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Christopher Waddington's Peers

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**A Study of the  
Workings of the Poor Law in  
townships of the  
Fylde of Lancashire - 1803 to 1865**

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Martin Ramsbottom

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**Submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of  
Oxford Brookes University  
for the award of the  
Degree of Doctor of Philosophy  
May 2011**

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CONTENTS

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|                                                                                          |     |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|
| Acknowledgements                                                                         | i   |
| Abstract                                                                                 | ii  |
| Abbreviations                                                                            | iii |
| List of Figures, Tables, Maps and Illustrations                                          | iv  |
| Introduction                                                                             | 1   |
| Chapter One<br>Pauperdom - Historiography and Legislation                                | 9   |
| Chapter Two<br>Lancashire, Kirkham and Lund in Context                                   | 44  |
| Chapter Three<br>The Poor in Kirkham and Lund 1803 to 1820 - An Overview                 | 67  |
| Chapter Four<br>The Poor in Kirkham and Lund 1803 to 1820<br>Who got What – and How Much | 107 |
| Chapter Five<br>The Poor in Kirkham and Lund 1820 to 1834                                | 184 |
| Chapter Six<br>The Era of the Guardians – 1845 to 1865                                   | 222 |
| Chapter Seven<br>Conclusion                                                              | 278 |
| Bibliography                                                                             | 290 |
| Appendix<br>Answer to Rural Questions – Chapelry of Lund                                 | 303 |

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## **Abstract**

This thesis takes up the call of historiographers for further and detailed studies into the workings of both the Old and the New Poor Law at the local level. By a close examination of three townships of an ancient Fylde, Lancashire, parish and of its successor union it seeks to answer three questions. Firstly, whilst it is accepted that there were differences in the operation of the Old Poor Law between the north and west and south and east of the country, the question is asked as to how far down the relief chain did the differences penetrate. Was their uniformity at Regional, sub-regional or county level or did the divergence penetrate to parish or even township level. The assertion here is that even the smallest townships looked after their poor as they saw fit and that there was no over-arching parish policy let alone one at county or sub-region.

Secondly, to what extent did the introduction of the New Poor Law affect the poor themselves. Did they notice any difference or did they not. This thesis suggests that certainly in the Fylde they would have noticed some differences but these were more in the administration of relief rather than in the relief itself. Here again there was diversity of practice.

Thirdly, the question of the alleged cruelty of the Workhouses under the New Poor Law as it operated in the Fylde is briefly considered and it is shown that inmates of the Fylde Union Workhouse were relatively fortunate as far as living conditions were concerned and that the 'less eligibility' arose not from these but from the fact of their being deprived of their independence. The cruelty, if there were any, was largely psychological than physical.

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Abbreviations

C.N.W.R.S.	Centre for North-West Regional Studies, Lancaster University
C.O.E.D.	Concise Oxford English Dictionary
D.N.B.	Dictionary of National Biography
H.M.S.O.	His Majesty's Stationery Office
H.S.L.C.	Historic Society of Lancashire and Cheshire
L.C.A.S.	Lancashire and Cheshire Antiquarian Society
L.F.H.S.	Lancashire Family History and Heraldry Society
L.R.O.	Lancashire Record Office
P.P.	Parliamentary Papers
T.N.A.	The National Archive
T.S.O.	The Stationery Office

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## List of Figures, Tables, Maps and Illustrations

### Figures

|      |                                                                                            |     |
|------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|
| 2.1  | Kirkham – Trades & Services – 1851 - %                                                     | 57  |
| 2.2  | Kirkham – Occupations of Heads of Households<br>1851 - %                                   | 58  |
| 2.3  | Kirkham – Social Classification of Heads of Households<br>1851 - %                         | 58  |
| 2.4  | Newton-with-Scales & Clifton-with-Salwick<br>Occupations of Heads of Households – 1851 - % | 63  |
| 3.1  | Kirkham - Numbers of Paupers Relieved - 1796 to 1816                                       | 68  |
| 3.2  | Kirkham – Poor Relief Expenditure - 1804 to 1816 - £s                                      | 83  |
| 3.3  | Kirkham – Movement of Prices and Poor Relief - 1804 to 1816                                | 85  |
| 3.4  | Kirkham and Average of Four Lancashire Towns<br>Poor Relief - 1804 to 1816 - £s            | 86  |
| 3.5  | Kirkham, Clifton and Newton – Poor Relief - 1804 to 1816 - £s                              | 87  |
| 3.6  | Kirkham – Out-Relief and Workhouse Expenditure                                             | 89  |
| 3.7  | Kirkham – Trend of Workhouse Expenditure - 1804 to 1816 - £s                               | 90  |
| 3.8  | Kirkham – Out-Relief Expenditure - 1804 to 1816 - £s                                       | 94  |
| 3.9  | Kirkham – Number of Paupers Relieved - 1804 to 1816                                        | 95  |
| 3.10 | Kirkham – Paupers by Gender - 1804 to 1816 - %                                             | 96  |
| 3.11 | Kirkham – Out-Relief paid to Male and Female Paupers<br>1804 to 1816 - %                   | 97  |
| 3.12 | Kirkham – Numbers of Recipients of Bailiffs’ Charity<br>1807 to 1819                       | 98  |
| 3.13 | Kirkham – Numbers of Recipients of both Out-Relief and<br>Bailiffs’ Charity                | 99  |
| 3.14 | Newton – Poor Relief Expenditure – 1804 to 1816 – 1816 - £s                                | 100 |
| 3.15 | Newton – Numbers of Males and Females Relieved<br>1804 to 1816 - %                         | 101 |
| 3.16 | Newton – Cash paid to Males and to Females<br>1804 to 1816 - %                             | 102 |
| 3.17 | Clifton [1815] Kirkham [1804] and Newton - 1804]<br>Comparison of Out-Relief - %           | 104 |
| 4.1  | Types of Relief Applicants - Totals – 1806 to 1815 - %                                     | 110 |
| 4.2  | Types of Relief Applicants – Annual – 1806 to 1815 - %                                     | 111 |
| 4.3  | Types of Relief Requested – Totals – 1806 to 1815 – Numbers                                | 112 |



|      |                                                                                   |     |
|------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|
| 4.4  | Types of Relief Requested – Annual – 1806 to 1815 - %                             | 113 |
| 4.5  | Approval/Rejection of Applications for Relief<br>1806 to 1815 – Total - %         | 114 |
| 4.6  | Approval/Rejection of Applications for Relief<br>1806 to 1815 – Annual - %        | 115 |
| 4.7  | Acceptance/Rejection of Applications by Pauper Groups<br>1806 to 1815 – Total - % | 116 |
| 4.8  | Success/Failure Rate of Applications by Type – Totals<br>1806 to 1815 - %         | 117 |
| 4.9  | Kirkham – Division of Out-Relief – 1804 to 1816 - %                               | 120 |
| 4.10 | Kirkham – Weekly Pay – Cash to Males and Females<br>1804 to 1816 - %              | 121 |
| 4.11 | Kirkham - Weekly Pay by Numbers of Males and Females<br>1804 to 1816 - %          | 122 |
| 4.12 | Kirkham – Variation in Rates of Weekly Pay<br>1804 to 1816 - %                    | 123 |
| 4.13 | Kirkham – Amounts of Weekly Pay to Males<br>1804 to 1816 - %                      | 124 |
| 4.14 | Kirkham – Amounts of Weekly Pay to Females<br>1804 to 1816 - %                    | 125 |
| 4.15 | Kirkham - Duration of Weekly Pay – 1804 to 1816 - %                               | 125 |
| 4.16 | Kirkham – Distribution of Cash at Need Payments<br>1804 to 1816 - %               | 127 |
| 4.17 | Kirkham – Division of Relief in Kind – 1804 to 1816 - %                           | 154 |
| 4.18 | Newton – Distribution of Out-Relief 1804 to 1816 - %                              | 169 |
| 4.19 | Newton – Numbers of Males and Females Received<br>1804 to 1816 - %                | 169 |
| 4.20 | Newton – Cash to Males and Females<br>1804 to 1816 - %                            | 170 |
| 4.21 | Newton – Weekly Pay Rates 1804 to 1816 - %                                        | 170 |
| 4.22 | Newton - Distribution of Cash at Need – 1804 to 1816 - %                          | 171 |
| 4.23 | Newton – Distribution of Relief in Kind – 1804 to 1816 - %                        | 175 |
| 5.1  | Kirkham and Average of Four Lancashire Towns<br>Poor Relief - 1820 to 1836 - £s   | 187 |
| 5.2  | Kirkham – Movement of Prices and Poor Relief<br>1820 to 1834                      | 188 |
| 5.3  | Kirkham – Trend of Expenditure on Poor Relief<br>1820 to 1834 - £s                | 189 |

|      |                                                                                        |     |
|------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|
| 5.4  | Kirkham – Workhouse Expenditure and Out-Relief<br>1820 to 1834 - %                     | 190 |
| 5.5  | Kirkham – Weekly Pay, Cash at Need & Relief in Kind<br>1820 to 1834 - %                | 191 |
| 5.6  | Kirkham – Gender of Paupers receiving Out-Relief<br>1820 to 1834 - %                   | 193 |
| 5.7  | Kirkham – Cash to Males and Females – 1820 to 1834 - %                                 | 194 |
| 5.8  | Kirkham – Rates of Weekly Pay – 1820 to 1834 - %                                       | 197 |
| 5.9  | Kirkham - Weekly Pay by Numbers of Males and Female<br>1820 to 1834 - %                | 198 |
| 5.10 | Kirkham – Amounts of Weekly Pay to Males<br>1820 to 1834 - %                           | 198 |
| 5.11 | Kirkham – Amounts of Weekly Pay to Females<br>1820 to 1834 - %                         | 199 |
| 5.12 | Kirkham – Numbers of Recipients of Poor Relief and Bailiffs’<br>Charity – 1820 to 1834 | 206 |
| 5.13 | Kirkham – Gender and Numbers of Recipients of Bailiffs’<br>Charity – 1820 to 1834      | 207 |
| 5.14 | Kirkham – Numbers receiving both Poor Relief and Bailiffs’<br>Charity – 1820 to 1834   | 207 |
| 5.15 | Clifton and Lancashire – Movement of Poor Relief<br>1815 to 1827 - £s                  | 210 |
| 5.16 | Clifton – Poor Relief Expenditure – 1815 to 1827 - £s                                  | 211 |
| 5.17 | Clifton – Distribution of Poor Relief Expenditure<br>1825 to 1827 - %                  | 211 |
| 5.18 | Clifton – Distribution of Cash at Need – 1815 to 1827 - %                              | 212 |
| 5.19 | Clifton – Distribution of Relief in Kind – 1815 to 1827 - %                            | 213 |
| 5.20 | Clifton – Gender of Paupers – 1815 to 1827 - %                                         | 214 |
| 5.21 | Clifton – Cash to Males and Females – 1815 to 1827                                     | 214 |
| 7.1  | Clifton, Kirkham and Newton<br>Principal Divisions of Out-Relief -1804 to 1827 - %     | 281 |
| 7.2  | Clifton, Kirkham and Newton<br>Divisions of Cash at Need - 1804 to 1827 - %            | 282 |
| 7.3  | Clifton, Kirkham and Newton<br>Distribution of Relief in Kind 1804 to 1827 - %         | 283 |
| 7.4  | Clifton, Kirkham and Newton<br>Males and Females Relieved – 1804 to 1827 - %           | 284 |
| 7.5  | Clifton, Kirkham and Newton<br>Relief to Males and Females – 1804 to 1827 - %          | 284 |

