appointment of local officials. The Poor Law Commissioners acknowledged the ‘relative efficiency’ of local authorities in the north, but insisted on replacing the township and parish with the union as the fundamental unit of Poor Law administration.<sup>172</sup> Government hoped to replace the part-time unpaid appointed officers with a professional corps of staff under the control of the union. In effect, the strategy of such a geographical concentration under the control of a Board of Guardians was to provide a new voice in local affairs – the voice of the union. As the union took shape, and there developed a small army of administrators and civil servants under the guidance of the Guardians, the parish overseers were replaced by a more astute body of officials. Consequently, the penny-pinching parish authorities and vestry committees would hopefully be replaced by this new breed of officials under the direct authority of the Union. The Guardians, as well as counting gentlemen and landowners in their number also included industrialists, manufacturers, tradesmen and shopkeepers. These men sought political affiliations through local connections and it was these men that became the voice of the union.

However, what the Poor Law Commissioners expected and hoped for was not found in Huddersfield. The forty-one elected guardians of the first board within the Union were a mixed bunch, and in the main, any divisions that existed were as likely to reflect the importance of local loyalties and social standing. Most Guardians regarded themselves as township delegates, rather than servants of the Union and it seemed that loyalties toward the old parish system were not truly dead. In fact, the expected voice of a union, allied to the values of the central Poor Law authorities, was in Huddersfield, the ‘voice of the

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<sup>172</sup> Ibid.

township...'<sup>173</sup> The reason for this, was primarily down to those Guardian members of the Board, who were against the new Poor Law and hostile toward the concept of the Union. Resistance was organised by the Huddersfield vestry and its radical spokesmen, William Stocks and Lawrence Pitkethly. Throughout 1839, the vestry and local Guardians, refused to acknowledge the jurisdiction of the Union over the Huddersfield workhouse and although the institution was eventually handed over to the Guardians, the dispute revived the anti-Poor Law agitation of the years 1834 -1837.<sup>174</sup>

The attitude of the old parish system that operated in Huddersfield and its outer districts was intensely paternalistic and autonomous, and as such, the language used by the vestry and parish, divided those recipients of relief between the deserving and undeserving. Such a system resulted in the demonising of some local paupers for relatively minor indiscretions and created a costly, rather ad hoc system that was reluctant to change. The observations of Blaug, that of a 'system of universal pauperism...full of indolence and vice' does not wholly equate with the conditions in Huddersfield, nevertheless, it is clear that under the parish system up to 1834, poor relief was both expensive and out-dated.<sup>175</sup> Despite the expected change heralded by the new Poor Law, with its machinery for mass-administration and the need to change the methods of poor relief distribution, the language of popular politics and authority remained, and to some extent expanded, becoming more forceful and direct.

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<sup>173</sup> Rose, 'The New Poor Law', 136-8.

<sup>174</sup> Huddersfield Township Meetings, KDA.

<sup>175</sup> See footnote 91. P.36.

## **Chapter Two.**

### The voice of Union or the voice of the Township:

#### the emergence of local elites and the anti-Poor Law movement.

The purpose of this chapter is to examine the kind of political language used during a period of radical revolt in Huddersfield during the 1830s. The 1830s was a decade of political and radical revolt throughout the country, but particularly in the industrial centres of the north. This chapter will study the reactions to the introduction of the new Poor Law and will consider the actions and rhetoric of certain individuals involved in the anti-Poor Law movement. It will also consider the status of these individuals and the extent of their involvement. As an organisation, the anti-Poor Law movement, was relatively short-lived, largely unsuccessful and considered less important in comparison to the more influential Chartist movement. Due to these failings, one needs to examine its overhaul effectiveness, its inter-relationships with the Poor Law and those who opposed it, and the effect that the movement had on the form and function of the Huddersfield Union. Of equal importance is the kind of political language that was used, both against the radical movements and by the radicals themselves. This chapter will also show how the power of political language, to some extent, enfranchised the poor of Huddersfield.

Between 1820 and 1840, Huddersfield changed quite dramatically and this chapter will study some of those changes and examine the effect that the rise of local authority had upon the town. It will be argued that the implementation of the new Poor Law had a significant effect on local politics and accelerated the rights of the working class. After all it was a working class that was becoming increasingly better educated and more aware of the political world around them and their rights within that world. These improvements, it will be argued, were part of an emerging theme of anti-Poor Law politics that was particularly strong

in the West Riding of Yorkshire and in East Lancashire. The anti-Poor Law movement left its mark on Huddersfield and on the Poor Law Union. The residue of anti-Poor Law rhetoric lasted well into the 1840s and formed the basis for the initial unstable efforts of the Poor Law Union. Factions from both the anti and pro-Poor Law sides sought election to the Board of Guardians and for a number of years the Union was affected by issues of instability, parochialism and self-interest.

As with many towns in the West Riding, expansion and economic prosperity came about relatively quickly. Up until 1820, the town of Huddersfield was a quiet market town. It was governed by an ancient Court Leet, granted to the Ramsden family by the crown in the seventeenth century. The Leet regularly appointed a constable for the village and an inspector of weights and measures; there was also a pinder whose job it was to impound stray cattle.<sup>176</sup> These somewhat traditional appointments soon became obsolete as the politics of a self-interested group of the minor bourgeoisie grew in popularity and the town's economic affairs changed rapidly:

Rampant individualism, inspired by no idea beyond quick money returns, set up the cheap and nasty model of modern industrial life and its surroundings'.<sup>177</sup>

A consequence of this rapid change meant that the traditional Court Leet and parish vestry, was been overtaken by the expanding township and the more complex needs of a population caught up in the rush of industrial competition.<sup>178</sup>

During the 1830s there were two distinct events which dominated the town's history. First there was the introduction of the Poor Law Amendment Act of 1834 and second, direct

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<sup>176</sup> An indication of the semi-rural nature of the town.

<sup>177</sup> G.M. Trevelyan, *English Social History. A survey of six centuries* (Longmans, London, 1945), p.463.

<sup>178</sup> D. Griffiths, *Partisans or Politicians* (Huddersfield Historical Society, 2008), p.9; O.Balmforth, *Jubilee History of the Corporation of Huddersfield* (Huddersfield, 1918); T. Dyson, *The History of Huddersfield and District* (Huddersfield, 1932); and R.Brook, *The Story of Huddersfield* (London, 1968).

and open opposition to it.<sup>179</sup> A principal factor of this very political decade was the importance of local politics and the self interest of certain groups of men. Such men, in order to progress, and in order to establish their names in perpetuity, put themselves forward for election to the Board of Guardians. This group of 'new men' were responsible for enforcing and administering the new Poor Law. They controlled the regulations that distinguished between the deserving and undeserving poor and more importantly they would decide what relief was given, and to whom. In many ways, after 1838, the Huddersfield Guardians were to become the voice of poor relief in the town. It will be argued that it was the rhetoric of this radical period in the 1830s, that began to shape the kind of theories and policies undertaken by the Union, and that such changes impacted directly on the future relief of the poor of Huddersfield.

As well as significant political change during the 1830s and 1840s, the town's industrial footprint and population grew significantly. As the industrial economy expanded, so did the number of manufacturers, shopkeepers and tradesmen. These members of the new bourgeois elite were men whose aim it was to transform the town. The vision they were hoping to create involved the industrial success of the town. And as part of this vision the town required a population of hard-working, morally upright citizens. The undeserving poor were effectively powerless and excluded, seen as a taint on the town's progress by the town authorities, to be controlled rather than improved.

Between 1830 and 1850, Huddersfield's 'shopocracy' of lower middle class artisans, tradesmen, manufacturers and professionals, gradually shrugged off the power of the parish vestry and the influences of the Ramsden family, and up to incorporation in 1868, they

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<sup>179</sup> F. Driver, *Power and Pauperism*, p112-130.

largely shaped the progress and vision of the town.<sup>180</sup> After 1838, the Board of Guardians saw the open vestry as an important source of popular democracy. Their involvement in such an institution prepared them for more important positions as the town prospered. Some of this group of prominent figures were politically active during the 1830s, and it was just such a group of men who became instrumental in manipulating the eventual success of the Poor Law Guardians and the Huddersfield Poor Law Union. Alongside a local study of some of the more important members of this group of local men, there will be a consideration of the wider implications brought about by the anti-Poor Law movement and previous studies that surround this volatile period in local English history. An important aspect in analysing the anti-Poor Law movement is the effective and vibrant language used by one of its most successful promoters, Richard Oastler. Of some significance will be the way Oastler used the press to promote the values of the movement and his own self-promotion toward his ultimate goal of election to parliament. Similarly the way the press reported the efforts of the movement either by supporting or opposing them.

Whilst the aims of the manufacturing classes was in truth to make their towns more competitive and ultimately more successful with other like-minded centres, the rise of self-interested attainment seems to have overshadowed any altruistic sense of duty following the demise of the old parish system. As success in business brought power and influence, so did the right connections in local politics. This notion is supported by a similar process that occurred in the nearby textile town of Oldham. There, as elsewhere in the industrial north the township meetings and open vestries provided ‘points of access to the political processes’.<sup>181</sup>

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<sup>180</sup> In 1835 there was a notable radical element holding considerable influence in the town. These men were being elected by the Huddersfield vestry as overseers, surveyors and constables. Such roles were seen as important steps in becoming established in local politics in the town. The open vestry held meetings regularly and their elections are recorded in the Huddersfield Township meetings of 2 April 1835, 25 March 1836 and 25 March 1837.

<sup>181</sup> J. Garrand, *Leadership and Power in Victorian Industrial towns* (Manchester, 1983), p. 89.



In order to assess the strengths and weaknesses of the town in times of political and industrial strife, it is necessary to examine the political position of the town in the early nineteenth-century. Local town governance in many towns during this period was split between, either incorporated or unincorporated boroughs. Huddersfield was unincorporated until 1868, and so the town had no charter, thus no corporation, and was ultimately under the control of the county bench and the county rate. Like many other similar towns, unincorporated towns were able to obtain a degree of independence by a succession of boards. In Huddersfield's case, between 1820 and 1848 there was a succession of these boards of improvement which provided some increased independence for the town.<sup>182</sup> As important as these boards were, they were largely regulated and overseen by the default mode of government, which in Huddersfield, as in many towns was the magistracy.

In Huddersfield, as in many other towns, Justices of the Peace, were a powerful part of the political landscape and were appointed by the Crown at County level. Usually, JPs came from the propertied classes and had far wider powers than their modern day counterparts.<sup>183</sup> They didn't just deal with criminal cases, but with a whole range of regulatory functions which were examined through the Quarterly sessions and the more frequent petty sessions. Huddersfield sat within the Upper-Agbrigg petty sessional division and had three locally based magistrates, covering the parishes of Huddersfield: these were the parishes of Almondbury, Kirkburton, Kirkheaton and Saddleworth.<sup>184</sup> Although these magistrates were unpaid, they were supported by a high constable and a salaried clerk based in Market Street in the centre of town.<sup>185</sup> During the 1820s and 1830s, Huddersfield had no

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<sup>182</sup> D. Fraser, *Power and Authority in the Victorian City* (Oxford, 1979) pp 1-21.

<sup>183</sup> According to the Webbs this was a period in which the justices of the peace indulged themselves in absolute independence from central control and authority - W.C.Lubenow, *The Politics of Government Growth; Early Victorian attitudes toward state intervention 1833-1848* (London, 1971) p.16.

<sup>184</sup> Their number was increased to eight during the Poor Law disturbances of the late 1830s.

<sup>185</sup> Griffiths, *Partisans or Politicians?* p.9.

formal means of law enforcement or standing militia, so it is surprising that the outbreaks of unrest were so infrequent.<sup>186</sup> Where there was opposition, the local magistrates were responsible for the 'control of the town' and were empowered to read the Riot Act, summon the militia and enrol special constables. In enforcing the law, the magistrates were supported by the Lord Lieutenant for the county, who was responsible for maintaining the militia and the yeomanry. The office of the Lord Lieutenant dated back to the sixteenth century and during the 1830s the position was held by the 2nd Earl Harwood.<sup>187</sup> The 1830s were a particularly busy period for the bench, and they played a vital part in enforcing both the wishes of the town and law and order on any group or individual that stepped out of line.

Due to the rebelliousness nature of the town's inhabitants during the 1830s, incidents of revolt are well attested to. Local historian, Roy Brook, records the observations of one such act of disobedience on 19 June 1833. According to Brook, a Dr. Chalmers recorded the events surrounding a riotous assembly the town's market place. The assembled locals were gathered to hear Richard Oastler speak about the sufferings of the 'factory children' and according to Chalmers, they cheered him enthusiastically, burning effigies of the 'Factory Commissioners, who were, Captain Fenton one of the obnoxious members of Parliament, and another unpopular master manufacturer'. These effigies were 'tossed ferociously in the air, and to renew their combustion were dashed into a bonfire from time to time'. The Doctor concluded by saying that 'the spectacle, I am sure, is a degrading one, and fitted to prepare the actors for burning the originals instead of the copies'.<sup>188</sup> The testimony of Dr. Chalmers

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<sup>186</sup> For a more complete discussion of English local government, see D.Roberts, *Victorian Origins of the British Welfare State* (New Haven, 1960) and S. and B. Webb, *English Local Government from the Revolution to the Municipal Corporations Act* (London, 1924)

<sup>187</sup> Henry Lascelles, 2<sup>nd</sup> Earl Harwood (1767-1841) Lord Lieutenant, 1819-1841. The previous Lord Lieutenant was the 4<sup>th</sup> Earl Fitzwilliam (Whig).

<sup>188</sup> R.Brook, *The Story of Huddersfield* (Macgibbon and Kee, London, 1968) p.79. The irony of these observations was that the town's first M.P. Capt. Fenton (Whig), much disliked by the town's radical element, fell to his death from a first floor window of his home at Spring Grove in the following year.

was an indication of a period of unruliness in Huddersfield. Brook points out that by this time:

Huddersfield had its own M.P., unpopular master manufacturers, and Richard Oastler fighting both over the question of conditions in factories; and protest meetings, of the sort described by Chalmers, were to be repeated in the Market Place and in other places around the town...<sup>189</sup>

Such events were an indication of popular politics in action, the language of Oastler clearly stirring the passions of an increasingly politically aware population. The local magistrates, who were tasked with dealing such agitation, were men of some standing in the town. On the side of the radicals, was Joseph Armitage, a manufacturer and landowner, and friend of the Tory radical Richard Oastler. The other two magistrates were Benjamin Batty (Tory) and Joseph Walker (Tory), both of whom were local landowners.<sup>190</sup> Batty and Walker were later to become supporters of the new Poor Law and were both *ex-Officio* members of the first Board of Guardians. As there were plenty of self-interested men of importance and ambition in the town, there were equally men who opposed such self-interest. One of these men was the radical Joshua Hobson (1810-1876).

Hobson was a direct opponent of the growing number of 'masters and manufacturers' of Huddersfield.<sup>191</sup> He was a cabinet maker, journalist, printer and former handloom weaver,

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<sup>189</sup> Ibid., pp.79-80.

<sup>190</sup> Joseph Armitage had also been involved with the town's bank since 1827, he had served the manor from 1823 and had been the vice president of the town's infirmary from 1831. Benjamin Batty had been the vice president of the town infirmary from 1815, being succeeded by Armitage. He served the manor from 1826 and became a JP in 1833. Joseph Walker was also on the board of the infirmary between 1814 and 1831, had served the manor from 1830 and became a JP in 1829.

<sup>191</sup> A surprising number of books and articles of been written about Hobson: - S. Chadwick, *A Bold and Faithful Journalist* (1976), D. Whomsley, 'Radical Politics in the 1850s and 1860s: Joshua Hobson and the Tenant Right dispute in Huddersfield', *Journal of Regional and Local Studies*, 17 (1987), 14-33. J.A. Hargreaves, *Factory Kings and Slaves; South Pennine Social Movements, 1780-1840* (Hebden Bridge, 1982).

who had the interests of the textile workers close to his heart.<sup>192</sup> He had links with the Owenite movement and was associated with many radical booksellers who held similar sympathies. His paper, the *Voice of the West Riding* was printed on his own wooden hand press. Hobson was born in Huddersfield in 1810 and had little formal education. He was apprenticed to a joiner, and then became a handloom weaver near Oldham. He wrote for local papers there and returned to Huddersfield, where he became caught up in the work of the local Short-Time Committee that was formed to support Hobhouse's Factory Bill of 1831.<sup>193</sup> Hobson became associated with the Tory radical Richard Oastler and the 'Yorkshire Slavery' campaign. In June 1833, the first issue of Hobson's *Voice of the West Riding* appeared. It was intended as the voice of the Short-Time Committees, but led Hobson into other forms of working-class agitation.<sup>194</sup> In April 1833, Hobson printed his opposition on the *Book of Murder*, a pamphlet attacking the Poor Law Amendment Act, such agitation and further anti-government polemics resulted in him being imprisoned in Wakefield gaol in August 1833 for publishing an unstamped paper.<sup>195</sup> He was further incarcerated for the same offence in 1835 and 1836. In the autumn of 1834, he moved to Leeds and set up as a printer and publisher. For twelve years he was the main publisher of radical material in the West Riding, his papers included the *Northern Star* a paper he edited for a time. The *Northern Star* began as a Barnsley paper for working men, it advocated the wholesale abolition of the 1834 Poor Law Amendment Act and a renewal of the Trade Union and Ten-Hour movements, the paper moved to Leeds in 1837. The idea of a popular newspaper for the West Riding came from a joint effort by Hobson and William Hill, who was the son of a Barnsley handloom weaver.

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<sup>192</sup> Together with Lawrence Pitkethly they invited Richard Oastler to assume leadership of the revived factory movement in the 'Fixby Hall Compact' – J.A. Hargreaves, 'A Metropolis of Discontent': Popular Protest in Huddersfield c.1780-1850' in E.A.H. Haigh (ed.) *Huddersfield a most handsome town* (Kirklees Cultural Services, 1992), pp.211-2.

<sup>193</sup> Whomsley, 'Radical Politics in the 1850s and 1860s: Joshua Hobson and the Tenant Right dispute in Huddersfield' p.25.

<sup>194</sup> *The Poor Man's Guardian*, 10 December 1831.

<sup>195</sup> *The Morning Chronicle*, 29 August 1833 and *Cobbetts Weekly Political Register*, 31 August 1833.

Hobson also had a hand in printing and publishing Robert Owen's *New Moral World*. In fact he was responsible for printing and publishing almost all the Owenite and Chartist pamphlets and books in this period and wrote pamphlets defending Owenite Socialism. Hobson was nominated as an Improvement Commissioner for Leeds in January 1840, as part of the concept of Municipal Chartism. By 1847, Hobson was back in Huddersfield, where he became one of the Poor Law Guardians for the town. In many ways Hobson's publications, especially the *Voice of the West Riding*, were popular polemics that to many, reflected the class conscious tone of the 1830s. His later years were spent involved in placing the Huddersfield Improvement Bill under the management of the town's Commissioners and writing regularly in the *Huddersfield Daily Chronicle*. Hobson died in 1876, and by the June of that year it had been decided to erect a monument to Hobson's association with the Ten Hours Factory Act in Huddersfield's Edgerton cemetery.<sup>196</sup> By November that same year, an 18 foot granite obelisk was unveiled in the cemetery at Edgerton.<sup>197</sup> Ironically, the town remembered him for his least radical efforts; his opposition to the Poor Law Amendment Act went largely unnoticed. Hobson's work and the work of other similar radicals was lauded by the historian Edward Thompson, who argued that the 1820s and 1830s, extolled the liberty of the press and the growth of trade unions, the repeal of the Combination Acts the growth of free thought, cooperative experiment and Owenite theory. According to Thompson the 1820s and 1830s were:

Years in which individuals and groups sought to render into theory the twin experience of the industrial revolution, and the experience of popular radicalism insurgent and in defeat.<sup>198</sup>

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<sup>196</sup> *Huddersfield Chronicle and West Yorkshire Advertiser*, 17 June 1876.

<sup>197</sup> *Ibid.*, 25 November 1876. (See photograph of the memorial, p.285).

<sup>198</sup> E.P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (Harmondsworth, 1991), p.781.

This period was also a time of increasing educational opportunity for the working-class. First contact with education meant for many, a rudimentary introduction to the three 'R's and in the case of some labourers and artisans, shopkeepers, clerks and schoolmasters there was the opportunity to instruct themselves:

A shoemaker who had been taught his letters in the Old Testament would labour through the Age of Reason; a schoolmaster, whose education had taken him little further than worthy religious homilies, would attempt Voltaire, Gibbon, Ricardo: here and there local radical leaders, weavers, booksellers, tailors would amass shelves of radical periodicals and learn how to use parliamentary blue books; illiterate labourers would nevertheless go each week to a pub where Cobbetts editorial was read aloud and discussed.<sup>199</sup>

Whilst the growth in the numbers of literate men and women grew steadily during the early decades of the nineteenth-century, the ability to handle abstract and consecutive argument was equally difficult to access and learn, it was not in-born, it had to be discovered, against what Thompson called 'overwhelming odds, lack of leisure time and the cost of candles'.<sup>200</sup>

Ideas and terms were sometimes employed in the early Radical movement which, it is evident, had for some ardent followers a fetishistic rather than rational value...in one account of the pitmen of the north-east in 1819, 'Universal Suffrage is understood by many of them to mean universal suffering... "if one member suffers, all must suffer"'.<sup>201</sup>

In Huddersfield, aside from the Sunday schools and the Bible Societies that grew with the Methodist movement there was little formal instruction for adults until 1825, when the Huddersfield Scientific and Mechanic Institute was founded, its aim was:

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<sup>199</sup> Ibid., p.782.

<sup>200</sup> Ibid., p.783.

<sup>201</sup> Ibid.

For the supplying at a cheap rate, the different classes of the community, with the advantages of instruction in the various branches of science and the useful arts.<sup>202</sup>

Such institutions were part of a movement which was popular throughout the British Isles and yet according to O'Connell, in 1840, the institute was found wanting on two counts. Firstly, it did not educate the working-class and secondly they did not teach science. However, by 1841, 'The Huddersfield Young Men's Mental Improvement Society' was formed and from its outset was apparently far more successful than its predecessor.<sup>203</sup> It was a success 'not by teaching large numbers of adults, eager and able to learn the principles of science, for such numbers did not exist in Huddersfield, but by providing elementary education to semi-literate boys and young men'.<sup>204</sup> An early benefactor of the society was Frederic Schwann, a prosperous export merchant who had already provided a library for his employees. Classes were first held in a Temperance Hotel in Cross Church Street in Huddersfield, but moved to the British school at Outcote Bank.<sup>205</sup> The ethos of the society, was to provide the student with the 'advantages of an elementary education adapted to their occupation in life'.<sup>206</sup> As successful as such institutions were, they were primarily aimed at those who could afford the time to attend classes and for those who fitted the model of an upright and sober member of the community. Many students were either artisans or skilled men in full-time employment. Generally speaking, in respect of the education of adults in Huddersfield, a common theme developed in the town during the 1830s. Whilst one can praise the efforts of benefactors such as Schwaan and the work he carried out, one should also pay attention to the class or groups

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<sup>202</sup> J. O'Connell, 'From Mechanics' Institution to Polytechnic: further and higher education', 1841-1970 in E.A.H. Haigh (ed.), *Huddersfield a most handsome town* (Kirklees Cultural Services, 1992)

<sup>203</sup> Ibid., p.562.

<sup>204</sup> Ibid.

<sup>205</sup> Ibid., p.564. Classes were held in the following subjects: reading, writing, arithmetic, grammar, design and French and by 1844 further classes in elocution, mathematics and chemistry were added.

<sup>206</sup> Ibid.

of adults who were the recipients of such instruction. Largely, though not exclusively, they were young men, in employment, with some leisure time at their disposal. The older adult working man with an expanding family did not have the same opportunities as their younger neighbours, nor did the out of work labourer, or those families on the fringes of extreme hardship and destitution. Such conditions in Huddersfield tend to agree with Thompson's earlier summing up of the educational position for the majority of men and women. And yet this period, offered some advancement to the working-class and allowed many to become involved in popular politics and possibly the opportunity to better their professional and social position. And so, by the late 1820s, there was in place, in Huddersfield, all that was potentially required to stoke the fires of revolt. As with many other working-class centres throughout the country the liberty of the radical press and the steadfastness of certain radical men, plus the opportunities of education, provided a sufficient impetus to fan the hungry flames.

#### The anti-Poor Law Movement.

According to Michael Rose, the 1830s was a decade of almost continuous political agitation, particularly in the manufacturing districts of the north of England.<sup>207</sup> Throughout this long decade there were campaigns for the Reform Bill, the Ten Hours Bill and the reorganization and recognition of the trades unions, by the end of the decade there emerged the Anti-Corn Law League and the Chartist Movement which, between them, dominated much of the 1840s. As an organisation the anti-Poor Law movement was somewhat limited, lasting no more than a few years.

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<sup>207</sup> M.E. Rose, 'The Anti-Poor Law Movement in the North of England' *Northern History*, Volume 1, June 1966, pp.70-91.



It began in earnest in 1837, instigated by the arrival of the Assistant Poor Law Commissioners in the northern counties. It was the Intention of the Commissioners to organize the new poor law unions under the terms of the 1834 Act. Although there were some disturbances against the new poor law in the north east and west and as far south as Sheffield, the majority of the agitations of the anti Poor Law movement, was confined to the textile towns and villages of Lancashire and the West Riding of Yorkshire – areas, according to Michael Rose ‘from which the Ten Hours Movement drew its greatest support’.<sup>208</sup>

### The Origins of Northern Opposition

The parish allowance systems of the old Poor Law, adopted in the rural south were, in the main, a rarity in the north. In Huddersfield and most northern industrial districts, outdoor relief had become part of the new industrial system, favoured by both employers and employees. Moreover, in the north, there were few of the abuses which continued in the south, and as a result, the cost of poor relief, was low in the northern districts; ‘of the ten counties where relief costs were less than five shillings per head in 1836, no less than eight were north of the Trent’.<sup>209</sup> There developed the argument that as the rates in the north were low, and the northern overseers and churchwardens were generally efficient - why should such a system that was known to work be replaced by a system that had not been proven? This had been a disagreement used in Parliament by a number of northern members, who argued that whilst they favoured the majority of what the new Act stood for, they believed its implementation in the north was not necessary.<sup>210</sup> In general circles, the Commissioners remained largely unconcerned, except for a small group who knew the north well and remained sceptical about the response the administration of the new Act might bring. As a

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<sup>208</sup> Ibid., p.70-1.

<sup>209</sup> Edsall, p.45.

<sup>210</sup> One such supporter was the M.P. for Leeds, Edward Baines. Not only did he hold such a view but he was also the owner of the influential *Leeds Mercury*.

result, the Poor Law Commissioners launched a rather ubiquitous charm offensive against the north. There were a host of pro-poor law pamphlets, distributed throughout the northern counties and the most important of these was the *Voice from the North of England*, which claimed, that although rates in the north were low and considering that prosperity in the region was high, they could have been lower still.<sup>211</sup> It also admitted that whilst the relief was ordinarily well administered, by the creation of Poor Law Unions and a team of full-time administrators, it could be even better.<sup>212</sup> The Commissioners also recognised the special case of the hand loom weavers, who were being replaced at a rapid rate by the mechanisation of the weaving process. By accepting the need to make allowances for such a group, the Commissioners were misrepresenting the needs of the industrial areas of the north, as hardly anyone in the north had considered extending such allowances to any of the sorts of occupation that were also suffering as a result of mechanisation.

It wasn't long before the movement toward opposition took shape and northern opposition to the implementation of the new Poor Law quickly became the focus of both regional and local politics. Gareth Stedman Jones argues that at an ideological level, the anti-Poor Law movement was guided by a wider diagnosis of the changing role of the state, a diagnosis that was to become a profound influence, not just within the circles of opposition to the new Poor Law, but to the rise and sustainability of Chartism too. The north was shaped by certain radical responses to the denial of working-class suffrage in 1832 and the policies of the Whig government thereafter. The same, argues Stedman Jones, was true of Chartism, which in recent years has been portrayed less as a sudden interruption of 'class consciousness and more as a product of an encounter between existing traditions of radical thought and the

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<sup>211</sup> It is no coincidence that the *Voice from the North of England* was in direct opposition to the similarly titled pamphlet by Joshua Hobson.

<sup>212</sup> Edsall, p.47.

political developments of the 1830s'.<sup>213</sup> Indeed, in the 1830s, there were a number of significant transformational issues, which arose and tested the mettle of working-class politics. As well as poor law reform, there was the restriction of trades unions, proposals for the formation of a police force and support for the factory system – all of these were seen as potentially menacing transformations in the scale and character of state power. *The Northern Star* called such issues – ‘a series of oppressions by a middle class government designed to subjugate the [minds] and bodies of people’.<sup>214</sup>

The anti-Poor Law movement brought popular politics to the everyday lives of people and created a momentum, which threatened to overwhelm the forces of order. According to Eileen Yeo, working class politics, was a conflict for the control of the ‘household, the street, the factory, the community, the vestry, the meeting house and the pub’.<sup>215</sup> The dramatic power of popular protest was witnessed locally as well as regionally. Between 1837 and 1838, large numbers of people throughout the industrial north mobilised and in doing so created the inaugural phase of the Chartist movement. Mass meetings on the moors were common, and the burning of effigies equally so, much ‘to do with the ritual and staged quality of protest as it was to do with the script’.<sup>216</sup> Symbolism did not diminish its violent confrontational character, as it was this kind of popular protest that brought the newly formed Metropolitan police and the military to the streets of Huddersfield, Bradford and Oldham and said as much about the weakness of government as it did about its strength.

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<sup>213</sup> G. Stedman Jones, ‘The Language of Chartism’ in J. Epstein and D. Thompson (eds.), *The Chartist Experience* (London, 1982), pp.3-58.

<sup>214</sup> *The Northern Star*, 27 January 1838.

<sup>215</sup> E. Yeo, ‘Culture and Constraint in Working Class Movements’ in E. Yeo and S. Yeo (eds.), *Popular Culture and Class Conflict* (Brighton, 1981), p.14.

<sup>216</sup> P. Pickering, *Class without Words* (London, 1986), p.112. and J. Knott, *Popular Opposition to the 1834 poor law* (London, 1986).

### The origins of opposition in Huddersfield

Huddersfield had never been immune to the rhetoric of radical politics, indeed for many, it was for a short time, the centre of radical politics in the West Riding. Due in part to a population explosion in the 1820s, and a chronic depression amongst the domestic handloom weavers, the town experienced a great deal of tension during the struggle for parliamentary reform between 1829 and 1832.<sup>217</sup> It was this tension and a history of opposition, particularly the repeal of any protective legislation for woollen workers in 1809 and the subsequent Luddite disturbances, that remained in the minds of the people of Huddersfield. Whether those events and subsequent disturbances were an elaborate revolutionary conspiracy, or the actions of industrial revolutionists, is still a matter of debate, nevertheless between 1809 and 1813, some of the towns men rose to the challenges and demands in order to protect their interests. And it was such similar interests that were again brought to the fore in the 1830s, by the charismatic leader of the Tory-Radical alliance Richard Oastler.<sup>218</sup> Following a tragic fire in a cotton mill in Huddersfield in 1818, where seventeen young girls perished, the issue of factory reform became an important social and political movement. It was these issues that Oastler took up in his famous letter in the *Leeds Mercury* in September 1830, when he exposed the plight of thousands of children and the hours they were forced to work.<sup>219</sup> As the main challenger to the Ramsden Whig interest, and between 1831 and 1838, Oastler became a constant thorn in the side of Whigs and the supporters of the Ramsden interest.<sup>220</sup> His efforts in the Huddersfield Short-Time Committee, earned him the epithet of the 'Factory

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<sup>217</sup> J.A. Hargreaves, 'A Metropolis of Discontent', pp189-90.

<sup>218</sup> Ibid.,p.209.

<sup>219</sup> Ibid.

<sup>220</sup> On a Sunday morning in June 1831, John Leech(1803-71), James Brook (1797-1870) led four delegates: the woollen manufacturer Samuel Glendinning (1802—83); the fancy weaver John Hanson(1789-1877); the apprentice cabinet-maker and former handloom weaver Joshua Hobson and the merchant Lawrence Pitkethly to Fixby Hall, to invite Oastler to assume the leadership of the revived Factory Movement in the Fixby Hall Compact. Source J.A. Hargreaves 'Metropolis of Discontent', p.209.

King' and his work and sheer resolve, resulted in a parliamentary bill, which finally passed into law and limited the hours children had to work. The efforts of Oastler and his close associate Lawrence Pitkethly, were subsequently channelled into resisting the implementation of the 1834 Poor Law Amendment Act.

In Huddersfield, during 1837, a wealth of anti-Poor Law pamphlets and polemics were produced, one such pamphlet satirically read 'Give it a fair trial –alternative poor law reform for the amendment of the wealthy classes – incarcerated in separate apartments of union palaces meeting through a golden gate just once a week'.<sup>221</sup> The clever allusion to the wealthy being locked up in 'apartments' in 'union palaces' meeting their loved ones once a week, through a 'golden gate' were of course mocking comparisons to the reality for the destitute poor who were to become confined in anything but the conditions referred to above. Such pamphlets were also an indication of the language of radical politics and an attempt at subverting authority. In May 1837, Oastler warned in the *Champion and Weekly Herald* 'that he was the determined opponent of the new starvation and man and wife separation law'.<sup>222</sup> But despite his well intentioned rhetoric there was an equal assault from those that opposed his views. He was described as being 'well skilled in the incendiary arts' and 'he knows what it is to stir up the poor of a thronged manufacturing district'.<sup>223</sup> However, the *London Dispatch and People's Political and Social Reformer* came to his defence in the same month when they commented:

Is it incendiary to say 'those whom god has joined let no man put asunder – those who work should eat or men should love one another and the few should not condemn the many to starvation. Down with the Whig and carry Oastler forward, stand first by

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<sup>221</sup> Anon – 'Give it a fair trial' (Huddersfield, circa 1837).

<sup>222</sup> *Champion and Weekly Herald*, 7 May 1837.

<sup>223</sup> Ibid.

Oastler, the real democrat, the working man's friend and advocate of universal suffrage!<sup>224</sup>

At a popular protest at Hartshead Moor (about 3 miles from Huddersfield) a reported crowd of 62,000, protested against the 1834 Act, the banners on display illustrated the strength of feeling and the crossover between opposition to the new Poor Law and the rise of Chartism: one banner read – 'No PLA Bill – No Bastille Punishments' whilst another read - 'Universal Suffrage – Vote by Ballot'.<sup>225</sup> Clearly from the references to 'Bastille Punishments' the opposition believed that internment in the workhouse was meant to be every bit as bad, as being sent to prison. In other words the poor were being further punished for being poor.

The geography of resistance in Huddersfield had a lot to do with the relationships and the disposition of the town's local elites, and the relationships between the township authorities, such as the vestry committee and the Board of Guardians. Local radicals such as Lawrence Pitkethly and William Stocks played a significant part in radical politics both at a local and national level. In 1838, Pitkethly described Huddersfield as being at 'the centre of an extensive and extending sphere of [political] operations'.<sup>226</sup> Pitkethly himself was apparently no ordinary orator and radical. In an article in the *London Dispatch and People's Political and Social Reformer* in October 1837, the plight of the Operative Spinners of Glasgow was discussed at a meeting in Newmarket in Huddersfield. The article reports that there were present:

Several of the best radicals in the West Riding. A potwash of social reform. Notable speakers were William Stocks, the good Tory and friend of the people and Mr Pitkethly a Radical of the very first water.<sup>227</sup>

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<sup>224</sup> *London Dispatch and People's Political and Social Reformer*, 9 May 1837.

<sup>225</sup> *Halifax Guardian*, May 1837.

<sup>226</sup> *The New Moral World*, 17 November 1838.

<sup>227</sup> *London Dispatch and People's Political and Social Reformer*, 15 October 1837.

The article went on to say that:

This was a very interesting meeting and was in every respect useful to the high-minded and manly working men of Huddersfield, who never will desert radicalism for the cause of whiggery.<sup>228</sup>

The article also suggests that, perhaps, education was improving the apparent ‘high-minded’ working men of Huddersfield. Such was the interest and reverence that certain radicals were held in, that in 1838, despite the gradual demise of the anti-Poor Law movement during that year, Richard Oastler was still being held aloft as the people’s champion.<sup>229</sup> In the *Northern Star and Leeds General Advertiser* the following advert ran:

A splendid portrait of Richard Oastler Esq. from a steel engraving will be presented to every Yorkshire purchaser of the *Northern Star* of 31<sup>st</sup> March and to those of Scotland, Lancashire and Newcastle of the 7<sup>th</sup> April – He is the father of the poor, the defender of the oppressed and the dread of the tyrant.<sup>230</sup>

Huddersfield and its political surroundings were dotted with industrial villages, many of which promoted opposition to the new Poor Law and together there existed a huge reservoir of popular, sometimes radical support. Henry Vincent who visited the area from the London Working Men’s Association, was impressed by the strength of local radicalism, as was George Tinker, who when writing to the Poor Law Commissioners, described the supporters of the movement as a ‘knot of sturdy democrats’.<sup>231</sup>

But what was the position of the local elites in all this tumult, where did the Ramsden family stand? Essentially they were pro-Poor Law reform, having the protected interests of

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<sup>228</sup> Ibid.

<sup>229</sup> In the June of 1838 the ‘Ancient Shepherds’ held their 2<sup>nd</sup> anniversary dinner at Horton Bank Top and gave a toast to both Fergus O’Connor and Richard Oastler ‘The Poor Man’s friend’. Source the *Northern Star and Leeds General Advertiser*, 9 June 1838.

<sup>230</sup> *Northern Star and Leeds General Advertiser*, 17 March 1838.

<sup>231</sup> G. Tinker to the PLC, 17 February 1838, MH 12/15064.

their land and the image of the township uppermost. Vivienne Hemingway calls the township of Huddersfield at around this time, a ‘nomination borough under the control of the Ramsden family’. The reason for this was that under the second Reform Bill the boundaries of the borough were limited to the township of Huddersfield, in which the Ramsdens owned the majority of the land.<sup>232</sup> Had the boundary taken into account the parish of Huddersfield the response from the family may have been somewhat diluted. As it was, John Charles Ramsden, decided he would stand for election, but the political climate was against him and the radicals held the upper-hand. Fortunately for Ramsden, the North Riding of Yorkshire asked him to stand as their county candidate, thus giving the reluctant Ramsden an excuse to withdraw and allow the brother of one of his agents Capt. Lewis Fenton to stand in his place.<sup>233</sup> The historian David Cannadine tends to support this view of the town, describing Huddersfield as the ‘pocket borough of the local Whig magnate, though the political hegemony of the Ramsden family was never absolute’.<sup>234</sup>

The informed and intelligent provincial press played its part in the politics of the north during the early decades of the 1800s. Following the implementation of the 1834 Act, there were newspapers that were for and against it and a further section that were radical through and through.<sup>235</sup> The rhetoric of these dissenting years, was in the main informative and direct in tone, some however, downright exaggerated and extreme. The majority of the papers that favoured the anti-poor law movement stressed the inhumanity prevalent in the new Act. Sensational tales were circulated about the cruelties practised in the Union Workhouses in the

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<sup>232</sup> V.W. Hemingway, ‘Parliamentary Politics in Huddersfield, c.1832-53’ in E.A.H. Haigh (ed.), *Huddersfield a most handsome town* (Kirklees Cultural Services, 1992), pp.481-3.

<sup>233</sup> Ibid.

<sup>234</sup> D. Cannadine, *Land and Landlords, the aristocracy and the town's 1774-1967* (Leicester, 1980), p.42.

<sup>235</sup> For the Act (Whig), – *Manchester Guardian, Leeds Mercury, Bradford Observer, Sheffield Independent*. Against the Act (Tory), *Leeds Intelligencer, Halifax Guardian, Bolton Chronicle*. Radical press – *Manchester Advertiser, Sheffield Iris, The Northern Star*.



south of England, tales of women being flogged, were reported by the *Bradford Observer*, whilst the *Bolton Chronicle* warned:

if a hard working man is reduced by sickness, or is unable to find work, he must literally starve out of doors or consent to enter one of these modern prisons. There to be separated from all that is dear to him on this side of the grave'.<sup>236</sup>

Though the report from the *Chronicle* is less salacious than the tales of flogging from the Bradford newspaper, it does tend to follow the same kind of language that was being used in some of the popular protests in the West Riding.<sup>237</sup> The most extreme publication of the time was the innocently named *Marcus Pamphlet*. This subversive leaflet debated the possibility of limiting the population, and outlined a scheme for the 'painless extinction of babies' by the use of carbolic acid gas. The *Marcus pamphlet* had a wide circulation and was intended to promote fear and loathing of the new Poor Law, the implausible proposition to exterminate babies was to take place in the new Union workhouses. The Webbs described *Marcus* as a 'neo-Malthusian crank' and with good reason, for no such events ever took place.<sup>238</sup>

The language of popular protest often mirrored the rhetoric of the more radical and free press. Returning to the protest at Hartshead Moor on Whit Tuesday 1837, one of the banners proclaimed 'We can manage the affairs of the poor without the aid of Commissioners and we will not be governed by three infernal lick spittles'.<sup>239</sup> Clearly a indication of revolt and the language of possible insurrection! Some anti-Poor Law supporters bemoaned the demise of the parish system and the old poor law, one member, Samuel Roberts, proclaimed

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<sup>236</sup> *Bradford Observer*, 2 February 1837 and *Bolton Chronicle*, August 1836.

<sup>237</sup> See 'Give it a Fair Trial' p.57, footnote 130.

<sup>238</sup> S & B Webb, *English Local Government: English Poor Law History, the first 100 years*, VIII (London, 1929), p.164, note 1.

<sup>239</sup> *Sheffield Iris*, 23 May 1837.

the primacy of the old poor law when he said ‘all was done at home and was like the conducting of an [extended] family.’<sup>240</sup>

The events of 1837 and the appointment of a salaried clerk to carry out the day to day work of the appointed Guardians are well documented and central to the history of the implementation of the New Poor Law in the town. The Huddersfield Guardian elections of 1837 ‘caused considerable alarm within the Poor Law Commission and amongst supporters of the Whig government’. Even Alfred Power admitted that a ‘considerable number of respectable and influential persons now opposed the system’.<sup>241</sup> The Hartshead Moor demonstration, gave the anti-Poor Law campaign new momentum at the regional level.<sup>242</sup> Indeed, by the mid 1830s, a radical element of local men had gained substantial influence in the Huddersfield vestry, and many of those interested in their personal enhancement, were being elected as overseers, surveyors and constables.<sup>243</sup> By the autumn of 1836, some of the Tory radicals in Huddersfield had established a noteworthy political base in the town. In the days immediately before the first visit of Alfred Power, these same radicals held a torch-lit demonstration, at which Richard Oastler and Feargus O’Connor were the main speakers. Once again, and as was to be the case at Hartshead in the May, the demonstrators banners proclaimed the anti-Poor Law sentiment, one read – ‘Those whom God hath joined together, let no devil of a Commissioner put asunder. If the paupers and the poor rates are to be commissioned, so should the land and the landlords’.<sup>244</sup> Between January and June 1837, there followed a number of attempts to rationalise and elect a board of Guardians in the town, but these attempts were disrupted by the towns Parliamentary elections in May of that year.

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<sup>240</sup> *Sheffield Iris*, 24 January 1837.

<sup>241</sup> F. Driver *Power and Pauperism*, p.121.

<sup>242</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>243</sup> *Huddersfield Township Meetings*, 2 April 1835, 25 March 1836 and 25 March 1837.

<sup>244</sup> *Halifax Guardian*, 21 January 1837. The slogan refers to the separation of husbands and wives in the new workhouse.

In the election, the Tory-radical Oastler, lost to the Whig-Ramsdenite candidate Edward Ellice by 290 votes to 340.<sup>245</sup> Of two elections held that year, Oastler stood on the principle that he would ‘tear the accursed new poor law from the statute book’.<sup>246</sup> According to Hemingway and Driver, support for Oastler was at its strongest in two social groups: traditional Tory voters, such as farmers and magistrates, on the one hand, and the more humble occupational groups, including publicans and tailors on the other: Vivienne Hemingway also suggests that whilst the Ramsden family were not directly involved in diverting the voters, their land agents may have influenced voters whilst canvassing to vote for the Whig candidate.<sup>247</sup> Had Richard Oastler been more supported by a wider range of voters, and not simply seen as the ‘incendiary political radical’ that he clearly was, he may have been voted in by the people of Huddersfield. Such a result would have no doubt extended the life of the anti-Poor Law movement. But Oastler was often guilty of being unable to control his followers and his ‘disavowal of the radical principles of universal suffrage and secret ballots during his election campaigns’ did not endear him to the voters.<sup>248</sup>

The summer and autumn of 1837, saw the town try and resist the efforts of central government in the appointment of an operable board of Guardians with a clerk at its head. There were repeated attempts at appointing a clerk to manage the affairs of the union; Whig Guardians from the Holmfirth townships complained to the authorities that the local magistracy were failing to implement the new law and it was clear that something had to be done. That ‘something’ was the intervention by the Home Secretary John Russell. The eventual outcome of the behind the scenes negotiations from Westminster resulted in the

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<sup>245</sup> F. Driver, *Power and Pauperism*, p.126.

<sup>246</sup> *Leeds Intelligencer*, 6 May 1837.

<sup>247</sup> F. Driver, *Power and Pauperism*, p.125. V.W.Hemingway, ‘Parliamentary Politics in Huddersfield, c.1832-53’ (1992), pp 486-7.

<sup>248</sup> F. Driver, *Power and Pauperism*, pp.125-6.

addition of no less than eight names to the Huddersfield division of the West Riding Commission of the Peace, in November 1837.<sup>249</sup> The four new magistrates appointed by Alfred Power, were prominent factory owners and advocates of the new Poor Law, each one of them had appeared on the Whig and pro-Poor Law side during the borough elections in 1837.<sup>250</sup> Many thought the appointment of a clerk in early 1838 would counter the anti-Poor Law faction. According to Edsall it 'had solved nothing' as the opposition Guardians, still a majority, became recklessly determined to make nonsense of the functioning of the board.<sup>251</sup> There were two main tactics employed by the anti-Poor Law Guardians, one was to insist on long adjournments to meetings and the other was to invite any assembled crowd from outside, into the chamber in the hope they would disrupt proceedings. There followed a reaction by the pro-Poor Law group and an official complaint, by the opposition to the Poor Law, about the apparent fixing of the Guardians elections in March 1837. The opposition complained to the Poor Law Commissioners, who summarily rejected the complaint; Power dismissed the claims in favour of 'our friends of the law'. Edsall states that this was a serious error on the

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<sup>249</sup> William Brook, Joseph Starkey, John Sutcliffe, Thomas Starkey, George Armitage, Joseph Brook, John Starkey and John Brooke, Names of Acting Magistrates, QD1/108 (WYA).

<sup>250</sup> F. Driver, *Power and Pauperism*, p.129.

<sup>251</sup> Edsall, (1971), p.153.

**Table 2.1 The Huddersfield Board of Guardians c.1837/8.**<sup>252</sup>

<b>Guardian</b>	<b>Occupation</b>	<b>Politics</b>	<b>Religion</b>
Benjamin Batty	Gentleman	Tory (Ex-Officio)	
W.W.Battye	Merchant	Tory (Ex-Officio)	Anglican
Wm. Brook	Merchant	Whig (Ex-Officio)	
Joseph Chatsworth		Ex-Officio	
George Crosland	Manufacturer	Whig	Nonconformist.
George Dyson	Woolstapler		Anglican
John Haigh	Merchant		
John Harpin	Gentlemen, Upperthong		
John Howgate			
Sir. John Lister L Kaye.		Ex-Officio	
Kilner	Drysalter	Oastler 37	
Wm. Leadbeater	Merchant	Whig	Congregationalist
Josh Lockwood	Merchant		Wes. Methodist
James Shaw	Finisher	Oastler 37	
Joseph Starkey	Merchant	Whig 37 (Ex-Officio)	
<u>John Sutcliffe*</u>	<u>Woolstapler</u>	<u>Whig 37 (Ex-Officio)</u>	<u>Nonconformist</u>
Wm. Swaine	Fancy manufacturer	Whig/Lib	Anglican
Joseph Thornton	Cloth Dresser	Radical	Wes. Methodist
Joseph Tolson	Fancy Manufacturer		
Joseph Walker	Gentlemen,	Tory (Ex-Officio)	

part of Power, and the Board descended into near chaos, the culmination of which was a torchlight procession and demonstration that marched on the court house in Huddersfield, led by Stephens and Feargus O'Connor. The upshot of such a show of defiance resulted in the pro-Poor Law group threatening to resign their place on the board.<sup>253</sup> Despite the intervention

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<sup>252</sup> See pp.283-4 for details of later boards of Guardians.

of the Home Secretary and the Lord Lieutenant of the West Riding and the insertion of the pro-Poor Law magistrates, the appointment of an elected clerk was not the seal that set the poor law in motion in Huddersfield. If anything it separated Guardian from Guardian, and it was to be some years before a majority of the Guardians accepted that they were now an active part of the new Poor Law.

Of the initial board of Guardians the majority of those who were *ex-officio* were County gentlemen, with little or no commercial interest in the town. Of those that were drafted in by the Poor Law Commissioners, the most noteworthy was the Whig - Ramsdenite, John Sutcliffe JP (1775-1858).<sup>254</sup> Sutcliffe was by trade, a wool stapler (a dealer in wool) and his appointment as one of the *ex-officio* magistrates was probably the work of the Ramsden interest. He was a man of some integrity and standing, despite his connections to the manorial landlord and his family. According to his obituarist, he was the first Nonconformist to have ‘the honour of a seat on the Huddersfield bench’ and had, by the time he was appointed as a Guardian, already served on several local committees and was to serve on several more before his retirement.<sup>255</sup> An indication of John Sutcliffe’s humanity was apparent, when he spoke out at a key meeting of the Board of Guardians in 1838. He is reported to have said, that they, the Guardians, should be ‘kind hearted in disposition, from men of a churlish or snappish disposition the poor would rather starve than solicit relief. Refusal by some men would be much better received by the pauper than the granting of a pittance in a rude and

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<sup>253</sup> Ibid., p.154.

<sup>254</sup> Sutcliffe was a close friend of Isabella Ramsden, mother of the young Sir John William Ramsden as the dozen or so letters between the two attest to. – Letters, KDA DD/RA/C/4/1-4.

<sup>255</sup> *Huddersfield Chronicle*, 17 April 1858. Sutcliffe had been Chief Constable in 1815 and during the Luddite disturbances he had been a founding member of the ‘Huddersfield Prosecution Society’. He was a founding member of the Huddersfield dispensary in 1814 and was later chair of the British and Foreign school society in Huddersfield and was the first chair of the Huddersfield Improvement Commission in 1848.

unfeeling manner'.<sup>256</sup> Perhaps Sutcliffe's position is an indication that he was a man who was comfortable in revealing his humanity before his fellow Guardians, particularly as the assembled group were the founding members of a union that had hardly had the best of starts, though a more cynical skew on Sutcliffe, might suggest his views were political. As a Whig supporter of the new Poor Law, his opinions toward his fellow man may have been made in order to balance the counter opinion of some of pro-Poor Law supporters.

The property qualification for elected Guardians, the multiple voting systems, and the appointment of ex-officio members, were altogether intended to protect the general interests of property, against those of any particular group or locality. The reality was anything but, for during the late 1830s and early 1840s, the Guardians were frequently at odds over Poor Law policy. This was due in part, to their political differences and the fact that their office presented considerable opportunities for the exercise of local power and influence.<sup>257</sup> The Huddersfield Poor Law Union, formed in January 1837, was to become one of the largest unions in the country, serving thirty-four townships and a population of around 100,000. From the township of Huddersfield in the north, to Austonley and Holme townships in the south, was a distance of around fourteen miles and from Marsden-in-Huddersfield in the west, to Cumberworth Half in the east, a distance of around sixteen miles. The management of such a large union meant major changes in the geography of local relief. The Poor Law Commissioners decided, wisely, to substitute the Union for the township, as the primary unit of Poor Law relief. According to Felix Driver, the hope was to replace the 'hordes of part-time, locally appointed officers with a professional corps of staff under the

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<sup>256</sup> *Leeds Mercury*, 25 August 1838.

<sup>257</sup> D. Fraser, 'The Poor Law as a political Institution' in D.Fraser (ed.), *The new Poor Law in the nineteenth century* (London, 1976), pp. 111-27; D.Fraser, 'Poor Law politics in Leeds', *Publications of the Thoresby Society* 53 (1970), pp. 23-49.

control of the Union as a whole'.<sup>258</sup> The intention in bringing this large geographical area under one roof was to create a centralised union - a new voice in local affairs – the voice of the Union.<sup>259</sup> But was it the voice envisaged by the Poor Law Commissioners? It transpired that it was not. Between 1839 and 1842, there were a handful of disputes between the Guardians and the authorities. The most hostile of these dissenters were the township of Huddersfield Guardians, and, in particular, the radical voices came from the Huddersfield vestry, and the likes of William Stocks and Lawrence Pitkethly. Throughout 1839, the vestry and local Guardians, refused to acknowledge the jurisdiction of the Union over the Huddersfield workhouse. This dispute revived anti-Poor Law agitation and in the elections of 1840, Pitkethly was elected as a Guardian in Huddersfield and Stocks was narrowly defeated at Honley. It was decided, though not agreed by all, to adopt the principle of localism with the establishment of four sectional relief committees in the February of 1840. From this point forward applications for out-door relief were considered by Guardians elected for the corresponding district. Though such a system was never intended by the architects of the new Poor Law, Huddersfield was far from unique, and between 1847 and 1858, the central authority sanctioned the division of no less than fifty-two boards of Guardians into sectional relief committees.<sup>260</sup>

After years of control by the parish and the old Poor Law, the 1830s heralded a period of dramatic change. Gone was the parochial spirit, and in came a feisty clamour for position and political power. Local manufacturers, shopkeepers and some sections of the propertied classes, began to embrace control of their townships. In essence, the dominance once enjoyed by the parish, was taken over by the rise of self-made men, who had an interest in matters

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<sup>258</sup> F. Driver, *Power and Pauperism*, p.134.

<sup>259</sup> Ibid.

<sup>260</sup> J. Archbold, *The Consolidated and other orders of the Poor Law Commissioners and the Poor Law Board* (London, 1859), p.253-6.



beyond the redundant scope of the parish. Despite the agitation of the anti-Poor Law movement, the processes of central control stamped its mark, quickly obliterating the traditions of the parish over a few short years.

The primary topic here has been the kind of rhetoric used to enforce both the pro and anti Poor Law positions. Initially there was the introduction of the new Poor Law, and within this context the development of radical politics, and the way such politics and policies attempted to be all inclusive in their endeavour to stir up local feeling about local issues. Subsequently, both national and local politics brought the mechanism of the Poor Law, the Factory movement, Chartism and the early trade unions to the fore. It was a period not only of political development, but an era of unification and an expression of the rights of the working classes. The obvious point to note here is that all the shouting was being done by self-interested parties, with the mob followed their direction. The 1830s and 1840s, was a period overly concerned with political manoeuvring and seizure of local control. It was true that a dialogue had opened up between the interests of the town and the minor bourgeoisie and the rights of the working classes, but this had little to do with the condition of the pauper classes.

This chapter began by making the point that the years 1820 to 1840 were unstable years for Huddersfield. There were the problems of an emerging industrial society, and the effect that that had on the working-classes. Moreover, by 1840, Huddersfield had established itself as an industrial centre, and it was clear that there were elements of this success that had to be dealt with. For one there was the significant rise in the urban population, a rise that the town had not properly prepared for, as the existing housing stock was limited, old and often badly built. This rise in population, greatly added to by the influx and overspill of Irish migrants from other northern towns during the 1840s and 1850s, meant the inevitable rise in

the number of unemployed men. This resulted in existing conditions becoming even more overcrowded.

The evidence has shown that the political language around the anti-Poor Law movement clearly illustrated the lengths that radical politics would and could go to. The town had a long and direct involvement in all kinds of revolt, from the Luddite disturbances, to Chartism and O'Connor's Great Northern Union that was established in the town in 1839. Then there was the succession of radical men of substance, Joshua Hobson, William Stocks and Lawrence Pitkethly and the political firebrand and the *poor man's friend* Richard Oastler. In many ways, the anti-Poor Law movement was a small segment of a series of radical events that had occurred during the 1830s. At its height in Huddersfield, the anti-Poor Law movement was, for a short time, a major concern to the town and its poor. But it was as much about the political ambitions of Richard Oastler and his fight to overturn the Whigs, and take his fight to parliament as it was about the true operation of a more appropriate system of care for the poor. This is not to say that the movement was not successful. It was on the whole an opportunity for the radical element of Huddersfield to pitch their views alongside a worthy cause. The language of the movement was deliberate and intentionally inflammatory; it aligned itself toward high moral standards and the word of god. It was a perfect vehicle for radical revolt and a useable precursor to the Chartist movement. What the 1830s gave Huddersfield in one sense, had little to do with any improvements in the spread of pauperism or the condition of the poor, but there were signs of a gradual shift toward certain sections of the working-class becoming more aware of their circumstances and more involved in the language of popular politics, which, after all governed their daily lives.

## Chapter Three.

### The Poor of the Huddersfield Township.

The preceding chapter illustrated the kind of language and rousing rhetoric that stirred the working classes during a particularly radical period of the town's history. Those radicals who whipped up local fervour against the new Poor Law and those who supported it, were, over time, those who promoted the language of progress during the towns civic development during the 1840s. They were men of a similar model to those who had steered the town through the 1830s.

This chapter will develop the theme surrounding the authoritarian language which put down and effectively punished the poor of Huddersfield. This deprecating language was used against certain sections of the poor, but was more widely used against the newly arrived Irish during the 1840s and 1850s. The kind of language used against the Irish was broadly insulting and one can assume would have had a negative, even alienating effect on them. The language used when talking about the Irish, whether from the newspapers, or from official sources, was largely synonymous with the national view adopted during the 1840s and 1850s. Such attitudes toward the Irish are varied and complex, but in the main they originate from the self-serving stereotypes, developed over many years and the relationship between England and Ireland.

For many years, Ireland was seen as a colonial possession that served the interests of the 'growing British capitalist industrial economy with labour, agricultural produce, and to a certain extent, capital'.<sup>261</sup> There were typical differences perceived by the English in comparison to their Irish neighbours. Where there was English honesty, the Irish were liars.

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<sup>261</sup> H. Waters, 'The Great Famine and anti-Irish racism', *Race and Class*, Vol 37, Issue 1, July–September 1995, p.98.

Where the English worked and prospered the Irish idled in poverty. English industriousness, energy, order, sense of justice was contrasted with Irish disorder, fecklessness, propensity for violence and irresponsibility. A manly Protestantism confronted a cowardly and corrupt Catholicism. Such stereotypes were, according to Hazel Waters, the stock in trade of political and media comment.<sup>262</sup> Newspaper examples of the anti-Irish feeling are numerous, particularly in the *Times*:

Remember, you are dealing with a people who, in the mass, are almost uncivilized.

Like children, they require governing with the hand of power. They require authority and will bear it.<sup>263</sup>

Of course the function of such opinion being so widespread, served a purpose for both the English stereotype of the Irish in their own land and the Irish supplanted in Britain. The local authorities used the established opinion of the Irish in order to qualify their own position in respect of anti-Irish language.

Primarily due to their experiences in Ireland the migrant Irish formed tight-knit communities in the centres where they settled. Huddersfield was no exception. This strong sense of community, assisted by a revival of the Catholic Church, made for a resilient yet poor community. This chapter aims to examine how the Irish fared in the town, against such negative language and how their experiences affected their growth in Huddersfield.

Geographically, this chapter aims to focus on the central township of Huddersfield within the town centre. It is within these boundaries that some of the poorest quarters could be found and conversely some of the poorest of the town's inhabitants.<sup>264</sup> One of the primary points in this chapter is to examine how, during the middle of the nineteenth century, the Irish

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<sup>262</sup> Ibid.

<sup>263</sup> T.C. Foster, *Letters on the condition of the people of Ireland*, (London, 1846, reprinted from the *Times*), letter XXXIX, p.599.

<sup>264</sup> R. Dennis, 'The Social Geography of Victorian Huddersfield', p.425.

were treated in Huddersfield. Were the Irish dealt with any differently to the native English community; a community, who were themselves poor and who shared the same yards and courts and stock of densely packed houses? This chapter will argue that from the 1840s onwards, the Irish Diaspora was often roundly attack on a national level and no ordnance of abuse was left unused.

Rapid changes to the existing textile industry between 1770 and 1850, were largely due to technological and organisational innovation.<sup>265</sup> In the 1830s and 1840s, the town saw a dramatic movement in, of those seeking work in the mills. During the same period the power-loom was becoming ever more popular in the textile districts. The handloom weavers, who had been suffering financial hardship and a squeeze on their skills since 1819, felt the pinch of this rise in technology and the inevitable introduction of mechanisation.<sup>266</sup> Added to this, an increasing migration of workers from other parts of Britain put these skilled workers under extreme measures, as many migrants were more than willing to work in the increasingly more mechanised weaving sheds that were popping up all over the district.<sup>267</sup> As a result of these prevailing conditions, and the fluctuating economic fortunes of the town, there soon emerged a growing level of poverty and real threat of increased pauperism amongst the town centre population. The town centre of Huddersfield was the poorest of all the townships and parishes in the district for most of the nineteenth century.<sup>268</sup>

For those whose only choice was the provision of the Poor Law and indoor-relief, there was the town workhouse, an ill-suited brick built building, located a couple of miles

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<sup>265</sup> C. Giles, 'The Huddersfield Woollen Industry and its Architecture' in E.A.H. Haigh (ed.), *Huddersfield a most handsome town* (Kirklees Cultural Services, 1992).

<sup>266</sup> A.J. Brooke, 'Labour Disputes and Trade Unions in the Industrial Revolution' in E.A.H. Haigh (ed.), *Huddersfield a most handsome town* (Kirklees Cultural Services, 1992).

<sup>267</sup> Weaving sheds such as those built in 1838 at Armitage Bridge Mills at South Crosland or the colossal Starkey Brothers mill at Longroyd Bridge. Source C. Giles, 'The Huddersfield Woollen Industry and its Architecture' p.291.

<sup>268</sup> See Map No.1 p.256.

from the town centre in Blacker Lane at Birkby. The ‘poorhouse’ as it was locally known, was built around the middle of the eighteenth century; though very little is known of its origins, its infamy became well known in the 1840s when the appalling conditions discovered there were the cause of national enquiry and debate.

A further theme to be considered is the development and improvement to indoor-relief in Huddersfield, from the appalling and detrimental conditions of the Birkby poorhouse in the late 1840s, to the provisions set in place by central government in the 1860s and 1870s. This chapter will explore the extent to which, during the mid-nineteenth century, certain changes were made in the general provisions of indoor-relief, provisions which were accompanied by a deliberate effort to reduce out-relief, and whether such attempts were in the long-run, beneficial for the Huddersfield Union. Moreover, by concentrating on the conditions of the pauper residuum in the town, certain assumptions about the stigma of pauperism within the community can be made. Through such an analysis, we can see whether local attitudes towards poverty changed during the period. To assist in this aim the authoritative language of the town will be considered alongside its impact on the undeserving Irish poor, and there compared with the experiences of the much larger English born population.

Our starting point for this chapter might allow us to touch on the real causes of poverty, not just in Huddersfield, but in England and Wales generally. According to Michael Rose, of all the causes of poverty throughout the nineteenth century ‘the most prominent was poverty resulting from the receipt of inadequate or irregular earnings’.<sup>269</sup> Rose and others believed that the effects of such a condition were mainly felt by those employed as ‘casual labourers’. In an attempt to stem the strain of pauperism, most unions subsidised low earnings and despite attempts to abolish such a practice by the Local Government Board in the 1870s,

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<sup>269</sup> M.E. Rose, *The Relief of Poverty 1834-1914*, (Basingstoke, 1985), p.17.

the practice continued in some unions.<sup>270</sup> In essence, the main fear for the poor was the loss or lack of employment, or at least the uncertainty of sustained employment. The fact was that the loss of a job often threw the whole family and their circumstances into turmoil and often upon the mercy of the Poor Law. Gertrude Himmelfarb has argued that ‘the condition of the poor is the “touchstone” of a civilisation, a nation, a philosophy’.<sup>271</sup> Consequently, the Elizabethan Poor Laws had given England a reputation as a country where:

compassion had become public policy and although these principles were often criticized, defended, amended and replaced, the laws themselves remained for 350 years only to be replaced by the welfare state after the Second World War.<sup>272</sup>

Yet according to Himmelfarb, the Industrial revolution changed the idea of what poverty was:

It had been a natural, unfortunate, often tragic fact of life, but not necessarily demeaning or degrading, it became seen as an urgent social problem that threatened the fabric of society and had at all costs to be abolished.<sup>273</sup>

However, during the early part of the nineteenth century and certainly in 1834, such opinions were, according to Peter Wood, largely ignored:

Contemporary opinion in early Victorian England had no difficulty in seeing poverty as connected to disease... it was sufficiently commonplace and widely regarded as self-inflicted, little effort was made to measure or analyse the problem.<sup>274</sup>

As the century progressed and statistical evidence became available on the condition of the poor, the results showed a concentration toward groups such as handloom weavers, factory

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<sup>270</sup> Rose, *The Relief of Poverty*, p.18.

<sup>271</sup> G. Himmelfarb, *The Idea of Poverty: England in the early Industrial Age* (London, 1984), p.3.

<sup>272</sup> Ibid., p.4.

<sup>273</sup> Ibid., p.12.

<sup>274</sup> P. Wood, *Poverty and the Workhouse in Victorian Britain* (Stroud, 1991), p.20.

children, Irish immigrants, vagrants and prostitutes, as opposed to the general 'mass of the poor'.<sup>275</sup> As industrial towns developed as both urban and economic places, the effect of trade depression and overcrowding in towns such as Huddersfield, was felt by the activation of the cyclical effects on an increase in poverty. During such periods, particularly in the 1820s, and 1840s, those workers with a larger than average number of dependants, felt the impact of rising food prices and unemployment. The period 1820-1850 was a period of falling prices, but it was also a period of greatest unemployment, which in effect cancelled out any advantage that might normally occur.<sup>276</sup> In the industrial north and other urban areas during the 1840s, such conditions were particularly bad. John Foster has suggested that in 1849, 15 per cent of the population of Oldham, 28 per cent in Northampton and 23 per cent in South Shields, were living in primary poverty, and using a slightly different calculation, Michael Anderson, found that 20 per cent of Preston families were living in the same distressed condition.<sup>277</sup> This situation was possibly exacerbated in many northern industrial towns by the arrival of Irish migrants seeking work and fleeing the famine. The situation in the 1840s and 1850s was totally different in scale and need, to the seasonal Irish economic migrants that had travelled to Britain over the past two hundred years or more. The migrants who came during the famine years were fleeing appalling and life-threatening consequences; it was a flight out of sheer necessity and survival not a search for improved wages or an improved life style.

Throughout much of the mid-nineteenth century, the most noticeable sections of the poor in Huddersfield were Irish migrants. In order to define and illustrate the conditions of

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<sup>275</sup> Wood, *Poverty and the Workhouse*, p.11.

<sup>276</sup> Ibid.

<sup>277</sup> J. Foster, *Class Struggle and the Industrial Revolution: Early Industrial Capitalism in three English Towns* (Weidenfeld and Nicolson, London, 1974), pp.91-9. M. Anderson, *Family Structure in Nineteenth century Lancashire* (Cambridge University Press, 1971), p.31.



this group, some comparisons will be drawn upon from the much larger ‘Diasporas’ in Manchester, Liverpool, Bradford and Leeds. More locally, and perhaps in a more defined context there is the comparison between Huddersfield and the Irish community in Batley.<sup>278</sup> Although Batley was a much smaller town, with fewer Irish, there were many similarities between the two. The Irish were by far the most put upon of any migrant group in Britain during the nineteenth century. They appeared in all the major industrial centres, from London to the Midlands and south Wales, to the north of England and the central lowlands of western Scotland.<sup>279</sup> In the past, ‘Wandering Irish reapers, navvies and destitute paupers’ were a familiar sight in Britain.<sup>280</sup> By the 1820s and 1830s, however, these wandering labourers and paupers were being overshadowed by a growing number of settled Irish migrants in the major towns and cities.<sup>281</sup> Between 1820 and 1850, large numbers migrated to Britain following the famine in Ireland; Liverpool had the largest and most densely packed Irish communities followed by Manchester then Glasgow.

**Table 3.1 The Irish-born population of England and Wales, 1841 – 1881.**<sup>282</sup>

Year	England and Wales	% of the total population
1841	289, 404	1.8%
1851	519, 959	2.9%
1861	601, 634	3.0%
1871	566, 530	2.5%
1881	562, 374	2.2%

<sup>278</sup> An industrial town about 7 miles to the North East of Huddersfield.

<sup>279</sup> D.M. MacRaild, *Irish Migrants in Modern Britain, 1750-1922* (Palgrave Macmillan, 1999), p.185.

<sup>280</sup> Ibid., p.48.

<sup>281</sup> Ibid.

<sup>282</sup> Source Census of England and Wales, 1841-1881.

**Table 3.2 The Irish-born in the five English regions with the largest Irish settlement,****1851.**<sup>283</sup>

	<b>Total</b>	<b>Irish-born</b>	<b>% of the total population</b>
<b>North-West</b> , including the cities of Manchester and Liverpool	2, 490, 827	214, 318	8.6
London	2, 362, 236	108, 548	4.6
<b>Yorkshire</b>	1, 789, 047	57, 266	3.2
Durham & Northumberland	715, 247	31, 167	4.4
Monmouthshire and Wales	1, 188 914	20, 738	1.7

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<sup>283</sup> Source Census of England and Wales, 1851.

**Table 3.3 Huddersfield's Irish-born population compared to other West Riding towns****1851-1901**<sup>284</sup>

	<b>1851</b>	% pop	<b>1881</b>	% pop	<b>1901</b>	% pop
Huddersfield	1,957	5	1,462	1.8	799	0.8
Halifax	2,686	7	2,587	n.a.	n.a	n.a
Leeds	8,466	5	9,560	n.a	n.a	n.a
Bradford	9,279	9	7,870	4.3	4,294	1.5

The Irish were no strangers to Huddersfield, as a small group numbering a few hundred had been in the town for many years and had settled in the town during the early nineteenth century.<sup>285</sup> Far greater numbers came during the late 1840s and by the time of the 1851 census, it was estimated that there were nearly 2,000 persons born in Ireland, enumerated in the five Huddersfield townships.<sup>286</sup> The majority of this migrant influx lived in the town centre, where they comprised over 5 per cent of the total population.<sup>287</sup> The most intense concentration of Irish migrants was in the courts and yards on either side of Castlegate and at the southern end of Upperhead row.<sup>288</sup> In real terms the Irish represented only a small percentage of the population of the town centre of Huddersfield and, an even smaller

<sup>284</sup> Decennial Censuses, 1851-1901; C.Richardson, 'Irish Settlement in Mid-Nineteenth Century Bradford', *Yorkshire Bulletin of Economic and Social Research*, May 1968.

<sup>285</sup> It is believed that these early migrants had arrived from Ulster and had been flax weavers, who were now employed in some of the mills in Huddersfield. Brook, *The Story of Huddersfield*, p.26.

<sup>286</sup> See table 3.3.

<sup>287</sup> R. Dennis, 'The Social Geography of Victorian Huddersfield' p. 428.

<sup>288</sup> See Maps 4, 5 and 6, pp. 277-79.

percentage of the whole district. Yet despite such numbers they contributed greatly to concerns about poverty and relief in the town.

However, it was with the ‘big city’ that the Irish migrant had become synonymous in the contemporary imagination of the 1840s and 1850s. Liverpool and Manchester were home to large numbers of Irish, and during the 1850s, these two centres were the most densely populated cities on earth.<sup>289</sup> The authorities regularly associated dirt, disease and overcrowding with the waves of Irish migrants. In truth, the real problem was the substandard late eighteenth-century housing, the court and cellar dwellings, which had been a problem long before the Irish came along in any number. Yet, according to Donald MacRaild, ‘Manchester’s Irish town, the dock areas of Liverpool, and a host of alleys, rookeries and jerry-built back to backs, typified life, not only in these great centres, but also in the many mill towns of Lancashire and the West Riding of Yorkshire’.<sup>290</sup>

Throughout Britain there were numerous examples of discrimination against the Irish. The greater their numbers were, the greater the regularity of anti-Irish rhetoric. ‘Indifference, defence and hostility’ to the Irish migrant was a growing problem especially in Manchester. On the issue of employment and Irish labour, the Rev. James Crook of St Austin’s Catholic Church in Manchester, believed that the Irish took the jobs the English didn’t want, ‘the Irish have got, and retain, the monopoly of this department of industry by offering to do their work for lower wages than the English’.<sup>291</sup> Peter Ewart, a cotton manufacturer disagreed with Crook’s assessment, arguing that the Irish had no negative impact on wage rates – though he did agree that English workers had become ‘assimilated to the Irish’ having gained lower

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<sup>289</sup> MacRaild, *Irish Migrants in Modern Britain*, (London, 1999), p.50.

<sup>290</sup> Ibid., p.52.

<sup>291</sup> Sir G.C. Lewis, *The State of the Irish Poor in Great Britain*, Parliamentary Papers (London, 1836). (hereafter referred to as the Lewis Report) The Lewis report was instigated by Sir George Nicholls and reported on the state of the Irish Poor; Lewis carried out the study and wrote up the report.)

moral standards through drinking and living less comfortably.<sup>292</sup> Attitudes such as these directly attack the culture of the Irish and relegate them to a lower order; however, such issues were not only the opinion of the clergy and manufacturers. From the 1820s, the problem of Irish pauperism became a significant issue for the authorities. According to one Manchester Poor Law officer, the burden of the poor of Manchester had doubled between 1823 and 1833, from £7,983- 16s to £14,556- 4s- 3d, whereas the cost of maintaining the Irish had grown fourfold, from £817-16s-8d to £3,326-17s-8d.<sup>293</sup> Another overseer, Thomas Armitt, alleged that the Irish pauper's willingness to lie to overseers in order to gain either public or private charity was well-known; he held the view that the Irish were 'deceitful pilferers and whiskey smugglers, whose attitude to life was careless and wasteful'.<sup>294</sup>

The condition and behaviour of Irish women did not escape derogatory comments either. A report on the *State of the Irish Poor*, describes them as 'wasteful and adverse to labour' they were apparently 'ignorant of the arts of domestic economy, such as sewing and cooking'. In summary, they were, 'unable to adequately feed and mend the clothes of their husbands and children'.<sup>295</sup> The report also criticised the Irish family's mute acceptance of the most rudimentary sort of living conditions, 'a pallet of straw to sleep on and few possessions, besides a stool, sometimes a table, an iron pot and a frying pan, a jug of water, a few plates and a leaden or pewter spoon'.<sup>296</sup> Such issues as cleanliness and homeliness struck deep within Victorian ideologies, both in a moral and religious context. It wasn't long before this stereotypical image of the Irish became common-place in most towns and cities of the north. Issues surrounding the language and moral attitudes toward the migrant Irish cannot be

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<sup>292</sup> *Lewis Report*, p.xiv.

<sup>293</sup> MacRaid, *The Irish migrants in modern Britain*, p.54.

<sup>294</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>295</sup> 'The Lewis Report', *The state of the Irish Poor* (1836) p.xiii

<sup>296</sup> *Ibid.*

underestimated here, for they play an important part in the assessment of such a group of individuals, who, from their first contact with England became the epitome of the undeserving pauper, and from the language used they might even be considered by some to be similar to Marx's lumpenproletariat.

The 'Irish experience' in Huddersfield was fairly typical of many such experiences encountered throughout many industrial towns in the north of England, and yet there are also instances in the context of Huddersfield's industrial geography that make that experience quite different. One of the themes here will be to concentrate on the spatial environment and the living conditions of the migrant Irish community. An examination of the Irish experience requires a consideration of the language used about such a group and the context of that language. The popular image of the Irish, and their community and the way they chose to live and support each other, will tend to form attitudes about such a group and will add to an understanding of the condition of Huddersfield's Irish poor. Such attitudes and preconceptions are a strong indication of the prevailing attitudes of the authorities and local opinion during the 1840s and 1850s. The kind of language that was used to denigrate the Irish grew in popularity and was fuelled by an amalgam of a nation in opposition to the Irish, which in turn influenced central and local authorities, as well as the local population. The local elites might assume that Huddersfield's migrant community were a poor example to a largely vulnerable and impressionable English population.

**Table 3.4 The enumerated population of Huddersfield and Batley and the Irish population of both towns.<sup>297</sup>**

Census years	Population of Huddersfield	Irish-born population of Huddersfield	Population of Batley	Irish-born population of Batley
1851	30,880	1,957	9,308	172
1861	34,877	1,367	14,173	655
1871	38,654	1,382	20,868	1,248
1881	41,876	1,244	27,508	1,264

With regard to the localised Irish population, the above figures for the Irish born population in Huddersfield show a peak in 1851, followed by a decline over the next forty years; whereas, in Batley, though much smaller by comparison, there is a year on year increase. This might suggest that Irish migrants were transitory in nature and likely to move between towns. The opportunity and need to move centres for any migrant group or workforce was often dependant on trade and employment factors, more than a sense of belonging, which in the case of the Irish was even more illusory than it was for the local population.

The decline in Huddersfield's Irish population was possibly due to two factors. The first was the 'apparent reluctance' of the Irish to work in the mills, and secondly, there were greater opportunities available in the much larger centres of Bradford and Leeds. As many Irish born migrants were from the rural-west of Ireland, those able to work were far more used to outdoor labour and often rejected mill work due to the confined nature of the

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<sup>297</sup> The decennial census returns 1851-1881 of Huddersfield and Batley, Huddersfield Local History Library. W. Page, *The Victorian History of the Counties of England, A History of the County of York*, Vol.III, (London, 1913).

industry.<sup>298</sup> Many first generation migrants were illiterate and some barely spoke any English; these were important disadvantages and could have a direct impact on them gaining employment in such a restricted industrial area as Huddersfield.<sup>299</sup> Towns like Bradford and Leeds were centres which offered a more diffuse labour market, there were larger Irish communities resident in these towns and this may have encouraged the Huddersfield migrants to extend their boundaries of opportunity.<sup>300</sup>

The Irish migrant experience from the 1850s through to the late 1870s was that of a largely unsettled and disaffected community, often struggling to come to terms with the difficulties of settling into such an alien industrial community. But such experiences were not in isolation in Huddersfield, they were felt in almost every town and city where the Irish settled. The realities of life and the prospects for an Irish migrant and the alien culture they were thrown into, are perfectly described by an Irish labourer quoted in the *Leeds Times* in the late 1840s:

Sir, and is it me gingers you would like to see snipped off entirely by them blissid (sic) machines. Sure I can handle a hoe or a pick; but them mules and looms is a pig with a different snout entirely.<sup>301</sup>

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<sup>298</sup> This point is taken up by Esther Moriarty in her thesis, where she argues that the earlier work carried out by Michael Nolan is rather discriminatory in tone in respect of the Irish migrant and his inability to manage to work in the mills due to the language barrier and the intelligence of the migrant. This is rather an unfair analysis of the points raised by Nolan. The fact was that many first generation migrants did tend to avoid work in the mills, but this was due to more than any assumed failings on the part of the migrant. There were issues that arose from employers and other mill-workers, who were often reluctant in either hiring or working alongside the Irish. By the second and third generations, this position changed as the Irish became more integrated by the 1870s and 1880s. In essence Nolan's point, whilst a little acute is not wholly untrue.

<sup>299</sup> Communication, quick thinking and manual dexterity are important traits in the textile trades.

<sup>300</sup> There were larger groups of Irish families in both Leeds and Bradford, more opportunities for outside labour and along with bigger communities there were greater opportunities to hawk goods around the community.

<sup>301</sup> *Leeds Times*, 8 December 1849.



The Irish community in Leeds tended to settle in the east of the city, in an area which was notoriously poor and had some of the most dreadful housing conditions in the county. By the 1850s, there were around 8,500 Irish in Leeds, and like many similar towns they were supported by a growing sense of community and connection to the Roman Catholic Church. However, the behaviour of some of the Irish inhabitants gave the authorities cause for concern. Stories, both true and misleading, of drunken brawls, and mini skirmishes, did little to reconcile the Irish community with the established local population.<sup>302</sup> There were strong political affiliations too. In many cities, Leeds in particular, there was a strong connection to the Irish Home Rule debate. Indeed, Leeds had its own Home Rule Association. Father Patrick Lavelle, a politically motivated priest visited Leeds in 1862 and urged the community to promote the 'Catholic doctrine on the right to revolt'.<sup>303</sup> As a result of such visits and other nationalist activities there emerged a strong anti-Irish feeling in the city, the result of which had an impact on the Catholic Church and its growing secretive association with activities both political and subversive.<sup>304</sup> The socialising spirit of the local Catholic Church was often split between the local Catholics, usually from the professional and middle classes and the Irish migrants. The Irish migrants sometimes shielded themselves behind their faith, especially during times of persecution. This apparent vulnerability meant that adherents to the Catholic faith grew in numbers, especially where new churches were established. The Catholic Churches naturally saw it as their duty to evangelise and look after the newly arrived Irish poor.

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<sup>302</sup> D. Thornton, *Leeds The story of a City* (Ayr 2002), p.157.

<sup>303</sup> *Ibid.*, p.158.

<sup>304</sup> The Ribbon Society was often associated with the emancipation of the Catholic Church and the earlier political response between the rural poor of Ireland and the English absent landlords. The activities and support for Ribbonism was organised into lodges and was popular throughout England in centres where there large numbers of Irish migrants. Members were identified by the wearing of a green ribbon or green button badge. See – H.B.C. Pollard, *Secret Societies of Ireland, Their Rise and Progress* (London, 2003), pp. 34-37.

### The Migrant Irish Poor of Huddersfield

In Huddersfield, Irish migrants preferred to settle in two areas, Upperhead row and Castlegate.

**Table 3.5 Origins of the Irish in the Castlegate and Upperhead row area of Huddersfield in 1861.**<sup>305</sup>

Origins of the Irish in Castlegate.	Number	Origins of the Irish in Upperhead Row	Number
Roscommon	59	Galway County	89
Galway County	35	Roscommon	29
Sligo	26	Sligo	23
Mayo County	12	Mayo County	12
Dublin	9	Elsewhere	26

The table above illustrates the areas of origin for certain Huddersfield residents. The counties of Roscommon, Galway and Sligo are in the west of Ireland, and were, throughout much of Ireland's history, rural communities. With virtually no opportunity to take up agricultural work in the West Riding, these rural migrants settled in the town centre, avoiding the outlying villages and townships where the majority of mills were concentrated. By making for the town centre, the Irish opened up a wider variety of jobs not directly associated with textiles.<sup>306</sup> They were also able to live closer together in family groups, associating with other families that were from the same region as themselves, perhaps the same village? They were able to trade amongst their own community, with hawking and outdoor labouring becoming the mainstay occupation of these first migrants. As well as the apparent reluctance to

<sup>305</sup> Census Enumerator Sheets for Huddersfield 1861, Town centre HO 107/2295 –RO 273/11/01.

<sup>306</sup> Moriarty, 'The Great Famine' (2010), pp. 121-123.

working in the mills, the outlying villages offered less community space for whole groups to live alongside each other. As there was a greater number of houses available in the town centre the Irish were able to associate and live in larger numbers, closer together in properties that were in a poor condition, but charged lower rents than the outlying areas.<sup>307</sup>

The experience of the Irish in Batley, though similar in some respects, was somewhat different to that in Huddersfield. According to Janice Gilbert, the Irish migrants in Batley laboured in the rag and shoddy mills, a consequence not repeated in Huddersfield.<sup>308</sup> The reason for this was twofold. The work in the rag-reclaiming mills was less technical and certain processes in the trade were more labour intensive, suiting anyone used to physical labour. Secondly, the rapid growth of this poorly paid trade within the textile industry failed to attract local workers, so, in 1851 a group of Batley mill owners, placed an advert in the *Manchester Guardian* in order to attract families to the town.<sup>309</sup> There followed a steady influx of Irish migrants to Batley from Manchester. The efforts of these mill owners, was somewhat unusual, as the general opinion of the Irish by the local population in Batley was not dissimilar to the opinions of the people in Huddersfield. In his history of St. Mary's Catholic Church, Dennis Walsh states that the 'English natives' regarded the Irish in Batley as a rather 'Irksome lot' and saw 'Paddy' as an intruder, looking upon him as an interloper from an inferior race.<sup>310</sup> As is apparent from table 3.4, the Irish were never present in large numbers initially, though those that came quickly established themselves into a very tight knit community.

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<sup>307</sup> Ibid., pp.202-5.

<sup>308</sup> J. Gilbert, *The Irish in Batley 1841-1881* (un-published dissertation). Institute and year not recorded by the local History library at Huddersfield. (Probably Huddersfield Polytechnic between 1970-1980)?

<sup>309</sup> M. Haigh, *The History of Batley 1800-1974* (Malcom Haigh, 1978) p.107.

<sup>310</sup> D. Walsh, *St. Mary's of the Angels: 100 years 1870-1970* (Webb, 1970) p.7.

In Huddersfield too, there were distinct areas where the Irish settled, though it is important to stress that there is no evidence to suggest that anything like Irish ghettos ever existed.<sup>311</sup> Areas such as Castlegate, Water Lane, Swallow Street and Duke Street, were 'known as' Irish areas, but given there was some concentration of Irish in these streets, this by no means shows that ghettos existed, because they were never wholly occupied by the Irish.<sup>312</sup> But because the Irish were there in numbers, it was easier to identify such areas as 'Irish'. They were not known as 'English' or 'native' areas. This enables the English community, the authorities and the press, to identify such areas occupied by the Irish. Such ease made certain areas acquire a certain undeserved reputation. This was useful for the authorities as they could identify the Irish by area and therefore the often bigoted rhetoric could be easily identified to particular parts of the town centre. The same rules applied in Leeds and Batley. In reality, such areas contained no more than a dozen or so family units and in most of these areas there were greater numbers of the local English poor. In 1871, Castlegate had 39 Irish born and first generation English born Irish households. In the same street there were 46 households occupied by the local population and a further twenty eight migrant families from other parts of the North-West. Similarly, Manchester Street had twenty Irish households and Upperhead Row had thirty-four. These areas too were known locally as Irish areas, but in fact they were very long streets the latter stretching from one end of town to the other. The result was that whilst the Irish were concentrated in these areas they were by no means the dominant ethnicity.<sup>313</sup>

By 1870 immigration from Ireland was in decline. By this period there is little evidence of the Irish moving away from the town centre. In fact they were moving closer together, compared to the local English community, it can be seen that there were more Irish

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<sup>311</sup> Moriarty, 'The Great Famine', p.45.

<sup>312</sup> See MAPS 4, 5 and 6.

<sup>313</sup> Moriarty, 'The Great Famine', p.47.

families living closer together than at any time in the previous thirty years. Although this had been a declining pattern since the 1840s, it was still the case that the Irish preferred to live in large family groups within extended family units. The popularity of the lodging house and its association and status with the Irish cannot be denied, but whilst they were popular with newly arrived migrants, they were never the mainstay residence for many Irish. This popularity is evident from the increase in the number of lodging houses in the town. In the late 1840s, this was particularly apparent by the sheer number of lodging houses in certain parts of Huddersfield. In Swallow Street for instance, there were 12 lodging houses, containing a total of 47 beds, and 137 inmates, in Barkers Yard there were 10 lodging houses again with 47 beds and 135 inmates.<sup>314</sup> In Upperhead Row there were 4 lodging houses with 26 beds and 59 inmates, Doherty's Yard had 2 lodging houses, 12 beds and 26 inmates, and Jowitt's Court, had 7 lodging houses, with 35 beds and 90 inmates.<sup>315</sup> Such a concentration of migrants did not go unnoticed.<sup>316</sup> To a large extent these lodging houses became synonymous with anti-pauper rhetoric. Throughout the whole of the nineteenth century the lodging houses in Huddersfield were a problem for the authorities and were seen as a source of degenerate behaviour and a significant taint on the growing aspirations of the town. The Lighting and Watch Committee in 1849, reported that 'great numbers of fellow creatures are nightly herded in the dark, damp, ill-ventilated and filthy cells - tombs rather than lodging houses'.<sup>317</sup> The measures to eradicate such premises were considered but never acted upon. The lodging houses of Huddersfield were both a focus for moral improvement and a way of identifying the poor, particularly the Irish poor, and yet another way of identifying Irish

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<sup>314</sup> *Leeds Times*, 12 June 1847.