## **Tables**

|    |                                                              |     |
|----|--------------------------------------------------------------|-----|
| 4a | Frequency of Relief Applications – 1806 to 1815              | 109 |
| 4b | Kirkham - Doctors' Patients, Fees, Sick Pay & Recipients     | 134 |
| 4c | Kirkham - Lying-in Allowances – Amounts and Recipients       | 139 |
| 4d | Kirkham - Funeral Allowances – Amounts and Recipients        | 146 |
| 4e | Kirkham – Types of Clothing Provided                         | 156 |
| 4f | Kirkham – Poor Relief Expenditure 1816 to 1820 - £s          | 180 |
| 5a | Kirkham – Distribution of Cash at Need – 1820 to 1834 - £s   | 201 |
| 5b | Kirkham – Distribution of Relief in Kind – 1820 to 1834 - £s | 203 |
| 6a | Fylde Union Workhouse – Populations 1841, 1851, 1861         | 246 |

## **Maps**

|     |                                                                                                                       |     |
|-----|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|
| 2.1 | West Lancashire showing Kirkham Parish, Kirkham Town and the Townships of Newton-with-Scales and Clifton-with-Salwick | 52  |
| 2.2 | The South-East Fylde showing the Location of Kirkham, Newton-with-Scales and Clifton-with-Salwick                     | 53  |
| 6.1 | The Extent of the Fylde Poor Law Union                                                                                | 225 |

## **Illustrations**

|     |                                         |     |
|-----|-----------------------------------------|-----|
| 3.1 | Kirkham's Parish Workhouse in the 1850s | 88  |
| 6.1 | The Fylde Union Workhouse about 1910    | 245 |

## **Appendix**

|  |                                                                                                                                             |     |
|--|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|
|  | Response to the Poor Law Commission's "Rural Questions" for the Chapelry of Lund – townships of Newton-with-Scales and Clifton-with-Salwick | 303 |
|--|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|

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Introduction

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Amongst the people of Kirkham enumerated in the 1851 Census was Christopher Waddington. Aged eighty years and listed as a pauper miller, he was living with his daughter on Preston Street, one of the principal thoroughfares of the town, and his description suggests that he was receiving relief from the Poor Law authorities. Waddington's tale was a sad one. In the early years of the century he and his brother John were working the corn mill which stood on high ground to the east of the town and which they leased from the Clifton family of Lytham, the lessees of the Manor of Kirkham. They were probably prospering as in 1812 the Clifton estate granted them a new lease on condition that they erected "at their own proper costs and charges a good substantial Brick Windy mill" to replace the existing wooden structure which was then in a state of some decay. <sup>1</sup>

The new mill was erected and, as far as is known, flourished for a period but the Waddington brothers could not have foreseen that the trees growing in the adjacent wood on property owned by Mr. King of Carr Hill House were also flourishing and had attained such an height that they cut off the prevailing wind and the mill ground to a halt. Waddington wrote to Mrs. King and to the Clifton family's agent bemoaning his fate, asking for assistance and saying that if something were not done to ease his plight he would be forced to go begging and probably end his time in the Workhouse.

R. C. Shaw quotes from his missive -

I have sent you this letter to inform you of my situation as at this time we are without money and meat, my wife has left me and gone to Preston to my daughter, she stayed till she could no longer get anything to eat. <sup>2</sup>

He begged here to cut down the trees which were the cause of his hardship otherwise -

My creditors will sell my household goods and the mill and I shall be forced to go either to the workhouse or otherwise a-begging from door to door as I cannot work for my living, being deprived of my left arm on November 12<sup>th</sup>, 1821. <sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> SHAW, Roland Cunliffe. Kirkham in Amounderness: the Story of a Lancashire Community. Preston, R. Seed & Sons. 1949. P.307.

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

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

Mrs. King was unmoved by his entreaties. So were the Cliftons. The law took its course and the Waddingtons appear to have been evicted. <sup>4</sup>

Miller Waddington's story, particularly his letter to Mrs. King, makes it clear that he was in no doubt as to what his fate might be and he was probably resigned to it. He was not alone. He became one of the thousands who from the sixteenth century to the twentieth were compelled, along with their families, to go "on the parish" or "into the Union" to keep body and soul together.

The treatment of these men, women and children is revealed through the records of the Poor Laws as administered by some fifteen thousand parishes and later, following the Poor Law Amendment Act of 1834, by over six hundred Poor Law Unions and their records have provided plentiful source material for historians whose work is discussed in the first part of Chapter One where changes of approach, interest and emphasis are considered. Here a particular theme recurs. This is the need, as Dorothy Marshall pointed out in 1969, John Brown in 1973, Geoffrey Oxley in 1974 and Steven King in 2000 for further detailed local studies in order that a clearer view may be obtained of the workings of the Poor Law in practice rather than in theory <sup>5</sup> This is particularly desirable for as Derek Fraser remarked "The student of Poor Law history is well advised to accept as a first premise that the story of poor relief is but dimly (and often not at all) told through the pages of national legislation." <sup>6</sup>

This call for more work provides the first reason for the present study. The second is to be found in the nature of the Poor Laws themselves whose development is outlined in the second part of Chapter One which notes that an important object of the 1834 Poor Law Amendment Act, one of the principal pieces of legislation, was a reduction in

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<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.* P.308.

<sup>5</sup> MARSHALL, Dorothy. The English Poor in the Eighteenth Century: a Study in Social and Administrative History. London, Routledge & Keegan Paul. 1926. Reissued 1969. BROWN, John. Poverty and Social Policy 1815-1919. Milton Keynes, Open University Press. 1974. OXLEY, Geoffrey O. Poor Relief in England and Wales 1601-1834. Newton Abbot, David and Charles. 1974 KING, Steven Andrew. Poverty and Welfare in England: a Regional Perspective. Manchester, Manchester University Press. 2000.

<sup>6</sup> FRASER, Derek. The Evolution of the British Welfare State: a History of Social Policy since the Industrial Revolution. London, MacMillan Press Limited. 1973, P.31

the cost of assistance to the poor. This was to be achieved by the firm application of stricter rules in the granting of relief which were to replace what was seen as the laxity of the early nineteenth century and the consequent rise in expenditure. The extent to which this ambition was realised has been the subject of debate and the present work considers the period before and after the 1834 Act with a view to assessing the degree of change over time in the area of one Lancashire poor law union.

This, the Fylde Poor Law Union, was to be created by amalgamating the parishes of Bispham, Kirkham, Lytham, and Poulton-le-Fylde. Kirkham was the largest of these and its principal township, also called Kirkham, together with the nearby townships of Newton-with-Scales and Clifton-with-Salwick, provide the background against which this study is set and their geography and history are the theme of Chapter Two.

A major focus here is the status of Kirkham. An ancient ecclesiastical centre and market town with a strong industrial base, it was the principal settlement in the whole of what was to be the area of the Union throughout the period covered by this work. Therefore, although the extant primary sources are by no means as prolific as in other areas the town was of sufficient importance to justify the present study and there is adequate material to permit the construction of a viable discussion and the drawing of conclusions on the extent of relief at that period. This analysis will thus contribute to fulfilling the need for more local studies.

These two chapters form an essential preliminary to the study. They are followed by three chronological sections. Firstly, Chapters Three and Four consider in detail relief in Kirkham township in the period from the 1803 Parliamentary Return to the years following the Select Vestries Acts. Newton provides a comparative foil and Clifton is briefly introduced, the aim being to demonstrate that even at the lowest level relieving authorities acted largely in accordance with their local circumstances. Secondly, Chapter Five discusses practice in Kirkham and Clifton in the years from these acts to the events of 1832–1834 and reviews the poor law system on the eve of reform whilst Chapter Six takes up the discussion from 1845. This gap is unavoidable as the

primary sources for the Fylde Union have not survived but the loss from the point of view of the present study is more apparent than real for, as Steven King has discussed, it was not until the early 1840s that the Poor Law Commission finally got to grips with its task and, at the local level, the Guardians of the Fylde Poor Law Union settled into their roles and put their stamp on the Union by the erecting a new Workhouse. King wrote that –

Of course, the processes of change were by no means as smooth as they have been portrayed here. The Commission itself was in a parlous state after its initial five-year mandate had expired in 1839. It had to survive on one-year of extensions of its role until 1842, when, in the face of political opposition, a further five-year term was granted. In the meantime the resources available to the Commission, which had always been too small for the task, were pared further. <sup>7</sup>

The Chapter therefore examines the period from 1845 to 1865 by which time further major changes in the working of the law were foreshadowed. It presents an impression of the relief of the poor in the Fylde which can then be compared with standards of relief under the Old Poor Law. In short, the whole study presents a detailed examination of relief under both the Old and the New Poor Law in the chosen townships, considering variation in practice and the extent to which the 1834 legislation affected the experience of being poor for the paupers of the area.

The approach is chronological rather than thematic or topographical. It might have been possible to look at varying aspects of relief over time and consider, for example, whether the provision of rents varied or if the type of clothing supplied to the paupers changed. A comparison with other places in Lancashire or further afield would also have been of value and interest. Consideration might have been given to different groups of pauper such as children, the widowed or the elderly. All these would have had their attraction and they find a place within a chronological study where they provide bases for further investigation. However, given that the fundamental theme here is the treatment of the poor across time and across the divide between the old and the new poor law, a chronological treatment is indicated and the choice is reinforced by the nature of the sources.

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<sup>7</sup> KING. *Op.cit.* P.228.