<sup>315</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>316</sup> See MAPS 4, 5 and 6.

<sup>317</sup> *Leeds Times*, 8 June 1849.

districts. Yet despite the fact that such dwellings were the focus of negative comment, there were attempts to improve conditions in certain parts of the town.

In December 1847, it was reported that £466-10s-1d was paid as relief to the sick in the ill-ventilated lodging houses of the town; a large proportion of this relief was spent on those residing in Windsor Court.<sup>318</sup> Conditions there were so bad, that according to the *Leeds Mercury*, ‘orders have been given for the erection of 10 water closets in that court, and these are also for the use of the ‘dirty Irish’.<sup>319</sup> It is clear from the report of the *Leeds Mercury* that Windsor Court was in an appalling state, but there were others, apart from the Irish living there, and yet, it is the ‘dirty Irish’ who are singled out. During the same period in Batley, small Irish communities grew up in the districts of Crossbank, White Lee, Healey and Batley Carr, and in the town centre at Havercroft.<sup>320</sup> One particular street, New Street, became notorious for the Irish who settled there. Between 1841 and 1881, the street was drastically overcrowded. According to F.H. Purchase, New Street was:

tenanted by the sons of Erin and it is but natural that there should be a bad lamb in the flock, and a bad street in the town, and this may fairly claim all the honours which people can attach to a dwelling place of a race, who, whilst disclaiming to build up charities are the first to put in a claim to be the receiver of them.<sup>321</sup>

Like Huddersfield, the cramped dwellings and back to backs of Batley had a high percentage of lodgers; according to Gilbert, in 1861, 60 per cent of households were under multiple occupancy; by 1881, 45 *per cent* of households still had lodgers residing with them.<sup>322</sup> Such

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<sup>318</sup> *Leeds Mercury*, 4 November 1849.

<sup>319</sup> *Leeds Mercury*, 25 August 1849.

<sup>320</sup> Gilbert, *The Irish in Batley*, p.27.

<sup>321</sup> F.H. Purchase, *From Village to Town* (York, 1882)

<sup>322</sup> Gilbert, *The Irish in Batley*, p.33.

patterns relating to a high concentration of lodgers and extended family members was common during this period.

Whilst there is evidence to suggest that there were no Irish ghettos in Huddersfield, there is clear evidence to show that the Irish community, though settled in Huddersfield by 1850, were becoming increasingly secluded due to the attacks by the authorities and the press. The police columns of the local newspapers were particularly hostile toward the Irish. Castlegate was, according to the *Leeds Mercury*,

the haunt of thieves, prostitutes and other disorderly characters – it was a bye word, where anything evil or immoral has to be described, there are thirteen beer shops, two regularly licensed Inns, all dens of iniquity and vice.<sup>323</sup>

The conditions in the area were no better in 1864, when Inspector Hannah reported on one particular incident in Castlegate, where:

The Irish, were fighting amongst themselves, they attacked innocent parties and respectable inhabitants of Castlegate, who have complained to the Improvement Commissioners. Four or five constables had to be deployed to protect the non-Irish inhabitants. Mr Clough, one of the towns Improvement Commissioners, spoke about the evil of crime was getting so great, that Huddersfield was becoming the brothel of the West Riding.<sup>324</sup>

Between 1864 and 1865, there were a total of 227 incidents reported to the police in the town centre township. Of that the number, 146 incidents were allegedly committed by the Irish, the remainder were offences committed by the local population. In the main, these incidents occurred in the Castlegate area of town, but not exclusively. Of the 227 incidents the most numerous complaints were associated with fighting, theft, drunkenness, swearing, offences

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<sup>323</sup> *Leeds Mercury*, 23 June 1850.

<sup>324</sup> *Leeds Mercury*, 31 December 1864.

against the licensing laws and gambling on a Sunday. Of the 227 incidents the Irish were involved in 81 assaults, 35 allegations of theft and 14 offences of drunkenness.<sup>325</sup> The evidence suggests that in most offence categories the ethnicity of offenders is fairly equal, except in the assault category, where offences committed by the English population numbered only 19.<sup>326</sup> Throughout the 1860s, the *Huddersfield Examiner* regularly ran headlines that were clearly anti-Irish in tone and purpose. Under the police notices, headlines such as ‘*ordinarily drunk*’ – ‘*Swallow Street again*’ ‘*Another Kelly and another do*’ ‘*A drunken Murphy*’, ‘*Classic Castlegate*’ and ‘*Castlegate Again*’ were commonplace, pointing to a common understanding of who caused the trouble and where the worst areas were.<sup>327</sup>

Batley encountered similar problems to those in Huddersfield. The local Batley press had the same attitude toward their Irish population. Headlines such as the ‘*Irish boy and his mother*’ and ‘*Assaulting an Irishwoman*’ were typical court headlines.<sup>328</sup> The Irish sense of community and revelry was never lost on such places and was at times troublesome. The New Inn pub in Batley had an Irish landlord by the name of John Kenny. In 1867, he was charged with running a disorderly house – in mitigation, Kenny said that ‘Irish people made a great deal of noise after having a little drink’.<sup>329</sup> Similarly, there were regular run-ins between the Irish and the police, mainly for acts of drunkenness, or for fighting and brawling in a public place. It wasn’t unusual for the local press to illustrate how unruly the Irish in Batley were, and hardly a week went by where they weren’t being made an example of in the police courts. According to the *Batley Sentinel*, for every five Irish men sent to prison one, Englishman follows.<sup>330</sup> Such a figure was an assertion on the part of the paper and not from

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<sup>325</sup> *Leeds Mercury*, 12 April 1865.

<sup>326</sup> *Leeds Mercury*, 12 April 1865.

<sup>327</sup> *Leeds Mercury*, January to November 1866.

<sup>328</sup> *Batley Sentinel*, 1867.

<sup>329</sup> *Batley Sentinel*, 18 October 1867.

<sup>330</sup> *Ibid.*



government figures and is a clear indication of the negative attitude displayed by local newspapers in such areas.

The English community in Huddersfield's Castlegate area were not immune to prosecution yet it is obvious that when they were reported they were often referred to by normal criminal types, such as thief, prostitute and the like. The Irish are identified by their origin and thus were marked out as a group likely to cause trouble and to be wary of.

Castlegate was the main socialising area for the Irish in town. And whilst they may have been known colloquially for their fondness for drink and for fighting – a symptom far removed from Sir Walter Scott's impression of a nation 'turned towards gaiety and happiness', it is more likely that they were, at times, an embittered community at odds with their experience in Ireland and their miserable environment in England.<sup>331</sup>

By living in an area so poorly equipped to support a decent standard of living, the Irish migrant and indeed his fellow English born neighbour, might think themselves hard done to. James Treble concerned himself with just such a predicament in his study of Irish Navvies in the north of England. On the Navvies fondness for the pub, Treble states that such a place represented a refuge for the Irish labourer and whilst there:

resting from his strenuous labours, he could....perhaps debate the question, whether, if he was "at war with civilization" society, with its relative indifference to, and ignorance of, the brutalizing environment in which he lived and worked, was not in its turn, in some measure to blame for the cultural and material poverty of his social life.<sup>332</sup>

Such concerns are obvious expressions of the frustration expressed within the context of the limiting environment of the slums of the northern industrial town.

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<sup>331</sup> Scott is quoted in C. Woodham-Smith, *The Great Hunger, Ireland 1845-1849* (Penguin, 1991), p.19.

<sup>332</sup> J.H. Treble, 'Irish Navvies in the North of England 1830 -1850', *Transport History*, November, 1973. p.243.

The national and regional newspapers regularly contributed to anti-Irish language. None more so than *Punch* magazine, which tainted every aspect of the Irish migrant's character. In an article published in 1862 and entitled 'The Missing Link', the cruel caricature compared the Irishman to an ape. It read:

A creature manifestly between the gorilla and the Negro is to be met in some of the lowest districts of London and Liverpool, by adventurous explorers. It comes from Ireland, whence it has continued to migrate; it belongs in fact to a tribe of Irish savages; the lowest species, it is moreover, a climbing animal, and may sometimes be seen ascending a ladder laden with a hod of bricks'.<sup>333</sup>

There were quite specific reasons behind such attempts to paint the Irish in as poor a light as possible. First, it was a suitable tactic in distracting attention from the reasons for the plight of the Irish. Secondly, such caricatures of the wild Irish were used to impress upon the English proletariat that, without sobriety, steadiness, and a respect for law and order, the English could end up like the Irish, or like the caricature given to the Irish.

One of the most important and at the same time most derisory reports on the condition of the Irish in Huddersfield was reported in the *Morning Chronicle* by Angus Bethune Reach.<sup>334</sup> Reporting on conditions found in Huddersfield in 1848, Reach stated that there was a considerable number of 'low Irish' in the town, and that the effect of the sanitary reform measures in process of being carried out:

is to drive them forth from the borough, into adjacent townships, where they cannot be hindered from pigging together on the floors of garrets and cellars by dozens and scores'.<sup>335</sup>

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<sup>333</sup> L.P. Curtis, *Apes and angels: the Irishman in Victorian caricature* (Smithsonian Institution Press, 1996).

<sup>334</sup> *The Morning Chronicle, 1848 – an Anthology* (London, 1971), Local History Library Huddersfield.

<sup>335</sup> *The Morning Chronicle*, 22 May 1848.

These new Sanitary Acts, explained Reach, allowed the town to regulate the number of persons accommodated in each 'common lodging-house' and that these regulations had dispersed the Irish population in the town dramatically.<sup>336</sup> Reach describes some of the houses in Huddersfield inhabited by the Irish:

...the place was about eight feet by six - was inhabited by a man, his wife and several children. The man was a Mason's labourer, and in constant work earning 14s a week. The woman did the housework, as she said. Filthy plates, and tubs full of foul smelling scum and slops lying everywhere about...her tasks were made more onerous by the children of a neighbour being committed to her care, while the mother was absent upon a country expedition, exchanging pots and pans against old iron, glass, bones and rags. For taking the children in question the woman received 4d a day.<sup>337</sup>

The tone of Reach's prejudices is very evident when he describes a neighbouring dwelling occupied by an English couple, who were the only English couple in the area.<sup>338</sup> His comments are softened due to their ethnicity, and Reach has obvious sympathy for their plight, which is in conflict with his ill-mannered portrayal of the Irish family. In conclusion, he states:

The contrast between this poor family and their lazy Irish neighbours was very striking and very painful.<sup>339</sup>

It is obvious that Reach and the *Morning Chronicle* possessed anti-Irish feelings and whilst these feelings were not unusual or solely the opinion of the paper, they are an indication of a widespread dislike of the Irish poor and the opinion that they were wholly undeserving. The

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<sup>336</sup> There is evidence which tends to dispute Reach's claim as the 1851 census records the Irish population in 'North Huddersfield' to be 938 in total, consequently there was no dramatic disruption of the standing population to other townships.

<sup>337</sup> *The Morning Chronicle*, 18 April, 1848.

<sup>338</sup> Moriarty, 'The Great Famine', p.42.

<sup>339</sup> *The Morning Chronicle*, 22 July 1848.

only balance in Reach's report, is that the poor English neighbours lived in the same miserable conditions.

Some of the causes of this bigotry toward the Irish might arise from the communal activities which could have been seen as alien by the much larger English community. They had their own religion, a largely alien religion to many, and a sometimes extreme social life of their own. But perhaps, most important of all, was the common experience of being oppressed by the English, particularly through the sometimes forced removal from their own land in Ireland. The local English working class emerged from the 1840s, buoyed by the effects of the anti-Poor Law movement and Chartism, and some of them were better equipped and informed as to the rights of workers. The exclusion of the Irish from these developments, led to communal segregation and reticence, and a growing reliance on traditional Irish cultures and religious practices. In Huddersfield between 1840 and 1870, there was little meaningful integration between the Irish and the local communities. The two were set aside to move in their own world of religion, politics and leisure, and it wasn't until second and third generation Irish families emerged, that integration began to become the norm. Eventually a common language and common working practices, plus an educated migrant population, found it far easier to assimilate into the local community. Though the majority of local newspapers developed an almost universal dislike of the Irish, they did have some local support. The Huddersfield shopkeeper, Thomas Heaps, came to the defence of the Irish in the *Morning Chronicle*<sup>340</sup> where he urged the authorities to exercise fairness and understanding:

If they are Irish, were they not brethren, and were they to look upon them the less on that account? If the duty to provide a remedy for existing evils devolved upon the authorities of the town, let them enforce it, but if it devolved upon them as

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<sup>340</sup> Thomas Atkinson Heaps was a local radical and by trade an Ironmonger in the town. Between 1844 and 1845 he served as a rate collector.

individuals, let them accomplish it, and not quarrel about what quarter the poor unfortunate beings came from.<sup>341</sup>

### Irish Casuals

Life for vagrants in the nineteenth century was often a precarious and dangerous situation. As a group they were controlled by both local and national legislation. The pernicious 1824 Vagrancy Act, temporarily imprisoned those who were without visible means or were found to be sleeping rough, or committing any of a host of minor offences. The majority of Irish migrants preferred to settle amongst their own, or as part of either, extended families or as lodgers. For those seeking work, many went on the tramp and the majority of the residents in the town's Vagrant office were young Irish men.<sup>342</sup> According to the 1851 census for the south-west area of the town centre there were forty-nine vagrants resident in the office, twenty-nine of whom were of Irish origin; the average age of the Irish vagrants was 26.6 years, and in the main, the men were either agricultural or railway labourers.<sup>343</sup> The rest of the vagrant residents were made up of either local men or men from various parts of the North and North West. Their occupations varied, but in the main they were itinerant labourers tramping for work.<sup>344</sup> The vagrant office was a simple dwelling and was served by a master and a number of paid servants. There was a small budget allotted to the office and we know that between 1855 and 1856 the total expenditure on the premises was a little over £38.<sup>345</sup>

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<sup>341</sup> *The Morning Chronicle*, 12 June 1847.

<sup>342</sup> The Vagrant Office was situated in Croft Head, off Upperhead row near to the main bus station in the town. It was closed in the late 1860s following the opening of the workhouse at Deanhouse.

<sup>343</sup> The number of railway labourers might be explained by the transient nature of being employed as a navvy. There were lots of large engineering projects ongoing in the area during the 1840s and 1850s including the excavation of tunnels through the Pennines.

<sup>344</sup> Moriarty, 'The Great Famine', p.134. Census Returns, Huddersfield Town Centre South-West 1851, Ho 107/2295, RO 458/18/59 and 457/18/59.

<sup>345</sup> Huddersfield Union Minute Books, 1856 – 1859, KDA.

Unfortunately very little else little is known about its day-to-day operations, or about the residents other than fragmentary information about their nationality, age and occupation.

Amongst the Irish poor there lived a scattering of industrial migrants from many parts of Britain, particularly the rural north of England and a number of families from Lincolnshire and Norfolk.<sup>346</sup>

By 1851, Huddersfield as a textile town had fewer textile workers living in the town centre. By this time they tended to live in dwellings nearer to the mills in which they were employed.<sup>347</sup> As we have learnt already, some Irish migrants were reluctant to work in the mechanised sections of the textile industry. The 1851 and 1861 census suggests that the majority of Irish migrants residing in the town centre were employed in the following areas of work: ‘others’, labouring, mason’s labourer and servants. Esther Moriarty’s thesis refers to these ‘other’ occupations as multifarious in nature and that the:

the Irish adopted such a variety of professions that 230 of the 1109 positions held by the Irish in the town were ranked as others.<sup>348</sup>

These often seemed to have been *ad hoc* jobs that were not popular enough to warrant recording as individual trades or professions. What is apparent, is the mobility of the Irish and their apparent readiness to move around from town to town in search of better prospects, something which the local population were often reluctant to try.<sup>349</sup>

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<sup>346</sup> A family of five resided in Swallow Street in 1851; the father was a labourer and his birthplace was given as Cromer. Similarly, in Manchester Street, were the Witson’s and the Claytons, both families from Louth, Lincolnshire. 1851 Census.

<sup>347</sup> In an area to the South-East of the town there settled a small community of handloom weavers from Kendal. This group were later followed by weavers from Preston and textile workers from South-East Lancashire. Dennis and Clout, *A Social Geography of England and Wales*, p.71.

<sup>348</sup> Moriarty, ‘The Great Famine’, p.119.

<sup>349</sup> G. Davis, *The Irish in Britain 1815-1914* ( Dublin, 1991), p.5.

### The provision of Township and Union Relief

In assessing the provisions of both in-door and out-door relief in Huddersfield, it is necessary to concentrate on the five workhouses that remained operational for nearly a generation after the inception of the New Poor Law in 1834. Little is known or recorded about the workhouses at Almondbury, Golcar, Honley and Kirkheaton, this is not the case in matters concerning the poorhouse at Birkby. Our assessment of the provisions set aside by the Huddersfield Union, requires an examination of the way the union classified its poor, especially pauper children and the pauper insane, and the provisions set aside for both groups. Also essential is an understanding of the debate between ‘centralism and localism’ and the way the fractured politics of the guardians interfered with the progress of the union. In order to gain a greater understanding of the systems in place, it will be necessary to examine the way that out-door and indoor relief was carried out in Huddersfield. Throughout this assessment we will be able to observe how, and under what circumstances, change occurred from township relief to union relief and from the provisions of the township workhouses to the sustainability of two central institutions.

### The Inadequacies of the Birkby poorhouse.

Since the late eighteenth century, the Township poorhouse at Birkby was the largest and most populace workhouse in the Huddersfield district. Generally, the poor from the local population were more likely to use the provisions of the old town poorhouse than their Irish neighbours. Though the Irish were often the recipients of out-relief, generally they tried to avoid indoor-relief. The primary reason for this was that the Irish tended to live in extended ‘Irish households’ and could more readily rely on other family members for relief and assistance. As outdoor relief was never completely banned under the new Poor Law, and as many Irish migrants had closer family ties, they tended to survive without recourse to the poorhouse.

The old poorhouse at Birkby was a poorly run, badly decaying institution. Its failings as a poorhouse were first made public during the Typhus epidemic of 1847 a period which had a damaging effect on the poorhouse population and indeed the population of the town.<sup>350</sup> Dr. Thomas Tatham, the first medical officer for the Huddersfield Union, had expressed his concerns in June 1847, through a letter to the Chairman of the Board of Guardians. He was primarily concerned with the general 'state and management' of the workhouse, which he stated was carried out 'in a slovenly and inefficient manner' due to the neglect of the paid nursing staff. It was noted that only one nurse, Robert Worth, was able to read and write, and up to his recent illness, was assisted by another male orderly. These two nurses were, according to Tatham, responsible for cleaning both male and female patients. He was particularly disgusted by the numbers of those who remained in a filthy state, and those who are 'lying in their own filth with the hands and faces smeared with it for two whole days without being washed'. As a result of such neglect three inmates died. Tatham made it clear to the guardians, that in his experience working in other hospitals, he had generally found them to be in a satisfactory condition, whereas in the Huddersfield town workhouse infirmary, he despaired of the 'worthlessness of the pauper nurses' and thought that the situation would not change unless the guardians appointed a 'proper paid nurse'.<sup>351</sup>

The official response to the concerns of Dr. Tatham was a slow and ponderous one, with arguments over the wording of Tatham's allegations, forming a stumbling block for the overseers and guardians. Eventually there was an enquiry into the state of the poorhouse. The report found that it was, and had been, overcrowded for some time. Forty children were confined to one room measuring eight yards by five, and in a similar sized room, lived thirty females, and in a slightly larger room lived fifty men. On the pauper diet - the report recorded

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<sup>350</sup> See chapter five.

<sup>351</sup> *Leeds Mercury*, 22 June 1847.



that soup was regularly served, its quality was poor, being made up of shin beef and leg, offal and potatoes. Old milk was usually served as a general drink, with the older inmates and the sick, receiving small amounts of sugar and tea. Clothing was miserably deficient, as the majority of inmates were dressed in rags and certain females were often exposed in an unnatural and inappropriate way. The report noted that the bedding, such as it was, was of a minimal standard and was dirty and in a poor condition.

The conclusion of the overseers was that the workhouse showed:

Unmistakable signs of bad arrangement, short-sightedness, real extravagance, a waste of ratepayers money and want of comfort, cleanliness and satisfaction amongst the poor'.<sup>352</sup>

During this rather reprehensible period, one incident concerning the death of an infant illustrates well the issues common in the level of care at the Birkby poorhouse. Helen Horsfall, a local woman was married to an Irish migrant who was working away from the town. Due to destitution, Horsfall had to go to the poorhouse and whilst there she gave birth. Within days, she fell ill with a fever, and unable to care for her newborn infant responsibility passed to the workhouse staff. Dr. Tatham prescribed nourishment for the child, yet despite the order from the doctor, the child died 17 days later. Tatham believed that the child died from mal-nourishment. The infant death was referred to the Huddersfield Board of Guardians who largely dismissed the matter, and added their support for the workhouse governor, Mrs Ainsworth. However, the persevering town deputy registrar recorded the following in his report – believing, ‘that the child of a vagrant railway worker born in a British workhouse possesses rights inalienable and powerful as those of the Royal Infants themselves’.<sup>353</sup> Subsequently there was an inquest, which for a second time in 12 months, revealed the

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<sup>352</sup> *Leeds Mercury*, 9 April 1848.

<sup>353</sup> *Leeds Mercury*, 5 February 1848.

failings of the poorhouse. The guardians were exposed as hard-hearted and lax in their mismanagement of the workhouse staff and the inquest concluded that the new-born infant had failed to thrive and receive proper nourishment while its mother was ill with the fever.

*The Manchester Times & Gazette* later commented:

What sort of management can prevail in the Huddersfield workhouse when it is customary there to neglect the orders of the medical officer, with regard to those who stand to him in the relation of clients – who have no other friend but him – the sick poor.<sup>354</sup>

As a result of the report into the death of the infant the Union Guardians indicated that perhaps recent events might have an impact on the attitude of the poor. It was recorded that:

the Guardians should be aware of the necessity to stand firm on recent issues and reassure those who ‘enquire’ as to our purpose, that measures will be taken to improve conditions and those in the care of this union will receive all that is prudent and available [to the] value of the ratepayers.<sup>355</sup>

Whilst these events and their conclusions show the guardians in a defensive mode, it shows them only reluctantly prepared to offer such measures and improvements that were fair and equitable to the ratepayers.

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<sup>354</sup> *Manchester Times & Gazette*, 8 February 1848.

<sup>355</sup> Huddersfield Union Guardian Minute Book, May 1848, KDA.

**Table 3.6 Composition of the Workhouse population in the Huddersfield Union 1841-****1861.**

Workhouse	Children under 14		Adults under 60		Adults over 60		Total
	M	F	M	F	M	F	
<b>1841</b>							
Huddersfield	15	22	14	20	17	7	95
Almondbury	12	9	9	16	6	3	55
Golcar	4	4	9	5	5	4	31
Honley	7	6	2	12	6	6	39
Kirkheaton	2	1	1	5	4	3	16
<b>Total</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>58</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>236</b>
<b>1851</b>							
Huddersfield	15	5	30	25	18	10	103
Almondbury	4	3	10	12	8	4	41
Golcar	1	0	5	5	8	2	21
Honley	4	1	3	5	5	5	23
Kirkheaton	6	4	9	14	10	4	47
<b>Total</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>57</b>	<b>61</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>235</b>
<b>1861</b>							
Huddersfield	1	0	39	35	32	7	114
Almondbury	1	1	10	12	10	4	38
Golcar	2		7	4	8	2	23
Honley	1	1	2	7	3	3	17
Kirkheaton	21	14	2	11	3	0	51
<b>Total</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>69</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>243</b>

The fact that the workhouses at Almondbury, Golcar, Honley and Kirkheaton, remained operational for nearly forty years after the implementation of the Huddersfield Union is a

significant factor in assessing pauper provision for the area. Another important factor is the reluctance to extend beyond the four named institutions above and to build a purpose built workhouse which would cater for the needs of all pauper groups.

The problem for Huddersfield was the sense of localism and political manoeuvring amongst the guardians. They were supposed to be disinterested bodies, but in reality they were anything but. There existed a broad spectrum of political differences that were vestiges of the remains of the anti-Poor Law movement. When the Union came into being there were 34 townships, and 41 elected guardians, by 1884, the numbers of guardians had increased to 70.<sup>356</sup> The first guardians were a diverse group made up of manufacturers, farmers and shopkeepers. Consequently divisions on the board reflected the importance of local loyalties, social standing and political affiliation. Most guardians saw themselves as township delegates rather than servants of the union. As long as the township remained the basic unit of chargeability for most paupers, there would remain a powerful rationale for this form localism.

#### Centralism versus Localism.

One of the problems facing the Huddersfield Union was that workhouse provision between 1837 and 1853 was run on local interests. This factor flew in the face of central policy and had to change. In order to try a deflect change the guardians attempted to try and confuse matters, by interfering with the classification of paupers. During the early 1840s, the Huddersfield Guardians agreed to concentrate most of the union's able bodied paupers at separate institutions, for instance, able-bodied males went to Golcar and females to Honley.<sup>357</sup> This was done, in an attempt to try and move away from the perception of the Poor Law Commissioners, who rightly believed that there existed a strict regime of localism

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<sup>356</sup> F. Driver, *Power and Pauperism*, p.159.

<sup>357</sup> Place, *Pray Remember the Poor*, p.24

amongst the workhouses in the Huddersfield Union. The reality was that the five smaller workhouses housed inmates who were born nearby, or were from the same township as where the workhouse stood. This was apparently a common practice amongst the northern unions. Driver states that each of the five workhouses in the Huddersfield Union drew upon ‘a distinct local catchment, and suggests that location, was an important consideration in the allocation of paupers to institutions’.<sup>358</sup> One could argue that local guardians, who were elected from those townships where there was a workhouse, had more to gain from keeping their local institution open.

The classification and distribution of paupers was a constant problem for the Huddersfield Guardians, and one which was never truly eradicated until the 1870s, with the closure of the township workhouses and the subsequent concentration on the two main Union workhouses. The guardians decided as far as practicable to implement their initial classification on the able-bodied and also to send all the pauper children to Kirkheaton and all the elderly, to the poorhouse at Birkby. One might conclude that throughout the 1840s, the Huddersfield Union workhouses appear to have been treated as local institutions serving the locality that surrounded them, a process which served the township needs rather than the needs of the union.

After 1851, the proportion of workhouse inmates, who were born locally, fell significantly, indicating a move towards a genuine centralised workhouse policy. That said, the strategy of classification between workhouses was to remain incomplete, as each workhouse continued to house a wide variety of paupers. Table 3.6, (p.128) indicates a gradual shift in the movement of children under 14, to Kirkheaton and a similar shift of the elderly to the poorhouse at Birkby.

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<sup>358</sup> F. Driver, *Power and Pauperism*, p.159. (see Figure 9.2 Birthplaces of Huddersfield Union workhouse inmates, 1851,p.151.)

Workhouse children and the pauper insane – removing the pauper taint.

Throughout the 1840s, arguments in Huddersfield regarding classification continued unabated. The main topics of categorization surrounded children and the pauper insane. After 1853, children in the Huddersfield Union, were mainly concentrated at Kirkheaton, however, this implementation was only partly completed as there still remained around a dozen adults there. By the 1850s, the main concern of the central authorities, surrounded the ‘moral contamination’ of these children and where possible their removal from workhouses populated by adults. There were concerns too about the standard of education available to child-paupers. In Huddersfield education opportunities for the poor, were described by the Union medical officer as a ‘sham’.<sup>359</sup>

Between one fifth and a quarter of children under 16 years, were either orphans or had been abandoned by their parents and whilst they were a minority in the pauper population within the workhouses, they became the main topic of debate. A campaign led by the *Leeds Mercury* in the 1840s, compared the workhouses of Huddersfield with the new Moral and Industrial school in Leeds. The paper doubted whether ‘Huddersfield and Leeds were in the same England’ when considering the provision given to the children of Leeds, who had by 1848, been moved from the workhouses to the industrial school.<sup>360</sup>

Such comments were all very well, but one should remember that Leeds had a far greater number of pauper children and far greater resources at their disposal. Gradually the Union was forced to accept that the ‘taint of pauperism’ would stick permanently, unless certain improved conditions existed for pauper children. By the 1870s, children were either sent to the board schools locally, or re-distributed amongst the ragged schools and orphanages that emerged in the latter quarter of the century. As well as these concerns for children, a more

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<sup>359</sup> J. Cocking to the LGB, 2 January 1872 MH 12/ 15086.

<sup>360</sup> The Leeds Mercury, 4 March 1848. P.Pennock, ‘The evolution of St James’, *Publications of the Thoresby Society* 59 (1987), pp. 130-76

serious and growing problem concerned the pauper insane. According to Driver they were the most dependant of all inmates, often spending years in the workhouse rather than days or weeks.<sup>361</sup> Debates over their care and management revealed a woeful lack of adequate assistance. However, the Huddersfield Guardians preferred to keep even the chronically insane inmates in their workhouses because of the cost of sending them to the county asylums.

**Table 3.7 Insane Paupers Chargeable to the Huddersfield Union, 1844-1881.**<sup>362</sup>

	Asylums	Hospitals	Workhouses	Out-door	Total
1844	31	1	18	15	65
1851	32	0	46	24	102
1861	70	0	57	18	145
1871	133	1	50	20	204
1881	162	3	93	2	260

As can be seen from the above table, between 1851 and 1881, the numbers of insane paupers rose significantly. Moreover, between 1871 and 1881, the numbers chargeable to the union and residing in both asylums and workhouses grew significantly. The addition of Deanhouse and Crosland Moor and the resultant improvements to conditions and provisions, meant that care for the insane pauper grew only by the available number of spaces available for such pauper. Even with this apparent increase in the provision for the chronic insane, both institutions had none of the specialist staff needed to care for such unfortunates. Such were the provisions in Huddersfield, that all the chronic insane inmates were not transferred to a single workhouse until a shift in policy in 1892, when some patients were sent to the

<sup>361</sup> F. Driver, *Power and Pauperism*, p.159.

<sup>362</sup> Sources: Returns in PP 1845 XXVIII; PP 1883 LVIII; MH 12/15072; MH 12/15078.

workhouse at Deanhouse. Regrettably, many insane inmates were looked after by the regular workhouse staff, much to the annoyance of the central authorities, who would regularly insist on the employment of the kind of staff employed in regular asylums. Plans to extend facilities at Crosland Moor for the chronic insane, were shelved when a government grant was offered following the opening of the Wadsley Asylum in Sheffield.<sup>363</sup>

#### The context for change.

The 1830s through to the 1850s were the darkest days for indoor-relief in the Huddersfield Union. Any challenge to the reluctance of the guardians to extend care and provisions were time and again, halted by an apparent reluctance to undermine or place any further strain on the ratepayers of the town. Despite the changes already mentioned there still remained the problems of 'centralism over localism'.

Fortunately, the 1860s and 1870s, were to some extent a turning point for Poor Law reform in England and Wales, where forced changes to the mechanism of the union began to be adopted. The effective crusade against outdoor relief, began in earnest in the 1870s, and resembled some of the conditions originally outlined following the reform described in the Act of 1834. During the 1860s, there were three significant Acts of parliament that assisted Poor Law Unions. The Irremovable Poor Act of 1861, significantly altered the law of settlement, by reducing the period to claim irremovability from five to three years; more significantly, the area of residence was changed from the individual parish to the union. In 1862 the Union Assessment Committee Act, ordered unions to establish committees to supervise new valuations, with the aim of securing a more uniform standard. The third significant measure came in 1865, with the Union Chargeability Act, which transferred the total cost of poor relief from the parish to the union, while at the same time reducing the period for irremovability to one year.

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<sup>363</sup> F. Driver, *Power and Pauperism*, p.161.



By the end of the 1860s the Poor Law Board<sup>364</sup> became a permanent department of the government, merging with two other departments which had administered Public Health, to form the Local Government Board in 1871.<sup>365</sup> In 1869 the then president of the Poor Law Board, George Goschen, confidently issued a minute complaining of the laxity in the administration of out-relief.<sup>366</sup> He reminded the boards of guardians of the advantages obtained in administering greater use of the workhouse test. Goschen's assertions were a reinforcement of the original principles of the 1834 Act and the Local Government Board applied considerable vigour to restricting the use of out-relief.<sup>367</sup>

This period of change became known as the 'Crusade against outdoor relief'. Michael Rose has concluded:

thus by the mid-1870s, the English Poor Law had come through its decade of crisis and had been so reconstructed as to be within sight of realising the Chadwickian ideal of 1834.<sup>368</sup>

Mary MacKinnon, in her research into 'out-relief', shows that the numbers relieved in the workhouse depended on several factors - 'pauper type, region and period'.<sup>369</sup> The statistics of those relieved during the 1830s and 1840s, were, according to MacKinnon, 'seriously incomplete' but improved year on year from the 1860s onwards.<sup>370</sup> In the mid-1860s, for

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<sup>364</sup> The Poor Law Board was established in 1847 and was the successor to the Poor Law Commission. The board was abolished in 1871 and replaced by the Local Government Board, which was itself abolished in 1919.

<sup>365</sup> Wood, *Poverty and the Workhouse*, p.126.

<sup>366</sup> George Joachim Goschen, 1831 -1907, was president of the PLB from 1868 to 1871 and on its abolition he became First Lord of the Admiralty, see T.J. Spinner, *George Joachim Goschen: the transformation of a Victorian Liberal* (Cambridge University Press, 1973).

<sup>367</sup> Ibid.

<sup>368</sup> M.E. Rose, 'The Crisis of Poor Relief in England, 1860-1898, in W.J. Mommsen (ed.), *The Emergence of the Welfare State in Britain and Germany*, (1981), p.62,

<sup>369</sup> M. Mackinnon, 'Poor Law Policy and the Crusade against Out-relief' *The Journal of Economic History*, Vol. 47, no.3 (September 1987).

<sup>370</sup> Ibid., p.604.

England and Wales as a whole, 12 to 15 *per cent* of paupers, excluding lunatics and vagrants were relieved in the workhouse. By the 1880s, the proportion was over 20 per cent and in the early 1900s, about 30 per cent.<sup>371</sup>

Between 1834 and 1874, the families of relief applicants and the more privileged in society, were encouraged to provide charitable assistance, as the harmful effects of relief on the development of thrift and independence was a recurring theme. While the importance of both charity and thrift are discussed in *The Poor Law Report of 1834*, it wasn't until the late 1860s that the authorities began to emphasize the necessity of restricting outdoor relief to able-bodied males and their dependants.<sup>372</sup> In the majority of places throughout the country in the 1850s, workhouses had excess capacity.<sup>373</sup> According to MacKinnon, the timing of workhouse building, suggests that only rapidly expanding cities were likely to face serious shortages of space. The quality of workhouses in the 1850s and the 1860s was unlikely to encourage the restriction of out-relief. To highlight this, and in a similar context to the conditions in the poorhouse at Birkby, MacKinnon argues that the much later London Infirmary scandals of the 1860s, led the Poor Law Board to order improvements in both medical care and the building of more modern hospital facilities.<sup>374</sup>

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<sup>371</sup> Ibid.

<sup>372</sup> S. and B. Webb, *English Poor Law History*, (London, 1929), pp. 345-40.

<sup>373</sup> On a county basis, workhouses were typically 50 to 70 per cent full. Parliamentary Papers, 46 (1854/5), p.27. D. Thomson, 'Workhouse to Nursing Home: Residential Care of Elderly People in England since 1840,' *Ageing and Society*, 3 (March, 1983), p.43.

<sup>374</sup> MacKinnon, 'Poor law policy', p.605.

### The First Union Workhouse

In November 1857 the Huddersfield Union Board of Guardians announced that a new workhouse was to be built in Huddersfield, and that improvements would take place at the Birkby poorhouse and at the workhouse at Kirkheaton. The Poor Law Board asked that a workhouse capable of accommodating 600 inmates and costing no more than £10,000 should be built. The location of the new workhouse, at Deanhouse, was difficult to get to, being in an elevated position near the village of Netherthong, on the hills above the town of Holmfirth.<sup>375</sup> Despite the requirements of the Poor Law Board, the finished workhouse could only accommodate 172. Shortly after its opening, a vagrant ward for ten men and ten women was added. Deanhouse was used predominantly to house the casual pauper and a number of local idiots and imbeciles. The 1881 census records that of the 176 inmates, 48 were mentally incapacitated.<sup>376</sup> The workhouse was unfit to take any great numbers of the 'regular' poor, the aged, infirm or sick and it was wholly unsuitable for children. It soon became apparent that a larger more accessible workhouse would have to be built nearer to the centres of greatest population.

### Crosland Moor

The workhouse at Crosland Moor opened on the 9 August 1872. The report into its opening was copiously sprinkled with local pride and admiring praise:

The buildings have been erected at a cost of £24,000 on an eminence which commands a fine view of beautiful scenery, and the situation is healthy and salubrious.<sup>377</sup>

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<sup>375</sup> 'A bleak hill in the coldest and most snowy part of England' was how Mr J.Davy described the workhouse in 1881 in his memorandum to the Local Government Board. *Huddersfield Examiner* March 1881.

<sup>376</sup> 1881 census.

<sup>377</sup> *Huddersfield Daily Chronicle*, 18 August 1872.

Despite the obvious civic pride recorded, there was also a good deal of detail concerning the plan of the workhouse and its provisions. The total number provided for was 218 in the main building, 75 in the hospital, 20 in the infectious ward, and accommodation for 100 children, in total, room for 413 inmates. This number was still well below the figures required by both the PLB and LGB, even with the two workhouses at capacity. On the outskirts of the main building there was a vagrant ward, which could accommodate 30 males and 15 females in separate yards and day and night rooms.<sup>378</sup> As the vagrant office in the town centre had been closed in the late 1860s, the total number of vagrants able to receive relief in the two union workhouses was now around 65. On cost, it was reported by Mr Kirk, the architect, that:

The cost of building had been £2.15s per yard, and that they could not build a cottage house for less than £2.10s per yard, so that they had given the guardians a very cheap building.<sup>379</sup>

The workhouse at Crosland Moor significantly increased the net accommodation in the union and throughout the 1870s further improvements were made.<sup>380</sup> In 1885 workhouse capacity in the Huddersfield Union was put at 774, more than three times the limit certified for the five workhouses in existence in 1848. According to Driver, this more than matched the population increase over the same period:

Moreover, indoor pauperism rose from around seven per cent of total pauperism immediately before the mid-1860s to nineteen per cent during the early 1880s, with outdoor relief outnumbering indoor relief by four to one.<sup>381</sup>

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<sup>378</sup> This vagrant ward was some distance away from the main building and was situated near to the reception rooms at the main entrance to the site.

<sup>379</sup> *Huddersfield Daily Chronicle*, 8th August 1872.

<sup>380</sup> F. Driver, *Power and Pauperism*, p.155.

<sup>381</sup> *Ibid.* p.156.

Expenditure increases, indoor relief, workhouse loan repayments, asylum bills and officers salaries, exceeded out-relief expenditure in every single year between 1873 and 1886. By this time it could be said with some certainty, that 'Huddersfield had decidedly moved towards institutional provision'.<sup>382</sup>

#### Huddersfield under the Union.

With the unprecedented expansion of the union in Huddersfield during the 1870s, came improvements in the provision for those requiring indoor-relief. Separate infirmaries, male and female wards, and separate accommodation for children away from the main building improved conditions immeasurably. These provisions were able to be made due to the reasonable reduction in out-relief. The crusade against out-relief appealed to the local guardians and ratepayers, because those unions that applied the workhouse test 'would both improve the moral character of society and reduce relief expenditure'.<sup>383</sup> As the workhouse test was applied at the Crosland Moor workhouse, we can assume that the guardians and the ratepayers were applying the apparent logic of the Local Government Board and the Charitable Organisation Society.

Normally, out-relief was handed out in order to supplement whatever other income the pauper received, or was assumed to receive, while unions paid for the complete maintenance of their indoor paupers. There were two significant orders which alluded to the Poor Law Commissions earlier energies in promoting the abolition of outdoor-relief to the able-bodied. Enforcing out-relief had been particularly difficult in the northern unions, hence the need for the orders. The first of these was the 'Outdoor Labour Test Order of April 1842', which allowed unions to hand out relief, at least half of which was to be in food and clothing and was to be given to able-bodied male paupers, who satisfied a labour test, usually stone-

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<sup>382</sup> Ibid.

<sup>383</sup> MacKinnon, Poor Law Policy, p.607.

breaking or oakum picking). Two years later, came the Outdoor Relief Prohibitory Order, issued in December 1844. This prohibited all outdoor relief to able-bodied men and women, apart from in exceptional circumstances. This was particularly unpopular in the north and rarely used, the guardians in Huddersfield preferred to use the earlier order at their discretion. The cost of relieving an indoor pauper was about 50 per cent higher than the rate for providing out-relief. Only where the workhouse test deterred a high proportion of applicants from becoming paupers, could the crusade reduce expenditure. Proponents of the 'crusade' argued that very few, about one in ten of those offered the workhouse as a test of destitution would accept it. Numbers on relief could thus be much reduced without putting pressure on workhouse facilities'.<sup>384</sup> However, local guardians could not entirely refuse relief to any applicant who was apparently destitute; consequently, they had to admit all those willing to enter the workhouse. If the Guardians improved conditions in the workhouse, then some applicants might be less reluctant to enter. Similarly the reduction of out-relief payments might make indoor relief more appealing. If too many paupers, who would previously have received out-relief did enter the workhouse, the unions could not cut their costs.<sup>385</sup>

Between 1837 and 1860 the Huddersfield Union was typical in its approach to balancing the needs of its pauper population and its ratepayers. External pressure gradually improved the outlook of those who relied on outdoor relief, and the workhouse test, sorted out the able-bodied from those who were incapable of work and thus supporting themselves. The reality was that by the 1860s, Huddersfield's workhouse population was chiefly made up of children, the elderly, the sick, the feeble-minded, and depending on the season, a scattering of beggars, tramps and vagrants. Between 1837 and 1870, conditions could be said to have improved gradually, the proceeding twenty years saw more significant improvements and yet

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<sup>384</sup> Ibid., p.608.

<sup>385</sup> Ibid., p.609.

the attitude toward the poor changed little over that period. There was still a widening gulf between the deserving and undeserving poor. The majority of this kind of prejudice was aimed at the residents of the town centre. Whilst there were adverse comments and attitudes toward common thieves, the casual poor, beggars and vagrants, it was the Irish who were often the most vilified.

As we know, the town centre of Huddersfield was occupied by the largest concentration of the poor. We also know that the majority of this population were from the local English community and yet they were, compared with the Irish community, relatively anonymous. The Irish community on the other hand were far from anonymous and for the reasons already outlined, became associated with issues such as nuisance, idleness and criminality. These issues can be viewed as factors in preventing many first generation migrants and their immediate off-spring, into adopting any meaningful assimilation with the host population. By examining the Irish in Huddersfield, one is able to view their community as an 'alien' culture transplanted into an 'alien environment'. Differences of this 'other' community test certain assumptions about the attitude to the poor, poverty, and pauperism, especially the undeserving poor. The way the Irish gathered themselves into tightly-knit groups, seemed unusual to the local population, consequently they were denigrated for this sense of community. This was due, in part, to a national feeling of disdain toward this 'other' culture, the Irish were the subjects of regular harassment and authoritarian control.

An assessment of the Irish community in Huddersfield and the local English community that lived alongside them requires an evaluation of the term undeserving in the terms defined in the context of this thesis. The communities in which the Irish resided were populated by a greater number of the local population, who happened to live in the same poor conditions. The local English poor were every bit as vulnerable to the ravages of poverty and the taint of pauperism as the Irish were. As such they should not be held in isolation. The

Irish stand out more for criticism due to where they came from, and the numbers that came. Gertrude Himmelfarb, has described such groups as more ‘conspicuous’ rather than ‘numerous’, due, as she says to the growth of large towns ‘and of the metropolis especially’.<sup>386</sup> To the local population they represented everything that was undeserving of a pauper and yet they were no worse than their neighbours, who given the right circumstances and ill-fated luck, were often just as poor. In the areas of Castlegate and Upperhead row there existed the residuum of Huddersfield’s poor, both English and Irish. Here in the narrow courts, packed yards, under and over-dwellings and cellars, one could find a rich assortment of humanity; petty criminals, prostitutes and beggars – the outcasts of Huddersfield’s society. In respect of the Irish, one might choose to use the term ‘outcast’, which is a term used by Himmelfarb, when she refers to the poor residuum as the:

outcast groups, the ragged poor whose condition infected their homes and lives as well as their attire, or the dangerous classes, the criminals and outcasts, ‘who were as one commentator put it, “in the community, but neither of it nor from it” – in the community of the poor physically, geographically, but not of it socially and morally, nor, some suspected, from it biologically.’<sup>387</sup>

I would argue that as the Irish were seemingly part of this alien culture, a culture made up of non-English norms, they cannot be readily given the epithet of undeserving as easily as we might think. The evidence shows that they were no more undeserving than any of the other poor inhabitants of the town centre. What made them seemingly *more undeserving* was the apparent ‘conspicuousness’ that was attributed to them for ‘who’ they were, not what they ‘were’ or represented.

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<sup>386</sup> Himmelfarb, *The Idea of Poverty*, p 87.

<sup>387</sup> Ibid.



One of the main reasons for using the Irish migrant as an example of the undeserving poor in Huddersfield is that during the 1840s and 1850s, as a group, they were considered the most problematic section of the poor. This was due not from an empirical position, where evidence pointed toward a wholly unruly mob, who were unable to settle, in what passed for a civilised town, but from localised and nationalised opinion. The Irish migrant was specifically targeted by the authorities and was seen as both a stain on the cultural and moral outlook of the town. 'Paddy' was seen as 'deceitful, wasteful, lazy, emanating from an 'inferior race'. These terms were a collective point of view that were considered normal and morally precise; they were the comments and belief's of a national attitude that believed that the Irish in numbers, living in the conditions they lived in, were a prime example of all that was dreadful about, firstly, the Irish and secondly, urban society in the nineteenth century. One might conclude then that collectively the Irish migrant that settled in Huddersfield during the mid-nineteenth century was perceived as more undeserving than their English neighbours. Yet, in their defence, and as we have seen, apart from their housing conditions and their sometimes rapacious attitude to life, they were no less industrious as many others who were poor and lived alongside them. Despite the anti-Irish language that was popular between 1840 and 1870, as a community in Huddersfield, the Irish successfully adapted and adopted local concepts. Opportunities in the workplace increased, and through mixed marriages and the growing popularity of the Catholic Church, stable Irish communities grew up elsewhere within the town and throughout the district. By the 1880s and 1890s, Irish families were regularly inter-marrying and moving away from their traditional areas so often associated with minor criminality, drunkenness and low-living. What remained as the Irish emerged from this dark period, was a sense of community and a sense of belonging to a close social network.

In respect of those pauper recipients of relief, one can say that the deserving pauper in Huddersfield was typical of many industrial areas in the north. Generally, by the 1870s, those considered deserving of relief in Huddersfield were the aged, long-term sick, children, and the pauper insane. Once the poorhouse at Birkby ceased to be the main source of indoor-relief, and central government had forced through changes that altered the cost of relief for the Huddersfield union, the town began to provide a relatively stable system of poor-relief. By the middle of the 1870s and the early 1880s, it had sufficient workhouse accommodation for those who regularly sought relief, and furthermore, could now provide relief for the outcast groups, such as the casual pauper, tramp and beggar. However, changes to the condition of the general poor of Huddersfield were not the sole responsibility of the guardians, Poor Law relief had, for many years, sat alongside charity and private and public philanthropy in providing much needed relief.

By understanding the poor of the Huddersfield township and the processes of both indoor and outdoor relief, one can see the kind of authoritative language that was used extensively to undermine both, the Irish and undeserving poor in the town. A similar form of political language was also used in trying to control and minimise the backlash from the appalling conditions found in the Birkby poorhouse. The same could be said for the subtle rhetoric that was used in managing indoor relief and the care of the mentally ill. This maintains the fact that the growing Union was a closely allied political unit that was managed to achieve two things, first the cheapest cost to the rate-payer for the services undertaken and second, to stem the rise of pauperism in the town.

## Chapter Four.

### Charity and Local Philanthropy.

The political language associated with philanthropy and charity is a complex area involving class, social position, politics and a belief in high moral standards. Nineteenth century philanthropy aimed to extend middle class values up and down the social scale, however, for the majority of people, no matter how poor, there was no need to remind them that fitness, decency and independence were wholesome principles; nor were such distinctions between the deserving and undeserving absent from the vocabulary of the poor. And yet, despite this kind of understanding across the classes, the language of philanthropy was still used in an attempt to maintain social order and remove the taint caused by the spread of the degenerate classes. At a basic level the human reaction toward charitable support and the giving of alms is as old as civilization itself, and by the nineteenth century the importance placed on charity as a voluntary action, was vital in supporting the provisions set aside by institutions such as the Poor Law.<sup>388</sup>

The aim of this chapter is to examine the nature of the language of philanthropy and public and private charity in Huddersfield during nineteenth century. Consequently, and in keeping with the central themes of this study, one should ask if there was a difference in the availability and amount of charity offered to the deserving and undeserving poor. And where charity was available to the poor was the language of that charity associated with social control, or merely an attempt at removing certain deep-seated elements of pauperism from the town. The usual recipients of charity were the elderly, infirm, disabled and at times destitute women and their children. Accepting these norms the more important point here, is whether

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<sup>388</sup> Herodes Atticus, 101-177CE, Greek philanthropist and benefactor. A.J. Papalas, 'Herodes Atticus; an essay on education in the Antonine age', *History of Education Quarterly*, Vol.21 No.2. (1981), pp.171-88.

there were any major changes in attitude toward undeserving poor. If there was, from what quarter did it come?

The concept of 'social control' and its relationship to charity is rather a difficult area and is often considered rather murky and reductionist.<sup>389</sup> The natural urge to make others conform to the same values and speak the same language is often implicit in social relations generally, from family life to national politics.<sup>390</sup> When control is associated with concepts such as bourgeois hegemony it may also be misleading, for it begs the question whether there was a revolutionary proletariat in need of control.<sup>391</sup> Consequently, historians find it difficult to deal with 'social control' when it is implied and unconscious, and as a conscious philanthropic motive it is easily over-played. Fear of social unrest cannot explain the persistence of charitable subscriptions through changing political circumstances, especially throughout the 1830s and 1840s. If fear of domestic revolution was ever a critical consideration, the aristocracy and the ruling classes could have done a more effective job of controlling their social inferiors by passing general statutes. To rely on the chaos of *ad hoc* charitable institutions, many of which were rivals and at cross-purposes, was not a very efficient form of subduing the disaffected. And yet, whilst there might not be any direct evidence of there ever being a conscious effort to control the classes through charity, there was, by the very nature of some charities, a direct association with attempting to raise standards and change the attitude of both the deserving and undeserving poor. Evidence of

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<sup>389</sup> F. Prochaska, 'Philanthropy' In F.M.L. Thompson (ed.) *The Cambridge social history of Britain, 1750-1950, Social agencies and institutions*, vol.3 (Cambridge, 1990), p.370-1.

<sup>390</sup> F.M.L. Thompson, 'Social Control in Victorian Britain', *Economic History Review*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ser., 34 (1981), pp.189-208; and Stedman Jones, 'Class Expression versus Social Control? A Critique of Recent Trends in the Social History of Leisure', *History Workshop*, 4 (1977) pp. 162-70.

<sup>391</sup> Prochaska, 'Philanthropy', p.371.

this kind of change did occur as part of the surge in evangelical charity during the nineteenth century.

In the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries the character and intensity of religious belief, was such that an out pouring of good works co-existed with the fatalistic attitude toward poverty, which marked economic thinking after Malthus. With individual nature and ethic, British Protestantism was compatible with *laissez-faire* doctrine. Charities expanded in a liberal society, splintered by religious class, and local and occupational allegiances. They competed for converts and custom. But unlike liberal economists, philanthropists tended to look beyond material life toward eternity.<sup>392</sup> The Historian, Alan Kidd states that on an intellectual level the humanitarianism of the late eighteenth century created ‘a new moral universe which compelled action in the face of human suffering’ and this, combined with the emerging self-help ideology, which forged the new Poor Law, framed the context of philanthropy for most of the nineteenth century.<sup>393</sup> He further suggests that during the nineteenth century, charity was a partner to other methods of assistance, rather than the ‘subordinate addition that it is today’.<sup>394</sup> And as such, to the Victorians, charity was an important aspect of both private and public life. According to Frank Prochaska:

Most eighteenth and nineteenth century families at almost every level of the social scale commonly tithed their incomes to charitable causes.<sup>395</sup>

Such was the extent of charitable giving that philanthropic receipts for 1885 in London alone were larger than the budgets of some European states.<sup>396</sup> From the seventeenth to the early nineteenth century, the most accepted form of charitable giving, was through the endowment

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<sup>392</sup> Ibid.

<sup>393</sup> A.J. Kidd, *State, Society and the Poor in nineteenth century England* ( New York, 1999), p.65.

<sup>394</sup> Ibid.,p.72.

<sup>395</sup> Prochaska, ‘Philanthropy’, p.358.

<sup>396</sup> Ibid.

of a charitable trust. During the nineteenth century a growing number of commercially minded people believed that aristocratic philanthropy and its associations with almsgiving and old endowments led to indigence and servility amongst the needy. This rapidly outdated form of organised charity became the 'principle expression of middle-class resolve'.<sup>397</sup> However, this type of bequest fell out of favour by the early decades of the nineteenth century, to be replaced by the more direct method of support whereby the donor used their money whilst they were still alive. For some, this was not only the accepted method of assisting a fellow human being, but became part of a sophisticated system of paternalism between the benefactor and the beneficiary. Yet like the aristocracy, the middle-classes used philanthropy to justify their social position and in return expected some kind of loyalty from their social inferiors. Like the middle-classes, the ruling classes largely took it for granted that deference would surely flow from philanthropy. However, attitudes were changing and during the early decades of the nineteenth century a reliance on working class co-operation and self-sufficiency developed. Working class self-help was often referred to as paternalism and was usually organised by women. This was a significant break from the paternalistic attitude more associated with the aristocracy. Those slightly better off in society assisted their poorer neighbours in running provident societies, savings banks, ragged and Sunday schools, mechanics' institutes, lying-in and visiting charities. Self reliance and thrift were part of the social gospel and charities explored by working people fostered such traits. As charitable co-operation assisted in the social and political integration of the working classes, it represented and implied, an attack on aristocratic power.<sup>398</sup> Perhaps the most important unit of social responsibility rested with the family. Co-operation within families often saved family

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<sup>397</sup> Kidd, *State, Society and the Poor*, p.65.

<sup>398</sup> B. Harrison, *Peaceable Kingdom: Stability and Change in Modern Britain* (Oxford, 1982), P.220.

members from utter destitution. According to Prochaska poor families and communities would take up:

Formal subscriptions which were often supported by trade unions, friendly societies or benefit clubs, or simply by neighbours with common needs and worries.<sup>399</sup>

These important community-based activities, assured those unlucky enough to be in a position of want that for a limited time there was some form of alternative assistance other than a reliance on poor relief. A similar attitude existed in times of emergency and disaster, or during times of widespread disease or down-turns in trade. Extensive relief was offered to the township of Holmfirth in the Holme-Valley, when on 5 February 1852, the embankment of the Bilberry reservoir burst, and 86 million gallons of water poured into the river Holme. 81 people lost their lives and the disaster left many homeless and without work. Four mills were destroyed along with ten dye houses, three drying stoves and twenty seven cottages. Such was the extent of the damage and loss of life, that meetings and committees met all around the country; the national response and relief fund collected £69,422.8.49; £7,000 of which was used to rebuild the reservoir defences. Barely a week went by during that year that the *Huddersfield Chronicle and West Yorkshire Advertiser* didn't associate itself with the human and financial cost of the disaster.<sup>400</sup>

The detailed focus of this chapter will reflect upon the outcomes of charitable assistance for the neediest and the undeserving. Such groups mainly lived within the central township of Huddersfield. As with previous chapters, the main focus will tend to centre upon those deemed *undeserving* and the private and public function of charity in Huddersfield and its effect on such a group. The basis of this public form of assistance will focus on two important evangelical charities, one Protestant the other Catholic.

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<sup>399</sup> Prochaska, 'Philanthropy', p.364.

<sup>400</sup> G. Minter, *On the trail of the Holmfirth Flood*, (Huddersfield, 1996).

The Protestant ‘Rock mission’ emerged in one of the poorest areas of Huddersfield in the late 1870s, and its relative success was due to the merger of individuals from several church and chapel groups in the town. The benefactors of Catholic charity emerged much earlier and can trace their origin to the construction of St. Patrick’s in the 1830s. The people of Huddersfield and its responses to the Catholic Church and the needs of its poorest members, developed rather quickly as the migrant Irish community grew. As a result of these two evangelical charities, there emerged the first organised charitable groups, whose clear intention, it was, to reform social assistance and organise charitable giving amongst the destitute. As a result they were complementing the work of the Charitable Organisation Society, the Temperance movements.<sup>401</sup>

#### Private and Public Charity in Huddersfield

The majority of charities in existence in Huddersfield before 1875, were quite specific in the kind of people they were aimed at supporting. In table 4.2 (below) the majority of charities are linked to posthumous donations from named individuals. The beneficiaries seem to be ‘deserving’ recipients of charity; ‘Old people in Marsh’, the ‘Industrious aged poor’, ‘coal for the needy’, and the ‘needy in Almondbury and Newsome’ and ‘poor widows over 40’.<sup>402</sup> Terms such as industrious and needy, were associated with the deserving attributes of the recipient. The language here, also suggests that the benefactors were thinking about such people when they gifted their endowment. The majority of these Huddersfield charities were endowed before the middle of the nineteenth century and is therefore suggestive of a trend whereby the philanthropic preferred to see their money distributed after their death.<sup>403</sup>

These charities were not intended for the casual or undeserving poor or the residuum of the town centre, but for the needy poor. The undeserving poor went largely unaided.

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<sup>401</sup> The Charitable Organisation society was founded in 1869 in London.

<sup>402</sup> Rigby, (Clerk to Guardians) Paper on Local Charities (*Huddersfield Examiner*, 22 February 1908).

<sup>403</sup> Rigby, Paper on Local Charities.



Whilst there is evidence that endowed charities fell out of favour during the mid-nineteenth century, there is some evidence that some of the older charities were maintained and well supported, and a vital safety net to the community. One such charity was the Thomas Armitage charity of 1647. This charitable trust provided £200 to be distributed to the poor through the ‘vicar of Huddersfield’.<sup>404</sup> Due to the death of the trustees of the charity the ‘Huddersfield dole’ as it was known, required administering and up-dating; a well attended public meeting was arranged and took place in the church school room at Paddock. Present was the Reverend McGrath, Joel Crowther, Joseph Thornton and the radical agitator and friend of the poor, Joshua Hobson. Such was the popularity of Armitages’ charity that as a result of the meeting it was carried that a field at Fartown should be purchased in order to build a school.<sup>405</sup>

The most popular charity per yearly income is the ‘Technical College’ charity of 1878, (Table 4.2) which grossed the most of all the charities listed. The charities purpose, ‘Education for all’, is typical of the Victorian ethos of self-help and mirrors the growth and promotion of education during this period. In a nineteenth century context, one would not expect to see any charities wholly supporting the indolent and feckless and during the early part of the nineteenth century, no charity ever intended to assist them directly. In table 4.3 the charities reliant on annual subscription followed a similar trend to the earlier posthumous charities. Here, the ‘deaf and dumb’, the ‘blind’, ‘poor folk’ and ‘orphans’ are assisted, but unlike the earlier charities, there are indications that the focus on reaching, ‘hard to reach’ groups is growing. The support for the training of ‘rough girls’ and a home for ‘inebriate women’ are indicative of two significant steps forward in organised relief. These are charities that were recognising the need to assist those who forty years earlier, might have been largely

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<sup>404</sup> *Huddersfield Chronicle and West Riding Advertiser*, 2 October 1858.

<sup>405</sup> Ibid.

ignored.<sup>406</sup> These new ventures into welfare, combined with the emergence of Charitable Organisation Society, were the largest by subscription, compared to the older traditional more deserving charities. By the late 1870s, it is clear that charity in both its private and public sense was beginning to consider certain sections of the undeserving poor. Such charity was never intended to be wholly heart-felt, rather it was aimed at an attempt at removing the taint of pauperism and preventing destitution in the future. By assisting women and children, who were under the influence of successive periods of destitution, the hope was, to eradicate and instil a level of moral worth that might be carried over into future generations.

One of the most worthy of all Huddersfield's charities subscribed to was the General Dispensary (1814) and Infirmary (1829). The Infirmary was well supported by manufacturers and shopkeepers; association with the hospital often allowed local men the ability to distribute tickets of admission for the poor to be treated.

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<sup>406</sup> The assistance of such groups was both morally and gender deserving as well as a serious attempt at removing the taint of pauperism from future generations of young women and to try and correct the moral faults of drinking to excess.

**Table 4.1 Members of the Huddersfield Infirmary Board.**<sup>407</sup>

<b>Name</b>	<b>Occupation</b>	<b>Years on the board.</b>
William Batley	Gentleman	1848-61
Joseph Bottomley	Innkeeper	1862-7
Joseph Brooke	Stationer	1851-60
Sir Joseph Crosland	Wool Merchant	Trustee 1866-1897
William England	Chemist	1848-57
Thomas Firth	Tea Dealer	1848-67
William Greenwood	Surgeon	1856-65
Thomas Hayley	Plumber	1850-60
Thomas Kilner	Merchant	1848-54
Thomas Pitt	High Constable	1853-4
John Sutcliffe	Justice of the Peace	1848-9

The Dispensary, founded in 1814, was largely funded by annual subscriptions of one or two guineas; subscriber's obtaining in return the privilege of recommending patients:

Donations and benefactions were also important, and lesser sources of income included congregational collections, fines ordered by magistrates, and occasional concerts, bazaars and balls.<sup>408</sup>

The Huddersfield and Upper Agbrigg Infirmary was opened with great ceremony in 1829.<sup>409</sup>

A commendable £12,448 was raised through donations, legacies and congregational and miscellaneous collections. During the 1830s, admissions and the notoriety of the infirmary

<sup>407</sup> WYAS, Wakefield C500/1/33-44. Annual Reports Huddersfield Infirmary, 1832 - 1871.

<sup>408</sup> H. Marland, 'Health care in nineteenth-century Huddersfield' in Haigh (ed.) *Huddersfield: a Most Handsome Town*, p.615.

<sup>409</sup> 29 June 1829.

grew beyond expectations. Patients were admitted from Huddersfield and towns further afield, such as Brighouse, Holmfirth, Rastrick, Mirfield and Saddleworth. Despite what Hilary Marland calls ‘some statistical acrobatics’ it is apparent that the Infirmary was very successful. In 1870-71, 77 per cent of out-patients were cured or relieved, and the mortality rate was as low as 1.9 per cent.<sup>410</sup> Businessmen, gentlemen, professionals, artisans and holders of public office, became involved in the Infirmary's charitable body. Sir Joseph Crosland for instance, maintained a prominent position within the charity for over 30 years and other local members of the minor bourgeoisie made sure they were counted amongst the town ‘worthies’ if only for a short period of time. But what provisions were available for the sick poor in the town? Marland suggests that the very poor, ‘the old the careless and the unlucky’ were offered only a basic level of health care, based on the workhouse sick wards and on out-relief.<sup>411</sup> Alongside these institutional and organised forms of medical relief, there existed:

A rich and diverse self-dosing medical subculture, utilizing family recipes, the chemist's shop, spas and healing wells, and a galaxy of quack doctors and local healers.<sup>412</sup>

Different options were resorted to for different complaints, or medical emergencies. According to Marland, the victims of railway, mining or factory accidents would be transported hastily to the infirmary. Infectious diseases, even when life-threatening, would usually be treated at home, by a dispensary doctor, Poor Law surgeon, or general practitioner.<sup>413</sup> Following homemade treatments and visits to various unqualified men, the

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<sup>410</sup> WYAS, Wakefield C500/1/33-44. Annual Report Huddersfield Infirmary, 1870-71.

<sup>411</sup> Marland, ‘Health care in nineteenth-century Huddersfield’, p.598.

<sup>412</sup> Ibid.

<sup>413</sup> Ibid., p.600.

sick poor might turn to the friendly society.<sup>414</sup> Friendly societies were usually used by the lower middle-classes and the skilled working class, though it was common practice for Poor Law overseers to pay friendly society subscriptions on behalf of paupers, thus relieving themselves from the burden of paying out-relief to the sick and from the task of employing medical attendants.<sup>415</sup> The authenticity of the illness or complaint was checked by the friendly society and sickness benefit paid, the society's doctors would then treat the patient. If the treatment failed, and by now crippled with debt and no job, the patient might apply for a ticket of admission to the infirmary, where this failed and now possibly destitute, the only course open was for the whole family to fall at the mercy of the Poor Law and the workhouse.<sup>416</sup>

For the very poor, self dosing, was often the only chance of a cure. The reliance on such acts is apparent by the growth in the number of chemist's in Huddersfield. In 1790, there were only two chemists in the town, by 1841 there were eleven and by 1871 twenty five. The chemist was often consulted by the patient and would advise and offer the services of a dentist, surgeon and man-midwife.<sup>417</sup> The chemist was often out of reach to the very poor, who often resorted to the services of quack doctors, herbalists and druggists. Has Marland states, the services of unqualified advice if only for minor ailments, tended to be much cheaper than that offered by the regularly qualified physician and surgeon.<sup>418</sup> Furthermore, there is evidence that local healers were used regularly by the overseers of the poor, to treat the various ailments of those dependent upon poor relief. Under the Old Poor Law, sick

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<sup>414</sup> Generally the monthly subscription to friendly society was 1 shilling.

<sup>415</sup> Marland, 'Health care in nineteenth-century Huddersfield', p.613.

<sup>416</sup> For a detailed account of the effect of friendly societies, see R.J. Morris, 'Clubs, societies and associations' In F.M.L. Thompson (ed.) *The Cambridge social history of Britain, 1750-1950, Social agencies and institutions*, vol.3 (Cambridge, 1990), pp.395-445.

<sup>417</sup> Ibid., p.605. See also H. Marland, 'The medical activities of mid-nineteenth-century chemists and druggists, with special reference to Wakefield and Huddersfield' *Medical History*, 31 (1987), 415-39.

<sup>418</sup> Ibid., p.609.

relief was regulated by the various townships and organized by the overseers of the poor. Medical relief was only a small amount of the Poor Law expenditure after 1837, though under the old Poor Law there is some evidence to suggest that it was administered generously and with some flexibility.<sup>419</sup> After 1837, however, even this small percentage of the expenditure was too still expensive, chiefly due to the size of the union with its population in excess of 100,000, the sick-relief that had previously existed, was almost impossible to carry out. Medical treatment under the new regime was carried out by the Poor Law medical officers, who were well qualified but grossly under-paid and overworked. Mr Roberts, the medical officer for Golcar, was so overworked that he refused to attend the children of one Rebecca Taylor: three of her children died of scarlet fever as a result. For this, Roberts, was verbally reprimanded by the Guardians.<sup>420</sup> Despite these instances of poorly provided sick relief there was still the relief charities, whereby the wealthier classes could provide medical relief to the sick-poor: these were the voluntary Huddersfield Dispensary and Infirmary and the rate-supported Poor Law medical service. The significance of these two is summarised by Marland:

These differed from the other forms of medical options which have been considered, in that they were created and controlled by a group, made up chiefly of local manufacturers, for the assistance of another group, the Infirmary for the ‘deserving poor’, the labouring man who had fallen on hard times, the Poor Law for the destitute.<sup>421</sup>

There were similar charities in Manchester: the Hospital for ‘Consumption and Diseases of the Throat’ began its charity by hosting a large public event in the Mayors parlour in Manchester Town Hall. In attendance were some of the town’s senior councillors and

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<sup>419</sup> Ibid., p.621.

<sup>420</sup> Minute Book of the Huddersfield Board of Guardians, 7 May 1858, KDA.

<sup>421</sup> Marland, ‘Health care in nineteenth-century Huddersfield’, p.625.

businessmen as well as a future Tory M.P. According to Peter Shapely, just such an event helped to give the charity ‘the kind of respectable image and high profile needed to engender both the interest and confidence of potential investors’.<sup>422</sup> Hospital charities were some of the most commendable of all charities and whilst they were sometimes divorced from politics and morals, they were important in promoting the admirable aspects of Victorian benevolence. However, there were occasions under the Infirmary admission rules, when tickets were often given by employers to their workers, in order for them to be treated. In certain cases and with certain benefactors, the reach of politics and political ambition was the primary motive.

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<sup>422</sup> P. Shapely, *Charity and Power in Victorian Manchester* (Manchester, 2000), p.43. The history of medical charities and hospitals is also discussed in – J. Mohan and M. Gorsky, *Don't Look Back? Voluntary and charitable finance of Hospitals in Britain, Past and Present* (London, 2001).

**Table 4.2. Charitable Provision in Huddersfield before 1885<sup>423</sup>**

Name	Date begun	Gross annual income	Recipients each year
John Mortimer's charity	1823	£16	Old people in Marsh
Ann Hanson's Charity	1829	£5	Old people in Marsh
William Cliffe's Charity	1851	£28	Poor widows over 40
Holroyd's Charity	1830	£38	4 cottages in Birkby
Sir John Ramsden's gift	1839	£17-15s	Industrious aged poor
Gibson's Charity	1637	£4	Coal for needy
George Brooke's gift	1884	£23	Buxton Rd Wesleyan poor
Bentley's gift	1821	£30	Poor in Huddersfield
Wilson's gift	1830	£5	Poor in Huddersfield
Nettleton's Charity	1613	£311	Needy in Almondbury
Almondbury poor Charity	1673	£65	Needy in Almondbury and Newsome
Bentley Charity	1850	£30	6 poor Lockwood householders
Lee's Charity	1861	£21-16s	Poor in Dalton
Technical College	1878	£394	Education for all
Firth's Dole	1624	£12-10s	Relief from Almondbury poor rates
Fenay's Charity	1765	NA.	Needy in Almondbury and Newsome

<sup>423</sup> Rigby, (Clerk to Guardians) Paper on Local Charities (*Huddersfield Examiner*, 22 February 1908).



**Table 4.3. Charities Reliant on Annual Subscription<sup>424</sup>**

Name	Date begun	Gross annual income	Recipients each year
Orphan home	1861	£250	22 Orphans
Poor folk's gathering	1871	£160	1200 old and poor
Deaf and Dumb society	1871	£160	Deaf and Dumb
Blind society	1871	£160	Blind
Charity and Organisation society	1884	£432	Poor and needy
Training home for rough girls	1884	£432	Orphaned girls
Inebriate home for women	1884	£432	Intemperate women

**Table 4.4. Charities Endowed and Subscribed to.<sup>425</sup>**

Name	Date begun	Gross annual income	Recipients each year	Number of subscribers in 1829
General Infirmary	1829	£2000 + £6000	Over 1000 patients subscribed	30

This form of philanthropy was sometimes criticised, but defenders of Victorian philanthropy, according to Prochaska:

do not doubt its human effects and say it reflects the nation's genius for the *ad hoc* and industrial, for self-help and personal sacrifice'. Critics on the other hand, judge

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<sup>424</sup> Ibid.

<sup>425</sup> Ibid.

philanthropy to be largely insensitive to the genuine needs of the poor and see it as a thinly disguised form of self-interest.<sup>426</sup>

Of course self-interest played a huge part in the process of philanthropy, but the continued existence and even the longevity of a charity was often reliant on the self-interest of its benefactors. This self-reliance was understandable, for in order to be productive and to remain so, charities had to offer the investor no matter how small, some kind of incentive for their subscription. Subscribers of 5 guineas to the 'Manchester and Salford Auxiliary Bible Society' were made governors of the society and as such were given a vote at all meetings of the committee, this directly allowed the donor the opportunity to 'influence all policy decisions'.<sup>427</sup> Prospective donors were, by their own philanthropy, promoted to a position of some importance, which if they wished, they could use for their own self-promotion. Obviously the more worthy the charity the more important the position gained by the donor.

The resilience of the working class was often overtly apparent and their ability to deal with a personal crisis, disease or trade depression or to simply survive in deprived areas brought out a hardiness of personal sacrifice. Prochaska, acknowledges the working classes ability to promote good health among their number and to take advantage of educational opportunities and a family life, free from the dependence on 'alms or the workhouse'.<sup>428</sup> According to Alan Kidd, there existed, to some contemporary observers of the period, a dread of the expansion of an increasing poor population. He cites the philanthropist Edward Brotherton, who wrote of the shock and alarm he felt whilst exploring the working class districts of Manchester.<sup>429</sup> He complained that the:

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<sup>426</sup> Prochaska, 'Philanthropy', p.358.

<sup>427</sup> Ibid., p.44.

<sup>428</sup> Ibid. p.366.

<sup>429</sup> Edward Brotherton (1816-1866), was a persistent writer of letters to the *Manchester Guardian*. He was a campaigner for better conditions for the poor and the child education. Lord Aberdale called him the 'the thunderclap from Manchester' his letters and efforts helped paved the way for the Education Act of 1870.

Intelligent classes...do not know Manchester, but if they explored they would find thousands of children who must almost of necessity, grow up idle, reckless and many of them criminal.<sup>430</sup>

Brotherton's observations, related to the gradual segregation of the classes in Manchester. During the 1840s and beyond, the middle classes began to move out of the city and into the leafy suburbs, effectively losing contact with their poor urban neighbours. In Manchester as in Huddersfield, the concentration of the casual poor, in the narrow streets and unsanitary courts provided problems of relief, and public order at times of economic crisis. The streets populated by the host poor in Huddersfield and districts such as Deansgate, Angel Meadow and Ancoats in Manchester, were, by the 1840s, becoming isolated from the influence of the former wealthy inhabitants, which to 'contemporaries was both a consequence of urbanisation and a cause of social crisis'.<sup>431</sup> This kind of disassociation was apparent in the number of houses that were built in the Greenhead area of Huddersfield during the mid nineteenth century.<sup>432</sup> Whilst there might have been a reduction in the day to day, face to face, reality of the need for charity, there is also the possibility that from the 1850s onwards, charities become more formalised - even bureaucratic.

According to Kidd, 'Voluntary action was the archetypal Victorian response to moral and social problems'.<sup>433</sup> Those who responded to such need did so under the common belief that they, the beneficent had the right and a duty to exert a moral influence upon the needy. Equally, the donor might expect loyalty from their social recipients. In the face to face daily setting, philanthropy invigorated deferential behaviour, giving it the character of a moral

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<sup>430</sup> Kidd, 'Outcast Manchester'. pp. 48-9.

<sup>431</sup> Ibid., p.52.

<sup>432</sup> A middle class district of large houses and villas were built surrounding Greenhead park about a quarter of a mile from the town centre.

<sup>433</sup> Ibid.,p.52.

relationship.<sup>434</sup> Kidd states that this kind of relationship introduced the recipient into a moral obligation to be grateful to the donor and to:

Offer something in return and as far as the benefactor was concerned this ought to be those moral characteristics usually associated with being *deserving*.<sup>435</sup>

During the second quarter of the nineteenth century, some charities adopted secular values and tried to move away from those that were singularly evangelical in intent. According to David Owen, between 1810 and 1850, assistance for those outside the realm of self-help organisations, mutual aid, or charity, ‘must be prepared to face the rigors of the workhouse’.<sup>436</sup> Aside from the very few local charities that we shall review here, there was little in the way of aid for the poorest residents of Huddersfield. Excluding the work of the Rock Mission and the Roman Catholic Church, it would appear that any charity that did exist, was either through personal donations from private individuals and the charities that assisted orphaned children, the aged, disabled and infirm. Both nationally and at a local level, in respect of those seeking assistance under the Poor Law, real improvements or, as Keith Laybourn puts it, ‘the principles of 1834’ were not effective until the 1870’s and beyond:

By which time philanthropy electoral reform and a rising humanitarian concern for the poor, particularly for children and the aged, were paving the way for further reform.<sup>437</sup>

One major contribution to the problem of individual poverty, its causes and its relief, was the system of ‘district visiting’ which was usually carried out by religious bodies and missions and the Charitable Organisation Society. There is evidence that such visiting was used by those working for the Rock mission, and included those who had been helped themselves as

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<sup>434</sup> Prochaska, ‘Philanthropy’, p.369.

<sup>435</sup> Kidd, ‘Outcast Manchester’, p.52.

<sup>436</sup> D. Owen, *English Philanthropy 1660-1960* (Oxford, 1964), p.136.

<sup>437</sup> K. Laybourn, *The Evolution of British Social Policy and the Welfare State* (Keele, 1994), p.32.

well as by those who were part of the original religious groups who instigated the charity. As charity in Huddersfield tended to focus on the benevolence of people who left endowments, or extended their charity to accepted groups within society, any change beyond this was slow to take place. Support for these charities began to slow and there emerged a more altruistic change toward worthy causes. It became popular to support the building of schools, or to bequeath land to be used for the benefit of educational projects. Almost all private charities in Huddersfield benefited from these worthy causes - rarely touching the undeserving poor much before 1870.<sup>438</sup>

### The Charitable Organisation Society

The Charitable Organisation Society had the principal aim of removing indiscriminate relief by treating each case of relief on its own merits. A return to self reliance was also a prime motive in the way the Charitable Organisation Society operated. Relief was only to be given to the undeserving cases if they could show that they were attempting to reform. It soon becomes apparent that with the advent of the Charitable Organisation Society there came into being, relatively clear lines of charitable relief.<sup>439</sup> As Octavia Hill and her co-workers in the Charitable Organisation Society would have it:

Charity was for the deserving cases, those who could be helped by preventive and remedial action; the Poor Law was for the undeserving destitute.<sup>440</sup>

The purpose of the Charitable Organisation Society, was to organise existing charities so that support given to the poor could be regulated on strict lines. However, in what Prochaska called '*laissez faire* capitalism turned in on itself' there were problems in the organisation of charities and their resources, inevitably, this led to squabbles over how best to regulate the

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<sup>438</sup> For an example of individual philanthropy in a much larger and poorer area, see the individual 'saint-like' generosity of Frank Crossley (Saint Francis of Ancoats). Shapely, *Charity and Power*, pp.74-75.

<sup>439</sup> P. Murray, *Poverty and Welfare 1830-1914*, (London, 1999), p.64.

<sup>440</sup> Prochaska, *Women and Philanthropy*, p.132.

many charities that sprang up during the nineteenth century.<sup>441</sup> Geoffrey Searle believed that the Charitable Organisation Society held the view that poverty could be eliminated, if pauperism and the depraved attitude to life and the consequent dependency on relief were eradicated. According to Searle, the Charitable Organisation Society would often ‘put down slackly run charities’ and repress begging as far as possible, their main aim was to ‘establish a clearing system which would enable charities to distinguish between *deserving* and *undeserving* cases, the latter being referred to the Poor Law authorities’.<sup>442</sup>

There was however, an element of public protest toward organised charity, particularly the Charitable Organisation Society and the prescriptive and inquisitive nature of the relief offered by such an organisation. Under the Charitable Organisation Society - vagrants were largely left alone. The methods employed by them often came in for criticism, especially from the general public. Opinion in Sussex on the Charitable Organisation Society was divided. Some thought the Brighton branch of the society were ‘... a board of ogres’ but conversely, the society in Brighton, roundly applauded Sir Cordy Burrows when he advised ladies:

whose tender hearts and sympathies were so easily touched by tales of woe, and who all too often indiscriminately relieved street beggars’ that they were, - ‘as bad as the beggars themselves – one being wicked; the other fools.’<sup>443</sup>

The organisational prowess of the society seemingly knew no bounds. By the late 1870s they were well organised, and could advise on a growing number of topics concerning the benefits of a stable and healthy life-style. In Huddersfield there is evidence that the society were linked to local Boards of Guardians and through their enquiries they were able to inform the

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<sup>441</sup> Ibid., p.106.

<sup>442</sup> G.R. Searle, *A New England: Peace and War 1886-1918* (Oxford, 2004), p.96.

<sup>443</sup> R. Humphreys, *Sin, Organised charity and the Poor Law in Victorian England* (London, 1995.), p. 110.

guardians as to who was receiving what - in the form of charity.<sup>444</sup> There were also instances where the society would report and regularly liaise with the district medical officers and public health officials. As the medical officers were employed by the Poor Law Unions, it was apparent that the society and the local unions were working alongside each other. Frank Prochaska argues that the importance of the district-visiting schemes when he states that:

The history of visiting is in part a history of its transition from amateurishness to sophistication, the grafting of social science methods on to religious precepts and church organization.<sup>445</sup>

#### The Evangelical response to charity.

Of the fundamental worth of the virtues of *faith, hope and charity*, the greatest of these according to the Bible is charity.<sup>446</sup> And this was one reason why charity played such an important role in assisting the needy during the nineteenth century. However, the mid-nineteenth century response to the self-help ideology and its relationship to charity and giving, were closely linked to ideas that charity should be dispensed carefully: to reward virtue, but not to encourage false expectation. Generally there were three specific points to be considered in any charitable response toward the poor. There should be discrimination in giving - there should be personal contact with the poor, and a fostering of self-help. Giving alms to a beggar was seen to be irresponsible, indeed, throughout the early decades of the nineteenth century there were anti-begging societies, whose primary aim was to re-direct the impulses of donors away from the street mendicant, as well as to suppress and try and

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<sup>444</sup> *Huddersfield Weekly News*, letter to the Board of Guardians from Mr Hemingway, Secretary of the Huddersfield and Halifax Charitable Organisation Society, 19 June 1875.

<sup>445</sup> Prochaska, *Women and Philanthropy*, p.132.

<sup>446</sup> *Corinthians* 1, 13:13.

eradicate begging itself.<sup>447</sup> The same could have been said about the Protestant Rock Mission in Huddersfield, which operated for the benefit of all ‘paupers’ even the same areas as the Catholic Church with its largely Irish migrant congregation.<sup>448</sup> In Huddersfield, from the 1830s, the Roman Catholic Church was particularly vigorous in protecting the interests of the newly-arrived Irish. The Catholic Church offered a form of hands-on social work toward the Irish, a pattern that was repeated in other centres such as Bradford and Leeds. The Protestant poor too, had a similar experience through a successful mission in the town. From the early 1870s, this was an organisation, which was Interdenominational and operated in the town centre for over sixty years. Together, these two bodies, with differing religious views, did a great deal to relieve the plight of the poorest in the town during the latter half of the nineteenth-century.

#### The Rock Mission

By the 1870s, it became clear that there was little if any adequate provision for the casual poor of Huddersfield. On the other hand, the Catholic Church had long-established social links with its poor in the town, but it seemed that the Protestants had been somewhat forgotten by the established Anglican Church. The Rock Mission began its weekly prayer meetings in premises in Thomas Street, providing both social and spiritual help for the poor. There was, each Sunday, a similar service held alternatively in one of two lodging houses situated in Lowerhead row and Kirkgate. The Lodging houses are referred to as ‘lodging

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<sup>447</sup> The work of the London Mendicity Society founded in 1818 until its decline in the 1860s, illustrates the combination of punitive relief strategies pursued by those who sought to organise and rationalise charitable giving.

<sup>448</sup> Some of the poorest parts of the town were toward the bottom end of the town towards the present location of the University. Rosemary Lane and Manchester Street as well as the Beast Market and St.Peters Street generally define some of the worst parts of the Victorian town centre.



house one and two'.<sup>449</sup> By carrying out services in the lodging houses it is likely that the some of the nearby residents might have been Irish Catholics and it is recorded that these early services came under the scrutiny of the Roman Catholic clergy 'who had influence over the occupiers of [these] premises'.<sup>450</sup> One might assume from this that the Catholic Church were suspicious, or at least wary of the efforts of their Protestant friends who might be perceived as trying proselytize the Catholic occupants of the lodging houses.

In 1879, it was reported that the mission should provide a service for the poor that was 'suitable for their condition' and a room was secured for a small rent in Rosemary Lane.<sup>451</sup> The first service took place there on the first Sunday in August 1879 and there was reportedly seating for 50 people. The service seems to have upset the local community as the following account testifies:

When the door was opened, a rush was made by the rough element surrounding the mission and [prevented] the service taking place.<sup>452</sup>

We do not know who the 'rough element' was, or why they felt the need to 'rush' the service. We know that Rosemary lane was a run-down area and the census returns between 1851 and 1871 indicate that most of the street was, and had been, consistently occupied by either first generation Irish migrants or their off-spring.<sup>453</sup> The event does not seem to have been too serious, as it would have no doubt been reported in the local press. There are no newspaper

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<sup>449</sup> The Rock Mission, Turnbridge 1882 – 1945, KDA. Contained in this document is a hand written account of the history of the mission by an anonymous hand. The document also contains details of members of the mission and subscriptions to a later building fund. The pages of the account are numbered by the author in the same hand. The author is unknown, but is likely to be someone from the church

<sup>450</sup> The Rock Mission, 1882-1945, p.7. (A hand written archive on bound paper, sometimes numbered, often not).

<sup>451</sup> Ibid.,p.12.

<sup>452</sup> Ibid., p.9.

<sup>453</sup> Census Enumerator Returns, Huddersfield 1871; Town Centre North –Rosemary Lane, HO 107/2295, Folios 151-310.

reports supporting this disturbance, indeed the mission only becomes newsworthy in the 1880s, when it moves to new premises in Lord Street in the town centre. When the new premises are opened a tea is given to friends and members of the mission by Messrs Batch and Jebson. The chairman referred to the:

Past usefulness of the mission and the present and continued interest manifested by those directly benefited thereby.<sup>454</sup>

The assembled group were treated to an ‘entertainment’ and the meeting was closed following the singing of the doxology. Some months later there was a juvenile entertainment laid on for the friends and members and overseen by the chairman Mr Haigh. During the evening ‘a dialogue was given by several children showing their desirability of total abstinence’ and the chairman gave a talk on the perseverance with regard to the duties of life.<sup>455</sup> Despite the apparent interruptions to services and the apparent suspicion of the Catholic Church, the mission carried on regardless. The new premises in Rosemary Lane were furnished with begged and borrowed items: a pulpit and table and chairs were collected from local chapels and meetings carried on there for about 18 months. This period is described as ‘turbulent’ in the archive, with the doors in Rosemary Lane being regularly bolted during services.<sup>456</sup> Despite this, local opposition continued, with windows being regularly broken.<sup>457</sup> Services were carried out by ladies and gentlemen from the towns various churches – and the ‘Church of England and the non-conformists have worked hand in hand in this movement’.<sup>458</sup> As well as the apparently well attended indoor services in

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<sup>454</sup> *Huddersfield Chronicle and West Yorkshire Advertiser*, February 26 1887.

<sup>455</sup> *Ibid.*, 18 July 1887.

<sup>456</sup> *The Rock Mission, 1882-1945*, p.13

<sup>457</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>458</sup> *Ibid.*, p.9.

Rosemary lane, there were outdoor services in the area during the summer months. The *Huddersfield Weekly News* recorded details of a service held on Christmas day 1880:

There were about 70 people in attendance, all of the poorest kind and they were well provided for by their many friends. On Monday morning a breakfast was given to the inmates of the neighbouring lodging houses where services were held.<sup>459</sup>

Despite outside pressure from locals, services continued in the lodging houses. The archives record the thoughts of the mission and the work they carried out and the general good it was doing for the community. The account states that those that attended seemed to improve in character and that:

Women had some influence over their husbands, who they were able to keep from the local public houses in the town; in all, their living conditions and prospects seem to have improved.<sup>460</sup>

During the early 1880s the members of the mission decided to try and help their cause by their own efforts and in doing so had an offertory placed in the mission room for ‘voluntary contributions’.<sup>461</sup> The money raised, went toward the up-keep of the mission and for the needy of the district. We know from the record that several destitute people were assisted through these donations. William Barnett, of Thomas Street, was given a small amount to enable him to pay some rent owing for his lodgings, on the strict understanding that he attend the mission and refrain from drinking. Similarly, Catherine Scott, a weaver who had received a serious injury to her arm was assisted in arranging transport to Dewsbury, where her brother

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<sup>459</sup> *The Huddersfield Weekly News*, 29 December 1880.