The principal evidence is found in the records of the Poor Law Overseers for the first forty years of the study and in the Fylde Poor Law Union Guardians' Minute Books for the period following the formation of the Union. <sup>8</sup> The Kirkham overseer's records consist firstly of a series of day-books covering the period 1806 to 1839. <sup>9</sup> These list day by day the payments made by the overseer including disbursements which were clearly not connected with the relief of the poor. These are complemented by a series of three books, which list alphabetically under the last name of the pauper payments made either directly to them or on their behalf. They are clearly derived from the first series and together cover the period 1804 to 1816. <sup>10</sup> From 1817 to 1820 there is a gap in this series and then from 1820 two books list, again alphabetically by paupers' last names, payments made to individuals.<sup>11</sup> The period from 1806 to 1814 is supplemented by an order book which lists decisions made on whether to relieve or not, who to summon to the Workhouse, the provision of goods and the payment of rents or their withdrawal. <sup>12</sup> There are also miscellaneous documents which include lists of money for the poor of other towns, <sup>13</sup> a collection of receipts for disbursements <sup>14</sup> and some settlement and removal certificates. <sup>15</sup> In addition, there is the Kirkham Bailiffs' Book. <sup>16</sup>

This volume, used for a variety of purposes from the eighteenth to the twentieth century, gives details of the payments made from the principal Kirkham charity, the Bailiffs' Charity, to the poor of the town at Christmas from 1807 to 1838. This will feature in the chapters dealing with the Old Poor Law and further investigation of local charities might initially appear to have had its attractions. However, local charities at the period under consideration were minimal. Friendly societies existed in the locality

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<sup>8</sup> A search at the National Archives produced nothing of note. What might have been of use, the volume of correspondence relating to the Fylde Union, was twice reported as being missing.

<sup>9</sup> L.R.O. PR803 – 1806 to 1810; PR804 – 1811 to 1814; PR805 – 1815 to 1838.

<sup>10</sup> L.R.O. PR802 – 1804 to 1807; PR798 – 1807 to 1811; PR806 – 1812 to 1816

<sup>11</sup> L.R.O. PR807 – 1820 to 1828; PR808 – 1828 to 1838.

<sup>12</sup> L.R.O. PR810.

<sup>13</sup> L.R.O. PR811 and PR812.

<sup>14</sup> L.R.O. PR834.

<sup>15</sup> L.R.O. PR2076.

<sup>16</sup> I am grateful to Mrs. Barbara Kay for drawing my attention to this item and to the Trustees of the Kirkham United Charities for allowing me to make use of it.

but they left no records and, whilst the area boasted three schools which benefitted from charitable bequests, namely the Free Grammar School at Kirkham, the Kirkham Girls Charity School and the Newton Bluecoat School, consideration of these is outside the scope of the present work which deals with the formal system of relief as provided by the Poor Laws. Finally, use will also be made of other material including the local press, Quarter Sessions Returns, Census Enumerators' Schedules and Parliamentary Papers,

At Newton, the township records consist of a series of "Poor's Books" detailing payments made to individual paupers. They cover the period from 1803 to 1834 although from 1816 there are considerable gaps.<sup>17</sup> There is also a bundle of miscellaneous records including letters from paupers, bills from Brindle Workhouse and settlement and removal orders.<sup>18</sup> At Clifton, the surviving record is the overseer's payment book which covers the period from 1815 to 1828.<sup>19</sup> Despite its poor condition it is possible to reconstruct payments to the poor during this time. There is also a document relating to the chapelry as a whole. This is the Answers to Rural Questions compiled by the minister, the Reverend Richard Moore, in response to the requirements of the 1834 Poor Law Commissioners and reference will be made to this where it contributes to the discussion.<sup>20</sup>

The records of the Fylde Board of Guardians include their Minutes Books, extant with gaps from 1845, and the Minutes of the Workhouse Visiting Committee from 1862 onwards. Material in connection with the formation of the Union is to be found in the Clifton family archives and in the contemporary press.<sup>21</sup> Such fragmentation is not uncommon particularly for the period of the Old Poor Law and as King noticed, "The very rapidity of the process of Unionisation often means that late old poor law and

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<sup>17</sup> L.R.O. DDNw9/7 to DDNx9/9.

<sup>18</sup> L.R.O. DDNw9/12.

<sup>19</sup> This document is in the possession of Mrs. Eileen Morgan of Fulwood. Her permitting its use for this study is gratefully acknowledged.

<sup>20</sup> Great Britain. Poor Law Commission. Rural Questions. Chapelry of Lund. P1834/XXX/282.

<sup>21</sup> L.R.O. DDCl.

early new poor law records are sparse.”<sup>22</sup> It needs to be remembered that these primary source records were created for contemporary purposes rather than for the benefit of future historians. The coverage and accuracy of the material depended entirely on the compilers who were often unpaid, not always too literate, careful or honest and had other calls on their time, even negotiating their own economy of makeshifts. This was particularly the case under the Old Poor Law although as will be seen their successors who served the new Boards were not always free from perfidy and speculation. Furthermore, their survival, largely a matter of chance, has depended not only on the compilers and their successors in office but also on generations of librarians and archivists who have not always agreed on the need to preserve them.

The survival rate of documents is not, of course, the only problem and, as Alannah Tomkins has pointed out, there are also difficulties in making use of the material presented in addition to the initial hurdle of deciphering the handwriting.<sup>23</sup> These problems include variant spellings for last names – Cowburn or Cowbrand; the use of diminutive forms of Christian names – Margaret and Peggy, Elizabeth and Liz; lack of clarity in specifying precise relationships and marital status and the frequent lack of details in expenditure – “paid Birley’s account” – but for what and for whom? Another problem, common to all three townships considered here, is the discrepancy between expenditure as shown in the official returns and the amounts actually spent on the poor. This is largely accounted for by the fact that overseers were frequently given duties apart from their role as providers of poor relief such as supervising the constable and compiling militia returns.

Given these constraints and the quantity of existing historiography, what purpose is to be served by a consideration of the relief of poverty in a small Lancashire town and two of its adjacent townships. Firstly, Lancashire at the time under consideration was experiencing unprecedented growth and change and Kirkham, although situated at some distance from the main centres of population, was nevertheless of major

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<sup>22</sup> KING. *Op.cit.* P.238.

<sup>23</sup> TOMKINS, Alannah. The Experience of Urban Poverty, 1723-82: Parish, Charity and Credit. Manchester, Manchester University Press. 2006. P.245 *et seq.*

importance in the Fylde area. Secondly, whilst the County is not entirely without its studies of poor relief, there is still, as the authorities cited have made clear, room for further work as a contribution to the history of poor relief in general, to its variation within regions and sub-regions and in Lancashire in particular and as a contribution to a place which for much of its history had a standing in the area as an ecclesiastical, commercial and manufacturing centre. Only by further such detailed studies will it be possible to reach an overall understanding of the working of the poor laws in the parishes and unions rather than in the offices of Poor Law Commissions and Poor Law Boards.

Finally, whilst the task might be harder than would be the case in places with a greater document survival rate and the conclusions less firm, this is no justification, particularly in the view of the established primacy of Kirkham in the area, for not undertaking the task and responding to the call of historians for another local study which will add to the sum of knowledge of the relief of poverty, provide a basis for further comparative analytical studies across a wider area, make a contribution to the historiography of the Fylde area and help to present a picture of poverty as experienced by Christopher Waddington and his peers.

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Chapter One
Pauperdom – Historiography and Legislation

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**1 – Historiography**

The Christopher Waddington who introduced this work was by no means alone in his condition. Pauperdom, the state of having to accept relief from Parish Vestry or Poor Law Union, was a real threat to many of the population until the years after the end of the Second World War which saw the final demise of the Poor Law and the foundation of the National Health Service and the Welfare State. <sup>1</sup> The system which these new initiatives replaced had its roots in legislation of the Tudor period and its lengthy development and widespread influence upon the day-to-day existence of the poor has made it a topic of interest not only to historians and social scientists but also to novelists such as Charles Dickens and Jessica Stirling who saw the workhouse, the bricks and mortar of the system, as an engaging setting for their fictional accounts. <sup>2</sup> This chapter therefore firstly surveys the literature on the poor and the poor laws. It outlines trends and changes in approach and interests over time including the ‘economy of makeshifts’ and emphasises the need for detailed local studies. Secondly, the evolution of the law from Tudor to Victorian times is presented as a background for the discussion which is to follow for, as Steven King wrote, “It seems desirable to try to understand what the state thought should happen in terms of welfare provision before launching into a detailed description of what actually did happen.” <sup>3</sup>

This survey on the literature relating to the poor begins by noting F. M. Eden’s work The State of the Poor which, whilst presenting a contribution to the contemporary debate on how the poor were to be relieved, also took into account, as the title suggests, the living conditions of the poor themselves. <sup>4</sup> Later work including George

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<sup>1</sup> For the history of this period see LEES, Lynn Hollen. The Solidarities of Strangers: the English Poor Laws and the People, 1700-1948. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.1998 and HARRIS, Bernard. The Origins of the British Welfare State: Social Welfare in England and Wales, 1800-1945. Basingstoke, Palgrave MacMillan. 2004.

<sup>2</sup> These accounts range from DICKENS, Charles. Oliver Twist. 1837, numerous editions, to STIRLING, Jessica. The Workhouse Girl. London, Coronet Books. 1997.

<sup>3</sup> KING, Steven Andrew. Poverty and Welfare in England 1700-1850: a Regional Perspective 1700-1850. Manchester, Manchester University Press. 2000. P.18.

<sup>4</sup> EDEN, Frederick Morton. The State of the Poor. 3 Vols. London, J. Davis. 1777. Reprinted London, Frank Cass. 1976.

Nicholls's History of the English Poor and P .F. Aschrott's The English Poor Law System Past and Present, were, as their authors made clear, intended for those concerned with the management of the poor and even Sidney and Beatrice Webbs' English Poor Law History was as much a contribution to the thinking of the times as an historical survey. <sup>5</sup> Two publications which appeared during the time the Webbs were active were Edith Leonard's The Early History of English Poor Relief and Dorothy Marshall's The English Poor in the Eighteenth Century. <sup>6</sup> The latter was first published in 1926 to be reissued forty-three years later. In the preface to the reissue Dr. Marshall noted "an increased interest in social history" and to "much work, both published and unpublished, in the form of M.A. and Ph.D. theses" and her work in its two printings forms something of a link between the older work and the new social history with its emphasis upon people, their environment and their activities or, as G. M. Trevelyan referred to it, "the history of a people with the politics left out." <sup>7</sup> Here was a largely untouched area to which historians now turned their attention with an examination of living conditions, leisure activities, sports, housing conditions, and questions of kinship, medical care and education in addition to separate sections of the population such as children and the aged. <sup>8</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> NICHOLLS, George. A History of the English Poor Laws. 3 Vols. London, P.S.King and Son. 1904. Reprinted U.S.A. Augustus M. Kelley. 1967; ASCHROTT, Paul Felix. The English Poor Law System Past and Present. London, Knight and Co. 1888; WEBB, Sidney and Beatrice. English Poor Law History. 3 Vols. London, Longmans Green. 1927. Reprinted London, Frank Cass. 1963. For a discussion on the Webbs' viewpoint see KIDD, Alan. 'Historians or Polemicists? How the Webbs wrote their History of the English Poor Laws.' Economic History Review. 2<sup>nd</sup> Series. Vol. 60. 1987. P.400.