<sup>460</sup> The Rock Mission, 1882-1945, p.11.KDA.

<sup>461</sup> *Ibid.*, p.12.

was gravely ill.<sup>462</sup> Scott appears in a later account, where she is praised for her ‘solid and faithful work in the mission’.<sup>463</sup>

In 1882, and in an effort to spread the congregation throughout the town, the existing mission members were encouraged to go to other churches in the town centre. Many members threatened to give up their devotion, as they felt uncomfortable about going elsewhere. They felt more at ease worshipping amongst their own community and in their own mission. In 1885, the Rosemary Lane property was bought by an un-named businessman and the mission was given notice to quit. Compensation was sought from the town’s mayor and the mission was given £1. The following account summed up the mission’s intent in their search for a new mission:

The Lord has opened out a way and within 100 yards from the last place; a lease was secured in a more commodious place, which had previously been a Temperance refreshment room.<sup>464</sup>

We do not know the location of this new mission, but in any event, within a short space of time, they had to move again, this time to Lord Street and premises known as the ‘Rock’. The new premises were no more than 200 yards from the Rosemary Lane mission, which was still within easy reach of the poor in the town. The mission leaders were philosophical about these constant changes, stating ‘like Abraham of old, we had to keep on the move’.<sup>465</sup> The Lord Street premises were extended and a library was added for the education, both spiritual and worldly of the members. But despite this new-found security, within two years the mission was required to leave Lord Street. Eventually, the members decided that the mission needed to be placed in a permanent building. Perhaps one of the reasons for a more settled

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<sup>462</sup> Ibid.

<sup>463</sup> Ibid. (unnumbered page).

<sup>464</sup> Ibid., p.23.

<sup>465</sup> Ibid., p. 24.

base, surrounded discussions that concerned the philosophy of 'free religion' and the unfair system of 'pew rents' and 'denominational divisions which alike puzzle and paralyze the poor'.<sup>466</sup> The mission records a Methodist conference in London in 1889 when missions in the poorer parts of England were discussed;

Mission rooms were support for the poor and acted as an inducement for them to gather amongst their own class - the mendicant and badly clothed prefer a room frequented by persons like themselves, where they can find a religious home amongst their own class.<sup>467</sup>

The fact that the detail of this conference was recorded in the history tends to support the idea that it was a doctrine of interest to the Rock mission and that the experience of the Rock, was similar to ideas being proposed at the conference.

After thirteen years moving from rented room to rented room, the mission decided to go ahead with a more settled venue. It is recorded that Mr Beadon, 'the esteemed agent of Sir John Wm.Ramsden', was willing to make available a piece of land for a 'small annual acknowledgement' on which, a wooden structure could be built.<sup>468</sup> Plans were made and the cost of the wooden chapel to be built in St Andrews Road, Turnbridge, was estimated at around £200. The mission soon began a mothers meeting group, a penny savings bank, a sick committee, and a Sunday school and a congregational visiting committee. The visiting committee was staffed by local men and women who lived among the poor, and were most likely poor themselves. They were 'strong and diligent members of some years standing'.<sup>469</sup> The membership of the mission was never large. By the 1880s, there were sixty-five

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<sup>466</sup> Ibid., p.28.

<sup>467</sup> Ibid., p.28.

<sup>468</sup> Ibid., p.29.

<sup>469</sup> Ibid., p.31.

members the number rarely changed much throughout the mission's history.<sup>470</sup> There are records of those who attended the sacramental services every month. These records are not regularly kept and suddenly end around 1904. Between July 1895 and June 1896, there were 340 attendees with an average attendance of  $28\frac{1}{3}$ , the following year the total attendance was 349, with an average of 29.<sup>471</sup> These numbers, though small, do not reflect the dogged determination to continue the necessary work of the mission in improving the lives of the poor. The evidence suggests that the Rock mission did much more than evangelise its members and its continued existence well into the twentieth century is testimony to its success.<sup>472</sup> Later records from the 1920's and 1930's show that there were 48 offertories in various places throughout the town with the aim of raising funds for the mission. In 1920-1, the mission amalgamated with the Queen Street Chapel and became known as the Queen Street mission, disbanding in 1945.<sup>473</sup>

It would appear that the Rock throughout its history, offered the destitute and poor, spiritual and social assistance, and that despite the alleged efforts of the local community and the Roman Catholic clergy in disrupting what we might assume was parochial territory, the mission survived and flourished. One gets a sense that the Rock was open to all, deserving and undeserving, Protestant and Catholic, or no religion at all, and sat well amongst some of the poorest inhabitants of the town. Though religious in nature the mission often offered sound practical advice on many matters concerning cleanliness in the home, child-health and medical provisions for babies:

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<sup>470</sup> The numbers between 1877 and 1910 fluctuate between 45 and 75. The recording of these numbers is often erratic and not a regular part of the minutes of the mission.

<sup>471</sup> The Rock Mission, 1882-1945, KDA, p.35.

<sup>472</sup> In an entry in 1920 an Arthur Walker records the death of one stalwart of the mission William Wrigglesworth, who had been assisted by the mission in 1881 and had 'turned to God instead of the drink and God had saved him fromof [his wayward life]' - The Rock Mission, 1882-1945 (unnumbered page).

<sup>473</sup> The Lord St Mission still exists to this day and is run by the united Methodist churches of Huddersfield, it provides basic food and clothes to those in needs.

Miss Broadbent was particularly active in promoting a healthy and clean home amongst the town's poor; she would also advise young mothers on how to look after the youngest members of the family and assist the mothers of new-born babies in basic hygiene, providing them with the basic knowledge of general cleanliness and infant care.<sup>474</sup>

Support for the Rock mission was offered by the established Anglican Churches, the Methodists and the non-conformists, indicating a growing will to assist the poor. However, the fact that the mission struggled to gain a foothold in regular premises for some time, suggests that the assistance given was piecemeal and basic. Peter Shapely gives several similar examples of the kind reflected upon above. Regarding the Wood street Mission in Manchester, he describes the emotive language used to describe the children who were in need of saving:

It claimed that a hungry lad is not a phenomenon, he is met with everywhere, and that there were lads especially hungry who, with cadaverous look, hang about the streets. The waifs were often 'homeless, friendless, penniless' the pleas for charitable giving gave a stark warning to those that had in their power to assist, give generously and prevent these children being abandoned to the 'freezing hospitality of the Union or become society's pests.'<sup>475</sup>

It does seem that by the 1870's there was a sincere attempt to not only improve the moral and spiritual nature of the inhabitants of the lodging houses, but a drive to bring Protestant values to a largely Irish Catholic community. Although the records kept regarding the Rock are inconsistent and often disorganized, there is one rather poignant section at the beginning of the volume. Over three pages, the mission records the names of members of the congregation,

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<sup>474</sup> The Rock Mission, 1882-1945, KDA, pp.24-6.

<sup>475</sup> Shapely, *Charity and Power*, pp. 33-34.

and where they are recorded has having died - it is recorded in the right-hand margin that the deceased 'died, still in the faith'.<sup>476</sup> Unfortunately only their names are recorded, no details survive of how old they were or where they lived in the town. Despite the rhetoric surrounding the poor and destitute and the rather precarious relationship they had with established religion, these simple extracts of faith, hope and charity, are testimony to the lasting good brought about by the Rock mission. It was obvious that the Rock had some limited success in assisting the poor of Huddersfield. Whether one can say that the Rock mission attempted any form of social control is open to interpretation. What seems to have been done is, to offer a sense of relief for some of the poorest in the town centre, albeit against an evangelical setting, and one that was aimed at providing improved outcomes for a whole community, Protestant and Catholic alike.

#### St. Patrick's and Roman Catholic Charity

The Catholic Church in Huddersfield attracted a growing number of Irish migrants during the 1830s and 1840s. The revival of the Catholic Church in many towns and cities in Britain had only briefly been re-established when they found themselves at the heart of newly established migrant communities. St Patrick's Roman Catholic Church, Huddersfield, was built to serve just such a fledgling community. And serve it, it did, not just those that had been in the town since the early decades of the nineteenth century, but those who were to come in the 1840s and 1850s. As in other northern towns and cities the founding fathers of renewed Catholicism fought hard to unify church and community, and by the 1850s, there were a great number of Catholic based charities in the north. In Manchester for example there was St Ann's Sunday Evening Ragged School, St Bridget's Roman Catholic Female Orphan Asylum, St Mary's Home and House of Refuge and Penitentiary.<sup>477</sup>

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<sup>476</sup> The Rock Mission, 1882-1945. KDA.

<sup>477</sup> Shapely, *Charity and Power*, p.144.



Before 1828 the established Catholic families of Huddersfield were spread across the district. During these early years the Huddersfield Catholics were attended to by priests from St. Mary's in Bradford.<sup>478</sup> Between 1828 and 1832, the Huddersfield Catholic mission held mass in a private room in Woolpack yard in the town centre. This early mission was dedicated to St Patrick by the then mission priest, Father Thomas Keily. Due to the number of Irish new to the town, demand increased for a permanent church and Father Keily set to work to build St. Patrick's. His work was helped in the main by the encouragement of local businessmen, who employed a number of the earlier established Irish. It was not because they were Catholic, rather that they wanted their workforce to remain in the town and it was thought that the best way to secure this was for them to have their own place of worship.<sup>479</sup> Land was leased from the Ramsden estate and a church was built. St. Patrick's opened on 26 September 1832, with the high mass been sung by Rev. Dr Preswick.<sup>480</sup> It was noted that there were many Protestants present 'of the first respectability' and the initial collection raised £130.<sup>481</sup> The influx of Irish Catholics during the mid to late 1840s, swelled the congregation of the church and by 1858, a curate was appointed to administer to the increased number of parishioners. By the 1880's, provision was made for the Irish community at the lower end of town and temporary quarters were found in Highgate Street and then in St. Peters Street.<sup>482</sup> At around the same time and due to the poverty witnessed by successive

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<sup>478</sup> Rev. Francis X. Singleton, *A Historical record of St. Patrick's Church, Huddersfield*. (Huddersfield, 1932) p.15.

<sup>479</sup> Ibid.

<sup>480</sup> Ibid., p.16.

<sup>481</sup> Ibid., p.17.

<sup>482</sup> These locations were close to the Rock mission and may indicate why there might have been some caution, even suspicion exercised by the Catholics.

priests, the Sisters of the Order of the Holy Cross and Passion came to the town and resided in a convent in Brunswick Street in order to provide charitable services.<sup>483</sup>

Bishop Robert Cornthwaite, Bishop of Leeds, 1861-1890, knew the effect that the growing Irish poor had on the fledgling communities in the towns of Yorkshire. His attitude toward the poor however, was typical of many senior religious clerics. In a pastoral letter of 1877, he remarked that ‘it is, indeed, a dispensation of providence that there shall always be the poor...’ but added that the rich are ‘commanded by god to help them’, a direct reference to *Corinthians* 1.13:13.<sup>484</sup> Bishop Gordon went further, ‘Christ, chose to be poor, poverty, therefore, must be good’ adding that it ‘delivers a man from many temptations’.<sup>485</sup> Successive bishops had the same strong ideas about the poor and yet it was the poor themselves that paid for and furnished many of the new Catholic Churches in Yorkshire:

The pennies of the Irish poor were the sole support of many priests in the industrial areas of Yorkshire, enabling them to provide the facilities needed.<sup>486</sup>

Despite this distant rhetoric from the Catholic hierarchy - at the grass-roots level the church cared for and offered aide for its poor congregation.

The parish priests of St. Patrick’s were well aware of the conditions that the majority of their congregation lived in, and more importantly knew that many of them in the Protestant workhouses and institutions were being denied the rights of the Catholic sacrament.<sup>487</sup> The original Poor Law Act of 1834 had made it quite clear that there were rules about religious discrimination, it was not to be tolerated, but some rules were simply not adhered to. Whilst there was a mutual respect for each other’s religion, especially from the lay members of the

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<sup>483</sup> Ibid., p.26.

<sup>484</sup> *Acta Dioec.* Beverlac (A.D.B), Vol. V. Pastoral letter, 30 November 1877.

<sup>485</sup> *Acta Ecclesiae Loinensis* (A.E.L), Vol VIII, Pastoral letter, November 1894.

<sup>486</sup> J.F. Supple-Green, *The Catholic Revival in Yorkshire 1850-1900*, The Leeds Philosophical and Literary Society Ltd (Leeds, 1990), [209]3.

<sup>487</sup> Ibid., [209]4.

Protestant faith there were obstructive measures laid down by the local authorities in many industrial centres. There is evidence that the Boards of Guardians in several towns were openly reticent about the rules laid forth by parliament and the subsequent Act of 1834. During the 1850s and 1860s, some priests found it difficult to gain access to the workhouses. In Bradford, the guardians there refused admittance stating:

the most serious inconvenience and interference with the discipline and good order of the workhouse would occur.<sup>488</sup>

In Sheffield Father Burke waged a concentrated war against the authorities. As mission priest for St. Catherine's, Burke was dismayed to hear that Catholic children were being taken out of the workhouse and introduced to the Band of Hope, Burke complained that such a manoeuvre was most 'definitely Protestant'.<sup>489</sup> In Huddersfield however, there remained a state of relative calm on the issue. Father Stephen Dolan had managed to get himself on to the Board of Guardians for the town and had the assurance from his fellow members that no Catholic girl would be sent into service in a Protestant home. His reasoning being that such a position would make it impossible for a Catholic girl to properly fulfil her religious duties.<sup>490</sup> The relative success of St. Patrick's church during its earliest years, was due to the singular efforts of Fr. Michael Trappes. He worked tirelessly during the 1840's for both the church and his community. In a letter to Dr. Briggs, Bishop of Trachis, and Vicar Apostolic of the Yorkshire district, Trappes raised the issue of a school room for the Catholic poor of

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<sup>488</sup> *Leeds Mercury*, 2 December 1860.

<sup>489</sup> *The Tablet*, 20 November 1886.

<sup>490</sup> Singleton, *A Historical record of St. Patrick's Church, Huddersfield*. p.31.

Huddersfield.<sup>491</sup> In the letter, Trappes outlined the need for a school room to house the poor Catholic children. He stated that the:

children have unfortunately, too long been left to run wild, particularly on a Sunday, free from restraint.<sup>492</sup>

Trappes stated that he had completed a census of the Catholic population of the town and found that:

there were over 500 children whose parents are generally the poorest of the poor' and yet, he has neither the experience himself or has the required number of teachers who can bring about a change for these 'wretched children'.<sup>493</sup>

Indeed, Trappes stated that a good many benevolent individuals in the town and neighbourhood, of different persuasions had sympathy and:

feeling for the deplorable condition of the poor Irish children, and knowing that ignorance and want of education, are the prolific sources of crime, have voluntarily come forward in the most handsome manner with liberal subscriptions...<sup>494</sup>.

We learn from the letter that the children were expected to pay a penny a week for the day and Sunday classes and Fr. Trappes used his own money to finance the project. He went on to explain that he expected, due to the 'general depression in trade and the scarcity of employment' that he generally relied on the good conduct of lay members and other members of the community.<sup>495</sup> He was at pains to point out that the school would not be run on 'sectarian' principles, but on the lines common to much of the country, his final lines make a

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<sup>491</sup> Bishop Briggs was Vicar Apostolic, as up to September 1850 there was no Catholic Hierarchy in Britain. In effect the Pope had control of the English Catholic Church, but allowed Vicars Apostolic to govern in his absence. The return of the Catholic Hierarchy in 1850, allowed Bishops to have control of the various diocese.

<sup>492</sup> Letter from Rev. M. Trappes to Dr. Briggs, Bishop of Trachis and V.A. of the Yorkshire District, 23<sup>rd</sup> April 1841, (The letters of Bishop Briggs, Leeds Catholic Diocese Archives,)

<sup>493</sup> Ibid., 23 April, 1841.

<sup>494</sup> Ibid., 23 April, 1841.

<sup>495</sup> Ibid., 23 April, 1841.

plea for any financial assistance his Bishop could offer. Dr. Briggs replied on 1 May 1841 and agreed with Trappes' sentiments and applauded his efforts to date. The Bishop also commended the efforts of those from the different denominations and asked that his thanks be passed on to them at the earliest opportunity. He then went on to outline his advice on education, which he had given in one of his late pastorals:

let not your schools be exclusive, but open to children of all religious denominations, and when Protestant children attend, let them not share in the duties of prayer, or religious instruction, unless at their own desire, expressly sanctioned by their parents or guardians.<sup>496</sup>

He finished the letter by offering his support and assistance. This letter is a clear indication of the level of support offered by St. Patrick's during its early years, furthermore it illustrates that there were offers of benevolence from people of the lay community and from people of other denominations.

St. Patrick's offered support and spiritual care for poor and destitute Catholics of the town; furthermore a system of social assistance existed to those who were both Catholic and poor. The destitute, though not encouraged to do so, would at times seek assistance from the Parish priest.<sup>497</sup> There was also a Catholic temperance movement in the town, which was promoted through the auspices of lay members, one of whom was a reformed drinker, petty criminal and lodging house keeper, by the name of William Henry. He was an Irish Catholic and a noted speaker, renowned for both his spirit and vigour in turning drinkers against the evils of alcohol.<sup>498</sup> There was also the benevolence of the Tidy family. George Tidy owned stables and several dozen cabs, which were hired out to hackney drivers in the town. Tidy

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<sup>496</sup> Letter from Dr. John Briggs, Bishop of Trachis and V.A. of the Yorkshire District, 1 May 1841, (The letters of Bishop Briggs, Leeds Catholic Diocese Archives).

<sup>497</sup> Supple-Green, *The Catholic Revival in Yorkshire*, p.117.

<sup>498</sup> *The Tablet*, 17 March 1859.

was known for his strong Catholic faith, though claiming no Irish decent, he employed many Irish men and boys as drivers and stable-hands: some of the younger stable-boys were especially well looked after by Tidy, and every year they and their siblings were taken on a day-trip by the other cab drivers during the summer months. There is evidence that the same cab drivers of Huddersfield took the poor Catholic children from St. Patrick's church on similar days out.<sup>499</sup>

From later letters from successive Bishops, primarily after the restoration of the Catholic Hierarchy, there does seem to be more of a process of *quid pro quo* between the parish priests and the diocese. As the recipients of the Rock mission were more than likely Protestant and lived in and amongst the Irish Catholic community there may have been some resistance in accepting the mission in an area where the Catholic clergy were administering to their own people. However, there is no evidence to support any anti-Protestant feeling during this period. Indeed, both communities seemed to have managed to associate and live together relatively peacefully, excepting each other's slight religious differences. In 1863, the *Tablet* recorded a bazaar at St. Patrick's, where many Protestants of the town attended. These Protestants apparently:

Expressed their sympathy and delight at the spectacle afforded them. Harmony prevailed throughout the whole proceedings, which were not marked by a single untoward event.<sup>500</sup>

Such comments may be defensive, and intimate that there had been 'untoward events' in the past, else why mention it? However, due to a lack of evidence to the contrary, we can assume that there existed an equitable atmosphere between the two religions.

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<sup>499</sup> *The Huddersfield Weekly Examiner*, 16 August 1858 and *The Tablet*, 30 April 1859.

<sup>500</sup> *The Tablet*, 14 February 1863.

### The Evangelising nature of the Temperance Movement and Life-long Sobriety.

One cannot discuss the evangelising nature of charity, both religious and secular without discussing the role played by the temperance movement. The temperance movement's limitation was the number of willing adherents, men, women and children who were keen to live a life free from drink. Adherents came in their tens of thousands and they took up the doctrine of life-long abstinence, and with such a pledge came the promise of renewed self-worth, thrift and moral fortitude and the many that adhered to these principals did so for the rest of their lives.<sup>501</sup>

The underlying issue behind the temperance movement was the amount and availability of strong drink, and throughout the history of the temperance movement its members regularly challenged the trafficking of liquor.<sup>502</sup> By the late 1860s there were about 170 public houses and beer shops in Huddersfield, compared with around six in the town centre forty years earlier.<sup>503</sup> With the rapid expansion of industrialism over the same forty years, came the rapid growth in the number of pubs, and with that growth came the new consumers, the working and labouring classes who over a short period of time made the pub the centre of their free time. The change in cultural and consumer habits had a dramatic effect on many communities. Consequently there was a continuous discourse on the morals and status of those who idled their time away in pubs. Such issues were also taken up by the church and were often the subject of evangelical charity. The Rock mission took over premises that used to be a 'temperance refreshment room' and quickly developed a theme of

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<sup>501</sup> J.S. Blocher, *Alcohol and Temperance in Modern History*, [www.abc.clío.com](http://www.abc.clío.com) accessed 1 May 2009.

<sup>502</sup> Together with the Quakers and the Salvation Army the temperance movement harangued the House of Commons, demanding legislation to restrict the sale of alcohol. In some parts of Britain public houses were forced to close on Sundays. The National Temperance Federation formed in 1884, became closely associated with the Liberal Party, whereas the Whigs remained supportive of the drinks trade. P.L.Quinn and C. Taliaferro, *A Companion to the Philosophy of Religion* (Oxford, 1999) ch. 13, pp 111-121.

<sup>503</sup> D. Green, *Huddersfield Pubs*, (Stroud, 2007).

abstinence, as one of the main sources of discussion and education within the mission.<sup>504</sup> By the 1870s, temperance was well-established in the day to day activities of the church and chapel in Huddersfield. Abstinence was practised by many churchgoers in the town and across the three main religious groups. Even the Catholic Church offered assistance in giving up the demon drink, despite this amusing verse dedicated to St. Patrick:

No wonder that we Irish lads are then so blythe and frisky  
 St. Patrick was the very man that taught us to drink whiskey,  
 O' to be sure he had the knack and understood distillin'  
 For his mother kept a shabeen shop in the town of Enniskillen!<sup>505</sup>

One of the earliest Catholic groups to tackle the perceived problem of the Irish and drink, was the 'Confraternity of the Sacred Thirst' which was successful across the north and followed the *Tablets* stance on abstinence:

to abstain from all intoxicating drinks on Saturdays until God, in his mercy, shall grant peace and triumph to the church and liberty to the Holy and Apostolic see.<sup>506</sup>

In 1877, Fr. John Curry, an Irishman, brought both the issue of drink and culture into focus in his lectures to audiences in Huddersfield and Bradford, Curry:

exalted his hearers to withstand the temptations of the public house, for by giving way to drinking they dimmed the lustre of the cross and the shamrock'.<sup>507</sup>

Just like the Rock mission the Catholic Church soon became involved in a similar stance concerning temperance.

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<sup>504</sup> See pp.150-2.

<sup>505</sup> S. Gilley, 'English attitudes to the Irish in England 1780-1900', in Colin Holmes (ed.), *Immigrants and Minorities in British Society*, (London, 1978), p. 83.

<sup>506</sup> *The Tablet*, 14 April 1875.

<sup>507</sup> *The Leeds Mercury*, 31 January 1877.



Temperance was a mass movement that had its true origins in the early nineteenth century. Although there existed diatribes on drunkenness and excess, total abstinence from alcohol was very rarely advocated or practised. One of the earliest temperance societies was inspired by the theologian and Irish Presbyterian Minister, John Edgar.<sup>508</sup> During the late 1820s, he advocated a concentration on the Holy Spirit, rather than on beer and wine. In 1834, he addressed a parliamentary committee inquiring into the causes and consequences of drunkenness in the United Kingdom, he noted that:

There were 550 dram shops in Belfast and 1,700 shops selling intoxicants in Dublin as well as numerous illicit distillers ‘even in the most civilised districts of Ulster’.<sup>509</sup>

The father of English temperance was Joseph Livesey, who started his temperance movement in Preston in 1832 and required followers to sign a pledge of total abstinence.<sup>510</sup> The temperance movement were keen to engage in all manner of issues surrounding drink. The medical dangers of alcohol were addressed by the movements own paid doctors, who went head to head with the wider medical community: the dissemination of this knowledge was sponsored by the largest and most notorious temperance organisations, including the National Temperance League, the Church of England Temperance Society, and the United Kingdom Alliance.<sup>511</sup> There soon a large number of medical practitioners who were keen to become surgeons and scientists, and who were influential in promoting the temperance cause among audiences who were increasingly impressed by the facts and the authority of science.<sup>512</sup> However, for the majority of well-meaning Victorians, abuse meant a narrative towards a

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<sup>508</sup> R. Blaney, *Presbyterians and the Irish Language*, (Ulster, 1996).

<sup>509</sup> *The Irish Times*, An Irishman’s Diary, 28 October 2010.

<sup>510</sup> J. Weston, *Joseph Livesey: the story of his life, 1794-1884* (London, 1884).

<sup>511</sup> *Ibid.*, p.332.

<sup>512</sup> *Ibid.*, p.336.

lack of moral control and in the case of the working classes and the poor - a breakdown in moral standards.

The major tone of most temperance lectures and literature was religious and moralistic, many other kinds of arguments in favour of personal abstinence or restrictions on the trafficking of drink were also utilised, from the very origins of the teetotal movement in the 1830's. The temperance historian Brian Harrison has argued that the initial tenor of the movement was secular and worldly, an approach that only changed in the second half of the nineteenth century, when it became affiliated with organized religion.<sup>513</sup> Early teetotal societies had been led by ambitious members of the working classes, who believed that abstention from alcohol was one essential step to achieving self-improvement and respectability. For the ruling classes, intemperance among the masses was considered a problem from the point of view of national prosperity and public order. Drunkenness was denounced, not only on the grounds that it was inconsistent with Scripture, or with a righteous Christian life, but also because it often led to violence, crime, and pauperism. Temperance reform was thus presented as relevant to both the ethical or spiritual realm and the material conditions of life. It served as a rational solution to social problems associated with industrialization and as a means to self-realisation and social advancement.<sup>514</sup>

By the 1850's, more and more members of the clergy were readily joining the temperance movement. The Church of England Temperance society, founded in 1873, became the largest and most influential temperance group in the nation: by 1910, there were over 485,000 members.<sup>515</sup>

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<sup>513</sup> B. Harrison, *Drink and the Victorians: The Temperance Question in England 1815-1872* (London, 1971), pp. 179-195.

<sup>514</sup> Harrison, *Drink and the Victorians*, p.185.

<sup>515</sup> *Ibid.*, p.187.

The Huddersfield Temperance Society was founded in 1833 and during the week long celebrations to mark its ninth anniversary, more than 1,600 townsfolk attended meetings and sermons in the Philosophical hall in the town.<sup>516</sup> Mr T. Shepherd, president of the society presided over the five nights of meetings and introduced such temperance luminaries as Mr Brown-Leech and Dr. F.R. Lees, the editor of the *National Temperance Advocate and Journal*, who gave a reading of his award winning essay 'The Strong Drink Question'. During the week, there was a procession through the principal streets of the town and accompanying the hundreds who marched, was the Huddersfield Teetotal Band. On the opening day of the festival, some 1,400 members sat down, in two shifts, and took the 'cup which cheers but not inebriates'.<sup>517</sup> By 1850, meetings were being held in the outer districts. The neighbouring villages around Longwood were invited to a talk given by Mr J.C. Booth in the school room at Longwood. Booth spoke at length about the objects and principles of the temperance reformation.<sup>518</sup> Later that same year the Huddersfield Temperance Society celebrated its seventeenth anniversary in the Queen St chapel in the town. The Rev. Skinner conducted a special sermon reading from the Old Testament (Esther 8, vii).<sup>519</sup> Some thirty years later the society was still going strong and during their thirtieth anniversary celebrations, the local press reports a series of 'interesting meetings embracing their principal features, the religious, the social, the oratorical and the practical'.<sup>520</sup> During processions throughout the week the celebrants were joined by the Band of Hope, who provided a musical interlude during the proceedings.<sup>521</sup> In 1873, the society held its fortieth anniversary celebrations in the Theatre Royal in town and at the Queen St Chapel.

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<sup>516</sup> *The Bradford Observer: and Halifax, Huddersfield and Keighley Reporter*, 27 October 1842.

<sup>517</sup> Ibid.

<sup>518</sup> *Huddersfield Chronicle and West Yorkshire Advertiser*, 22 June 1850.

<sup>519</sup> Ibid., 26 October 1850.

<sup>520</sup> *The Huddersfield Chronicle*, 3 October 1863.

<sup>521</sup> Ibid.

By the 1870's, nearly every church and chapel in Huddersfield held Sunday schools. St Patrick's Roman Catholic Church included a period of Sunday instruction with added training on the evils of drink. The provision of a light tea served as both a reward for the children's attendance and as an indication of the wholesome nature of a sober life.<sup>522</sup> By the end of the 1880s, church and chapel organised temperance groups were every bit as popular as the independent groups. According to Harrison the character of the temperance movement changed radically between 1830 and 1860:

it became more high brow and respectable as working-class moralists and reformed drunkards were replaced by new leaders from the educated classes.<sup>523</sup>

This appears to be the case in Huddersfield, where there was an array of educated speakers attending the anniversary celebrations in the town. Many of these members of the educated classes were the clergy from the various religious denominations, particularly the non-conformists and Anglicans, though some members of the church, had been total abstainers for some time, and didn't need the temperance movement to illuminate the path of a drink-free life. The Wesleyans, and the earlier Plymouth brethren, had long since taken the pledge of abstinence.

In secular terms, the temperance movement tried to convince working men to spend their money on clothes, food, and even middle-class comforts such as furniture, watches, rather than beer and spirits. Temperance rhetoric and the associated narratives, argued that spending money on alcohol would only lead to ones ruin and the ruin of one's family. A related discourse of rational recreation, suggested more productive leisure and social activities, and sought to provide libraries and lectures to fill working men's free time. Alternative attractions, such as temperance coffee houses began to spring up in all major

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<sup>522</sup> *Huddersfield Chronicle and West Yorkshire Advertiser*, 19 June 1880.

<sup>523</sup> Harrison, *Drink and the Victorians*, p.181.

urban centres, but it soon became apparent that drinking coffee would not entertain a working man for a whole evening.

Whereas the temperance movement was founded by middle-class men seeking to improve the working class, the teetotal movement was founded by seven working-class men under the leadership of Joseph Livesey.<sup>524</sup> Livesey and his followers took the pledge, promising never to consume any drink. This pledge was considered the cornerstone of the teetotal movement. One working-class teetotaller, Thomas Whittaker, spoke in reference to the middle class value of the ideal 'true man', saying that teetotallers:

made me feel that a man's position and success did not, after all, depend so much on his birth and parentage than on his own efforts and perseverance.<sup>525</sup>

Teetotalism was at its most popular during the 1830's and 1840's, but was outlived by the more moderate temperance movement, which is still an active constituent for many church-goers today. What seems fundamental to both movements was their attitude toward the drunk and *his* kind. To the temperance movements, only certain people drank in pubs and went about drunk, and it was these characters that were targeted for their seemingly low morals and lack of self-control. Whilst drunkenness was not a crime *per se* – public drunkenness could become criminal if it had the contributory factors of disorder and violence. Drunkenness was generally only visible when it took place in public, and when it did, it often shocked onlookers, and by doing so promoted ill-feeling toward those caught in the act. Unfortunately, and in most cases, it was the working classes and the casual poor who were found in such a state.<sup>526</sup> Though the middle and upper classes were not immune to such

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<sup>524</sup> L.L. Shipman, *Crusade against Drink in Victorian England* (New York, 1988), p.9.

<sup>525</sup> *Ibid.*, p.30.

<sup>526</sup> Many of the Acts that legislated against drunkenness and violence came into being during the 1860's and 1870's at about the time that the numbers of pubs and clubs were growing and police numbers were also increasing.

riotous behaviour, they were often more discreet. Private clubs, and Free mason lodges, were often lively venues in the provinces, where the problems of drink, proliferated just as much as the high street pub.

In respect of views toward the poor, there developed the idea that the drunken pauper was having too much fun and consequently had too much spare time on his hands. This suited the moral majority, who were often important men at the forefront of civic authority in the town. According to Geoffrey Searle, public houses became useful for the gathering of working class groups such as trade unions, and the early socio-political groups, as well as friendly society's, and a collective of salubrious characters such as petty criminals and prostitutes.<sup>527</sup> The pub was becoming a focal point for much more than the regular drinker and idler and instead of becoming unpopular and the centre of all that was morally corrupt, its importance improved its position in the community.

The language of philanthropy and public and private giving in Huddersfield, was similar, if on a smaller scale, to other like centres in industrial towns particularly in the north. Ideas of community, self-help and reliance on entrenched morals were natural enough attributes, even to the poorest of inhabitants. Like other centres, Huddersfield made much of its endowed charities: the language here, called for moral standards associated with 'industry' and a necessity of the recipient being in 'need'. The work of the Rock mission offered a new version of charity in that it was able to offer practical advice and through its visiting service, an alternative to the often prescriptive activities of the Charitable Organisation Society. The town displayed natural responses to emergencies and was clearly able to rally, clear and unambiguous levels of support following the flood at Holmfirth in 1852. This garnering of local and national support was a prime example of Victorian benevolence.

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<sup>527</sup> G.R. Searle, *A New England? Peace and War 1886-1914*, p.557.

In some cases, certain members of the middle classes justified their social position through charity, in return for an acknowledgment of loyalty from their beneficiaries. Might this then demonstrate certain relationships between benefactor and beneficiary, and might it also indicate a relationship where the benefactor has some control over the person or organisation in receipt of the charity? Even the Rock mission, with its district visiting and adherence toward the principles of temperance and abstinence, was more associated with aspects of industry and self-reliance, rather than any attempt at social control. Indigence and servility amongst the needy, was for some, the direct result of the upper and middle classes expecting due deference to their benevolence and the return of a loyal benefactor. Those that contributed to the dispensary and infirmary in Huddersfield, allowed themselves a level of this type of relationship. However, this form of giving was well established during the nineteenth century and was rarely a form of social control, more so, an accepted form of publicly announcing one's charitable deeds. The pay-off, for the benefactor, was often local praise and a possible improvement in one's professional and public status.

Social control did not exist in isolation and its relationship to charity required much more than the individual aspects of organised aid. Through the organisation of law and order and many other social processes and relationships, social order was sustained. 'Policemen without boots' were 'humanitarians, clergymen, social workers and educators'. Rather than 'social control' there existed a form of 'social order', which was sustained by a product of accepted norms, such as common morality, maintained through the existing institutions of society.<sup>528</sup> The old seventeenth-century charities that supported the 'industrious and the needy' were the same accepted virtues used in the nineteenth century. However, in order for social order to work within public charity there should be vigorous guidance held over the poor to prevent them from idleness and the attributes of pauperism.

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<sup>528</sup> p.152.

Where then did the undeserving poor stand within these expanding public charities? Were they provided for? It is clear that certain elements of the undeserving poor should not be helped, for they had the provisions of the Poor Law. In the case of the 'sick poor' and the availability of medical assistance, there is some evidence that the Poor Law authorities might assist in times of need. But it is also clear that self-dispensing and the use of quack medicine, was often the only way that the very poor might be helped. Once again, if all else failed and the family unit could not help, then the Poor Law and the workhouse were the only options available.

There were changes during the latter quarter of the nineteenth century in the care and help afforded to the casual poor of Huddersfield. The ground-breaking efforts of the Rock mission and social responsibility offered by the Catholic Church were particularly welcome, if not universally popular. These attempts at social reform amongst some of the poorest inhabitants were useful and appropriate, but they were simply not enough. It was largely through evangelical philanthropy, such as this, that the town succeeded in a limited sense in bolstering the provisions of the Poor Law by providing additional aid on top of Poor-relief. By partaking in the ritual of scripture and the pledge to abstain, the poor were held to account and were sworn to remain sober and industrious. These gradual changes and improvements had little to do with social control, rather the affirming of the existence of social order, self-reliance and moral character. Subsequently the language of charity was every bit as powerful, if not more so, as the language of the old parish overseer or the anti-Poor Law radical of the 1830s. There were many complex narratives at play, but it was clear that despite the efforts of Huddersfield's Catholic and Protestant missions and the language of sobriety and self-help, in many instances, charity was there for the use of the deserving and not for those deemed undeserving.



## Chapter Five

### Public Health Reform.

The focus of this and the final chapter, chapter six, is to examine areas of change that involved far-reaching reform and direct and effective control. Reform came in the shape of improvements in public health and sanitation. Control came in the form of a much more organised system of social order. Consequently, and importantly for the town, a more organised police force, and an effective use of the physical resources from that which had existed under the vestry and parish systems.

This chapter will examine the popular political language of those in authority, in particular the Improvement Commissioners, and the changes they enforced in order to make improvements to the town – ‘improvements which were essential for the prosperity and comfort of the inhabitants at large, of this rapidly increasing town’.<sup>529</sup> The language used by Joseph Brook, centres around ‘prosperity and comfort’. However, one might ask - prosperity and comfort for who, the poor and destitute or those in authority, their friends and associates and the great and the good? It is difficult to say, but throughout the regular Improvement Commissioners meetings that were held in South parade, it is clear that they had two strict agendas; value for money for the ratepayer and the removal of the taint of pauperism, for the good of the town; as controlling the spread of poverty was more important than improving the individual lives of the poor.<sup>530</sup> Despite these agendas, certain areas in the town and outer districts were improved and some improvements were made which benefitted the poor and destitute. These improvements were largely as a result of the recommendations of the Public

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<sup>529</sup> *Huddersfield Chronicle and West Yorkshire Advertiser*, 7 February 1852, the quote comes from a letter from Mr Joseph Brook Esq. on the occasion of his resignation as chairman of the Improvement Commissioners in January 1852.

<sup>530</sup> *Huddersfield Chronicle and West Yorkshire Advertiser*, 21 August 1852.

Health Act of 1848 and the interpretation of that Act by the Huddersfield Commissioners. The result was that during the 1850s and 1860s, conditions in the town were improved, mainly as a result of scientific advances in the fields of medicine and public health.

For the Improvement Commissioners, the antidote to the evils of the lodging houses was to build their own 'model lodging house' and for that building to provide both the latest sanitary conditions, as well as clean affordable rooms for the working man and his family. In truth the model house was an attempt at distracting attention away from the many run-down and dilapidated common lodging houses that proliferated throughout the town. In essence this chapter centres around quite radical reform and dramatic change and an attempt, by the authorities, under a smoke-screen of public accountability, to rid the town of the common lodging house, which was a taint on the town.

The rapid rise in Britain's population, from nearly 9 million in 1781 to 20 million in 1851, and the subsequent movement of rural workers into the industrialised areas, coupled with a lack of basic amenities, had dire and dangerous consequences for the health of the nation. As such John Aikin's verdict on Manchester in 1795 presents one side of the coin:

The poor are crowded in offensive, dark, damp and incommodious habitations, cellars are so damp as to be unfit for habitation...the poor often suffer from the shattered state of cellar windows. This is a trifling circumstance in appearance, but the consequences to the inhabitants are of the most serious kind. Fevers are among the most usual effects; and I have often known consumptions which could be traced to this cause. Inveterate rheumatic complaints, which disable the sufferer from every kind of employment, are often produced in the same manner.<sup>531</sup>

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<sup>531</sup> V. Berridge, 'Health and medicine', In F.M.L. Thompson (ed.) *The Cambridge social history of Britain, 1750-1950, Social agencies and institutions*, vol.3 (Cambridge, 1990), p.174.

Virginia Berridge marks such a description as the zenith of health from which some improvement followed:

Declining mortality, increased access to medical services, the impact of new technologies and therapies on disease all came into play. Legislative milestones marked the way – the 1848 Public Health Act; the 1911 National Health Insurance Act; the establishment of the National Health Service in 1948.<sup>532</sup>

According to Brian Barber, public health reform was the most important single item on the agenda of any local authority in the nineteenth century:

And by the early 1840s, there was, in Leeds, not only ample evidence that certain major reforms were necessary – the introduction of sewerage and public cleansing, building regulations, and the control of smoke pollution, for example – but also local legislation available to enable them to be carried into effect.<sup>533</sup>

During the late 1840s there were similar concerns about certain areas in Huddersfield, particularly during the return of cholera. According to the *Leeds Mercury*, in Huddersfield, cholera:

manifested itself in great intensity in Paddock, a portion of the hamlet of Marsh; here there is no drainage and slops and refuse are thrown out onto the streets, one particular area that is in great need of cleaning is an area known as Johnny Moore Hill.<sup>534</sup>

It was some time before adequate provisions were made for the *in-famous* area known as Johnny Moore Hill. The area became a hot topic and was regularly commented upon by the local press. One article entitled ‘Paddock Plague-Spots’ aired the views of Huddersfield

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<sup>532</sup> Ibid.

<sup>533</sup> B. Barber, ‘Municipal government in Leeds 1835-1914’, in D. Fraser (ed.) *Municipal reform and the industrial city* (Leicester University Press, 1982), p.67.

<sup>534</sup> *Leeds Mercury*, 22 September 1849.

residents and their opinion of the district. One concerned resident who signed himself a ‘Cholera Committee Man’ accounted for the awful conditions found in Paddock, and on the recent cholera epidemic he wrote:

Death struck inhabitants of that infected locality dropped off like rotten sheep were hurried to the grave one after another. ...fleeing for their lives, but in some instances too late! For they carried in their system the poison they had imbibed in the Plague Smitten Spot...I remember all these things and how promises were made that the appearances so disgusting should be amended, that evils so deplorable should be remedied.<sup>535</sup>

Despite such appalling conditions and the promises of the Ramsden Estate trustees who owned the land to improve sanitary conditions, nothing was done. As the anonymous cholera committee man put it:

The pretty looking plans for sewerage works, made by the surveyor to the trustees of the lord of the manor, are carefully put by, to be brought out again when another death-dealing scourge manifests itself, then to be examined and discussed, and estimates made – and then to be carefully *put by again*. “Johnny Moore Hill” remains *as it was* in all its pristine glory of filth, nastiness and infamy. This district has for the last twenty years been a fever-spot – a place where every form of disease has been more intense than in the surrounding localities; and since the cholera disappeared, fever has again been present. But what of that? Dread pestilence has passed-nobody now is looking on- and, *nothing is done!*<sup>536</sup>

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<sup>535</sup> *The Huddersfield Chronicle and West Yorkshire Advertiser*, 13 April 1850.

<sup>536</sup> *Ibid.*

Just as the authorities were unwilling to improve the poor house at Birkby in the late 1840s, similarly during the cholera epidemics of the same period, and despite promises of improved sanitary conditions, clean water and the removal of standing nuisances was slow to appear.<sup>537</sup>

### The housing condition in Huddersfield

What often passed for decent housing in the early decades of the nineteenth century soon became deficient in coping with the growing number of labourers coming to the town. Consequently, there developed in the poorer run-down areas, a number of slums which had become unfit for healthy habitation.<sup>538</sup> Though Huddersfield was never chronically fated with years of trade depression, it nevertheless felt the effects from irregular slumps in trade and employment during the 1840's and the much more severe Cotton crisis of the early 1860's. Between 1870 and 1890, there was relative stability and some prosperity in the textile industry in Huddersfield.<sup>539</sup> Yet, by the end of the 1880s, it was becoming evident in Huddersfield, as elsewhere, that the uneasy synthesis of Poor Law thrift and charity which had relieved distress from want of employment since the 1830's, was, by the end of the decade under great strain.<sup>540</sup> Ever since the 1830s the living conditions in many urban areas were becoming increasingly harmful to the health of the population. The problem often lay

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<sup>537</sup> See a letter by Enoch Sykes from Lucas-yard, Huddersfield on the condition and state of cellar dwellings in Huddersfield, *The Huddersfield Chronicle and West Yorkshire Advertiser*, 23 April 1850 and the 'Necessity of a Public bath for the people of Huddersfield, *The Huddersfield Chronicle and West Yorkshire Advertiser*, 3 August 1850.

<sup>538</sup> There was nothing wrong with the accommodation in the yards and courts; the problem evolved through severe overcrowding. See Dennis, *The Social Geography of Huddersfield*, pp.428-430.

<sup>539</sup> Apart from a severe period of unemployment during the early 1890s, details of which were recorded in a letter from the Clerk to the guardians to the COS and reported in the *Huddersfield Examiner* on 10 January 1891, and a deputation of unemployed out-door labourers to the Mayor, claiming 'distress' which was also reported in the *Examiner* on 24 January 1891.

<sup>540</sup> See R.B. Perks 'The New Liberalism and the Challenge of Labour in the West Riding of Yorkshire 1885-1914 with Special Reference to Huddersfield'. Unpublished thesis, Huddersfield Polytechnic, March 1985. See also D.T. Jenkins 'Textiles and Other Industries 1851-1914', in E.A. Hilary Haigh (ed) *Huddersfield a most Handsome Town* (Kirklees Cultural Services, 1992), pp.241-275.

in the density of housing, as opposed to the quality of the buildings themselves. A consequence of such conditions often resulted in the repeated occurrence of certain diseases; cramped airless back-to-back properties, with over and under dwellings and lack of useable sanitation, played a significant part in the number of houses unfit for healthy habitation.

Huddersfield, like many northern towns, grew dramatically during the 1830s onwards. With a subsequent increase in population the town needed more houses. The town's expansion from township through to incorporation as a borough in 1868, to that of County borough in 1888, saw the town of Huddersfield expand as well as its boundaries, resulting in the merger of multiple townships, one with the other.<sup>541</sup>

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<sup>541</sup> R. Dennis, 'The Social Geography of Huddersfield' in E.A. Hilary Haigh (ed) *Huddersfield a most Handsome Town* (Kirklees Cultural Services, 1992), pp.430-1.

**Table 5.1 Population Increases in Huddersfield 1801-1891.**

<b>Township of Huddersfield</b>	<b>1801</b>	<b>1811</b>	<b>1821</b>	<b>1831</b>	<b>1841</b>	<b>1851</b>	<b>1861</b>	<b>1871</b>	<b>1881</b>
	7268	9671	13284	19035	25068	30880	34874		
% increase		33.1	37.4	43.3	31.7	23.2	12.9		
<b>Borough of Huddersfield (1868)</b>								70253	81841
% increase									16.5
<b>County Borough of Huddersfield (1888)</b>	<b>1891</b>								
	95,417								
% increase									

As a consequence of this rapid expansion, towns were encouraged to form ‘Improvement Committees’ but as with the majority of reforms, local areas were left to their own devices as

to the appropriate amount of work needed to provide the appropriate level of hygiene. An apparent lack of local initiative in Huddersfield during the 1840s seems to have retarded the much needed sanitary improvement, and despite advice from the medical profession on how to improve basic levels of sanitation and public hygiene, little changed. The result of this initial reluctance meant that the labourers and occupiers of the common lodging houses and the town's slums suffered the most. According to the radical educator George Searle Phillips:

Of all the sights one meets within the manufacturing districts, the houses of the mechanics and factory workers are the most distressing. They seem to have been erected after no model; with no design after beauty; but piled together in savage haste and contempt for the beings destined to dwell in them. This is literally true of the houses in Longley village...<sup>542</sup>.

These houses referred to at Longley, were good examples of the jerry-built houses thrown up during the early nineteenth century all over the north. Rows and rows of back to back terraces, many of which remained up to the 1960's, were a common feature of towns like Huddersfield. It had long been known that cholera and typhus might be defeated if sanitary conditions were to improve in the towns, and for this reason health reform became a notable cause of the late 1840s.

### Public Health reform

The origins of sanitary reform can be traced to the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century, but the number and nature of investigations in the ten-year period between 1834 and 1844, added a further impetus. In turn, the Poor Law enquiry of 1832, with its report in 1834, saw the emergence of a systematic approach to recording the causes of death. The select Committee on the Health of Towns in 1840, and the Royal Commission inquiring into the state of Large Towns and Populous Districts, resulted in the publication of an official report

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<sup>542</sup> *Huddersfield Chronicle*, 28 April 1877.



by Edwin Chadwick into the sanitary Condition of the Labouring Population of Great Britain. The report produced a mass of evidence and established a link between the sanitary conditions of housing and levels of mortality. According to Victoria Berridge, the question which preoccupied Victorian observers during the 1830s and 1840s 'was not why health was improving and mortality rates declining, but why they were not'.<sup>543</sup> Gradually, and somewhat reluctantly, this evidence produced an acceptance by the state and in 1848 the Public Health Act was made into law. Following this major piece of legislation it was no coincidence that embryonic building regulations and local improvement Acts were presented to Parliament during the 1840s and 1850s. The reason for this was simple, in increasing numbers, towns and cities sought to obtain local powers to restrict environmental damage to the housing stock. Chadwick's report in 1842, based on his survey of 1840, was established on four central principles which revealed much about the latest ideas surrounding the built-environment.

Much of the report was devoted to establishing a correlation between physical conditions and life expectancy. Some attention was devoted to the economic cost of ill-health, and in which the funding of widows and orphans was highlighted. The social cost of squalor and defective housing was identified, and the corrosive effect of poor living conditions on the morals of individuals. Intemperance and immorality, were linked to deficient housing, and in subsequent decades was used to legitimate municipal and state intervention in social policy. Chadwick identified the need for a radical overhaul of the administrative machinery, and though conscious of the vested interests of local boards and placemen, recognised that centralisation was eventually necessary. Indeed, Chadwick's 1842

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<sup>543</sup> Berridge, 'Health and Medicine', p.197.

Report was the model for many other reports and presented a compelling case for sanitary reform.<sup>544</sup>

The Public Health Act of 1848 created a Central Board of Health. However, by 1858 it had gone. Amid personal opposition to Chadwick and local council antagonisms to central government, the board managed to reflect a widespread acceptance that the previous uncontrolled development of the built environment could not be tolerated in the second half of the nineteenth century.<sup>545</sup> In order to carry out such changes there were a great number of well appointed men, who for their part adopted the urgency that was deficient amongst the governing powers of the land. Perhaps foremost of these men was Chadwick. But there were others too, who had the same enquiring enthusiasm and fervour for intervening in public issues. Of these, Seymour Tremenheere, commissioner for mines from 1843 to 1854 was a most energetic civil servant, serving on many commissions and a man who had free rein in spreading his experience across many aspects of social reform.<sup>546</sup>

Huddersfield was largely unprepared for outbreaks of disease and infection. There were only one or two standpipes in the town, and one public pump situated near the market cross, which was in use up to 1847.<sup>547</sup> During the 1830's and 1840's, Huddersfield's poor rarely drank from the water supply, nor did they use it for washing. In times of extreme desperation, a 'water order' could be obtained from the St. Peters parish church.<sup>548</sup> As many of the inhabitants living in these areas of Huddersfield were poor, they were likely to have

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<sup>544</sup> Ibid., p. 198.

<sup>545</sup> A. Brundage, *England's 'Prussian Minister' Edwin Chadwick and the Politics of governmental growth, 1832 – 1854* (Pennsylvania, 1988). See also A. Wohl, *Endangered Lives: Public Health in Victorian Britain*, (London, 1983) p.4.

<sup>546</sup> M.W. Flinn, Introduction to the *Report on the Sanitary Conditions of the Labouring population of Great Britain*, (Edinburgh, 1965), p.31.

<sup>547</sup> Huddersfield County Borough, Improvement Commissioners Minutes, 1848-1868, KDA. The need for more fresh water pumps was discussed and costed by the committee throughout the 1850's.

<sup>548</sup> Huddersfield County Borough, Improvement Commissioners Minutes, 1848-1868, KDA.

been the ones who were more directly affected by disease and the extremes of poor housing. And yet this kind of situation did not seem to affect those living in the common lodging houses.<sup>549</sup> When cholera returned to the town in 1848-9, there were many features of the new epidemic which were similar to the first visitation in 1832. In Huddersfield as elsewhere, 'It visited the same places and found the same state of un-preparedness'.<sup>550</sup> However, following the second epidemic, the faults of an unprepared nation were not revisited; there was an air of determination to avoid a further return and the topic of cholera became a much debated issue. There were several reasons for change. The large influx of Irish migrants who populated the larger towns and cities of Britain often brought typhus fever with them. Those who had seen 'famine fever' in cities such as Glasgow, Manchester and Leeds could not view cholera as an 'unprecedented horror'.<sup>551</sup> However, public health reforms were slow to build up any lasting momentum or establish any practical help; though articles, pamphlets, reports and public debate informed government of the real need for education based on scientific fact, especially the miasma-based attitudes to public disease.<sup>552</sup>

#### Huddersfield and The Public Health Act of 1848.

The majority of the very poor living in Huddersfield's town centre lived and died in the most appalling conditions. Such terrible conditions were the breeding grounds for infectious and

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<sup>549</sup> Between 1845 and 1856 there was no significant increase in the number entering the town workhouse and yet it was estimated that the number of those accommodated in the towns lodging houses had increased by over 20 per cent. *Huddersfield Examiner*, August 1856.

<sup>550</sup> R.J. Morris, *Cholera 1832: The Social Response to an Epidemic* (Croom Helm, London 1976), p.200.

<sup>551</sup> *Ibid.*, p.201.

<sup>552</sup> Dr. John Snow (now credited with discovering the cause of cholera) doubted that the disease was passed by the process of miasma, believing that standing and running water was the agent. That said, Miasmatists were well entrenched and it took Snow many years to promote his theory to the point where it was generally accepted. Snow correctly proved that the cholera bacillus thrived in foul contaminated water, and when used for drinking or culinary purposes it was accidentally ingested, thus manifesting itself in the recipient and infecting the intestines. The work of Snow and others allowed Dr. Robert Koch, in 1883 to isolate the micro organism *Cholera vibrio* and for Jaume Ferran Cluan to produce the first vaccine against the disease in 1885.

virulent disease. Typhus, a sure fire-killer, was a prevailing sickness and in Huddersfield during the 1840's the effect it had on the poor was dramatic.

In March and May 1848, the *Leeds Mercury* ran the headline 'Huddersfield Workhouse Abominations, Andover in the Shade'. The underlying problem facing the workhouse, its overseers and the Board of Inquiry, was the recurrence of typhus and the devastating effect it had on the inmates of the town workhouse, many of whom were the aged, infirm and casual poor (the deserving poor). Despite the return of the disease, the guardians did little to change the sanitary arrangements and the level of care for those who were so obviously suffering. The outcome of the inquiry revealed that the 'sick poor have been most shamefully neglected'.<sup>553</sup> The most damning extract concerned the fact that:

Patients had been allowed to remain for nine weeks without change of linen or of bed clothing; that beds in which patients suffering from typhus have died, one after another, [without] attempt at purification; that the said beds were only bags of straw and shavings, two patients suffering in infectious fever, were almost constantly put together in one bed; that it not infrequently happened that one would be ragingly delirious, when the other lay dying.<sup>554</sup>

Whilst the report of the Board of Inquiry concluded that the Huddersfield workhouse was almost constantly overcrowded and the accommodation remained insufficient for purpose, the critical report highlighted the fact that:

Throughout the entire establishment [there were the] most unmistakable signs of bad arrangement, short-sightedness, real extravagance, waste of rate-payers money, and want of comfort, cleanliness, health and satisfaction amongst the poor.<sup>555</sup>

The Guardians recorded the comments of the fever hospital doctor:

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<sup>553</sup> *Leeds Mercury*, 12 March, 1848.

<sup>554</sup> Ibid.

<sup>555</sup> Ibid.

This last year has been a year remarkable for fever and in consequence of the alarm excited among the inhabitants of Huddersfield relative to the spread of *Irish fever*.

As to the cause of such an epidemic Dr. Tatham said:

I think that the principal weight of fever has arisen out of the influx of the Irish people into this country in a bad state of health in consequence of the deprivation of food. Huddersfield I do not consider an unhealthy town at all – I see very few cases of Typhus fever originating among the inhabitants of the town itself.<sup>556</sup>

Like many other medical officers, Tatham believed the influx of the disease was due to the poor condition of the Irish migrant. He, himself, calls the disease ‘Irish fever’ in line with popular public and medical opinion. Does such opinion show bigotry toward the Irish immigrant, or expert opinion based on what the medical officer saw and experienced at first hand. One might suggest that Dr Tatham was favouring public opinion rather than any basis of any statistical fact. This feted institution in Huddersfield is further accounted for in a report published in the *Manchester Times & Gazette*. Here the Huddersfield correspondent describes the poor condition of the building, in particular the poor ventilation. The main day rooms and sleeping quarters were positioned so as to be overlooking a piggery which was part of the establishment.<sup>557</sup> The reporter states that:

it was not unusual for there to be between half a dozen or even half a score of pigs, there was no drainage from them and there was a pig tub which was full of swill. The smell permeated and infected the rooms which overlooked the piggery:<sup>558</sup>

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<sup>556</sup> Huddersfield Union Minute book, June/July 1848. KDA.

<sup>557</sup> The piggery was used to provide meat for the workhouse. There was also a large field which was used to grow potatoes.

<sup>558</sup> For a graphic account of the insanitary effects of pigs see Wohl, *Endangered Lives*, pp81-4.

The inquiries of the 'Health of Towns Commission' showed that the evils arising from the keeping of pigs close to dwellings was deleterious to health. The Commissioners described such conditions as dangerous; the *Manchester Times* add rather emphatically that:

when in 1832 Asiatic cholera was manifested in Sunderland *these* were the places most visited by that scourge. And yet, with these reports, so instructive! within their reach; with the sanitary report of the Poor Law Commission on their shelves with all that the press and the platform have been doing to direct attention to evils such as those with all this, have the guardians of the Huddersfield poor kept those pest places close under the windows of the day and sleeping rooms of the major population of their establishment?<sup>559</sup>

The correspondent points out, that in the previous twelve months, fever was raging in the workhouse, where there were 13 deaths out of 120 inmates during a one month period. He asked - 'was the piggery removed? It was not'. He concluded the issue of the piggery as follows:

There is in the management of this poor house a power behind the throne greater than the throne itself'.<sup>560</sup>

As if the retention and dangers of the piggery were not enough, the Huddersfield correspondent turned his attention on the school and day room set aside for the orphaned poor of the workhouse. Again the stench and bad air from the piggery are believed to have caused cases of scrofula in the children.<sup>561</sup> Scrofula was the major cause of mortality amongst youths in the Town workhouse; their room being 'ventilated from a piggery and pent up all night in such a confined space'. The correspondent states that the guardians have no excuse for this

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<sup>559</sup> *Manchester Times & Gazette*, 14 March 1848.

<sup>560</sup> *Ibid.*, 14 March 1848.

<sup>561</sup> Scrofula, a disease associated with TB, causing abnormal and often aggressive swelling of the glands in the neck.

state of affairs and reports on issues experienced at the nearby Norwood school.<sup>562</sup> These reports highlight both the obvious sanitary problems and the deficiencies occurring on a regular basis at the Huddersfield workhouse. What is perhaps more disturbing and at the same time relevant to this enquiry, was the inactivity of the Guardians in putting right these basic sanitary faults. As Kipling said, ‘you can’t clean a piggery with a pen dipped in rose water’.<sup>563</sup>

Despite the many failings of the poor and destitute, often through no fault of their own, the local town centre poor were blamed for the spread of disease. Ignorant of the real causes and solutions, it was Irish residents in Huddersfield, who came under scrutiny and the question was asked locally as well as nationally, as to the best way to deal with the problem of the ‘Irish poor’. Thomas William Clough, writing to the Huddersfield Guardians in 1848, described the living conditions of some of the town’s Irish residents. He describes undercellars having been fashioned underground where ‘there is not a ray of daylight’ and where beds are so crowded together, with occupants ranging from women in confinement and *lodgers of all kinds*.<sup>564</sup> He goes on to state that the common lodging houses are usually the cause of trouble in the town and that there was a prosecution before the assizes for riot, which was caused by the residents of such common lodgings. Of similar relevance are the instances of illness and disease within such dwellings. The relieving officer reported to Clough that:

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<sup>562</sup> The Norwood School, Hipperholme. Here between 600 and 700 children were affected by scrofula; there was a thorough investigation undertaken by a Dr. Arnott, who changed the diet, and when this proved ineffectual, ventilation was enquired into and found to be deficient, once corrected, the condition and occurrence of the scrofula improved immeasurably.

<sup>563</sup> R .Kipling, ‘At the End of the Passage’ *Penguin Book of English Short Stories*, C.Dolley (ed.) (London, 1967) p.64.

<sup>564</sup> Extract from a letter from T.W. Clough to the Huddersfield Board of Guardians. Huddersfield Union Minute Book, November 1848 and January 1849, KDA.

Of twenty inmates residing in one lodging house, eleven were ill of fever at once – and all of them were chargeable upon the rates for the town of Huddersfield.<sup>565</sup>

Clough then asks the returning officer for a statement of expense in respect of the sick poor from such quarters; the returning officer reported that:

the places got so crowded that [the] fever was so virulent that it was considered it would be more expensive to the town to allow these lodgers to remain in their lodging than to remove them and they were taken to an hospital especially provided for that purpose the amount that was paid was £125.5s.0d – then there was the amount to be paid for the removal of these destitute souls, which amounted to £106.16s.8d.<sup>566</sup> In the course of the year 1848, the total expenditure for caring for the sick cases amounted to £466, and was due entirely to ‘those dirty ill-ventilated lodging houses.’<sup>567</sup>

According to Hilary Marland, the cholera epidemic of 1849, resulted in 52 deaths. ‘This outbreak was largely confined to areas well known for their environmental problems, the town centre, the district of Birkby, the workhouse, and Johnny Moor Hill.’<sup>568</sup> Expenditure is sometimes an indication of how systems of sick relief fared and in 1863 the medical expenses for the Huddersfield Township amounted to £296 excluding expenses for the maintenance of lunatics, this fell to £126, or 1d per head of the population in 1873, equivalent to 1.6 per cent of the total Poor Law expenditure.<sup>569</sup> Prior to 1834, the sick poor were generally treated at the Huddersfield Dispensary. After 1834 the frugal nature of the Poor Law Guardians meant that

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<sup>565</sup> Ibid.

<sup>566</sup> Ibid.

<sup>567</sup> Ibid. The fever wing at the old Birkby poorhouse would have been used to treat those ill with the fever.

<sup>568</sup> Marland, ‘Health care in nineteenth-century Huddersfield’ in *Huddersfield: a Most Handsome Town*, p.611.

<sup>569</sup> A statement of the accounts of the Huddersfield Union 1861-1873. The Huddersfield township in account with the Huddersfield Union, for the year ended March 25<sup>th</sup> 1863. KDA.



the majority of sick poor patients had to rely more on the dispensary and rather less on the provisions of the Poor Law.<sup>570</sup>

1848 was the worst year on record in relation to the general health of Huddersfield's population. And yet despite the comments of Clough and Dr. Tatham, it would be wrong to blame the prevalence of disease in the town solely on the Irish. The fault lay firmly at the feet of the town authorities and the trustees of the Ramsden estate and their inability to cope with the sanitary conditions of the workhouse and the poorer districts of Huddersfield. Efforts to improve conditions, as we have seen, were lamentably slow and irregular. Any lasting improvements to the health and hygiene of the town would have to be widespread, long-lasting and better organised.

#### The Huddersfield Improvement Committee

In the autumn of 1848, Huddersfield decided to follow many other towns and improve sanitary conditions. Inaugurated in the October of that year, the 'Commissioners for improvement' set up several committees to look at various areas of public sanitation. One of their first announcements was to pave and provide sewerage and drainage in the newly built Fitzwilliam Street. This street ran from Leeds road to Trinity Street in the town centre, a distance of about one mile. The Funding for this came from the trustees of Sir John Wm. Ramsden at a cost of £4,000. The *Leeds Mercury* reported that the:

New and important principle as to the formation of this street was to provide a sewer gully, drains, and house drains without a penny cost to the ratepayers.<sup>571</sup>

Orders were also passed to improve the drainage and sewerage of the:

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<sup>570</sup> The Dispensary was a charitable institution and began to treat and relieve the distress in the town following the Napoleonic campaigns. The nearest hospitals were at Leeds, and Sheffield, great distances for the sick to travel. The charity's founding fathers were textile and woollen manufacturers resident in the town.

<sup>571</sup> *Leeds Mercury*, 13 October 1848.

Hitherto-neglected districts of the town, consisting of installing a pipe to every dwelling for the riddance of water from the roof and a proper sink and grate for back or yard premises. Every opening to such drains, were to be trapped to prevent the escape of stench into the dwellings or any portion of the premises.<sup>572</sup>

The expense of such work was to be carried by the owners of such properties and where the work was not completed the Commissioners would pay to have the work carried out and then levy a charge on the owner. A Nuisance committee was also set up and the following issues were examined. Petties in the 'lower parts of the town' were to be properly covered, and Pigsties were to be removed from the side of buildings, so as to remove the chances of infection from 'bad air'.<sup>573</sup> The Board of Guardians did not escape the attention of the Improvement Commissioners, as they were asked to provide medical staff to carry out house to house visitations in those localities 'where cholera had manifested itself'. In the worst affected areas, properties were fumigated with chlorine gas and chloride of lime in order to deodorise the cesspools.<sup>574</sup> There is no evidence that any immediate improvements were to be made to the *infamous* 'Johnny Moor Hill' at Paddock. Indeed the concerns relating to Paddock lasted for a number of years after the formation of the Improvement Commissioners. Nor for that matter were the improvements in the town centre. Between 1849 and 1850, the trustees of the Ramsden estate and the Improvement Commissioners were keen to advertise the improvements to the town centre. In what was called 'Huddersfield Newtown' plans were drawn up to provide open public spaces in the town, including squares and impressive public buildings. One letter writer, signing himself 'a cellar dweller' wrote to the *Huddersfield Chronicle* and complained that the aforementioned trustees and Commissioners had forgotten

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<sup>572</sup> Ibid.

<sup>573</sup> 'Petties' - open toilets.

<sup>574</sup> *Leeds Mercury*, 5 January 1849. There is evidence that lime was regularly used as there was a lime store next to the main railway station in the town.

about the existing 'Newtown' that lay largely unforgotten behind the smart streets. The writer describes the state of the properties and the 'poor creatures that inhabit them', he talks about the 'discomfort, nastiness and surrounding filth' that are seemingly ignored by the authorities in favour of a more impressive facade planned to impress the casual visitor.<sup>575</sup> During the 1840s and 1850s there are regular local newspaper articles commenting on the improvements required to the forgotten parts of Huddersfield.<sup>576</sup>

In order to try and combat the return of diseases such as typhus and cholera, the commissioners produced 3,000 pamphlets on 'How to avoid cholera' and a further 7,000 pamphlets were paid for and circulated by the Poor Law Guardians.<sup>577</sup> It was apparent that at last there were some moves toward improving the town's sanitary condition. Much of the work under these sanitary reforms was put out to tender.<sup>578</sup> Such work involved prominent local men, who became concerned in these early town improvements; Thomas Pitt Esq. High Constable of the upper Agbrigg Division, donated £3 to be 'employed in aid of this very important work'.<sup>579</sup> As a result of the formation of the Huddersfield Improvement Committee there were several sub-committees formed to deal with specific tasks. There was a Paving and Drainage Committee, made up of - Abraham Hirst, James Booth, William Moore, William England and John Brook. The Hackney Carriage and Lodging House Committee,

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<sup>575</sup> *The Huddersfield Chronicle and West Yorkshire Advertiser*, 20 April 1850.

<sup>576</sup> 'The State of the Cattle Market' in the *The Huddersfield Chronicle and West Yorkshire Advertiser*, 28 September 1850.

<sup>577</sup> *Leeds Mercury*, 13 October 1848.

<sup>578</sup> *Leeds Mercury*, 13 October 1848. Workmen carrying out the most unpleasant task of removing human and animal waste from the streets were rewarded with a 'moderate allowance of brandy' for their trouble; an indication perhaps of the kind of work undertaken.

<sup>579</sup> Huddersfield County Borough, Improvement Commissioners Minutes, 1848-1868, KDA.

was made up of Joseph Brook, William Moore and Edmund Eastwood. Many of these men were local businessmen with a vested interest in improving the condition of the town.<sup>580</sup>

The reality was that for many large industrial towns with expanding populations it became increasingly difficult to improve districts quickly.<sup>581</sup> Improvements and organisation were somewhat easier for some towns incorporated under the Municipal Corporations Act 1835; towns like Liverpool seemed to be efficient enough administrators, but they were a rather an atypical example.<sup>582</sup> There were a number of towns for whom incorporation meant more of the same; and therefore, corruption and ineffectual administration and a system failing to identify with local needs continued, often unabated. Huddersfield did not become incorporated until 1868, but failure to incorporate was not necessarily a bad thing, though some towns needed reforming from the ancient systems that were clearly not prepared for urban expansion during the 1830s and 1840s.<sup>583</sup> Huddersfield was one such town. But whilst there may not have been any obvious accusations of corruption, the town was clearly backward in recognising the needs of the local population, the town also suffered from some ineffective governance throughout the 1840s and 1850s.

However, during the late 1840s and 1850s the work of the Huddersfield Improvement Committee did have some impact on the 'smarter areas' in town centre. Conversely, there

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<sup>580</sup> Abraham Hirst was a woolstapler, William Moore was the towns Postmaster, William England was a chemist, John Brook was a JP and manufacturer in the town. Joseph Brook was a stationer and Edmund Eastwood was both a township and later borough surveyor.

<sup>581</sup> See A. Elliot, 'Municipal government in Bradford in the mid-nineteenth century' in D. Fraser (ed.) *Municipal reform and the industrial city*, (Leicester University Press, 1982) pp.146-51, and A. Sharrat and K.R. Farrar (eds.), 'Sanitation and Public Health in nineteenth century Manchester' *Memoirs and Proceedings of the Manchester Literary and Philosophical Society*, Vol 114, (1972) pp.50-69 and G. Kearns, 'Cholera, Nuisances and environmental Management in Islington, 1830-1855', in W.F. Bynum and R. Porter (eds.), *Living and Dying in London*, (London, 1991), pp.94-125.

<sup>582</sup> D. Fraser, (ed.) 'Municipal reform in historical perspective', *Municipal reform and the industrial city*, (Leicester University Press, 1982), p.6.

<sup>583</sup> Ibid.

was little done in the recognised poorer areas. The fact was, that in many poorer parts of the town, the onus for improvement was often levied on the owners of dwellings situated in the courts and yards. It was therefore unlikely that these landlords and owners would or could pay for such improvements. Apart from threats of prosecution from the Improvement Commissioners there was very little action in bringing absent or reluctant landlords to account. However, local issues of poor hygiene did not escape the attention of the press. One reporter using the moniker of ‘Corney Crake’ described the often lurid and vile conditions in the late 1840’s. His descriptions are graphic and Mayhew-like, alerting the reader as to the conditions that many people endured in the centre of Huddersfield. Communal privies in folds or yards were described as ‘vile’ and:

At the edge of the stone flags inside these privies was a drop to the ash pit and at more or less inconvenient distances from this edge were two or three poles stretching from side wall to side wall, used as peaks or perches for both poultry and humans alike, and with no privacy whatsoever - nor was the introduction of a long seat with holes of various sizes much improvement.<sup>584</sup>

Apart from these graphic allusions to the sanitary facilities of these poor districts the real problem seems to have been the appalling conditions in the courts and yards populated by the local English poor and Irish migrants. These places came under the scrutiny of the Huddersfield Improvement Bill in 1848. Here, subsequent enquiries revealed that in the previous year there had been 221 recorded cases of fever in the overcrowded common lodging houses, the majority of which were owned by Irish families. In Barkers Yard the

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<sup>584</sup> C. Crake, ‘Huddersfield Cuttings’, in *Huddersfield: A Most Handsome Town*, E.A.Hilary Haigh (ed.) (Kirklees Cultural Services, 1992), p. 642.

inquiry discovered a cottage room 5 yards square that accommodated 21 people, 11 of whom were found to be sick with the fever.<sup>585</sup>

### Common Lodging Houses

According to the Commissioners, one of the least attractive types of accommodation in one sense was often the most popular in another.<sup>586</sup> The common lodging house was not something that appeared along with the Act of 1834, indeed it was very much a product of the industrial revolution and the type of accommodation that had been providing a roof over the heads of many labourers and travellers since the mid-eighteenth century. To the authorities, lodging houses were regarded as the harbingers of disease, vice and petty criminality. In a collective sense the ‘wrong sort of character’ did frequent such premises, but in Huddersfield they were, in the main the haunt of the travelling and casual poor, including Irish migrants. Lodging houses were regularly criticised for their conditions; along with a general perception that they were dirty and so were the people who occupied them. But for many travelling men and women they were the only accommodation outside the Poor law available to them.<sup>587</sup> As Tom Crook explains in his study of lodging houses in London, to urban historians the ‘governance of unruly places, marginal subjects and deviant practices’ has been a major concern and of interest to many historians of the period.<sup>588</sup> According to Crook, lodging

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<sup>585</sup> Huddersfield County Borough, Improvement Commissioners Minutes, 1848-1868.

<sup>586</sup> In 1853 there were reportedly 3,300 common lodging house keepers in London, catering for some 50,000 nightly lodgers. Source – *Copy of a Report Made to the Secretary of State for the Home Department by Captain Hay, One of the Commissioners of Metropolitan Police on the Operation of the Common Lodging-House Act* (London, 1853), 1.

<sup>587</sup> As there were no charitable night shelters or spikes in Huddersfield, it was a choice between the casual ward post 1860, the expensive Model Lodging House or the cheap and plentiful common lodging house.

<sup>588</sup> T. Crook, ‘Accommodating the outcast: common lodging houses and the limits of urban governance in Victorian and Edwardian London’ *Urban History*, 35, 3 (2008) p.414. This concern is more than apparent in H.J. Dyos and M. Wolff (eds), *The Victorian City: Images and Realities*, vols. I and II (London, 1973).

houses have been examined from two perspectives;<sup>589</sup> on the one hand, by urban housing historians with an interest in outcasts, and inspired by an empirical sensibility;<sup>590</sup> and on the other, by historians of urban representations, equipped with a more cultural sensibility.<sup>591</sup> Crook's study is based on a variety of sources including social investigations, statutory guidelines, council records and contemporary articles.<sup>592</sup> Although he concentrates on London as his principle area of research, his general assumptions about lodging houses can be equated to many areas including Huddersfield.

Common lodging houses were 'hotels for the poor' and were otherwise known as 'low lodging houses' and later 'dosshouses'. They differed from the casual wards operated by the Poor Law authorities and the refuge shelters provided by philanthropic organisations. They were commercial operations and charged anything between 1d and 1s a night and where they differed from the casual ward and the shelter, though they nevertheless attracted the same kind of occupant, the 'outcasts' of society. According to Crook the mainstay of those who stayed in London's lodging houses were casual labourers, prostitutes and petty criminals. I would suggest that such people were the mainstay population of the majority of lodging houses in Huddersfield, excepting the fact that there were probably other groups, such as vagrant travellers and a scattering of the unemployed and unemployable.<sup>593</sup> Labelling those who used common lodging houses provides us with the ability to view them as they were viewed by the Victorians; terms such as outcasts, dregs, waifs and strays, pariahs, the

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<sup>589</sup> Ibid., p.415.

<sup>590</sup> A.S. Wohl, *The Eternal Slum: Housing and Social Policy in Victorian London* (London, 1977) P.74-5. L. Rose, *'Rogues and Vagabonds': Vagrant Underworld in Britain, 1815-1985* (London, 1988).

<sup>591</sup> A. Mayne, *The Imagined Slum: Newspaper Representation in Three Cities* (Leicester, 1993) Part 2. S. Marcus, *Apartment Stories: City and Home in Nineteenth Century Paris and London* (Berkeley, 1999) pp.104-7.

<sup>592</sup> Crook, 'Accommodating the outcast', p.415.

<sup>593</sup> Ibid., p.418.

odds and ends of humanity, even ‘the entire debris of the social structure’.<sup>594</sup> Such terms indicate the labelling of a group considered wholly undeserving. And yet trapped in such terms were the unemployed labourers who used lodging houses on a temporary basis while travelling in search of work or to their next job. Through a combination of the places where lodging houses were located, their condition, their patrons and the people who ran them, they have acquired notoriety, particularly from those whose job it was to regulate them. Because of the disreputable imagery conjured up by such places and heaving with characters snatched from the collective sump of human existence, they naturally caught the eye of the public and the moral majority. Such places were often the starting points for social investigators. The lodging houses of Huddersfield were identified as all that was morally corrupt in the town and assuming this, their occupants were also similarly considered.

As social investigation emerged in the 1830s, one of the areas it concentrated on was urban society and how such a society would progress and the limits of such progress. Social investigation was further distinguished by its incorporation of various moral and physical norms of conduct – the core of which according to Crook, included sobriety, physical cleanliness, assiduous domestic economy; and independence from poor relief.<sup>595</sup> From a sanitary perspective, the vast majority of medical reports concluded that common lodging houses were unhealthy establishments, encouraged a lazy attitude and were entirely inadequate. From the point of view of the lodging house keeper, there did exist a rather slovenly and resistant attitude to improving conditions, due in part to the kind of person that was drawn there and the perceived pointlessness in improving the often cramped dirty

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<sup>594</sup> A.K. Chalmers (ed), ‘Common lodging-houses’ [1889], *Public Health Administration in Glasgow: A Memorial Volume of the Writings of James Burn Russell* (Glasgow, 1905), p.244.

<sup>595</sup> Crook, ‘Accommodating the outcast’, p.419.



conditions.<sup>596</sup> In Huddersfield, one particular Irish lodging house keeper by the name of Keegan was prosecuted and cautioned on at least three occasions during the 1850's. His house in Manchester Street also doubled as a beer house; he was prosecuted for the disorderly behaviour of the 'Irish labourers and common vagrants that gathered there'.<sup>597</sup> Yet despite his poor record he continued as a lodging house keeper well into the 1870s.<sup>598</sup>

#### Regulating the Common Lodging House.

The legislation that governed lodging houses was initially weak and difficult to enforce. The first pieces of legislation which attempted to improve conditions were taken up by the Towns Improvement Clauses Act of 1847 and the Public Health Act 1848, an act which helped to shore up any leaky legislation left out by the previous act of 1847.

The 1848 Public Health Act defines the common lodging house; it referred to it as being a house or part of a house, where persons of the *poorer classes* are received for *gain*, and in which they use one or more rooms in common with the rest of the inmates, who are not members of one family, whether for eating or sleeping.<sup>599</sup> More improvements emerged in a legislative watershed in the 1850s, when two general acts were passed, the first in 1851, the second, modifying the former, in 1853. The 1853 Common Lodging Houses Act provided the basic template of powers through to the inter-war period and further major statutes, such as the 1875 Public Health Act, simply incorporated the measures established earlier. Sanitary Inspectors and police officers were allowed by law to enter lodging houses at any time. On issues concerning health, new regulations recommended that lodgers had a minimum of 300

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<sup>596</sup> As many of the occupants were the casual poor often sleeping in overcrowded conditions, the impetuous to improve the standard of accommodation was deemed unnecessary. Despite prosecutions and the threat of fines, many lodging house keepers were unwilling to improve their premises. Following the removal of lodgers, many would be operating again within a matter of days or weeks.

<sup>597</sup> Huddersfield County Borough, Improvement Commissioners, Minutes, 1848-1868 KDA.

<sup>598</sup> Census 1871, KDA.

<sup>599</sup> Public Health Act, 1848, 11 and 12 Vict. C.63.

cubic feet of available air in which to sleep, while more practical regulations required separate sleeping quarters for single men and women, as well as married couples. The sanitary Inspectors, overseen by the 'Improvement Committee' tried to regulate general cleanliness and keepers were charged with lime-washing their premises twice a year and maintaining adequate toilet accommodation and fresh bedding.<sup>600</sup>

#### Huddersfield's Lodging Houses.

One cannot draw too many comparisons between the lodging houses of London and the larger industrial cities of the north, and the number and condition in Huddersfield. The nearest major town to Huddersfield was Leeds and the conditions there were far greater than the problem in Huddersfield.

In respect of the number of lodging houses in Leeds, the *Leeds Intelligencer* reported that following an outbreak of typhus fever in the city in 1851, the source of the disease had been traced to some lodging houses. It was discovered that within a radius of a quarter of one mile from the parish church there were 222 lodging houses accommodating 2,500 people. They averaged two and a half persons to a bed, and four and a half to a room; of the 222 houses, only forty were even moderately clean, and six were cellar-dwellings in a filthy condition.<sup>601</sup> The regulation of lodging houses throughout the country usually became the responsibility of the local corporations for the town or city concerned. In Huddersfield between 1848 and 1868, lodging houses were regulated by the 'Hackney Carriage and Lodging House Committee'.

1848 was both a year for distress and change. Reform and improvements came with the formation of the Improvement Commissioners. However, It is difficult to assess how successful this change was, in the context of who the Commissioners were aiming to help.

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<sup>600</sup> There was a large warehouse storing lime next to the main railway station in the centre of Huddersfield.

<sup>601</sup> *The Leeds Intelligencer*, 15 February 1851

Was it to overhaul the image of the town and the Commissioners themselves, or was it solely to improve sanitary conditions in the town? Generally, the Commissioners did make noteworthy surface changes to sanitation and public health and for the first time attempted to regulate what was considered to tarnish certain parts of the town centre. Regulation of the lodging houses was quick and wide ranging. And it was needed, as in 1847, the *Leeds Mercury* reported upon the conditions of lodging houses in Huddersfield:

there were 221 reported cases of fever – ‘Premises in Windsor Court, renowned for the terrible stench, endured conditions which were of the very worst kind.’<sup>602</sup>

Later records of the Commissioners tend to support some regular maintenance of the regulations but, overall a reluctance to strictly abide by the initial policy drawn up in 1848. Of course there was some direction from government and the Public Health Act was often the motive force for the direction the Commissioners took.

The first steps toward improving the lodging houses in Huddersfield began at a meeting of the Huddersfield Improvement Commissioners held at the George Hotel on 15 September 1848. The opening statement recorded in the minutes recorded that the committee had the ‘power to hear and determine on all applications to keep and regulate all lodging houses, promoting cleanliness and ventilation in all licensed lodging houses in the town’<sup>603</sup> At the first meeting, in January 1849, the Commissioners stated that they were going to register all lodging houses and those that failed inspection would not be licensed, and would ‘face the penalties of the law’.<sup>604</sup> Later that same month there were a total of 69 applications for licenses for lodging houses in the town; of the initial applications only one property was rated to the relief of the poor in a sum of £10. Edward Dickinson owned a lodging house in

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<sup>602</sup> *The Leeds Mercury*, 28 March 1847.

<sup>603</sup> Huddersfield Improvement Commissioners Minutes, 15 September 1848, KDA.

<sup>604</sup> *Ibid.*, 3 January 1849.

Castlegate and the Inspectors, Cheeseborough and Townend visited the property and reported their findings. They found the following:

Room number one was in an attic and was 27 feet 4 inches long by 21 feet wide, with an average height 5 feet 5 inches. The inspectors calculated that there was 3,370 cubic feet of air in the attic. There were ten beds in the room, 1 bed per 2 lodgers and there were windows facing north and south. There was a stove in the middle of the room.

Room number two was a chamber on the second floor and was 19 feet 6 inches long by 14 feet 10 inches wide and 9 feet 8 inches high. The inspectors inspected a further three rooms and based on various calculations; they were able to assess how many lodgers could reside in each room.<sup>605</sup>

In the rooms detailed above, room number one was allowed 12 lodgers and room number two 8, in total there was regulation space for 35 lodgers. The property owned by Mr Dickinson was granted a licence as long as there were several alterations to the ventilation. The figure of 35 lodgers was reduced to 30 in July 1849, because ventilation had not been improved satisfactorily.<sup>606</sup> During March 1849, the following applications for lodging house licenses were received, inspected and approved. Jonathan Rishworth, 11, Thomas Street, 3 rooms allowed 8 lodgers; Mrs Atkinson, Beast Market, 4 rooms allowed 13 lodgers; Thomas Paister, Beast Market, 4 rooms allowed 12 lodgers; Robert Simmonds, Market Street, 4 rooms allowed 10 lodgers; and John Wild, Albion Street, 4 rooms 14 lodgers.<sup>607</sup> Lodging house licenses were not issued solely on the number of rooms available, but were issued on the strict dimensions of rooms and the available air space in each room. Despite the number of applicants there were lodging house keepers who failed to apply and were found out by the Commissioners.

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<sup>605</sup> Lung capacity calculations followed the recommendations of a Dr. Duncan of Liverpool.

<sup>606</sup> Huddersfield Improvement Commissioners Minutes, 3 January and 18 July 1849, KDA.

<sup>607</sup> Huddersfield Improvement Commissioners Minutes, 12 March 1849.

In April 1849, it was recorded that seven lodging houses were operating illegally; the owners were brought before the magistrates and fined 4 shillings, in each case, however, if each keeper cleaned out their houses of lodgers within 14 days there would be no penalty.<sup>608</sup> The activities of un-regulated lodging houses seem to have continued, and in July 1850, the Commissioners reported that there was an increase in such houses and directed the inspectors to lay any information of such illegality before the magistrates at their earliest opportunity.<sup>609</sup> The minutes record on a regular basis those who fell-foul of the inspectors and appeared before the courts.

In a move to further regulate the lodging house, the Common Lodging Housing Acts of 1851 and 1853 added much needed detail to the problem of regulation. Of the twenty recommendations, the most important introduced a ticketing system. A 'ticket' detailing how many lodgers were allowed in one building was to be displayed in each house. Each room should have bedsteads and sufficient bedding, no room to be used as a kitchen or scullery by lodgers, nor basement room below the level of the ground used for sleeping. For the promotion of good air and ventilation, windows were to be open from 9am to 4pm, unless prevented by tempestuous weather or the illness of an inmate. The walls of each lodging house should be lime-washed twice a year. There should be water available and a privy if there was a yard next to the property or at a distance near to the lodging to the satisfaction of the improvement inspector. Where an inmate was ill of an infectious disease, the Inspector of Common Lodging Houses should be informed as well as the Poor Law Medical Officer.<sup>610</sup>

In May 1852, the Huddersfield Commissioners reported that there were still problems being experienced in regulating the lodging houses; in particular the separation of the

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<sup>608</sup> *Ibid.*, 3 April 1849.

<sup>609</sup> *Ibid.*, 23 July 1850.

<sup>610</sup> *Common Lodging Housing Acts*, 1851 and 1853.

sexes.<sup>611</sup> Public notices were placed in every licensed lodging house, stating that neglect of the 1851 Act would result in a fine of £5.<sup>612</sup> Locally at least, the regulations were aimed at controlling the numbers of casuals in such lodgings. In November 1852, a police inspection of the lodging houses revealed that:

the Act of 1851, aimed at regulating the number of vagrants lodging in the town and that regulations being posted in the town, with the desired effect in reducing vagrant numbers in the town was having little effect on their number.<sup>613</sup>

It would seem that Huddersfield's interpretation of the Act was to rid the town of the unwanted casual poor, and a way forward was to tightly regulate and clean up and cleanse the lodging houses. Despite their efforts, un-licensed lodging houses remained a problem for the local authorities, and moreover the cause of the problem would seem to have been the casual classes. If such types were not moving on they were obviously still residing in lodging houses or finding enough money to stay in the slightly improved houses that were regulated. As with many issues concerned with regulation there are at times flaws in the day to day running of such schemes and it is reasonable to suggest that in some cases the lodging houses might not have improved sufficiently, or been rigorously inspected enough to keep on top of the problem.

It is clear that such matters and such 'cleansing' was not directly concerned with hygiene and public health; it was more concerned with civic pride and image endorsement and protection. It was about maintaining social order under accepted and well-established ideals. It was obvious that lodging house regulation had to be seen to be carried out in a way that seemed equal and considered not only to control the behaviour of the tenants but to keep on top of the sanitary condition of the places themselves. Despite these apparent stringent

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<sup>611</sup> Huddersfield Improvement Commissioners Minutes, 2 May 1852.

<sup>612</sup> Ibid.,

<sup>613</sup> Ibid., 22 November 1852.

measures few owners were prosecuted and the unregulated lodging houses seem to have survived, despite earlier attempts at closing them. Despite the nature of some lodging houses and their clientele, some measure of success was claimed by the Commissioners in a report of 1855.<sup>614</sup> The report found that overall, the lodging houses were found to be 'very orderly and becoming'.<sup>615</sup> At the Improvement Commissioners meeting, the chairman said that the inspectors had not seen or noticed 'any of the debase activities of previous years' in any of the lodging houses in Huddersfield as 'there was no doubt that in former years there was the grossest vice in the town'.<sup>616</sup> The chairman stated that the superintendant in charge of inspections was sure that:

The worst lodging house in Huddersfield was equal to the best in Halifax.<sup>617</sup>

At the time that this report was published the lodging house in Chapel Hill was open and taking in lodgers; during the meeting the chairman eludes to the effect the lodging house had on the state and availability of lodgings in the town and the smaller numbers in respect of the casual poor. The chairman said that he:

did not wish to depreciate the moral effects of the opening of the Model Lodging house, or its direct and indirect influence for good...he believed it to be a fact that the war had thinned all over town to a large extent, that portion of the population, who had once resided in the towns lodging houses.<sup>618</sup>

It was clear that the Commissioners believed that some of the unruly element had left the town and they believed this was due to the war in the Crimea. It might be difficult to understand such a comment; or are we meant to assume that some of the lodging house

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<sup>614</sup> 'State of the Lodging Houses', reported in *The Huddersfield Chronicle and West Yorkshire Advertiser*.