<sup>6</sup> LEONARD, Edith M. The Early History of English Poor Relief. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press. 1900. Reprinted London, Frank Cass and Co. 1965; MARSHALL, Dorothy. The English Poor in the Eighteenth Century: a Study in Social and Administrative History. London, Routledge and Keegan Paul. 1926. Reissued 1969.

<sup>7</sup> TREVELYAN, George Macaulay. English Social History: a Survey of Six Centuries. London, Longmans Green. 1942. P.9.

<sup>8</sup> Such as REAY, Barry. Rural England: Labouring Lives in the Nineteenth Century. Basingstoke, Palgrave MacMillan. 2004 and GOOSE, Nigel. *Ed. Women's Work in Industrial England: Regional and Local Perspectives*. Hatfield, Local Population Studies. 2007. RUSSELL, David. Football and the English: a Social History of Association Football in England 1863-1996. Preston, Carnegie Publishing. 1997. MORGAN, Nigel. Deadly Dwellings: Housing and Health in a Lancashire Cotton Town - Preston from 1840 to 1914. Preston, Mullion. 1993. ANDERSON, Michael. Family Structure in Nineteenth Century Lancashire. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press. 1971. KING, Steven Andrew. A Fylde Country Practice: Medicine and Society in Lancashire circa 1760-1840. Lancaster, Lancaster University Centre for North-West Regional Studies. 2001. CURTIS, S. J. and BOULTWOOD, M. E. A. An Introductory History of English Education since 1800. Foxton, University Tutorial Press Ltd. 1960; CUNNINGHAM Hugh, The Invention of Childhood. London, BBC Books. 2006. THANE,

The poor also, of course, received attention and the reasons are not hard to find. Firstly, whatever period is considered, there were so many of them and the question of how to deal with them was never far from the surface of public debate. Secondly, ever since *Oliver Twist* appeared in the pages of Charles Dickens's novel, the workhouse has had its place in the national imagination as a place of squalor, cruelty and degradation and an object of interest and curiosity. Thirdly, the formal documents which detailed the treatment of the poor abounded, even if incompletely, in libraries and record offices providing quantities of primary source material ready for investigation.

Eden considered the poor. Nicholls and Aschrott considered the poor laws. The Webbs, Edith Leonard and Dorothy Marshall took account of both although not from the same perspective. What have been the interests of later writers and is it possible to discern anything in the nature of a progressive development in their work? Mary Barker-Read commented in 1988 that –

As far as is known, the Old Poor Law has hitherto been examined in one of two ways: either as a straightforward dissertation on administration and practice in a selected region over time, or more recently within a theoretical framework.<sup>9</sup>

This theoretical framework was provided by the law together with the institution which played a part in its operation namely the workhouse, and a number of titles between them have discussed the development of the law, much of which codified existing practice rather than flowed newly from the pens of parliamentary draftsmen and the wider context is thus important. Two writers in particular, Paul Slack in his *From Reformation to Improvement* and Paul A. Fideler's *Social Welfare in Pre-Industrial England* have discussed the external forces which impinged upon those charged with the care of the poor, Slack noting that "The Old Poor Law . . . was affected by social attitudes."<sup>10</sup> Several writers together have provided a broad view of the poor law and

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Pat. *Old Age in English History: Past Experiences, Present Issues*. Oxford, Oxford, University Press. 2000.

<sup>9</sup> BARKER-READ, Mary. 'The Treatment of the Aged Poor in Five selected West Kent Parishes from Settlement to Speenhamland.' Ph.D. Thesis. Open University. 1988.

<sup>10</sup> SLACK, Paul. *From Reformation to Improvement: Public Welfare in Early Modern England*. Oxford, Oxford University Press. 1998; FIDELER, Paul A. *Social Welfare in*

the workhouse from mediæval times to the demise of the Poor Law as such in 1930. These have included, in addition to Dr. Leonard's work already noticed, Paul Slack's The English Poor Law 1531-1872, J. D. Marshall's The Old Poor Law 1795-1834; Anne Digby's The Poor Law in Nineteenth Century England, Michael Rose's The Relief of Poverty 1834-1914 and Anthony Brundage's The English Poor Laws, 1700-1930.<sup>11</sup> Finally, there is Lynn Hollen Lees's The Solidarities of Strangers: the English Poor Laws and the People 1700-1948 which is notable both for its extended chronological coverage and for the fact that it appeared at a time when the question of the extent to which the poor should be assisted was again being debated in the House of Commons, in the Press and in the bar of public house.<sup>12</sup>

The workhouse was central to the operation of the Poor Law, particularly after the Poor Law Amendment Act of 1834, and it has a place both in the historiography and in the public imagination. Michael Rose in his English Poor Law noted that –

The Workhouses both old and new were sources of terror for the poor. The monotony of their routine and the prison-like nature of their discipline were repellent.<sup>13</sup>

The House was loathed and feared for generations even after its final abolition in 1948 and entering its often imposing portals, designed to instil submission into the poor, was seen as an admission of failure to be avoided at any cost. Peter Grey and James Taylor have written of the parish workhouses of the pre-1834 era whilst the “well conducted institution” of the New Poor Law has been described in detail by M. A. Crowther, Anne Digby, Felix Driver and, more recently, by Simon Fowler.<sup>14</sup> It quickly

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Pre-Industrial England: the Old Poor Law in Transition. Basingstoke, Palgrave MacMillan. 2006.

<sup>11</sup> SLACK, Paul. The English Poor Law 1531-1782. London, MacMillan. 1990; MARSHALL, John Duncan. The Old Poor Law 1705-1834. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. London, MacMillan Press Ltd. 1985; DIGBY, Anne. The Poor Law in Nineteenth Century England. London, Historical Association. 1982; ROSE, Michael Edward. The Relief of Poverty 1834-1914. London, MacMillan Press Ltd. 1972; BRUNDAGE, Anthony. The English Poor Laws, 1700-1930. Basingstoke, Palgrave MacMillan. 2002.

<sup>12</sup> LEES, Lynn Hollen. The Solidarities of Strangers; the English Poor Laws and the People 1700-1948. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press. 1998.

<sup>13</sup> ROSE, Michael Edward. The English Poor Law 1780-1930. Newton Abbot, David and Charles. 1971. P.160.

<sup>14</sup> GREY, Peter. ‘Parish Workhouses and Poorhouses.’ Local Historian. Vol.10. No.2. 1971. P.70; TAYLOR, James S. ‘The Unreformed Workhouse 1776-1834.’ In MARTIN, Ernest Walter. Ed. Comparative Development in Social Welfare. London, George Allen



acquired its reputation as a place of harshness and squalor and the question of the cruelty of its regime has been treated in the literature notably by Ursula Henriques and David Roberts both of whom posed the question How Cruel was the Victorian Poor Law?<sup>15</sup> Undoubtedly there was cruelty, as demonstrated by Ian Anstruther in The Scandal of the Andover Workhouse but as Henriques and Roberts pointed out, it was not the law itself that was cruel, rather it was the manner of its implementation at the hands of local officers such as George Catch of Lambeth.<sup>16</sup> Some idea of the life of the paupers on out-relief rather than in the workhouse can be gleaned from official records and the letters of the poor. However, once the poor entered the house, thus exchanging poverty for pauperdom, little was heard of them although by making use of census data and admission and discharge registers Nigel Goose, David Jackson and Audrey Perkyns have investigated the age/sex distribution and something of the background of workhouse inmates.<sup>17</sup> Not surprisingly, they show that the majority of the inmates were either the young or the elderly, two groups almost inextricably linked with the poor law. Dr. Perkyns was particularly interested in children in the workhouse and she has been able to provide details both of the status of the children – orphaned, deserted, etc. – and of family composition including the presence or absence of both or only one parent and of siblings. Another recent work, on the Kirkham Cottage Homes based on letters from people who were resident there in the 1920s to 1940s, also takes children as its focus and makes it clear that even in the

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and Unwin Ltd. 1972; CROWTHER, Margaret Anne. The Workhouse System 1834-1929 London, Methuen and Co. 1983; DIGBY, Anne. Pauper Palaces. London, Routledge and Keegan Paul. 1978; DRIVER, Felix. Power and Pauperism: the Workhouse System, 1834-1884. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press. 1993. FOWLER, Simon. Workhouse: the People, the Places, the Life behind Doors. London, National Archives. 2007.

<sup>15</sup> HENRIQUES, Ursula Ruth Quixano. 'How Cruel was the Victorian Poor Law?' Historical Journal. Vol.11. No.2. 1968. P.365 and ROBERTS, David. 'How Cruel Was the Victorian Poor Law?' Historical Journal. Vol.6. 1963. P.97.

<sup>16</sup> ANSTRUTHER, Ian. The Scandal of the Andover Workhouse. London, Geoffrey Bles. 1973. For Catch, see CROWTHER, *op.cit.* P.121.