<sup>615</sup> *The Huddersfield Chronicle and West Yorkshire Advertiser*, 6 October 1855.

<sup>616</sup> Ibid.

<sup>617</sup> Ibid.

<sup>618</sup> Ibid.

number joined the army in search of better prospects. This is quite possible as we can't assume that just because the common lodging houses were the haunt of a percentage of the residuum, there were not those who were willing to change their fortunes and seek adventure overseas fighting. Many infantry soldiers signed up for at least ten years and the war in the Crimea might just have been the impetus needed to attract young men to the colours? We cannot assume that the lodgers fled the town because of a fear of conscription; such a system was not in place during the 1850s.<sup>619</sup>

During the 1850's the Commissioners proposed a change in direction; that change came in the shape of the Model Lodging House which was first discussed as a 'lodging house for the wayfaring classes' in 1852.<sup>620</sup> The 'Labouring Classes Lodging Houses Act 1851', quite specifically laid down certain rules and regulations for the condition and accommodation of 'future' lodging houses. The idea was to move away from the long and vicarious history of the common lodging houses which were, in the main, a blot on the urban landscape. The difficulty discovered by those who tried to administer the above Act, was how to define accommodation which ranged from filthy, overcrowded dens and brothels at the bottom, to reasonably comfortable boarding houses for artisans, commercial travellers, clerks and professionals at the top. Philanthropy took the direction of trying to provide 'model' lodging-houses for the respectable and industrious, who could thereby be separated from the corrupting influences of the rest. It was just such rules and ideals that the Society for Improving the Condition of the Labouring Classes incorporated in its first building scheme in 1845 in Clerkenwell, and following great acclaim further lodgings were built in George Street, and St Giles, in the heart of the most notorious slum areas in central London.

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<sup>619</sup> T. Royle, *Crimea, The Great Crimean War 1854-1856* (London, 1999) p.91 and pp 365-6.

<sup>620</sup> Huddersfield Improvement Commissioners minutes, 22 November 1852, KDA



Encouraged no doubt by the success of projects, Huddersfield declared its interest in creating its own lodging house on the 'model' design. The lodgings in Chapel Hill, Huddersfield, originated out of a need to improve not only the reputation of the town, but to provide a much needed building for those 'wayfarers' that required a nights' accommodation. More importantly these lodgings should be at a realistic price, and in surroundings that were far superior to the common lodging houses that after all tarnished the town. By raising standards the Improvement Commissioners clearly ignored the poorest of the poor; those who they had tried to drive out of the common lodging houses were now priced out of the lodgings house in Chapel Hill.

#### The Model Lodging House, Chapel Hill.

On 8 December 1852, it was agreed by the Commissioners to buy the freehold of a building from Messrs W.W. & H. Stables in Chapel Hill.<sup>621</sup> The freehold cost £1,600 of which £1,500 was to be paid on the 1 May 1853. Initially, plans outlined accommodation for 176. The house would be fitted out with toilets, a bathroom, cleaning room, coffee room and lodgings for a superintendent. Matters relating to the income arising from such a project were looked at and set against expenditure, and it was realised that a possible yearly profit of £185.12.00 could be made from the lodgings. On 28 April 1853, £3,600 was borrowed on the security of the Inspector of rates, for the purchase and fitting out of the building. The appointment of a master and assistant master were advertised, and Mr William Priestly was appointed, with James Moore acting as his deputy. The intended purpose of the model lodging house was to house travelling workers and their families and not to attract vagrants and casuals. The model lodgings could be seen as direct action on behalf of the Commissioners in radically improving the town's representation in respect of working-class accommodation.

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<sup>621</sup> The Stables family were woollen cloth manufacturers and cloth merchants. The premises in Chapel Hill were used to store their cloth – source *Slaters Directory 1848*, p.1101.

Prior to its opening in 1855, 350 bills were posted around the town announcing the opening of the model lodgings, a further 750 posters were produced by the Poor Law Guardians and posted around the town during the following twelve months. There were two floors on one side of the property and three on the façade that faced the town centre. There was accommodation for mechanics at 4d a night on the top floor, the normal single rate was 3d, married couples 6d, children under four years were admitted without charge and children under 12 were charged 2d. Bye laws and regulations were drawn up, and displayed in the foyer; some of the prohibitions were as follows:

No person shall be admitted if ill with fever, the house would be open from 5am to 11pm and everyone should be out of bed by 9am, unless ill. There was to be no defacing of walls or furniture, no spirituous or malt liquor and no drunks.<sup>622</sup>

Also prohibited were the following:

Card playing, gambling, fighting or obscene or profane language and there was to be no smoking in the bedrooms or kitchen.<sup>623</sup>

These regulations were obviously aimed at attracting the right kind of *deserving* artisan, mechanic or labourer, and were not for the vagrant unemployed or unemployable. It was the Commissioners' intention to use the model house as a flagship in the town and to hope, against hope, that common lodging houses might follow suit. In reality an ideal lost on the owners of such lodgings. In truth the Model house offered an alternative for the mechanic and artisan and in the case of the common lodging a suitable refuge the residual poor and casual vagrant.

During the 1850s the model house does seem to have accommodated working men and their families, leaving the common lodgings to the lower classes with their un-regulated

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<sup>622</sup> Huddersfield Improvement Commissioners minutes, November 1855 -1858

<sup>623</sup> Ibid.

often illegitimate appeal. By the late 1850s and into the 1860s the Commissioner's minutes seem to concentrate on the model house, with relatively few discussions regarding the common lodgings. However, from January 1858, the Commissioners begin to record the numbers of inmates at both the model house in Chapel Hill and the common lodging houses in the town. On 15 January 1858, it was reported that in the previous month there had been 2,682 lodgers in the model house and 1,956 in the common lodgings. The numbers recorded in the model house throughout 1858 and indeed subsequent years outnumbered the numbers in the common lodging houses and by November of 1858 there had been 21,635 lodgers staying at the model house, compared with 13,119 lodging in registered common lodgings.<sup>624</sup> The minutes record that occupier numbers for the model house in 1858 were lower than the previous year; but this was due to the lack of building work in the town during 1858. This tends to suggest that the model house was used in the main by skilled and semi-skilled men and their families, however, the building and associated trades could not account for the numbers recorded on a monthly basis, and might suggest that some of the inmates may have been casual labourers, even the casual poor and vagrants passing through the district and able to afford the accommodation. Attendance improved between 1859 and 1860 as the monthly average for 1859 rose from 2,190 to 2,818, the following year; an increase of 628 inmates and indication of a possible rise in the number of casual jobs, or perhaps the number of other classes in the town.

Earlier attempts of the Commissioners to eradicate unregistered common lodgings had largely failed. The minutes of a meeting in March 1864 record the fact that there were 35 unregistered houses in the town.<sup>625</sup> The following is a list of locations where there were 4 or more unregistered common lodging houses - these locations were in some of the most

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<sup>624</sup> Huddersfield Improvement Commissioners minutes, November 1857 -1858.

<sup>625</sup> The Huddersfield Improvement Commissioners Minutes, 22 March 1864, KDA.

deprived areas of the town: Jowitts Court, Rosemary Lane, Castlegate, Post Office Yard, Dock Street, Kirkgate and Chadwick Fold.<sup>626</sup> Whilst there were still inspections of unregistered common lodging houses there is no sign of any rigorous prosecution of such premises. Much of the Improvement Commissioners efforts are often directed toward the model houses and its continued use. The regulations still apply to the common lodgings, but their attention is often deflected by the glowing reports from the inspector of the model house. Much of the model lodging houses early success was due to the charge levied on inmates, which in turn was income for the town, whereas the common lodging houses were private enterprises, with the majority of any income going back to the owners. Between 1855 and 1863, the average number of inmates using the model house was 2,973 and in June 1868 the end of month figure topped 4,000 inmates for the first time in its history.

We know from the Commissioner's minutes that the model house was morally and educationally well equipped.<sup>627</sup> A report of 30 January 1867 states that the house was regularly supplied with 'newspapers and literatures' and that the library was 'elevating and religious in its tendency'.<sup>628</sup> We also know that the spiritual and moral needs of the inmates are catered for by the Buxton Road Wesleyans and the Ramsden Street Independents, the Temperance society too had a foot in the door, with 'well attended meetings'.<sup>629</sup> Perhaps there was by the 1860s, more of a need to attend to the moral needs of the inmates, which might then indicate that the model lodging house was housing more and more inmates from the lower classes and less and less from the skilled labouring classes. Evidence of this shift relates to a number of newspaper reports from the 1870s onwards. These reports identify some of the tragic characters that used the model house during the 1870s. Whilst it does not

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<sup>626</sup> Ibid.

<sup>627</sup> The Huddersfield Improvement Commissioners Minutes, 30 January 1867, KDA.

<sup>628</sup> Ibid.

<sup>629</sup> Ibid.

indicate that the casual and criminal classes were the sole users of the model house, it does show that the casual poor did stay there. In an article entitled 'Extraordinary Death of a Pauper', the *Huddersfield Chronicle and West Yorkshire Advertiser* reported on the death of John Bradbury in the Union Workhouse at Birkby. During the inquest into the death, the superintendent of the model house, William Priestley stated that Bradbury had been a lodger on several occasions at the model house in Chapel Hill. On the last occasion he had seen him the deceased had been intoxicated and the 'worse for it' and was refused admission. Bradbury had then been discovered by police in the town in a poor condition, having sustained what appears to have been a violent and sustained attack. Questions were later asked as to whether the police were responsible for his injuries as Bradbury was a known violent drunk.<sup>630</sup> In 1872, a report of abduction in Meltham grabbed the attention of the local papers. John Carven, a factory hand from Meltham, was before the Borough police Court charged with abducting Sarah Ann Wheatcroft, who at the time of the offence was 15 years and 8 months old. Carven and Wheatcroft made for the model house and on two separate occasions lodged there as man and wife. The superintendent was questioned as to why he didn't suspect the couple *were not* a lawfully married couple as it was obvious to the magistrates that they were not.<sup>631</sup> In 1878, the *Huddersfield Daily Chronicle* reported on the drowning of a vagrant hawker in a mill dam at Armitage Bridge. Bridget Mate, widow of the late John Mate, was well known as a hawker of threads and needles around Holmfirth and Huddersfield. It was reported that since her husband's death 'some years earlier', she had become homeless and regularly stayed at the model house in Chapel Hill.<sup>632</sup>

It was the case that a whole variety of lodgers stayed at the model house, some were skilled labourers working in the town and some were travelling vagrants and some as we

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<sup>630</sup> *The Huddersfield Chronicle and West Yorkshire Advertiser*, 11 November 1871.

<sup>631</sup> *The Huddersfield Chronicle and West Yorkshire Advertiser*, 22 June 1872.

<sup>632</sup> *The Huddersfield Daily Chronicle*, 12 February 1878.

have seen were the casual poor. Whilst the standards were higher than the common lodging houses, the model house did not refuse entry to anyone, and where it did, it was usually because they were intoxicated or had been troublesome toward staff on previous occasions.<sup>633</sup> The model house in Chapel Hill was intended as a 'model' for future lodgings and not only did it provide improved living conditions for the skilled and semi-skilled worker, but, the casual poor too.<sup>634</sup> Despite the great perceived potential of the model house, it did not, as it was hoped replace the common lodging house.<sup>635</sup>

Here within these broken down lodgings amongst the courts and yards was the real stain of all that was apparently evil about the context of pauperism in the town centre. Unfortunately for the Commissioners there was no apparent end to the common lodging house in the town centre during the nineteenth century. Many buildings used survived well into the twentieth century. Many of the yards were improved in between 1918 and 1945 but the true end of the common lodging house came about as a result of a lack of use, the buildings themselves remained until the town centre was overhauled during the 1950s and 1960s. Similarly the model house survived in Huddersfield until the 1950's, by which time it was commonly known as a doss house.

When one reviews the mid-nineteenth century, and in doing so consider the changes that were made in order to improve public health and sanitation, one should ask whether such

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<sup>633</sup> The Huddersfield Improvement Commissioners Minutes, 19 April 1869.

<sup>634</sup> The Model Lodging house was only a short distance away from the Buxton road Chapel, and one of the Trustees for that chapel, Mr John Cheeseborough, was also an inspector of lodging houses.

<sup>635</sup> On 25 May 1892, the Health sub-committee met in the Castlegate district of the town at 10pm to inspect some 14 common lodgings that were currently registered with the borough. The inspection revealed that a couple of common lodgings were registered to accommodate a large number of lodgers - John Brown, a lodging house keeper in Denton lane, has forty-nine lodgers, Thomas Lynch in Lowerhead Row, has thirty-three, Catherine McGrath in Castlegate, as thirty-eight, and William Brayfield, also in Castlegate, as forty-five. Of the common lodgings they visited, only one house was found wanting. John Rafferty, who as a house in Castlegate, had a bedroom set apart for single families, which was occupied by a married couple as well as three single females. The sub-Inspector was directed to caution Rafferty against a repetition of this offence.

changes were made in order to genuinely improve the town and its districts. Furthermore were these changes made for the inhabitants of all classes or were they to make certain selective improvements that might benefit the image of the town. When we consider the joint efforts of the trustees of the Ramsden estate and the Improvement Commissioners to improve the look of the town's smart streets in the late 1840s, to the detriment of the hovels that hid behind them, one questions where and for whom such renovations were made. While the town underwent necessary sanitary improvements and the back streets were adapted to remove waste water, one cannot deny that these improvements would have had an impact on the health of the poorest inhabitants. And yet these improvements came at a price, as the Commissioners levied the cost of such renovations upon the landlords and owners of the poorest properties.

One should also recall the rhetoric of Joseph Brook and the terms behind the meaning of 'prosperity and comfort'.<sup>636</sup> I think by now we can conclude that he did not mean to single out the destitute and the poorest inhabitants. Brook and his fellow Commissioners were aiming to make changes to the town in order to remove or at least attempt to remove the taint of pauperism. Such a taint was everywhere after all. It was in the decrepit cottages on 'Johnny Moor Hill' at Paddock and it was self-contained in all the lower lodgings in the roughest parts of the town. The Commissioners had the foresight to realise that they could not totally eradicate the common lodging house from the town. After all they served a purpose. They housed those who were likely to cause the authorities, the police included, the most amount of trouble. Fortunately, improvement Acts between the 1850s and 1870s gave them the momentum to rid certain unhealthy elements from the lowest lodgings and to qualify all the lodgings and to regulate them.

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<sup>636</sup> See the Comments of the Improvement Commissioner Joseph Brook Esq. on p.196.

The improvements set about under the auspices of the Public Health Act 1848, carried before it a spate of recommendations which improved the spread of chronic epidemics and within a few decades eradicated regular returns of cholera and typhus.<sup>637</sup> The prevention of such diseases did improve the outcome for many of the poorest people, who, during the 1830s and 1840s, would have certainly succumbed.

The language of this period of renewal and health promotion was overtly authoritarian. This is clear from the measures taken to regulate the lodging houses and the lengths that were taken in promoting the success of the model lodging house at Chapel Hill. It is obvious that the over-regulation of the lower lodging houses followed by the endorsement of the model lodging house, brought about, and indeed illustrated the path at gradual eradication that hadn't totally been abandoned by the Commissioners. Certainly, there was a balance to be struck between the overhaul of the nicer parts of the town and district and a cleansing of the poorer areas. At no time was there an attempt to eradicate poverty, rather a determined effort to reduce the symptoms that would lead to 'pauperism', which was a much more harmful evil altogether.

The reforms during this period, were to an extent hindered by the homage paid by the Board of Guardians to the revered ratepayers of Huddersfield. The Board of Guardians were culpable agents in refusing to improve conditions for those who resorted to the Poor Law for their relief. The appalling conditions found in the town poorhouse and described by Dr. Tatham, are testimony to the pitiful, sometimes dangerous management and care of the town's poorest inhabitants. The formation of the Improvement Commissioners allowed for some development in improving some of the worst conditions in the town, and through the use of sub-committees they began to make marked improvements in certain quarters within the town. The commissioners strategies adopted to combat the lowest lodging houses, were

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<sup>637</sup> See p.238.



largely incoherent and their strategy for the most part failed. The fact that common lodging houses remained popular despite over-regulation centres on the perception given to them by those that inhabited them. A local community emerged from their use. They were safe havens for the newly arrived Irish - the casual vagrant - the travelling labourer short on luck and money, and where many lodging houses sold beer, the not so discerning drinker and itinerant drunk.<sup>638</sup>

This popularity of the common lodging house caused the Improvement Commissioners a dilemma. They were clearly unable to close the town's common lodging houses, and in a practical sense, unable to do so; nevertheless their intent to resolve to remove the taint caused by such low lodgings is apparent in their efforts when planning the model house in Chapel Hill. For the Commissioners, if they couldn't remove the common lodging houses then they should create a standard of working-class accommodation that would be the pride of Huddersfield and the envy of other towns. This ideology is evident in the report of 6 October 1855, where the Commissioners made direct comparisons with the common lodgings in Huddersfield and the apparently inferior common lodgings in neighbouring Halifax.<sup>639</sup> Thereafter, a direct reference is made to attributes of the model house. Despite these rhetorical comparisons, the model house never fulfilled its true potential. Despite its improved conditions it was never wholly used by the skilled mechanic and travelling artisan and we know by the 1870s it was regularly being used by the casual poor.<sup>640</sup> As to the effect on the undeserving and casual poor of the town, once again there is evidence which points to the Irish being blamed for a host of wrongs, primarily in this case the spread

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<sup>638</sup> Between 1847 and 1875 at any one time there were around a dozen lodging houses that held licenses to sell beer and intoxicants. Source - The Huddersfield Improvement Commissioners Minutes, 1852, 1868 and 1876, KDA.

<sup>639</sup> The Huddersfield Improvement Commissioners Minutes, 12 April 1855.

<sup>640</sup> See footnotes 632-634.

of typhus. Even the workhouse medical officer, Dr.Tatham, supported this theory despite acknowledging that the town was not particularly unhealthy. The Irish not only bore the *taint* of pauperism but also the *taint* of disease, and were blamed for its proliferation around the town. Despite the changes made between the Public Health Act of 1848 and the discovery of an effective vaccine against cholera by Cluan in 1885, the actual changes or improvements to the lives of the poor in Huddersfield were relatively small. Whilst the suppression of typhus and cholera improved the levels of mortality, the lack of any real improvement in the living conditions of the poor meant that illness and disease were still prevalent life-style factors, and as such any improvement was small compared with the changes and improvement in scientific understanding. As with many issues surrounding the political language of Huddersfield it seemed that the - ‘power behind the throne (was) greater than the throne itself’.<sup>641</sup>

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<sup>641</sup> See footnote 560, p.205.

## **Chapter Six**

### **The Impact of Law and Order on the Pauper and Destitute classes.**

This final chapter will concentrate on the various groups that were associated with vagrancy, the casual poor, habitual tramp and wandering labourer and their association, both positive and negative, with the emerging forces of law and order in Huddersfield.

The purpose in concentrating on such a group of individuals is twofold; firstly, little has been said about such marginal groups as they were often transient in nature, moving around the regions, rarely settling in one town for any length of time. Secondly, they were often considered undeserving of any support and were often completely ignored and shunned by the authorities in times of need and as such, they are worthy of analysis. What support there was, was often only provided to such groups during instances of acute destitution and even then it was provided sparingly by the Poor Law Union. The authorities were keen to keep these 'casual applicants' well away from the home-grown poor. Even in the workhouse the authorities were keen not to tarnish the native pauper with the habits of the tramp and vagrant. The reason for this was obvious; they did not want to increase the taint of pauperism

This chapter will argue that although the casual poor often suffered at the hands of local authority, they were sometimes likely to find themselves on the receiving end of acts of benevolence and, and amount of tolerance from the same sources of authority. The same was true from similar acts of compassion from members of the public. Though generally, society generally treated vagrants and casuals with some suspicion, although there were those who envied such men and women for their apparent carefree lifestyle and ability to wander unrestrained. However, the majority saw the wandering poor as a threat to good order and property and many communities saw such men and women as a menace. In such a context

the casual wanderer is an example of a divergent, sometimes romantic, sometimes mystical group of individuals on the margins of society. Where they appear in Huddersfield they do so in relatively small numbers, as the town was never inundated with tramps and vagrants. Though where they do appear, they are devoid of sufficient means and are often found sleeping rough or resting in the town's common lodging houses, the vagrant office or the casual wards of the workhouses.

In short, this chapter intends to look at how the casual poor survived against the backdrop of an obvious increase in authority and local autonomy and more importantly, how this political language impacted on the casual poor and whether this contact was positive or negative.

#### The Tramp in Victorian Society.

The tramp and the vagrant were often the recipients of individual charity and a unprecedented amount of attention from the emerging forces of law and order.<sup>642</sup> Margaret Crowther states that the 'vagrant population inherits a many sided and contradictory mythical tradition which partly accounts for the continuing confusion of social attitudes and official policies towards them'.<sup>643</sup> Rather than their being a traditional rational fear of tramps and vagrants in the nineteenth century, as was the case during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the way was often open to employ varying attitudes toward them; some even romanticized their condition. Consequently, the position in Britain was unique in its treatment of vagrants, as on the continent and in the United States they were largely assisted through charity or the criminal law, in Britain however, they were dealt with by the Poor Law:

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<sup>642</sup> M.A. Crowther, 'The Tramp' in R. Porter (ed.) *The Myths of the English* (Oxford, 1992), p 113.

<sup>643</sup> Ibid., p.101.

It may be that the British, knowing that there was some kind of safety net for tramps, however inadequate, regarded them with less fear and more sentimentality.<sup>644</sup>

Certainly from a local perspective the safety net for tramps in Huddersfield was the various establishments outlined above. Huddersfield was not particularly concerned by the numbers of casuals in the town, at any one time, there were never any real efforts to expand these establishments, apart from the introduction of separate casual wards in the workhouse. Subsequently, when vagrant numbers increased toward the end of the nineteenth century the shortage of viable places and available welfare left the authorities struggling to cope. During the period of this study, and apart from the odd rise in vagrant numbers during depressed periods in trade, the workhouses could generally manage the numbers of casual applicants.

According to Crowther, these casual paupers aroused three powerful emotions: fear, pity and envy.<sup>645</sup> Fear emanated from the sixteenth century and the often quoted term ‘sturdy beggar’ through to the crafty and often marginally criminal moocher of the nineteenth century. These changes in the type of fear and their causes were often reflected in official language and policy.<sup>646</sup> Pity, usually took the form of either evangelical or humanitarian charity, whilst envy, a more complex notion, often expressed the nature of the free-spirit practised by the vagrant, the ability to do as he liked and yet, despite his publicly perceived wretchedness there existed a romantic image of the vagrant.<sup>647</sup> Tramping was usually a process of necessity and could last for many years. There was a host of sub-groups under the general banner of the tramp, such as the tinker. Tinkers were usually engaged in the selling of

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<sup>644</sup> Ibid., p.102.

<sup>645</sup> Ibid., p 105.

<sup>646</sup> The Vagrancy Act of 1824.

<sup>647</sup> The world inhabited by tramps and vagabonds is dealt with in the following sources: C.J. RibtonTurner, *History of Vagrants and Vagrancy and Beggars and Begging* (1887), K. Chesnow, *The Victorian Underworld* (London, 1970), chs 3, 7; L. Rose, ‘*Rogues and Vagabonds*’ *Vagrant Underworld in Britain 1815-1985* (London, 1988).

goods or the repairing of items and would travel the regions looking for work. Established tinkers usually had a cart and would usually avoid staying in the workhouse casual wards, preferring the common lodging house or an Inn. This type of travelling tradesman consisted of a whole host of tradesmen who found it necessary to travel to find work.<sup>648</sup> There were other groups who were often associated with fringe occupations and lifestyles; gypsies, professional beggars, travelling showmen, gamblers, fairground workers and other exotic wanderers. Gypsies were often viewed with suspicion and were often targeted by the authorities. Together with professional beggars they were often suspected of a whole range of misdemeanours. Vagrant numbers were often difficult to account for. Understandably, numbers increased at various times, particularly during periods of local and regional unemployment, numbers also increased at the end of wars, when displaced soldiers and sailors returned home to find their jobs no longer existed. But perhaps significantly numbers increased during, and beyond the Irish famine.

It fell to the Poor Law officer and police to regulate and control these disparate groups when they came to town. Professional tramps and beggars were the primary target of the police, who were of the opinion that tramps were nothing more than minor criminals, the same attitude was experienced by workhouse officials, who viewed the same people as troublesome agitators in the casual wards. The police, Poor Law officer and guardian were not the only ones who closely observed these groups. For a time there existed a group of individuals who went in disguise to observe such social groups. Though this kind of secret observation has a long history, its connection to the lives of vagrants and the destitute and to

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<sup>648</sup> E.J. Hobsbawm, 'The Tramping Artisan' in *Labouring Men* (London, 1968).

the institutions they visited, was very much an episode of the Victorian and Edwardian period.<sup>649</sup>

This genre of ‘dressing down’ has been a long standing theme in both factual and fictional literature, the peak of which, was George Orwell’s experiences living as a tramp in *Down and Out in Paris and London*, which became one of the best known works of its type. Toward the end of the nineteenth century British social research was becoming more organised, scientific and statistical, the period being epitomised by the observations of Charles Booth, Seebohm Rowntree and Arthur Bowley. Many social groups were susceptible to the statistical enquiry, ‘vagrants and some other groups could not easily, if at all be brought into its purview’.<sup>650</sup> Margaret Crowther has argued that an understanding of vagrant life was peculiarly dependent on literary and descriptive sources. Vagrancy was:

more elusive than most social problems, remained an issue where the creative writer offered as much guidance as a blue book, especially as the basic tools of the reformer-plausible statistics – were lacking.<sup>651</sup>

These make believe vagrants were not creative writers, and historians, such as Peter Keating, have tended to view their accounts as journalistic in tradition having much in common with the imaginative literature of the period.<sup>652</sup> These Victorian and Edwardian ‘complete participants’ were not the ethnographers in the sense that we might understand them today, as their writing rarely provided any advance in sociological or anthropological theory. Crowther suggests that such accounts of vagrancy:

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<sup>649</sup> M. Freeman, ‘Journeys into poverty kingdom: complete participation and the British vagrant, 1866-1914’, *History Workshop Journal* (52) (2001), University of Glasgow.

<sup>650</sup> Freeman, ‘Journeys into poverty kingdom’ p.1.

<sup>651</sup> Crowther, ‘The Tramp’ p.1

<sup>652</sup> Freeman, ‘Journeys into poverty kingdom’ p.1. See also P.J. Keating, *The Working Classes in Victorian Fiction* (1971) p.40.

Tended to concentrate less on the vagrants themselves than on the physical conditions in the casual wards; the nature of vagrancy is not usually the main issue.<sup>653</sup>

Throughout much of the nineteenth century, government both nationally, as well as locally, were fearful of the prospects of hoards of vagrants running riot around the country. Of course such conditions rarely occurred, although there were occasions when gangs of wayfarers and tramps would cause problems, but these were generally isolated cases and were often soon quelled by the authorities. It was often the fear of such occasions rather than the reality that affected Victorian sensibility. David Taylor argues that that there existed in the perception of crime, 'wider concerns for order and stability in a visibly changing world' and that the 'tolerance of crime and disorder diminished as fears grew'.<sup>654</sup> Such ideas were further complicated by the often inept abilities of the parish watchmen. Watchmen were employed by the parish and were often a point of fun and were often lampooned by the newspapers and public alike.

Eventually, it was the fear of crime, indeed rising crime, that allowed for a replacement for the old watch system and a more structured police force. In London and the larger urban centres the new targets for these new forces were the casual poor, who, rightly or wrongly, were perceived to be the main instigators of minor crime and public disorder. The perception for this is clear. In the emerging towns and cities of Britain the poor were often shunted into the neglected parts of a town, and in order to survive or make their lives more bearable, they would turn to petty crime in order to survive. The perception of the public, mainly the middle classes, was that the destitute and the criminal element amongst them were a threat and needed to be dealt with. A more pro-active professional police force was required

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<sup>653</sup> Crowther, 'The Tramp' p.101.

<sup>654</sup> D. Taylor, *The new police in the nineteenth-century England*, p.13.



and the emergence in the industrial centres of organised police forces was vital to the success in turning the tide of rising crime and the perception of a society in fear of its own people. As local borough and county police forces began to emerge in the 1850s, the subsequent increase in the number of uniformed officers on the streets had an impact on the number of arrests for petty crimes.

#### The police and vagrancy.

Vic Gatrell reminds historians that as a group we ‘might profitably remind ourselves that the history of crime is a grim subject, not because it is about crime, but because it is about power’.<sup>655</sup> In considering the policing of the casual poor in Huddersfield one might consider that it is as much a study of power and authority as it is about the study of the police officer as an individual or an authoritarian force for good. Whilst the average policeman of the 1850s and 1860s had discretionary powers, he was motivated toward certain methods of policing and had certain targets to achieve and certain crimes to consider when out on his beat. As Gatrell points out:

The rhetoric of liberty, justice and impartiality has always been usefully turned against the pretensions of the great and worthy; but those values have been more frequently compromised before the more experimental, discretionary and prejudicial devices of law as they were wielded in practice by policemen, Judges and politicians.<sup>656</sup>

Controlling urban spaces was a new experience for the provincial forces formed in the mid-nineteenth century. The cost of economic, urban and demographic growth during the industrial revolution counted the cost of certain events involving the urban poor. Gatrell calls these the ‘natural progress of barbarian habits, the explosive violence of the poor, the decay

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<sup>655</sup> V.A.C. Gatrell, ‘Crime, authority and the policeman-state, In F.M.L. Thompson (ed.) *The Cambridge social history of Britain, 1750-1950, Social agencies and institutions*, vol.3 (Cambridge, 1990), p.246.

<sup>656</sup> Ibid.

of deference, the collapse of family life and the diffusion of pauperism'.<sup>657</sup> It was the Royal Commission on the County Constabulary in 1839 that decided:

In scarcely any cases is [crime] attributable to the pressure of unavoidable want of destitution; ...it arises from the temptation of obtaining property with a less degree of labour than by regular industry.<sup>658</sup>

Such language associated criminality with the indigent underclass and it was such observations that coloured both the local authorities and the new police forces. If vagrants and the casual poor were open to abuse by the authorities, and they were, it should not surprise us to discover that they were easy prey to the increased numbers of police in the 1850s. For those who had no visible means and who wandered at large on the highway, often came under the punitive control of the police. Of course amongst such groups there were petty criminals and as such they represented mobile patterns of criminality. They were a threat to owners of rural properties, who on any given night might find homeless men and women lodging in their barns or outbuildings. Railway yards and empty carriages, stables and unused buildings, were particularly prone to minor invasions and in the pottery and brick making towns the warm kilns were particularly popular during the winter months. In an expanding town such as Huddersfield it became the responsibility of the police to keep an eye on areas that were likely to harbour the casual poor, as such, areas were considered to be a breeding ground for petty crime.<sup>659</sup>

The legislation that led to the prosecution of countless numbers of tramps, vagrants and the casual houseless poor comes largely from the Vagrancy Act of 1824. The Act was a consolidating Act, which confirmed the tendency of eighteenth-century legislation in its three-part distinction between 'idle and disorderly', 'rogue and vagabond', and 'incorrigible

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<sup>657</sup> Ibid., p.251.

<sup>658</sup> *RC on the County Constabulary*, PP 1839, XIX, p. 181.

<sup>659</sup> Summons and Charge register 1859-1868, KDA.

rogue'.<sup>660</sup> This robust piece of legislation aimed at controlling the vagrant population by making them account for their movements, was an Act which prescribed how certain members of society should go about their daily lives. It was overtly authoritarian and a pernicious piece of legislation and its popularity with the police has been long-lasting, with certain sections of the Act still in force today.<sup>661</sup> The fact that the Vagrancy Act was largely draconian, even by early nineteenth century standards does not detract from its usefulness to the authorities, many of whom found its scope more than adequate for their uses. The Vagrancy Acts accomplishment according to Steedman, reflected the daily context in which its use encouraged local constables to add extra 'labels' of 'habitual drunkard' and 'habitual criminal' to their daily use of the Act.<sup>662</sup> Steedman maintains that the long-term use of the Act and its powers reflected both its popularity with the police and no small amount of irritation from the vagrants it affected. The ultimate success of this legislation was the number of barriers that were erected by legislators in order to control a whole range of social offences. Wherever the term vagrant was used in the statutes, a trigger offence was automatically used by the police. During the 1850's destitute children were often termed vagrant and in 1868 and 1872 the term was also used for any person found gaming in a public place.<sup>663</sup> As David Taylor points out, the general instructions given to the police in the 1820's in respect of nuisances and petty disturbances were momentous. In respect of the wide-ranging Vagrancy Act, Taylor states that it is Roberts' assertion that:

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<sup>660</sup> C. Steedman, *Policing the Victorian Community: The formation of English provincial police forces 1856-80* (London, 1984), p.56.

<sup>661</sup> Sections 3 and 4 are still active sections and deal with begging and those who encourage children to beg.

<sup>662</sup> C. Steedman, *Policing the Victorian Community*, p.56.

<sup>663</sup> PP. 1861, vii, pp. 187-8 regarding 17&18 Vict. c.86 and 20&21 Vict. c.48 which extended the term to destitute children. The Vagrancy Amendment Acts, 1868 and 1872 (31&32 Vict. c.52; 36&37 Vict. c.38).

Those who, like children, adolescents and the casually employed, continued to use public space for recreation or fringe economic activity became subject to the direct discipline of the police and magistrates court.<sup>664</sup>

It does seem that the Metropolitan police were perhaps the unwitting experiment for the day to day control of the houseless poor. Taylor states the police's continued and increasing involvement in the lives of the poor and their regulation gathered apace, due to pressure brought about by various reform groups and the Home Office.<sup>665</sup> He goes on to say that:

Concern was expressed about the problem of the prostitute, the habitual drunkard, the gambler and the alien, so the state became more coercive and so increased police involvement in, or more accurately police intrusion into, the lives of the poor'.<sup>666</sup>

This intrusion into the lives of the poor soon spread amongst the provincial forces and became a natural discourse for the local police forces that emerged in the 1840's and 1850's. An officer in the Staffordshire force, Thomas Woollaston, had the following opinion toward the vagrant paupers on his patch, he:

Claimed that he was sympathetic to the real mendicant, but since he considered 'vagrancy [to be] very nearly allied to crime' it seems unlikely that many poor wayfarers would have benefitted from a confrontation with Woollaston.<sup>667</sup>

There was a similar attitude explored in Huddersfield. The Huddersfield Watch Committee refers to the general attitude toward petty crime and the poor in a report of 1856. The clerk to the committee records the comments of Mr Hunter, a committee member, when he stated that:

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<sup>664</sup> M.J.D. Roberts, 'Public and private in early-nineteenth century London: the Vagrant Act of 1822 and its enforcement', *Social History*, 21, 1988, p.293, in D.Taylor, (ed.) *The new police in nineteenth-century England, Crime, conflict and control*. Manchester University press, 1997, p.101.

<sup>665</sup> D. Taylor, *The new police in the nineteenth-century*, 1997, p.101.

<sup>666</sup> Ibid., p.101

<sup>667</sup> Emsley, *The Great British Bobby*, p.72.

Our town and our constables have a duty to us and every citizen of the town. They should quell disorder and regulate those who cause the most trouble. It is regrettable, but true that they are the poorest people of this town.<sup>668</sup>

Prior to the 1850s, Huddersfield's police force was small and its officers poorly paid and badly trained.<sup>669</sup> In the autumn of 1848 the Huddersfield Improvement Commissioners decided that the town required night and day constables to keep the peace. The commissioners made inquiries into such needs and decided their purpose was:

To institute the necessary inquiries for the purpose of ascertaining what number of constables it will be advisable to appoint with proper gradations of officers for the proper protection of the town by day and night.<sup>670</sup>

#### Borough Incorporation in Huddersfield.

The Watch Committee of 1848 was in force until the incorporation of the town in 1868. In November 1867, Capt. Donelly, once of the Royal Engineers, was appointed to hear the case both for and against the proposed incorporation of the town.<sup>671</sup> The existing population within the jurisdiction of the Improvement Commissioners was 24,100, with a rateable value of £100,008. Added to the town were the districts of Marsh, Fartown, Deighton, Bradley, Lockwood, Moldgreen, Dalton, Lindley, Almondbury and Newsome, which brought the population up to 72,455 and a rateable value of £199,497.<sup>672</sup> Not everyone agreed with the incorporation. One such dissenter was a Mr Shaw from Bradley, who thought that he and his fellow villagers would fare better on their own. He believed that the village of Bradley would

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<sup>668</sup> Watch Committee minutes, 28 August 1856, KDA.

<sup>669</sup> The Huddersfield improvement commissioners appointed a watch committee in 1848, which ran until 1868, when the town became a borough and appointed constables for its own borough police force which ran alongside other borough and city forces and the West Riding Constabulary until 1968.

<sup>670</sup> Huddersfield Watch and Fire and Lighting Committee Minutes, 1 November 1848, KDA.

<sup>671</sup> Draft Charter of Incorporation, KMT 1/box 146/11. WYAS.

<sup>672</sup> T. Dyson, *The History of Huddersfield and District from the earliest times down to 1951* (Huddersfield, 1951), p. 431

become ‘the mouth of discharge for the impurities of Huddersfield’.<sup>673</sup> Despite these small upsets over localism and the fear of the much larger authority interfering with the small autonomous village, the village of Bradley was incorporated within Huddersfield. With this incorporation there emerged a new kind of bureaucracy; a bureaucracy and a language of authority, which began to consume the Improvement Commissioners Watch Committee. In some respects change was necessary and as the fledgling borough took over the running of the new police force, changes and some uniformity to the idea of an effective police force began to take shape. The minutes of the watch committee record the first meeting in September 1868, under the auspices of the Mayor Mr. Jones, and Aldermen, Sykes, Mellor and Crawshaw and Councillors, Robson, [Houghton], White, Haigh, Hatersley, Lister, Dale and Woodhead.<sup>674</sup> During the meeting the committee decided on the manpower required to form the new borough force; there was to be one superintendent, five inspectors, ten sergeants and fifty-one constables, all appointed subject to testimonials in the proceeding weeks. A later meeting decided on the final structure of the new force, which consisted of one head Constable, three duty inspectors, one detective inspector, one market inspector, eight duty sergeants, one sergeant of the fire brigade, five 1st class constables, five 2<sup>nd</sup> class constables and forty-two 3<sup>rd</sup> class constables. Mr James Withers was the first head constable and the minute’s record that the projected expenditure for the year for the force would be around £4,000.<sup>675</sup>

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<sup>673</sup> Ibid., p.444.

<sup>674</sup> Watch Committee Minutes, 12 September 1868, KDA.

<sup>675</sup> Watch Committee Minutes, 30 November 1868, KDA.

**Table 6.1 - Offences recorded for incidents of Assault, Drunkenness and Vagrancy in the Summons and Charge Register in the month of October between 1863 and 1874.<sup>676</sup>**

<b><u>October</u></b>	<b><u>Assaults</u></b>	<b><u>Drunkenness</u></b>	<b><u>Vagrancy</u></b>
<b>1863</b>	22	16	2
<b>1864</b>	28	17	4
<b>1865</b>	26	18	3
<b>1866</b>	23	17	1
<b>1867</b>	23	11	1
<b>1868</b>	22	20	2
<b>1869</b>	26	22	1
<b>1870</b>	24	24	2
<b>1871</b>	21	15	2
<b>1872</b>	23	18	1
<b>1873</b>	22	10	3
<b>1874</b>	25	13	5
<b>Total</b>	<b>285</b>	<b>201</b>	<b>27</b>

#### Policing the Tramp and Vagrant.

Nationally, but particularly in London, which largely led the way for urban policing there was a shift of emphasis during the second quarter of the nineteenth century. This shift represented a change of focus and a new target for the police. The houseless poor, the casual pauper, tramp and vagrant, became both a national and local issue. The 1824 Vagrancy Act, the 1839 Metropolitan Police Act and numerous other laws were passed which armed the police with a

<sup>676</sup> Summons and Charge Register, 1859 -1867 and 1868 – 1874, KDA.

whole range of discretionary powers of arrest. In day to day practice this discretion was group-specific. Early police orders told constables to desist from interfering with respectable working people.<sup>677</sup> Consequently the groups firmly in the sites of the police were vagrants, suspicious characters and, with luck, a few burglars too. These vulnerable and largely accessible people were fed into the judicial system in large numbers. Magistrates convicted or committed them to trial on little evidence, often, other than police testimony as to character.<sup>678</sup> These men and women quickly became the ‘criminal class’ ‘and ideological stereotypes were thus fuelled and self-confirming’.<sup>679</sup>

Huddersfield was never over-run with criminal vagrants and the houseless poor. This is somewhat supported by an examination of the summons and charge register, the detail of which is re-produced in table 6.1 above. The table reveals few summonses and charges for offences relating to the Vagrancy Act and begging. Though it doesn’t show the status of those convicted of the other offences. The largest offence by number is that of assault followed by drunkenness. To give an impression of these numbers details of assaults have been compared to drunkenness and then offences associated with vagrancy for the month of October beginning with 1863 and covering the years up to 1874. By comparing the figures for 1863 and 1874, we see only a slight increase in the number of offences of assault, drunkenness and vagrancy. This slight increase may be an indicator of an increased efficiency of the police in bringing street offences to court, yet the numbers are not that different to previous years and do not give us a clear indication of police effectiveness over a period where police numbers increased. Unfortunately, one of the biggest problems of the Register is that they do not record the occupation or address of the defendant, revealing little social detail of prisoners brought to court.

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<sup>677</sup> W.R. Miller, *Cops and Bobbies: Police Authority in New York and London, 1830-1870* (London, 1977), p.55

<sup>678</sup> Gatrell, ‘Crime authority and the policeman-state’ p.278.

<sup>679</sup> Ibid.



Punishment for minor offences usually resulted in a fine; offences of drunkenness were usually dealt with by a fine of 5 shillings, whereas defendants charged with assault were fined between 2 and 5 shillings, though in one case relating to the assault of the defendants wife, a £2 fine was levied.<sup>680</sup> Whilst some cases were dismissed or settled out of court offences against public order and decency, such as drunkenness, prostitution, begging and vagrancy were nearly always dealt with by way of a fine.<sup>681</sup> Only when the defendant was considered a professional vagrant, habitual tramp or common prostitute, was prison considered.<sup>682</sup> There were rather a high number of cases that were not found proven, indicating perhaps that the evidence might have either been poorly presented or simply not collated correctly. It was the duty of the police to gather and present the evidence at court; many cases were usually presented by an inspector of police as it was rare for any prosecuting lawyers to be present at the magistrate's court.<sup>683</sup>

Amongst the records of offences relating to those that were up before the magistrates there are a large number of neglect cases, both of children and wives. They do not account for anything like the number of cases for theft, assault and drunkenness recorded in the borough yet, they do turn up on average at around one or two cases a month.<sup>684</sup> Unfortunately the records from the police and the records from the magistrates do not run concurrently and therefore there is no accurate or continuous picture of the number of convictions. Just as the magistrate's minute book records some of the cases before the bench in Huddersfield, so the 'refused charge book' kept by the borough police offers us a detailed look at some of the

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<sup>680</sup> Summons and Charge Register 1859-1868, KDA.

<sup>681</sup> Ibid.

<sup>682</sup> See Table 6.2, p.235.

<sup>683</sup> Usually officers of the rank of Inspector and above were allocated this task; a practice which continued up to the formation of the CPS in 1986.

<sup>684</sup> Between 1 April 1869 and 31 March 1870, there were 486 cases of drunkenness in the town put before the magistrates. The majority of defendants were found guilty and were fined between 5 and 10 shillings. Borough magistrate's offence book 1869-1870, WYAS.

incidents of vagrancy, that came before the police between the late 1850's and the mid 1880s. It also offers a more balanced look at the decision making process when dealing with those who were clearly either minor offenders or where there was insufficient evidence to proceed to a charge. It was often the case that the refuse charge book gave more detail regarding the suspected offender than any other police records; one learns for instance, that in December 1859, Frederic Buckley was caught begging in Manchester Street in the town centre. As with many beggars, he was 'cautioned' by the duty sergeant and was ordered to leave town. Buckley was released without charge primarily because he was not considered a common or 'professional' vagrant.<sup>685</sup> Common vagrants as defined by the Act were often put before a magistrate and their fate was determined on a case by case basis, with the defendant being fined or sent to prison. Often, when released they were ordered not to return to the town of conviction. Mary Horricks, a native of London was found begging in Ramsden Street, Huddersfield, on the 14 September 1862. As a first-time offender and therefore not a common vagrant, she was ordered to leave town.<sup>686</sup> Another first time was Timothy Mahoney, who along with Brendan Collins, was found begging in George Street, both were ordered to leave town. Vagrants found in public places, especially when drunk were often dealt with in the same way as those found begging. Martha Wilkinson was found drunk in the town and was ordered to leave the next day. Wilkinson was a common vagrant, but because she had dependent children in the nearby town of Birstall, she was ordered to leave town and not imprisoned.<sup>687</sup> In the summer of 1863, George Holdsworth, an itinerant rag collector from Oldham had come to Huddersfield to pursue his trade and had then gone drinking in the town. Two days later his wife came looking for him and left her two children unsupervised in the street whilst she searched for her husband. The children were taken into custody by the

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<sup>685</sup> The Refused charge book 1859-1933, 11 December 1859, KDA.

<sup>686</sup> Ibid., 14 September 1862, KDA.

<sup>687</sup> Ibid., January 1863, KDA.

police and the wife and husband rounded up, cautioned and directed to leave town.<sup>688</sup> Sarah Gregg was caught hawking in Huddersfield without a valid hawker's certificate. The desk sergeant recorded that:

The accused had only two common tablespoons in her possession, which she was offering for sale and as the Act is about to be repealed, she was cautioned and given her liberty'.<sup>689</sup>

Hawkers and pedlars were often the target of the local police; Ambrose Ireland, a pot hawker, who was accused of stealing 8lb of bacon, was arrested, but there was insufficient evidence to prove the theft, so he was directed to leave town immediately.<sup>690</sup> Incidents of unproven acts of theft litter the refused charge book; one such accusation centred around two inmates of the model lodging house in Chapel Hill. Harry Dawson and James Whittaker had both been out drinking in the town and Whittaker accused Dawson of stealing his money. The two were brought into the police office and the sergeant told the two 'they should sober up and forget their differences' both were released, but were barred from returning to the model lodging house.<sup>691</sup> Vagrants who were found sleeping in or on enclosed premises and were without any visible means of support, were nearly always prosecuted, though on occasions, those who were clearly down on their luck were released without charge. Alfred Cliffe a stone mason's labourer from Paddock, was found drunk and sleeping in enclosed premises with no means of support. Enquiries were made of him and it was discovered that he lived with his mother, who was a widow and in receipt of charity; having indirect means of support, once he had sobered up he was released. However not all those caught begging were

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<sup>688</sup> Ibid., June 1863, KDA.

<sup>689</sup> Ibid., 25 April 1869, KDA.

<sup>690</sup> Ibid., March 1870, KDA.

<sup>691</sup> Ibid., 6 October 1881, KDA.

in need. William Mace was found begging in Buxton Road and was arrested; the duty sergeant recorded:

The accused had been drinking and was no doubt begging more for fancy than want as he was in employment and had money in his pocket when brought to the office'.<sup>692</sup>

Of course there were occasions where those termed 'professional vagrants and tramps' were sent to prison as table 6.2 below indicates. The following proceedings before the Justices at Wakefield for the Upper Agbrigg division were recorded between 26 March 1852 and 10 March 1853.

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<sup>692</sup> Ibid., 2 April 1881, KDA.

**Table 6.2 Petty Sessions – Vagrant defendants before the magistrates in Wakefield.<sup>693</sup>**

Name	Gender	Offence	Sentence
Jonathan Swann	m	vagrancy	2 months
Charles Johnson	m	vagrancy	2 months
Silvester Thomas	m	vagrancy	1 month
Elizabeth Finter	f	vagrancy and neglect	discharged fined 2 shillings
John Brown	m	vagrancy	3 months
Bridget Garvey	f	vagrancy	7 days
Abraham Newsham	m	begging and vagrancy	Not recorded
Mary Jones	m	vagrancy	1 month
Francis O'Connor	m	theft and vagrancy	6 months
Margaret Saville	m	neglect and vagrancy	1 month
John Harrison	m	vagrancy	2 weeks
Frank Ellis	m	vagrancy	discharged fined 6 shillings
Noreen McAlister	f	begging	1 week
Norman Bails	m	vagrancy and begging	3 months
Emmett and Smithson	m	vagrancy and assault	6 months
Martin Callaghan	m	vagrancy	1 month

<sup>693</sup> Petty Sessions, Lower Agbrigg Division Court Registers 1852 -1974, WYAS P7.

Along with offences of begging, prostitution was a growing problem. In Huddersfield, the evidence suggests that women were likely to be arrested for petty theft from a prospective client rather than for importuning. Mary Jones, who gave her occupation as a dressmaker, was in Bull and Mouth Street when she allegedly accosted a Mr Denham, asking him to go with her for immoral purposes. Denham gave her up to constable Byrham, but would not appear in court as he did not want to be put in an embarrassing position over the affair. Jones was released without charge.<sup>694</sup> Bridget Clasby and Helen Thompson, both common prostitutes, were accused of stealing a bag containing £3 from a gentleman who they were drinking with. Both women were searched and no money was found and they were subsequently released without charge.

On occasions there were cases that showed that some police officers had discretionary powers and applied them. One such incident involved a Michael [Cau...] a labourer of no fixed abode who was found begging in John William Street. He was arrested and examined by the sergeant on duty; sergeant Higginbottom noted that the labourer had a child with him and had been begging for a few coppers to pay for a nights' lodgings, he was sober and 'did not have the appearance of a professional beggar' the sergeant allowed him and his child to spend the night in a cell, releasing them at 6am the following morning.<sup>695</sup> Similarly, John Barnes, a vagrant labourer, was found sleeping in the open air in Leeds road without visible means of support. He gave a good account of himself and told the police he had been working for a Mr Radcliffe on the new sewerage works. Barnes had been drinking the night before and turning up for work drunk, he was dismissed and had then gone into town drinking with what money he had left, at nine pm he returned to the works and had fallen asleep. There

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<sup>694</sup> Ibid., 23 January 1882, KDA.

<sup>695</sup> Ibid., 26 September 1881, KDA.

were no further proceedings against him.<sup>696</sup> Another vagrant, Charles Harlow, also known as Charles Heath, was found sleeping in a railway van in St George's square. He had no money on him and said 'he was on the tramp from Harrogate to Ashton under Lyme'. Harlow was released and ordered to leave town.<sup>697</sup>

The evidence points to the fact that many of the vagrants and habitual tramps found sleeping rough in the townships around Huddersfield, were usually ordered to leave the town by either the police there and then, or by the magistrates the following day. Even those that returned, were more often tolerated than sent to prison. Albert Cross, an itinerant rag and bone collector was often arrested and given a cell during the 1860s. Between 1862 and 1870, he appeared before the bench on eleven separate occasions and still managed to escape prison.<sup>698</sup> During the spring and summer months and during hot spells, the number of vagrants sleeping in fields and barns increased. In 1874, George Hinchliffe, a farmer from Almondbury, complained to the superintendent of police about a number of tramps found on his and his neighbour's farm. The Superintendent promised a purge on the tramps and between the 12<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> July, a total of six were arrested and put before the magistrates. All six were ordered to leave town.<sup>699</sup> Of course such issues were not as common in the colder months, when many tramps would try their luck in the town or around the smaller townships and villages. Exceptions to the discretionary nature of some local policemen meant that habitual and professional criminals who were also vagrants and habitual tramps found themselves spending short terms in prison. Generally, Sentences for beggars, vagrants and tramps ranged between 7 and 21 days, depending on the nature of the offence. More serious or persistent offenders were often punished by sentences of between 1 to 6 months, usually

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<sup>696</sup> Ibid., 12 May 1882, KDA.

<sup>697</sup> Ibid., 8 July 1889, KDA.

<sup>698</sup> Borough Magistrate's offence book 1869-1870, WYAS.

<sup>699</sup> *Huddersfield Chronicle and West Yorkshire Advertiser*, 22 July 1874.

accompanied with hard labour in the case of male prisoners. Those sentenced from the magistrates in Huddersfield and Wakefield would have ended up in Wakefield Gaol.<sup>700</sup>

It is difficult to assess vagrant numbers in Huddersfield, suffice to say that their number passed irregularly through the courts and they were often found either in the vagrant office or a common lodging house. During the 1870s and 1880s, some vagrants migrated to the casual wards at the Deanhouse and Crosland Moor workhouses. Throughout the 1860s and 1870s, casual ward provision was made at all three of the workhouses. These casual wards were seasonally attended, with lower numbers in the summer and higher attendances in the winter. The problem for Huddersfield was accessibility and provision and alongside this an unwillingness to fill the available spaces. Only when an individual was in desperate straits or was new to the experience of life on the road, was there any necessity to spend the night in the workhouse. There were those who by their very nature were either too old or too ill to care, and long-term inmates were common, especially at Crosland moor.<sup>701</sup> Many aged tramps were let out on a morning and admitted again at night. The younger, fitter, tramps, even in winter, would try and avoid the spike, preferring instead the freedom of a barn or enclosed building or common lodging house. The reason for this reluctance was often the austere regime that existed within these institutions; on occasions, even the option of gaol was preferred, as the accommodation and food was often better than that supplied in the workhouse. The most popular nights' accommodation was by far the common lodging house, here one could, for a small amount, find a bed amongst ones fellow vagrants and where the lodging house doubled as a beer house, find a more convivial atmosphere to that in the workhouse.

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<sup>700</sup> Prisoners to Wakefield Gaol, 1897-1955, KDA.

<sup>701</sup> Of the two main workhouses in the town, Crosland Moor was the closet to the main areas of population. Deanhouse was some 10 miles from the town and access was difficult even by the end of the nineteenth century.



It is clear that as the police and the courts became more professional, the vagrant and the tramp suffered by more prudent measures. Added pressure from the autonomy exercised by the borough and its ownership of its own police force after 1868 seems to have had an effect on petty criminality in the town. However, offences of vagrancy, begging, drunkenness and prostitution, altered little during the 1870s and 1880s. Whilst police numbers grew, there does not appear to be any drive adopted in locking up the vagrant population. Whilst such groups were regularly arrested there does not appear to be a willingness to over punish such men and women. In fact there is evidence that suggests that vagrancy and begging was somewhat tolerated in Huddersfield town as long as it did not involve any additional elements of criminality such as theft or an outbreak of public disorder.

#### The treatment of Vagrants and Casuals in the Union Workhouses.

The physical appearance of a tramp often distinguished them from the condition of a casual pauper. In many cases, tramps would wear numerous layers of tatty and decaying garments, which were generally in shreds and tied with pieces of string or rope. They rarely bathed and when they did enter the casual ward due to illness or during periods of extreme bad weather the engrained dirt would not be removed easily by a regular bath.<sup>702</sup> The daily grind for those that either slept rough or relied on the workhouse would have been an often unbearable situation. Often the experience of casual indoor relief depended on the care offered in the workhouse, and this care varied widely depending on those who administered it. The procedure however, for such admission seems to have been much the same throughout the country.

In the workhouses of Huddersfield, admission for the vagrant, tramp and casual applicant, would have been by way of a ticket which could be obtained from a workhouse

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<sup>702</sup> H. Mayhew, *London Labour and the London Poor*, (London Harmondsworth, 1985) and J.Hall, *The Huddersfield Union Guardians Handbook* (Huddersfield, 1895) p148. The Guardians' are instructed to dispose of any garments that are beyond cleaning and replace them with a suitable replacement.

official. During the 1850's and 1860's, such tickets could be obtained from the police station, though this was often an *ad hoc* affair and was rarely taken up by the majority of casuals. Where it was used, it was generally by casuals who were not known in the town or who had been elsewhere for some time. The majority of applicants preferred to simply turn up at the workhouse itself, if for no other reason than that they were less likely to undergo searching questions. The porter at the workhouse gate was responsible for admissions on this basis, and was obliged to ask where the applicant had come from, where they were going to, and what their occupation was. Generally, men and women were admitted for one night, although in 1881, regulations were imposed which said that they had to stay for two nights, three nights if admitted on a Friday or Saturday night. Under pressure from central government, more unions adopted this regulation, although in practice it was often unworkable, since most workhouse masters were keen to get rid of troublesome inmates. The porter, often the only member of staff resident on the premises, had the irksome task of searching and questioning applicants, and could be at times a law on to himself when taking in applicants. Such was the case with Joseph Dixon, a native of Linthwaite, who was dismissed as the night porter from Crosland Moor workhouse for stealing from the inmates of the casual ward and for stealing tea and potatoes from the workhouse kitchen.<sup>703</sup>

What was needed was direction in how to deal with such types. And so a guide aimed at impressing upon those that ran and regulated the workhouses in Huddersfield was drawn up by the clerk to the union John Hall. The *Huddersfield Union Guardians Handbook* gave employees and the guardians a ready-reference to the rules by which their inmates should abide by, though it is clear that this handbook and perhaps many others were written up on a similar scheme as there were numerous references to national policy.<sup>704</sup> An example of which

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<sup>703</sup> Petty Sessions, Lower Agbrigg Division Court Registers (1878) 1852 -1974, WYAS.

<sup>704</sup> J.Hall, *The Huddersfield Union Guardians Handbook* (Huddersfield, 1895).

was contained in a letter from the Poor Law Commissioners Hugh Owen.<sup>705</sup> He stated that the inmate might:

display a 'warmth of temper and passionate conduct' which might 'betray a consciousness of want and firmness' he adds 'the discipline of a workhouse has to be maintained by an undeviating adherence to the rules and a steadiness, which defies provocation, while it deliberately enforces obedience to orders by legal and authorised means.'<sup>706</sup>

The handbook refers to the Poor Law Commissioners General Consolidated Order of 24 July 1847, which outlined the general manner in which a 'casual applicant' might be punished. Of particular interest here, are the articles which relate to certain types of behaviour; 'Article 127' relates to certain acts of disobedience, in particular obscene and profane language toward another inmate, member of staff or guardian, and offences concerning the threatening or actual assault against any person within the workhouse. The proceeding 'Article 128' refers to more serious offences including drunkenness and acting in an indecent or obscene manner toward a member of staff, inmate or Guardian. The master of the workhouse could refuse such an inmate food for up to 48 hours. If this particular method did not work and the inmate persisted, he or she could be kept in confinement for up to twelve hours.<sup>707</sup> Of course all these punishments had to be recorded, so that the Guardians could review the behaviour of their inmates at their regular meetings. A more serious offence was contained within 'Article 146' and related to any inmate over the age of fourteen, who unlawfully introduced or attempted to introduce spirituous or fermented liquor into the workhouse. On discovering such an act the master was called upon to take the inmate before a Justice of the Peace to be dealt with according to the law.

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<sup>705</sup> Letter from The PLC February 5 1842, in *The Huddersfield Guardians Handbook*, p.106.

<sup>706</sup> *Ibid.*, p.106.

<sup>707</sup> *The Huddersfield Guardians Handbook*, pp. 142-3.

The Poor Law Amendment Act 1834 was quite specific about the rules concerning drink and drunkenness:

And whereas persons maintained in public workhouses sometimes refuse to work, or are guilty of drunkenness and other misbehaviour and been found guilty of such behaviour, shall be confined in a common gaol or house of correction for between 21 and 42 days.<sup>708</sup>

The testimony of those marginalised and destitute is often lacking, especially in urban centres such as Huddersfield. Apart from the ‘tramp graffiti’ scratched into the walls near to a spike alerting others, to the conditions of the casual ward or some other useful information useful to travelling men.<sup>709</sup> For many areas outside of London the best estimate as to the kind of lives lived by the destitute emerges from a group of writers and investigators, keen to witness at first hand, the conditions endured by the tramp and vagrant population. There was always a difficulty in assessing the true numbers of tramps and vagrants as they did not stand around waiting to be counted, and many of the statistics for tramp and vagrant numbers do not appear locally until the 1890s and even where they do, they are usually casual ward numbers enumerated in summer and winter. In Huddersfield we know that both the vagrant office at Croft Head in the town, and the model lodging house and common lodging houses accommodated casual paupers, though we can only guess at the numbers. What we can say is that there weren’t any significant numbers of vagrants in the town that caused the authorities to become overly concerned about their number. In fact all the indicators point to their being a relatively firm but fair attitude toward the vagrant.

This chapter has attempted to place the casual applicant, tramp and vagrant in a context that makes it possible for one to understand how they were treated and how they were

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<sup>708</sup> Ibid., pp.145-51.

<sup>709</sup> See Peter Higginbotham’s website [www.workhouse.org.uk](http://www.workhouse.org.uk)

perceived during the period of this study. The chapter has tried to illustrate both the negative and positive attitudes toward paupers on the margins of society. In Huddersfield, a town that was never inundated with vagrants and tramps, those in authority were more concerned by the condition of its poor residents and the possibility that through slippage into moral degeneracy they might spread the moral disease of pauperism throughout the town. By keeping on top of the vagrant and tramp numbers and by keeping them on the move, the town was relatively successful in tempering the tramp and vagrant problem.

The main thrust of this chapter has been to try and show that rather than individuals taking control of vagrant and casual numbers it was those autonomous authoritarian groups made up of the Improvement Commissioners, the Board of Guardians, the local magistrates and the police, that together became the organised guardians of law and order in Huddersfield. They were also the guardians of a strong and determined form of language that was aimed at controlling the destitute and vagrant poor. The vehicle for this was the Vagrancy Act, which allowed officers to use the language of the law to control the local burden of pauperism and its likely increase, if left unchecked. However, one could conclude that in Huddersfield there was little indication to suggest that tramps and vagrants were anything other than a nuisance.

The fears of an uprising from the pauper poor against their authoritarian 'masters' came to nothing. Whilst public opinion encouraged a vigilant attitude toward vagrants and the casual poor, such groups never lived up to the perception of the overly cautious public. Sometimes shrouded in mysticism and often viewed with suspicion, the tramp and vagrant became an attractive distraction for many investigators and writers. Not surprisingly then, these travelling groups of men and women, whether criminal or not, were closely observed by the authorities, yet despite this position in Huddersfield, such men and women were often

treated fairly and rarely treated harshly. In Huddersfield, there was an element of tolerance and humanity shown to some of those who were destitute.

It appears to be the case that the vagrant and casual poor had rather less opportunities open to them than the regular home-grown undeserving poor. What was found locally, as well as nationally, was that it was likely that petty criminals, vagrants, beggars and prostitutes came from the urban poor and it was the same urban poor who sheltered and to some extent protected them. Petty criminals and the casual poor had little to offer the labour market; they may have been physically able, but as Gatrell points out:

What they had in common, with all who had only unskilled labour to sell and in some cases, a disinclination or inability to sell it, was a need to cope with deprivation, social irrelevance, and the un-attainability of the goals of consumption and success an affluent society held out.<sup>710</sup>

What such assumptions meant for Huddersfield and other similar sized towns was a close tight-knit community amongst the poorest areas. Areas that housed a small network of petty larcenists, beggars and prostitutes, the bottom third of the population, who were held back in the community by kinship networks, and the difficulty in breaking out of a lifestyle, sometimes blighted by years of public persecution. Such communities were stigmatised by the police, magistrates and Poor Law Guardians on a regular basis.<sup>711</sup> It was Huddersfield's position ever since the late 1840s that amongst the poor of Huddersfield there lived the criminal classes. A similar position existed in many urban centres, but it was the Huddersfield's authority's intention to manage the poor and to punish and pursue the criminal classes. What passed for provision for the under-class of vagrants, tramps and the casual applicant was no different to many other towns and cities throughout England. The secret was

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<sup>710</sup> Gatrell, 'Crime authority and the policeman-state' p.303.

<sup>711</sup> Ibid.

to keep these undesirables on the move, either by direction of the police or magistrate, what was more important was that these groups should not spread their lifestyle and their ways amongst the existing working class poor of the town; for the authorities the taint of pauperism was difficult enough to restrain and the burden of the casual pauper only added to these problems.

## CONCLUSION

This study has established that between the 1834 and 1874 there were marked changes to the condition of the working-class poor of Huddersfield. However, these changes had little to no effect on the lives of the ‘undeserving poor’. As Huddersfield developed into an industrial centre and local autonomy and civic authority overtook the landed interest of the Ramsden family the town began to improve and reform the civic and built environment. As this civic authority took hold, during the 1840s and through the creation of a number of powerful committees, tasked with everything from sanitation to lodging houses, the town’s authorities quickly realised that as Huddersfield began to improve, the impression of pauperism became amplified and the perception of its spread became an important local issue.

This study then, has argued that for the deserving poor conditions did improve. By the 1870s, the working classes benefited from a number of improvements that had been made to their town during the previous fifty years. These deserving men and women were motivated by the language of power and social order. Huddersfield required these ‘ideal’ citizens, citizens who would benefit from an improved town, to possess the following commendable attributes of: a solid work ethic, a strong religious commitment, and high moral values. Such ideals, it was hoped, might spread throughout the community and help to stem the spread of pauperism.

This study has established that in Huddersfield, during the nineteenth century, established ideologies regarding the differences between the *deserving* and *undeserving* poor became more defined. The town’s authorities were well prepared to ‘help those, who helped themselves’, and this often took the form of a series of improvements associated with civic



schemes and ‘deserving’ charities.<sup>712</sup> The undeserving pauper was considered beyond the help of civic authority and philanthropy, self help and practical advice. Subsequently, any improvement in their circumstances remained largely static throughout the nineteenth century. Support for those deemed ‘idle, immoral and profligate’ was rare and impromptu, for the undeserving there remained only a few sources of support - the Poor Law and the spontaneous offer of charity were the only avenues of support. This study has demonstrated that toward the end of the century the theories and ideologies surrounding the differences between the ‘deserving and undeserving poor’ were not eradicated by shifts in attitude or the emergence of the social sciences or the rise in the statistical analysis of the poor. The distinction between the two classes of pauper remained and was still evident during the early decades of the twentieth century.

In the 1900s, one of the new breed of social scientists was Seebohm Rowntree, who completed a systematic study of poverty and the poor in York. He made a distinction between the deserving and the undeserving poor, a distinction that seems to have had an impact upon social policy up to 1914. Influenced by his father Joseph, Seebohm, studied the details of over 11,000 York families and drew his famous ‘poverty line’, which dictated the terms of a minimum weekly sum of money ‘necessary to enable families to secure the necessities of a healthy life.’<sup>713</sup>

The years 1900 – 1914, were a period of social enquiry and change, and one of the foremost exponents of this change were the reformers Beatrice and Sidney Webb. The Webbs became largely dismissive of the Poor Law and its operations and were responsible for the

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<sup>712</sup> The Model lodging house, the various friendly societies, local established charities and the Huddersfield Infirmary.

<sup>713</sup> A. Briggs, *Social Thought and Social Action: A Study of the work of Seebohm Rowntree, 1871-1954* (London, 1974), p.25. Also quoted in the study of poverty in the St Ann’s district of Nottingham during the 1960s, Source K. Coates and R. Silburn, *Poverty: The forgotten Englishmen* (Nottingham, 1970).

drafting of a key text in laying bare these deficiencies. The Minority Report was one of two reports prepared by the *Poor Law Commission into the Operation of the Poor Laws 1905 – 1909*; the other being the Majority Report. The Minority Report highlighted the Webbs' belief, that the new Poor Law was constructed on a false premise, namely that destitution was the result of personal irresponsibility. Beatrice Webb and the other leading contributors believed that it was short-sighted of society to expect paupers to be entirely accountable for their circumstances. The solutions advanced by the Minority Report, reflected its diagnosis of the problem. The principal aim of the report was to remove the able-bodied from the reach of the Poor Law, with the key mechanisms for achieving this end, being the introduction of labour exchanges, which, in addition to reducing search costs, would break the power the employers had in maintaining pools of labour in reserve waiting for work. Jose Harris argues that:

In historical accounts of modern social policy, the Royal Commission and in particular its famous Minority Report, has often been closely twinned with the Beveridge Plan of 1942, as one of the two most seminal public enquiries into the working of British social policy over the last hundred years.<sup>714</sup>

The *Report of the inter-Departmental Committee on Social Insurance and Allied Services* - the Beveridge Report of 1942 was based upon some of the principles of earlier reformers. The Beveridge plan was the foundation for the post-1945 welfare state, which aimed to create a comprehensive and universal welfare system that would address the five giant problems of 'Disease, Ignorance, Squalor, Idleness and Want'. These 'undesirable attributes' contained the same themes and concerns that were prevalent during the nineteenth century and yet,

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<sup>714</sup> J. Harris, 'The Webbs and Beveridge' in Ed Wallis (ed.), *From Workhouse to Welfare* (Fabian Society, 2009), p.55. For a more detailed analysis of the two reports see, A.M. Macbriar, *An Edwardian Mixed Double. The Bosanquets versus the Webbs* (Clarendon, 1987). For a detailed biography of Beveridge see, Harris, *William Beveridge: a biography* (Oxford, 1977).

there remained in Britain, the same significant conditions of ‘poverty and pauperism’ during the first half of the twentieth century.<sup>715</sup> In effect, up to 1939, many Britons still suffered under the burden of poverty and although there were improvements in the social conscience and the identification of socio-economic problems, such as the correlation between ill-health and unemployment, the rudiments of Victorian poverty still remained.<sup>716</sup> Similarly the taint of pauperism existed, every bit as much in between the wars, as it did during the nineteenth century in Huddersfield.

This study has examined the kind of anti-pauper language and authoritarian rhetoric that was used prior to the implementation of the Act of 1834. Even after the formation of the Huddersfield Poor Law Union in 1837, there still remained elements of the ‘rhetoric’ familiar to the old parochial authorities before 1834. As the town expanded in both population and wealth, attitudes switched toward both a physical and metaphorical ‘cleansing of the town’. During this period, attempts were made to try and eradicate some of the more irksome issues surrounding the plight of the poor. Essentially, the authorities tried to remove the spread of pauperism, or at least to halt its expanding margins. Whilst Huddersfield’s authorities could never hope to eradicate poverty altogether, attempts were made to improve moral issues surrounding certain communities within the poorest parts of the town. The tipping-point for Huddersfield was that the town did not want to develop the kind of pauper areas associated with larger towns such as Bradford, Leeds and Manchester, or similar towns such as Halifax and Oldham. For the local civic authorities, such as the Poor Law Guardians and the Improvement Commissioners the ‘legitimization’ of anti-pauper language was an important step toward the process of trying to minimize, the perception of pauperism. These efforts

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<sup>715</sup> *Report by Sir William Beveridge Presented to Parliament by Command of His Majesty*, HMSO, CMND 6404, November 1942.

<sup>716</sup> K. Laybourn, *Britain on the Breadline: A Social and Political History of Britain 1918-1939* (Stroud, 1998), Chapter. Four, pp.41-65.

manifested themselves in efforts toward reducing the number of lodging houses and at the same time, making improvements to the town's sanitation and public health. This study will argue that these efforts were largely unsuccessful, having little effect in reducing or containing the spread of pauperism.

Prior to the Act of 1834, the public rhetoric of Huddersfield's parish overseers openly vilified the undeserving poor, setting in motion, ideas relating to the influential nature of localism and the old Poor Law. These rhetorical attacks on the poor were aimed to distinguish between those who were worthy of relief and those considered unworthy. One could argue that such language and its effect, was a lesson to the deserving poor to remain so, and to avoid the apparent pit-falls displayed so explicitly by the undeserving poor and their authoritarian masters.

After 1834, old issues often remained un-checked. There were the knotty beginnings of the Huddersfield Poor Law Union, and its inability to settle local issues and leftover arguments from the radical anti-Poor Law days. These remnants of the old system coupled with the later abominations at the Birkby poorhouse, might have indicated that the care of the poor may become secondary to the issues of politic and local governance. Indeed, Felix Driver argues that:

the evolution of workhouse policy and practice in Huddersfield reflected not only the relationships between central and local authorities, but also the shifting pattern of debate and discussion at the local level.<sup>717</sup>

Of major concern to Huddersfield, during the early nineteenth century, were the problems associated with industrial expansion. The social conditions echoed in Beveridge's stark warnings of 'Disease, Squalor and Want' had been particularly strong in Huddersfield during

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<sup>717</sup> F. Driver, *Power and Pauperism*, pp.162-3.

the nineteenth century and added to these problems, was the apparent issues that surrounded the Irish.

This study argues that in the case of Huddersfield the Irish were not as undeserving as the town and its authorities made out. The Irish migrant found Britain an alien environment, and the British had difficulty in accommodating what they saw as an equally alien Irish culture. The small tight-knit Irish community in Huddersfield during the 1840s and 1850s was a community often at odds with the rest of the town; living in large extended family groups in specific districts in the town centre, the Irish often occupied the poorest dwellings. The majority of the newly arrived Irish would often seek out basic and cheap accommodation; the common lodging house was often the best value for money. This kind of accommodation offered the Irish, both a starting point and a point of reference and a sense of community. From the lodging house, family groups would often move on to more permanent accommodation in the derelict yards and courts off Upper Head Row and Castlegate. The Irish experienced the same starting points as many migrating labourers from other parts of Britain, who lived for many years in the same areas in the town centre. However, the experience for these migrating labourers, by the nature of their nationality, was very different to that experienced by the Irish.

What worked against the Irish was their initial reluctance to work in the mills and assimilate with the expanding textile communities. Whilst the extent of this practice is sometimes exaggerated, it is nonetheless true that there was a common reluctance to take up such work. However, such conditions were short-lived and by the late 1850s there were outward signs of integration; second generation Irish men and women were beginning to marry into local families and despite the strong pull of the Catholic Church, Esther Moriarty suggests that there was evidence of 'inter-faith marriages' in the town.<sup>718</sup> The evidence of a

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<sup>718</sup> Moriarty, 'The Great Famine', pp.65-70.

reluctance on both sides of this emerging cultural divide, added to the defamation and general anti-Irish attitude, which existed in Huddersfield. Subsequently, such attitudes and separated communities tarnished the Irish as undeserving of the kind of support offered to the local English poor; this resulted in the Irish becoming the scapegoats for the apparent increase in pauperism in the town. Their vilification acted as a form of justification for the town's anti-Irish feeling and as an active exercise in attempts at removing the taint of pauperism.

The concerns of the Huddersfield Improvement Commissioners surrounding public health and sanitation also focused on the Irish. To the authorities, the Irish were considered the harbingers of disease, particularly typhus. In support of the Commissioners, the *Morning Chronicle* criticised certain Irish householders in the town, comparing them unfavourably to their English neighbours, who were apparently so much cleaner and more deserving.<sup>719</sup> Consequently, this thesis argues that the Irish form an important and integral part of this study, as it has been shown that they can be further down-graded from the local undeserving poor, purely by nationality and the extent of the anti-Irish language. In the context of the period they were the ideal model of the *undeserving pauper*.

This study has illustrated the importance and context of evangelical charity and its effect on Huddersfield's poor. The study shows that such charity contained elements of social order along with humanitarian assistance, particularly during the late 1870s. The efforts of the Rock mission and its broader connections to the temperance movement could be viewed as an enforcement of social order rather than control, as it is safer, and perhaps wiser to realise that such organisations were often affirming accepted moral and religious ideologies already expected of working class communities. During the intervening years between 1834 and 1874, there were successive changes to the way charity helped those once deemed unworthy. The emergence of the Ragged and Industrial schools and the town's orphanage,

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<sup>719</sup> See p.97.

indicated a concerted effort in removing the taint of pauperism, allowing children, perhaps for the first time, the opportunity to escape the corrupting influences that blighted their parents. Such groups, by the 1870s were becoming the accepted norm and part of a growing realisation that children and women deserved assistance. Whilst there was a visible increase in the support of such marginalised groups there also existed the Charitable Organisation Society. The society often asserted that they would only assist those 'deserving' cases that came to their attention, as the 'Poor Law' was there to support the 'undeserving'. An increase in district visiting became the practical arm of the society and was co-opted by many other charitable groups, the Rock mission was one such example. There existed, during the 1860s and beyond, a close association between the Charitable Organisation Society and the Huddersfield Poor Law Union. This association allowed the two groups to exchange details regarding those in real need and those who were considered idle and feckless. These inter-relationships also indicate an element of the retention of social order and an element of control over the pauper poor.

Toward the last quarter of the nineteenth century it was largely accepted that the aged, the infirm and women and children, were often the most deserving cases and if they could be 'sustained morally and physically' by the worthy practices of the temperance movement, and the church, then there would be a realistic possibility that the negative effects of pauperism might diminish. However, one should not forget the role played by other institutions within the Huddersfield Union and the effect that they had in assisting and relieving the effects of poverty. This study has argued that both the Huddersfield Dispensary and Infirmary remained a major source of support for the sick poor throughout the nineteenth century. These important local institutions and the referrals made to them by the Poor Law Union, helped to shape the local role of the workhouse from the outside, as it were. Similarly, many other local authorities came to provide alternative institutional provision for some sections of the poor.

Examples of this involvement are the foundation of the model lodging house by the Improvement Commissioners in 1854, also the establishment of a temporary fever hospital by the Huddersfield Corporation in 1873, and the creation of local Board Schools, following the 1870 Education Act; all of which had important implications for the local role of the workhouse system. Not surprisingly, these local institutions focused largely on the working-classes and the deserving poor. For many of these institutions there were certain moral caveats attached to their use; the model lodging house was supposed to be morally elevating and used by the independent labourer, with those unable to afford its charges being turned away and referred to the Poor Law authorities.<sup>720</sup> Similarly, the temporary fever hospital established in 1873, and located on the site of the Birkby poorhouse with its shocking history of unmanageable welfare, was restricted to non-pauper patients only. This policy was justified by the local Medical Officer of Health, who remarked that:

...the honest, though poor working man, holds the pauper in great contempt and considers it a stigma upon his character to be associated with him.<sup>721</sup>

Such comments provide unambiguous evidence of the kind of late anti-pauper language, which was active well into the 1870s. It is also evident that although the Huddersfield Union extended its resources, and worked alongside other institutions, it was solely for the benefit of the deserving poor.

Despite the efforts of the central authorities, the Huddersfield Union often ignored and argued against changes in official policy; even in the late 1850s when the hardening attitude of the central authorities tried to control local unions, immediate success was not assured; the services that emerged with the amendments made to the Poor Law Amendment Act in 1834, created a system in Huddersfield, which by 1874 had become exhausted and

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<sup>720</sup> Model Lodging House regulations, HO 45/90177/9588.

<sup>721</sup> J. Pritchett to LGB, 22 January 1875: MH 12/15091.



redundant. The reason for this was that issues of local in-fighting and parochialism interfered with the machinery of the Poor Law. Such issues are evident in the difficulties experienced in adopting the new Poor Law in the town during the 1830s and 1840s. It was left to the valuable work carried out by others, unconnected to the Poor Law Union that to some extent improved the lives of the working-class poor.

This study has argued that one of the main intentions of the town was to minimise, if not eradicate the taint of pauperism. Whilst largely unsuccessful as this intention was, the painstaking efforts of the Huddersfield Improvement Commissioners, the evangelical charities, and co-opted temperance groups, coupled with the growth of law and order, had some impact in reducing this taint. However, such was the difficulty in dealing with such a problem that only temporary measures were taken to reduce the spread.

As the 'real' causes of poverty remained unresolved and unaltered for much of the nineteenth century, the old issues and arguments surrounding the conditions of the deserving and undeserving poor continued unabated. Even after the gradual demise of the Poor Law in the 1920s, it is important to note that the same issues surrounding the poor still remained, even between the two World Wars, when the first material steps toward a welfare state were only a few years away.<sup>722</sup>

But, perhaps even more significant is the fact that today we, as a nation, are still arguing over the distinctions between the 'deserving and undeserving poor' - yet despite these continuous deliberations the two groups still exist, though in a different context to that in place in the nineteenth century.<sup>723</sup>

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<sup>722</sup> During the twentieth century and the increase in Liberal reforms which often bypassed the Poor Law, the actual system was not fully abolished until the creation of the National Assistance Act of 1948.

<sup>723</sup> J. Moore, *BBC News Magazine*, 18 November 2010, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/magazine/11778284>.

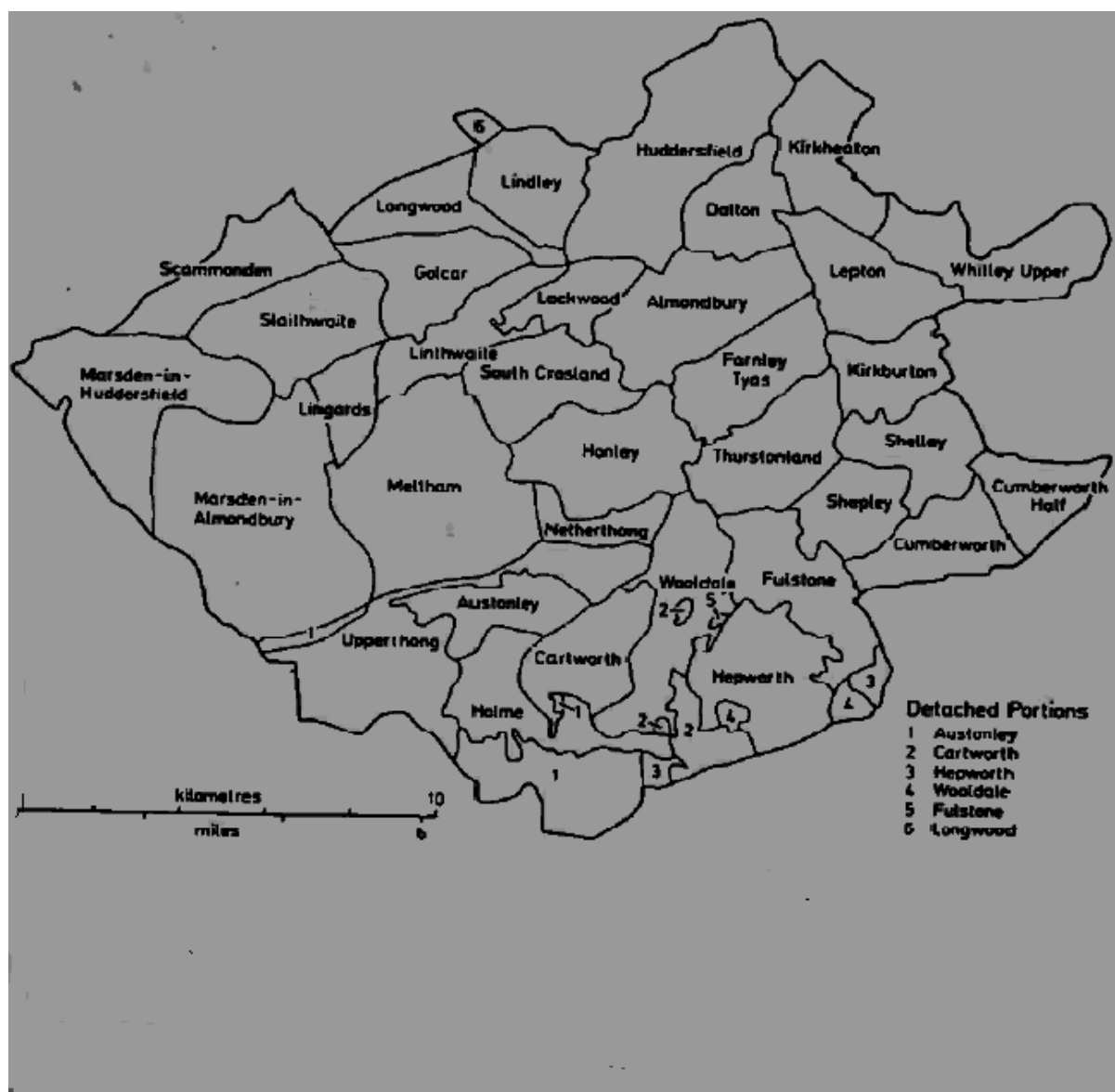
R. Wynne-Jones, 'The Deserving and the undeserving poor' Joseph Rowntree Foundation, [www.jrf.org.uk](http://www.jrf.org.uk).

'The Deserving vs. the undeserving poor' *New York Times*, 8 February 2009.

This thesis has maintained that whilst conditions for the deserving poor improved, there were little or no changes to the conditions experienced by the undeserving poor. It has been established that there was a distinct unwillingness to improve the lives of the undeserving poor and that a number of measures were taken to make sure this was both achieved and continuous. Furthermore, the adoption of a form of anti-pauper language was used to keep such paupers away from the accepted norms of deserving assistance. This same language was also used in trying to eradicate the perception of the town's taint of pauperism. As well as examining how language had an effect on the town and the poor, this study has also considered how the urban poor lived through dramatic change; from the unassuming economic changes of the 1820s, through to the robust industrialisation of the mid-nineteenth century. In doing so the study has also considered the relationships between 'popular' politics and the people. Ultimately, this study reminds us that language is an important way of articulating authority and shapes the way the *undeserving poor* and the Irish were viewed in the nineteenth century in Huddersfield.

## Appendix

### Map No. 1



Townships of the Huddersfield Union (Source MH 12/15108).

**Map No. 2****Huddersfield and surrounding towns.**

**Map No. 3**



**The Poorhouse at Birkby c.1860s.**<sup>724</sup>

The layout of the poor house is indicated by the arrow-head.

<sup>724</sup> Map of Blacker Lane at Birkby, 1860s, KLHL.



### Map No. 5



#### The Turnbridge area of Huddersfield.

Rosemary Lane, site of the Rock mission and bottom right Windsor Court.

Top centre the top end of Castlegate.<sup>726</sup>

<sup>726</sup> Map of Huddersfield Town centre, 1851, KLHL

## Map No.6



### Shorehead and the bottom of Castlegate.<sup>727</sup>

<sup>727</sup> Map of Huddersfield Town centre, 1851, KLHL.



**Board of Guardians: February 1855**

<b>Name</b>	<b>Occupation</b>	<b>Politics</b>	<b>Religion</b>
Joseph Sykes	Merchant	Whig/Lib	?
Joseph Bottomley	Inn-keeper, Westgate. Poor Law Guardian from 1841-1855.		Wesleyan Methodist
James Tolson – <i>opposed the new workhouse at Deanhouse.</i>			
Robert Spivey	Innkeeper		
Joseph Thornton	Cloth Dresser of Paddock	Radical	Wesleyan Methodist
J.Shaw			
Arthur Parkin			
George Barber			
John Oates	Farmer, Skelmanthorpe	Whig	Anglican
Charles Eastwood	Sand-House, Crosland Moor		
Horace Newhill			
George Hallas			
Joshua Lockwood (1787- 1862)	Merchant	Whig	Wesleyan Methodist
M. Holmes			
James Gardiner	Manufacturer, Holme		

**Board of Guardians: February 1867.**

James Wrigley			
John Cocking (clerk)			
Edward Clayton	Book seller, West Parade	Whig	
David Hirst	Boot and Shoe maker Westgate	Radical/Whig	Anglican
J.Holmes			
Harold Butterworth			
John Shaw			
Ernest Wilson			
F. Lidster			
D.Farrar			
S.Vickerman	Kirkburton		
A.Broadhead			



Memorial Obelisk to Joshua Hobson in Edgerton Cemetery Huddersfield<sup>728</sup>

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<sup>728</sup> The inscription on the memorial reads: To the Memory of Joshua Hobson 1810-1876, Erected by public subscription in grateful recognition of private worth and public service during a prominent and eventful life. He



Simple Pauper graves in Edgerton Cemetery

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...proved himself an intrepid champion of the poor the advocate of a free press A bold and faithful journalist and useful public servant His name must ever be associated with the passing of the Factory Acts The Huddersfield Improvement Acts The erection of the Model Lodging House The establishment of this cemetery and many other social and sanitary reforms. (both the above images taken by John Barrett)

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