<sup>17</sup> GOOSE, Nigel. 'Workhouse Populations in the Mid-Nineteenth Century: the Case of Hertfordshire.' Local Population Studies. Vol.62. Spring 1999. P.52; JACKSON, David G. 'Kent Workhouse Populations in 1881: a Study based on the Census Enumerators' Books.' Local Population Studies. Vol.69. 2002. P.51; PERKINS, Audrey. 'The Admission of Children to the Milton Union Workhouse, Kent, 1835-1855.' Local Population Studies. Vol.80. 2008. P.59. Similar data is used in the final chapter of this present work.

later years of the workhouse regime firm and strict discipline was still the order of the day –

Corporal punishments, generally what were referred to as ‘thrashings,’ were a feature of everyday life, generally administered freely and entirely at the discretion of the House Mother. <sup>18</sup>

The period over which these titles have appeared, from the 1970s to 2009, shows that there is still interest in the older themes at the national level. However, alongside these there has been increased recognition that the law and the workhouse were but parts of the picture or, to adopt Steven King’s metaphor, only two of the threads making up the rich tapestry of approaches to the poor and the poor laws. Unpicking the other threads is not a simple matter as, by definition, they are closely intertwined. There is the question posed by King himself who asked “Did England have several poor law systems and not one?” <sup>19</sup> He argues that for a large proportion of the population the threat of pauperdom was very real and that any single one of a number of possible changes in circumstances could push a family over the edge. Further, he suggests that those who lived in the south and east of the country were likely to be more generously treated than their peers in the north and west and to be assisted sooner as they descended into pauperdom. <sup>20</sup> Indeed, in answer to his own question, he observes, there were thus two English Poor Laws and within the two macro-regions there were sub-regions each of which had its own poor law culture and concludes by asserting that “a detailed sub-regional picture or [a discussion of] intra-county variations [requires] more and more detailed local work” <sup>21</sup> and “with many more regional studies it might be possible to write a more sophisticated sub-regional history of the poor law.” <sup>22</sup> Thus does he help to provide a justification for the present work. He has not been alone in this. Dorothy Marshall, in recognising that there were local differences, commented that they “can only be brought out by a painstaking

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<sup>18</sup> RAMSBOTTOM, Martin. The Kirkham Cottage Homes. Kirkham, Hedgehog Historical Publications. 2007. P.13.

<sup>19</sup> KING, Steven Andrew. Poverty and Welfare in England 1700-1850. Manchester, Manchester University Press. 2000. P.259

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.* P.257.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.* P.268.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.* P.265

examination of local records.”<sup>23</sup> Similarly Geoffrey Oxley in looking at the Old Poor Law echoed Marshall when he wrote that -

It is inadequate merely to described what was done, we must try to establish whether there was any clear policy or whether it was a matter of dealing with each case as it came up. To understand the position in a particular case we must have a clearer general background”<sup>24</sup>

and that -

poor relief can only be fully understood and, in return, make its fullest contribution to our understanding of the past, if it is seen as one amongst many relationships within a small community.”<sup>25</sup>

Historians had, of course, already turned their attention to areas below the national level. Keith Snell’s Annals of the Labouring Poor examined the “English and Welsh Counties south of Yorkshire, Derbyshire. Staffordshire, Shropshire and Radnor,” an area which King also had considered to be a separate region.<sup>26</sup> Whilst expanding his field of vision to include topics relative to the whole field of poverty, apprenticeship and domestic service for example, he deliberately paid no attention to Lancashire which for much of his period was one of the most densely populated counties in England. He made the comment, to be echoed by later writers, that the object of the poor laws was to ensure a submissive demeanour on the lower orders and made the point that whilst making ends meet was clearly an important consideration for poor and pauper alike, both had an existence beyond the overseer’s weekly distribution. A narrower view was taken by Eric Midwinter’s Social Administration in Lancashire<sup>27</sup> which examined a county later to be singled out by King for its parsimoniousness.<sup>28</sup> He surveyed the operation of the Old Poor Law then described the process of unionisation and detailed the manner in which the New Poor Law functioned asserting that “The Old Poor Law in Lancashire was neither ramshackle nor disorganised. It was reasonably successful” and that it “was a more vivid advertisement of what the Poor

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<sup>23</sup> MARSHALL, *Op.cit.* Unpaginated Preface.

<sup>24</sup> OXLEY, Geoffrey O. Poor Relief in England and Wales 1601-1834. Newton Abbot, David and Charles. 1974. P.77.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.* P.121.

<sup>26</sup> SNELL, Keith D. M. Annals of the Labouring Poor: Social and Agrarian England 1600-1900. Manchester, Manchester University Press. 1969. P.1.

<sup>27</sup> MIDWINTER, Eric. Social Administration in Lancashire 1830-1860. Manchester, Manchester University Press. 1969.

<sup>28</sup> KING. *Op.cit.* Poverty. P.262.

Law Commissioners planned to do than of the faults they so sternly denounced.”<sup>29</sup> Finally he concluded that “On examination, the gap between the pre-1834 and the post-1834 Poor Relief service closes considerably and, in the mundane passage of everyday Poor Law affairs, it is difficult to visualise any startling changes of officer, pauper, or ratepayer.”<sup>30</sup>

Snell’s work, with his consideration of family life and social relationships, presented the poor against the background of their daily life and both his and Midwinter’s work showed a progression away from the national and regional to the more local. The former’s assertion that the poor laws were intended to produce submissiveness has also been made by Brundage and by Larry Patriquin. Brundage has argued that the idea of a logical and progressive evolution of the poor laws is mistaken and that their operation was the outcome of a general agreement that the poor should be maintained. He saw its operation as being “consensual,” continually “contested” in the form of contemporary debate and “contingent” upon the events and circumstances of the time.<sup>31</sup> He further commented that the purpose of the 1834 Poor Law Amendment Act was to “recognise and strengthen the power of the country’s traditional leaders over their localities” as much as to reduce costs.<sup>32</sup> This theme was echoed by Patriquin in his Agrarian Capitalism and Poor Relief in England, 1500-1860 where he contends that England’s system of poor relief grew out of the progressive deprivation of the lower orders of access of their own plot of land possession of which had been seen as their historic right.<sup>33</sup>

So far this survey has considered the broader threads of King’s tapestry. Finer strands need now to be considered although again there is inevitably a degree of overlapping. The first of these sees the formal system of relief provided by the Poor Laws as only one strand in an ‘economy of makeshifts.’ The second discovers the poor not merely

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<sup>29</sup> MIDWINTER. *Op.cit.* P.14.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.* P.61.

<sup>31</sup> BRUNDAGE. *Op.cit.* P.154

<sup>32</sup> BRUNDAGE, Anthony. The Making of the New Poor Law 1832-39. London, Hutchinson. 1978.

<sup>33</sup> PATRIQUIN, Larry. Agrarian Capitalism and Poor Relief in England, 1500-1860. Basingstoke, Palgrave MacMillan. 2007.

as numbers in official returns or names in an overseer's payment book but as 'real people' who 'lived, moved and had their being' over and above a weekly attendance at the overseer's distribution. Central to both is the conception of live-cycle poverty which sees the poor moving in and out of pauperdom in response to changing circumstances such as frequent and often regular increases in family size, lack of employment, sickness, and death of the breadwinner. <sup>34</sup>

### **The Poor and the Economy of Makeshifts** <sup>35</sup>

In the Introduction to their work on The Poor in England Steven King and Alannah Tomkins draw attention to the use of the phrase 'the economy of makeshifts' to encapsulate the wide variety of strategies adopted by the poor in order, as alternative expressions had it, to make ends meet or to make shift and the expression itself provides a framework within which historians are now investigating the lives of the less fortunate members of society in their struggle to eke out their existence. <sup>36</sup> Older historiography has tended, as already noted, to discuss the poor against the background of the legal and institutional framework presented by the law and the workhouse. More recent work has, however, taken account of the fact that the formal system of relief was only a part of the mixed economy of welfare as discussed by Joanna Innes, and only one of an ever diverse economy of makeshifts, not necessarily the first to be adopted by the poor when they fell on hard times. <sup>37</sup> Here Alan Kidd has observed that –

Whilst the contribution of the voluntary sector and the state to the provision of care and welfare in the nineteenth century should not be

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<sup>34</sup> See STAPLETON, Barry. 'Inherited Poverty and Life-Cycle Poverty: Odiham, Hampshire, 1650-1850.' Social History. Vol.18. No.3. 1993. P.340 and OTTWAY, Susannah and WILLIAMS, Samantha. 'Reconstructing the Life-Cycle Experience in the time of the Old Poor Law.' Archives. Vol.23. No.98. 1998.

<sup>35</sup> For discussion on the "Economy of Makeshifts" see HINDLE, Steve. On the Parish? – the Micro-Politics of Poor Relief in Rural England c.1550-1750. Oxford, Clarendon Press. 2004, particularly Chapter One; INNES, Joanne. 'The Mixed Economy of Welfare in early modern England' In DAUNTON, Martin James. Ed. Charity, Self-interest and Welfare in the English Past. London, University College Press. 1996; KIDD, Alan. State, Society and the Poor in Nineteenth Century England. Basingstoke, MacMillan Press Ltd. 1999; KING, Steven Andrew and TOMKINS, Alannah. The Poor in England 1700-1850: an Economy of Makeshifts. Manchester, Manchester University Press. 2003. P.1.

<sup>36</sup> KING and TOMKINS. *Op.cit.* P.1.

<sup>37</sup> See INNES, Joanna. 'The "Mixed Economy of Welfare" in early Modern England: Assessments of the Options from Hale to Malthus.' In DAUNTON, Martin. Ed. Charity, Self-Interest and Welfare in the English Past. London, UCL Press. 1996. KIDD, *op cit.*, also discusses the mixture of charity, poor laws and self-help.

underestimated . . . much was left to the resources of the individual. Those in poverty, or in fear of poverty, were most dependent upon their own resources and of those of their family, their neighbours and their class. <sup>38</sup>

The need to make shift was not, as Kidd indicates, confined to the pauper class. It was probably a permanent feature of life for many individuals and families who continually hovered above the line which separated the poor from the paupers together with those who moved from poverty to pauperdom and back again according to the vicissitudes of their life cycle. There were, of course, as many 'economies of makeshifts' as there were families and individuals who had to make shift, each conditioned by their own particular circumstances and King and Tomkins highlight the questions involved in a consideration of the matter. <sup>39</sup> However, the major factor was the wages and other cash earnings, whether from regular employment or from casual labour, of the whole family. These could vary depending upon factors such as the nature of the employment, the time of the year, the state of trade and the size and ages of the family and clearly a family with a couple of strong teenage sons had a better earning capacity than that of a family with an out-of-work husband and a clutch of infant children or of an elderly ailing spinster. <sup>40</sup> Alice Walton and her three daughters for example earned fifteen shillings a week in 1814. Similarly, the Bagshaw family consisting of husband, wife and six children had a total weekly income of £1 8s 0d. These examples are drawn from Kirkham Town. Over the township boundary in Lund it was reported in 1834 Answers to Rural Questions that an average wage for a farm labourer was 10s a week, that his wife might earn 4s by weaving and that children could earn from 6d to 3s a week giving a possible family income of £1 4s 0d a week. <sup>41</sup> The earnings of wives

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<sup>38</sup> KIDD. *Op. cit.* P.109.

<sup>39</sup> KING and TOMKINS. *Op.cit.* P.14. See also WILLIAMS, Samantha. 'Earnings, Poor Relief and the Economy of Makeshifts: Bedfordshire in the early years of the New Poor Law.' Rural History. Vol. 16. No. 1. 2005.

<sup>40</sup> For a consideration on the relative importance of male wages and poor relief see WILLIAMS, Samantha. 'Poor Relief, Labourers' Households and Living Standards in Rural England c 1770-1834: a Bedfordshire Case Study.' Economic History Review. Vol. 58. No.3. 2005. P.485.

<sup>41</sup> Lund. 'Answers to Rural Questions' provided by the Minister, the Reverend Richard Moore. Parliamentary Papers PP1834/XXX/282-292. Questions 8, 12 and 13. A complete transcription of this document is given as an appendix. It relates solely to the chapelry of Lund. There appears to be no similar document for Kirkham Town or for any other hamlet or parish in the Fylde and the Questions discussed here are the

and children were essential to the family economy. The women of the house might take in work such as washing or bread making, even a lodger or a poor aged pauper whose board would be paid for by the overseer. The small hands of the youngsters were also able to make a contribution. In the cotton towns of Lancashire, for example, there was work in the mills, possibly alongside parents or siblings whilst Question 11 in Lund's 'Answers to Rural Question mentions the possibility of work at harvest time and Barry Reay notes that on the shores of Morecambe Bay cockling was an occupation for all the family. <sup>42</sup>

The standard of living supported by these earnings is open to question but the Minister of Lund, the Reverend Richard Moore the respondent to the Rural Questions, whilst observing that the rates he quoted were low indicates, in response to Question 16, that a family could exist on such earnings with "oats, bread, potatoes and buttermilk with bacon now and then and a little butcher's meat" as their regular diet. The latter possibly came from the pig which, the Minister reports, was "kept by many cottagers" in the gardens attached to their dwellings and it is likely that the gardens provided not only sties for the pigs but also potatoes and other vegetables. Paupers in Kirkham had their potato grounds but there is no evidence that they kept pigs, poultry or other animals although pigs were to appear regularly, as will be observed, in the Minutes of the Fylde Board of Guardians. <sup>43</sup>

The fortunate families existed on their earnings at what might have been considered a reasonable standard of living for their class, period and location but their relatively comfortable circumstances might change overnight in the event of occurrences such as the death of the principle wage-earner, unemployment, sickness or lay-offs. <sup>44</sup>

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only ones which shed light on the economy of makeshifts of the those living in the chapelry.

<sup>42</sup> LUND. Rural Questions. *Op.cit.* REAY, Barry. Rural Englands. Basingstoke, Palgrave MacMillan. 2004. P.66.

<sup>43</sup> Standards of living are discussed in HORRELL, Sara and HUMPHRIES, Jane in 'Old Questions, New Data and Alternative Perspectives: Families' Living Standards in the Industrial Revolution.' Journal of Economic History. Vol.52. No.4. P.848.

<sup>44</sup> This question of change over time is discussed by KENT, Joan and KING, Steven Andrew in 'Changing Patterns of Poor Relief in some English Rural Parishes circa 1650-1750.' Rural History. Vol. 14. No.2. 2003. P.119.

These events brought into play the total 'economy of makeshifts' and it is possible, following Kidd, to suggest a broad framework within which this operated. Three stages may be identified. The first, the family and kinship stage, involved such steps as reducing the standard of the family diet to a yet meaner level, drawing on any meagre savings or finding additional work even for the younger members of the family who in better times might have been sent to school or allowed to help around the house.<sup>45</sup> Assistance might be sought from other members of the family by way of a few pence until pay-day, a shovel-full of coals or child-minding so that the wife and other members of the family might go out to seek work, it being understood that such favours would be reciprocated should need arise. As these resources dried up the second, community, stage, came into play. This involved a variety of expedients such as seeking assistance from local charities, calling in benefits available from friendly society membership, pawning household goods and clothing, running a slate at the corner shop, gleaning at harvest time, collecting fruit or vegetables missed by the pickers in orchard and field, collecting lumps of coal from beside the railway line and, maybe, when all else failed, resort to deception, begging, thieving and prostitution, activities categorised by Steve Hindle as "Crimes of Necessity."<sup>46</sup> Other possibilities, which might have reduced family out-goings were avoidance of the rent collector, a move to cheaper accommodation, 'doing a moonlight' and the possibility of going to another place to seek work, sometimes at the expense of the poor law authorities, should not be ignored.<sup>47</sup> Such strategies could, of course, vary over time and, for example, the opening of the Preston to Wyre Railway in July 1840 must have provided a new but illicit source of fuel for the families living near to the line with possibilities for trading or exchange as well and the place of this new means of conveyance in

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<sup>45</sup> For a discussion on kinship links in Lancashire see ANDERSON, Michael. Family Structure in Nineteenth Century Lancashire. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press. 1971.

<sup>46</sup> HINDLE. *Op.cit.* P.81. For a discussion of the role of the pawnshop see TOMKINS, Alannah. 'Pawnbroking and the Survival Strategies of the Urban Poor in 1770s York.' *In* KING and TOMKINS. *Op.cit.* P.166 *et seq.* Peter King has written on gleaning in KING, Peter. Crime and Law in England 1750-1840: remaking Justice from the Margins. Cambridge. Cambridge University Press. 2006, particularly Chapters 9 and 10 and Barry Reay, *op.cit.*, P.66, notes that the practice could be worth from £1 to £3 a year. WILLIAMS, *op.cit.*, notes Peter King's calculation that the practice was worth between 3% and 14% *per annum*.

<sup>47</sup> WILLIAMS, *op.cit.*, also provides a list of possibilities and emphasises the influence of local conditions upon them.



facilitating migration and thus extending work opportunities should not be entirely ignored.

In all of these the poor had a degree of choice. They also had a choice when it came to the third stage, that of seeking relief from the Poor Law Authorities. The first option was conditioned by the depth of the family's desperation and at its most basic was just a matter of whether to apply for relief or not. Even when application had been made the poor still had the choice of accept what was offered or making shift without it and a contributory factor in the decision must have been the stigma and loss of status in the community which acceptance of relief carried with it. However, as Margaret Hanley has observed "more and more people saw a role for the poor law . . . in the economy of makeshifts and . . . more and more communities recognised this too." <sup>48</sup>

The poor law and its administrators were not merely providers of regular pensions or of cash 'at need.' They also supplied clothing, footwear, fuel and food as well as medical treatment and coffins and, on occasion, overseers acted as an employment agency. This suggests that the poor 'made shift' to gear their applications for relief not merely to the needs of the moment but also to what they thought was likely to be approved. Thus they asked for clothing for children rather than for cash to buy it and for funeral expenses, a request less likely, it might be thought, to have been turned down, rather than an for an extra 12s in cash to pay for the coffin. All this, of course, as Miss Hanly has suggested, depended upon the local game of chance.

### **The Narrowing Focus of Historiography**

Thus far this chapter has traced the broad sweep of the historiography dealing with the poor laws and with the strategies which the poor adopted to make shift. The consideration of the economy of makeshifts marks the transition from the general towards the more particular and to specific aspects of pauperdom. A major concept with which pauper, overseer and guardian had to deal under both Old and New Poor Laws was the question of settlement. Indeed acknowledgement of settlement, the

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<sup>48</sup> HANLY, Margaret. 'The Economy of Makeshifts and the Role of the Poor Law: a Game of Chance.' In KING and TOMKINS. *Op.cit.* P.77.

notion that every man, woman and child had a place to which they legally belonged, was the key to the granting of relief. Where settlement was proved and accepted, relief might be provided but when it was questioned removal back 'home,' to the place of 'settlement,' was often the consequence. Keith Snell has highlighted the importance of 'belonging' noting that it was just as important to the poor to have somewhere they could call 'home' which would be under some responsibility to relieve them should it prove necessary, as it was for the poor law authorities to be able to ascertain whether or not they were responsible for relieving an individual pauper and his family or whether some or all of them could be removed across the township boundary along with the burden of relief. <sup>49</sup> Brundage has outlined the course of the legislation commenting that "The purpose of [the] late seventeenth century enactments was both to regulate migration and to reduce litigation between parishes. It was to prove far more successful with the former than with the latter." <sup>50</sup> Just how the law was applied and to whom, as with many other matters connected with the poor law, was subject to variation and, as Brundage hinted, removal when settlement was denied, was productive of much litigation which sometimes possibly cost more than the appropriate relief. <sup>51</sup>

It has been to these various forms of relief that historians have been turning their attention and the work of Alannah Tomkins, particularly on pawnbroking, and Margaret Hanly on the vagaries of the law have already been noticed. Paupers, in common with any other group, required medical and nursing attention from time to time both when sick and, at least as far as the women were concerned, when lying-in. Provision both of medical and associated nursing services generally grew alongside the

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<sup>49</sup> SNELL, Keith D. M. 'Settlement, Poor Law and the Rural Historian: new Approaches and Opportunities.' Rural History. Vol.3. No. 2. 1992. P.145. See also the author's Parish and Belonging: Community, Identity and Welfare in England and Wales 1700-1950. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press. 2006. The same author also discusses the concept of 'belonging to' trades or other 'communities' in 'The Culture of Local Xenophobia.' Social History. Vol.28. No. 1. 2003.

<sup>50</sup> BRUNDAGE. *Op.cit.* English. P.10.

<sup>51</sup> See LANDAU, Norma. 'Who was subject to the Laws of Settlement? Procedure under the Settlement Laws in Eighteenth Century England.' Agricultural History Review. Vol.43. No. 2. 1995. For an example of a particularly complicated local case, that of John Singleton, see SHAW, Roland Cunliffe. Kirkham in Amounderness: the Story of a Lancashire Community. Preston, R. Seed and Sons. 1949. P.409

growth of medical knowledge and the increased professionalism of the profession to be accompanied by greater provision under the poor law. There was, of course, diversity of provision as discussed in the Introduction to Peregrine Horden's and Richard Smith's The Locus of Care and throughout the country as shown by Steven King who has discussed the nature of provision in Lancashire.<sup>52</sup> Derek Fraser and Anne Digby have provided broad overviews of the service in, respectively, The Evolution of the British Welfare State and Making a Medical Living whilst Crowther considers the workhouse medical service under the New Poor Law.<sup>53</sup> However much later historiography focuses either upon a particularly locality or a particular service. Alison Stringer in her article on health care in Northampton suggests that medical historians have tended to concentrate "on the activities of doctors treating those at the higher end of the social scale" and that the service under the Old Poor Law "has yet to receive systematic attention."<sup>54</sup> Nursing services, as distinct from the purely medical, were well developed, at least in the capital, during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries according to Jeremy Boulton although, he states, by the mid-eighteenth century the "roles and responsibilities of the parish nurse had become restricted largely to the rearing and nursing of children and infants"<sup>55</sup> as provision by the workhouse was expanded particularly after the 1834 Poor Law Amendment Act. Further although the medical profession was establishing itself and increasing its range of knowledge it should not be forgotten that in case of sickness the old remedies and the wise women of the parish, who were probably cheaper and more accessible, continued to form an important part of the economy of makeshifts.<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> HORDEN, Peregrine. The Locus of Care. London, Routledge. 1998. KING, Steven Andrew. 'Regional Patterns in the Experiences and Treatment of the Sick Poor, 1800-40: Rights, Obligations and Duties in the Rhetoric of Paupers.' Family and Community History. Vol. 10. No.1. 2007. P.61. KING, Steven Andrew and WEAVER, Alan. 'Lives in Many Hands: the Medical Landscape in Lancashire, 1700-1820.' Medical History. Vol.45. 2000. P.173.

<sup>53</sup> FRASER, Derek. The Evolution of the British Welfare State: a History of Social Policy since the Industrial Revolution. London, MacMillan. 1973; DIGBY, Anne. Making a Medical Living : Doctors and Patients in the English Market for Medicine, 1720-1911. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press. 1994. CROWTHER. *Op.cit.*

<sup>54</sup> STRINGER, Alison. 'Depth and Diversity in Parochial Healthcare: Northamptonshire 1750-1830.' Family and Community History. Vol. 9. No. 1. 2006. P.43

<sup>55</sup> BOULTON, Jeremy. 'Welfare Systems and the Parish Nurse in Early Modern London, 1650-1725.' Family and Community History. Vol.10. No.2. 2007. P.127.

<sup>56</sup> See CHAMBERLAIN, Mary. Old Wives' Tales – their history, remedies and spells. London, Virago Press Limited. 1980, particularly Chapter Five.

As will be shown in the detailed analyses which appear in later chapters, clothing and footwear were a major item of expense for the poor law authorities as, indeed, it must have been for the families of the poor and those in pauperdom. Steve King has raised a number of interesting questions about the dress of the poor commenting that “there is a considerable potential research agenda” concerning the amount, quality and quantity of clothing possessed by the poor and the attitude of the authorities to its provision.<sup>57</sup> In a subsequent article Peter Jones discussed his colleague’s assertion that the poor were well clothed during the period under review and this is clearly a matter for debate as ‘well clothed’ is a very much a subjective term and related to the prevailing standards of the community.<sup>58</sup> Pre-worn clothing was clearly included in the relief provision – there are examples from Kirkham – and Beverly Lemire has noted that “The second-hand clothes trade was a flexible, adaptable, intermediary phenomenon.” It was freely available and was probably, in form of ‘hand-me-downs,’ an important part of the economy of makeshifts over and above any provision by the poor law authorities.<sup>59</sup>

Aside from the regular weekly allowances – the county allowance, the Government allowance, the Act of Parliament Allowance or ‘our Income’ as it was variously described – medical care and clothing probably made up the largest parts of poor relief.<sup>60</sup> However, the literature is not entirely silent on other aspects of relief. Food, for example, discussed by Eden, has more recently attracted the attention of Alan Crosby and Peter Higginbottom.<sup>61</sup> Crosby has also written on the place of oats in the

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<sup>57</sup> KING, Steven Andrew. ‘Reclothing the English Poor, 1750-1840.’ Textile History. Vol.33. No. 1. 2002. P.37. The clothing of the poor is also discussed in STYLES, John The Dress of the People. London, Yale University Press. 2007.

<sup>58</sup> JONES, Peter. ‘Clothing the Poor in Early-Nineteenth-Century England.’ Textile History. Vol.37. No 1. 2006. P.17. The

<sup>59</sup> LEMIRE, Beverly. ‘Peddling Fashion: Salesmen, Pawnbrokers, Taylors, Thieves and the Second-Hand Clothes Trade in England c1700-1800.’ Textile History. Vol. 22. No.1. 1991. P.67.

<sup>60</sup> Quoted in JONES. *Op.cit*. The allowed system is discussed in ROSE, Michael Edward. ‘The Allowance System under the New Poor Law.’ Economic History Review. Vol.19. 1966. P.607.

<sup>61</sup> EDEN. *Op.cit*; CROSBY, Allan. ‘A Poor Diet for Poor People? Workhouse Food in Lancashire 1750-1834.’ Lancashire Local Historian. Vol.9. 1994. P.20; HIGGINBOTHAM, Peter. The Workhouse Cookbook. Stroud, The History Press Ltd. 2008.

diet of the Lancastrian poor.<sup>62</sup> Whilst food and clothing were important to poor and pauper alike, education was possibly less so. Until the late nineteenth century teaching was provided by a combination of schools provided by the churches such as St. Michael's Church School in Kirkham, by the old established Grammar Schools whose curriculum were usually classically based and unsuited to the needs of the poor, by charitable institutions such as Kirkham's Langton Girls School Charity or by free enterprise in the form of dame schools. Overseers and Guardians might pay for their charges to attend the local school but from the 1840s there was increasing pressure for poor law authorities to provide schools for their pauper children. This field does not appear to have been much explored in poor law terms but Frank Crompton's Workhouse Children contains a chapter on the subject of workhouse schools whilst Terence O'Brien made it the subject of his M.A. dissertation noting that "It is ironic that one's chance of education was, perhaps better if one was [sic] a pauper . . ." <sup>63</sup>

Another facet of relief, important as they are fast disappearing, is the workhouse buildings themselves. The parish workhouses were often nondescript and John Walton describes them as being "small and unassuming, with few pretensions to deterrence or industrial efficiency."<sup>64</sup> Those built under the New Poor Law were however, both testimonials to the ambition of the Boards of Guardians who erected them and awful warnings to the poor of the fate which awaited them. The main staircase in the 1860s Preston Union House would not have looked out of place in a minor stately home and the water tower of the 1980 Fylde Union building was visible for a considerable

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<sup>62</sup> CROSBY, Alan. 'Oats in the Lancashire diet, 1750-1850.' C.N.W.R.S. Regional Bulletin. New Series. No.11. 1997.

<sup>63</sup> CROMPTON, Alan. Workhouse Children. Stroud, Sutton Publishing Limited. 1997. O'BRIEN, Terrance. 'The Education and Care of Workhouse Children in some Lancashire Poor Law Unions, 18345-1930.' M.A. Thesis. University of Manchester. 1975. The interesting history of the Fylde's several charity schools is outside the scope of this discussion.

<sup>64</sup> WALTON, John Kimmons. Lancashire: a Social History, 15587-1939. Manchester, Manchester University Press. 1987. P.89.

distance. Both of these and numerous others have been discussed by Peter Higginbottom.<sup>65</sup>

The foregoing work has had as its focus the poor and paupers in the context of the poor law and its administration. Recent work has increasingly paid attention to the lives of the poor over and above their attendance at the overseer's weekly distribution although the dividing line between the two is inevitably narrow and blurred. Central to the existence of the poor were their living conditions. Nigel Morgan, for example, provided an insight into the housing of the poor in a Lancashire cotton town in his Deadly Dwellings whilst the more recent volume by Pamela Sharpe and Joanne McEwan considers the accommodation of the poor in London and elsewhere in the country.<sup>66</sup> Crosby's work on diet has already been noticed as has that of King and Tomkins which contains chapters on the place of criminal activity and of charity in the economy of makeshifts.<sup>67</sup> The letters of paupers, written to request relief, and examined by Thomas Sokoll often provide an insight into their domestic and family circumstances as do their inventories compiled, as Peter King has noted, not upon death but when circumstances such as the need to quantify the value of the assets of an applicant for relief made it desirable.<sup>68</sup>

Equally important are those writers who, whilst their primary focus lies in other directions, have taken the poor and the paupers into cognizance. Social relationships

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<sup>65</sup> HIGGINBOTTOM, Peter. Workhouses of the North. Stroud, Tempus Publishing. 2006 and HIGGINBOTHAM, Peter. Workhouses of the Midlands. Stroud, Tempus Publishing Limited. 2007. Higginbottom was also produced an excellent website on the subject which includes transcripts of Acts and photographs of extant buildings at [www.workhouses.org.uk](http://www.workhouses.org.uk).

<sup>66</sup> SHARPE, Pamela and McEwan Joanne. Accommodating Poverty: the Housing and Living Arrangements of the English Poor, c.1600-1850. Basingstoke, Palgrave MacMillan. 2011.

<sup>67</sup> LLOYD, Sarah. 'Agents in their own concerns? Charity and the Economy of Makeshifts in Eighteenth Century Britain' and SHORE, Heather. 'Crime, Criminal Networks and the Survival Strategies of the Poor in Early Eighteenth Century London. In KING and TOMKINS. *Op.cit.* The role of charities and friendly societies is also discussed in KIDD. *Op.cit.*

<sup>68</sup> SOKOLL, Thomas. SOKOLL, Thomas. 'Old Age in Poverty; the Record of Essex Pauper Letters, 1780-1834.' and KING, Peter. 'Pauper Inventories and the Material Lives of the Poor in the Eighteenth and Early Nineteenth Centuries.' In HITCHCOCK, Tim, KING, Peter, and SHARPE, Pamela. Eds. Chronicling Poverty: the Voices and Strategies of the English Poor, 1640-1840. Basingstoke, MacMillan Press Ltd. 1997.

and the interplay between classes, the “grids of power” to which Michael Braddick and John Walter referred, have attracted considerable attention. <sup>69</sup> The poor were, by definition, at the bottom of the heap and had to be controlled, a fact recognized even by early legislators. Similarly, the interests of those higher up the social scale, the landowners, clergy of the established church and entrepreneurs, had to be protected and their positions secured and Steve Hindle characterises this as “the dichotomous relationship between governors and governed.” <sup>70</sup> However, the question of where an individual, whether poor or not, fits into society and where he sees himself is more complex and is discussed in the context of the poor not only by Hindle who has made particular reference to the lower orders but also by Peter King who notes, as Hollen Lees had also similarly observed, that “Even beggars . . . could be choosers.” Even the poorest were not entirely without power. <sup>71</sup>

Historians have singled out three sections of the population for detailed attention. Children in particular have provided a wide field for investigation since, as Harry Hendrick highlighted, society began to consider them as individuals in their own right rather than as ‘small adults.’ <sup>72</sup> As far back as 1971 Peter Laslett drew attention to their considerable numbers noting that “in the pre-industrial world [children] were everywhere” <sup>73</sup> and their existence as wage earners and as apprentices has been noted. Sara Horrell and Jane Humphries have drawn attention to their contribution to the family economy and the extent to which they were exploited not only by employers but also in some cases by parents as a part of their family’s economy of makeshifts. <sup>74</sup>

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<sup>69</sup> BRADDICK, Michael J and WALTER, John. Negotiating Power in Early Modern Society: Order, Hierarchy and Subordination in Britain and Ireland. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press. 2001. P.1.

<sup>70</sup> HINDLE, Steve. ‘Power, Poor Relief, and Social Relations in Holland Fen, c.1600-1800.’ Historical Journal. Vol.41. No.1. 1998. P.67 and ‘Civility, Honesty and the Identification of the Deserving Poor in Seventeenth Century England.’ In FRENCH, Henry and BARRY, Jonathan. Eds. Identity and Agency in England, 1500-1800. Ashgate, Palgrave MacMillan. 2004.

<sup>71</sup> KING, Peter. ‘Social Inequality, Identity and the Labouring Poor in Eighteenth Century England.’ In FRENCH and BARRY. *Op.cit.*

<sup>72</sup> HENDRICK, Harry. Child Welfare: England 1872-1989. London, Routledge. 1994.

<sup>73</sup> LASLETT, Peter. The World we have lost. London, Methuen and Company Limited. 1965. P.104.

<sup>74</sup> HORRELL, Sarah and HUMPHRIES, Jane. ‘The Exploitation of Little Children: Child Labour and the Family Economy in the Industrial Revolution.’ Explorations in Economic History. Vol.332. 1995. P.484.

Many of them were apprenticed and not only by the poor law authorities but, as the case of Kirkham which will be discussed later shows, by local charities. However, whilst childhood has been the principal focus it is difficult to disentangle it entirely from the poor law as Kate Honeyman's work on child workers and Keith Snell's and Steve Hindle's on pauper apprenticeship reveal.<sup>75</sup> Setting them on work, however, has not been the only focus. Horrell and Humphries have turned their attention to those families 'headed by women,' concluding, maybe not surprisingly, that "children in such families were relatively deprived."<sup>76</sup> Deprivation arising from poor living standards inevitably resulted, *inter alia* in infant mortality and, in an interesting turn, Paul Huck has discussed the link between the two noting that it "often reflects differences in income across social classes . . ." <sup>77</sup>

The second of these two groups consisted of the women-folk, particularly the elderly and the single. The importance of women's wages in the total economy of makeshifts of the poor is unlikely to be questioned but what is open to debate is the extent to which there were continuing opportunities of earning. Steven King has particularly considered this question considering whether openings were increasing or falling off and the extent to which low wage rates for women were allied to the subsidising of wages by the poor law authorities.<sup>78</sup> Again Horrell and Humphries have contributed to the literature and taken this debate onwards suggesting that "participation rates and relative earnings [for women] declined after mid [nineteenth] century."<sup>79</sup> Many women were, of course, spinsters who, amongst all the population were the least likely, particularly as they approached old age, to have families on whom they could rely on

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<sup>75</sup> HONEYMAN, Katrina. Child Workers in England, 1780-1820: Parish Apprentices and the making of the Early Industrial Labour Force. Aldershot. Ashgate Publishing Limited. 2007 and HINDLE, Steve. 'Waste' Children? Pauper Apprenticeship under the Elizabethan Poor Laws, c. 1598-1697.' In LANE, Penelope, RAVEN, Neil and SNELL, Keith D. M. Eds. Women, Work and Wages in England, 1600-1850. Woodbridge, Boydell Press. 2004. SNELL. *Op.cit.* Annals.

<sup>76</sup> HORRELL, Sarah and HUMPHRIES, Jane. 'Stature and Relative Deprivation: Fatherless Children in early Industrial Britain.' Community and Change. Vol.13. No.1. 1998. P.73.

<sup>77</sup> HUCK, Paul. 'Infant Mortality and Living Standards of English Workers during the Industrial Revolution.' Journal of Economic History. Vol. 35. No.3. 1995. P.528.

<sup>78</sup> KING, Steven Andrew. 'Mere Pennies for my Basket will be Enough: Women Work and Welfare, 1770-1830.' In LANE, RAVEN and SNELL. *Op.cit.*

<sup>79</sup> HORRELL, Sarah and HUMPHRIES, Jane. 'Women's Labour Force Participation and the Transition to the Male Breadwinner Family, 1760-1865.' Economic History Review. Vol.68. No.1. 1995. P.89.



for support. <sup>80</sup> The men in society were expected to support themselves by labour or other makeshifts for as long as they were able and old age did not of itself bring either them or their families into contact with the poor law and it was not unknown for both men and women to be active to an age which even in the twenty-first century would be considered approaching the advanced. However, there were those, both male and female who eventually reached a stage where they could no longer support themselves and both Pat Thane and Susannah Ottaway have contributed to the discussion on the way in which elderly poor were provided for by a combination of assistance from kin and the poor law. <sup>81</sup> Finally, it has been asserted that pauper and poor alike were people not numbers. Like their more affluent fellow citizens, they procreated and, eventually, were given a funeral – sometimes at the expense of the parish. These two happenings have also attracted historiographical attention. Tim Hitchcock and Tim Meldrum have considered the sexual activities of the poor and their outcome whilst Peter Jupp and Clare Gittings considered the obsequies attached to the final crisis of the life-cycle. <sup>82</sup>

Clearly, as the foregoing has amply demonstrated, there is a large and growing literature on the poor, a literature which derives both from a direct interest in the poor themselves and from interests in other topics where the poor feature as a secondary theme to the main tune. So what conclusions about the poor and the poor laws have historians drawn in this immense body of work? Firstly the formal system of poor relief as provided for by the Poor Laws was only a part of the mixed economy of welfare identified by Innes and only one strategy in the economy of makeshifts employed by the poor, often only adopted when all else failed, a point particularly emphasised by Hindle and Kidd. Secondly, when the decision to request relief had finally been taken,

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<sup>80</sup> See HILL, Bridget. Women Alone: Spinsters in England 1600-1850. London, Yale University Press. 2001.

<sup>81</sup> THANE, Pat. 'Old People and their Families in the English Past.' In DAUNTON. *Op.cit.* Charity and OTTAWAY, Susannah R. 'Providing for the Elderly in Eighteenth Century England.' Continuity and Change. Vol.13. No.3. 1998. P.391.

<sup>82</sup> HITCHCOCK, Tim. 'Unlawfully Begotten on her Body: Illegitimacy and the Parish Poor in St. Luke's Chelsea.' In HITCHCOCK. *Op.cit.* Chronicling; MELDRUM, Tim. 'London Domestic Servants from Depositional Evidence, 1650-1750: Servant-Employer Sexuality in the Patriarchal Household.' In HITCHCOCK. Chronicling; JUPP, Peter C. and GITTINGS, Clare. *Eds.* Death in England: an Illustrated History. Manchester, Manchester University Press. 1999.

the poor were quite capable of making their own case, standing their own corner as it were, in their discussions with the poor law authorities. Relief, even in relatively liberal times might not always have been granted but refusal was not necessarily accepted with abject deference and tugging of forelocks. Nor did rejection on one occasion inhibit the making of later, even repeated, applications. Furthermore, the poor were aware not only of their rights under the law but also of the way in which local overseers worked the system, which magistrates were likely to be sympathetic to their pleas and whether a threatening, cajoling, demanding or wheedling approach was most likely to produce satisfactory results.<sup>83</sup>

Thirdly, the number of Acts of Parliament which eventually found their way onto the statute book never reflected either the quantity of bills laid before Parliament or the level of debate and discussion in the public arena which preceded their being brought before the House of Commons. Legislation tended to be re-active rather than pro-active, the outcome of trial and experiment at the local level, the formalisation of informal but accepted practice. Some Acts were adoptive rather than mandatory and legislation was frequently loosely drawn and vague in its provisions. The 1601 Act for example permitted the collection of “competent Sums of Money for and towards the necessary relief of the Poor” but there was no specific guidance as to how the money collected was to be spent and no specific provision for the payment of house rents, funeral costs or food, all of which were progressively to feature in the overseers’ payment books, nor for medical care which was increasingly provided as knowledge increased.

Fourthly, as a result of this lack of precision, implementation of the law was greatly conditioned by the ethos of the community and the whim of the officers in thousands of parishes and hundreds of unions. Whatever the law said should be done, what was actually done was diverse in the extreme and done not so much for the benefit of the

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<sup>83</sup> For strategies adopted by the poor in their applications for relief, see KING, Steven Andrew. ‘Regional Patterns in the Experiences and Treatment of the Sick Poor, 1800-1840: Rights, Obligations and Duties in the Rhetoric of Paupers.’ Family and Community History. Vol.10. No.1. 2007. P.61 and LEES, *op.cit.*, P.24 *et seq.*

poor but for the convenience and advantage of those working the system. Fifthly, impinging upon the community at both local and national level were external influences over which no magistrate, vestryman, overseer or guardian, let alone a pauper, had any control. Typical of these were the increasing price of wheat in the early years of the nineteenth century, the end of the French Wars in 1815 and the Lancashire cotton famine of the 1860s.<sup>84</sup>

Finally, there has been an increasing awareness that those who constituted the lowest stratum of society were not just names and numbers in official accounts for whom an allowance of a few coppers a week was the sum of their existence. They were people who moved out of poverty into pauperdom and, if they were fortunate, back again into relative solvency according to the vicissitudes of their life cycles. These less fortunate members of the community had a diversity of needs apart from a little cash, a couple of shirts or a loaf of bread and despite the fact that the struggle to keep body and soul together was for many a constant feature of daily life, they had an existence beyond the weekly meeting with the overseers.

The question asked earlier in this chapter was whether it was possible to discern a logical progression in poor law historiography and, if so, the direction in which it was moving. The answer has to be in the affirmative. From the broad sweep of Eden's eighteenth century survey, Nicholls' nineteenth century guidance for poor law professionals and the early twentieth century reforming zeal of the Webbs there is a clear trend leading from an over-arching consideration of the laws, their administration and their institutions through attention to specific aspects of relief such as apprenticeship, clothing, and medical care and thence to the economy of makeshifts, to individual groups of pauper and to their existence outside the confines of the Poor Law. The later writers have either had the poor themselves as their primary focus or have included them in their survey of other topics. Taken together they have produced the increasingly interlinking strands of Steven King's varied tapestry of

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<sup>84</sup> See BRUNDAGE. *Op.cit.* English. P.39 *et seq* and P.105.

approaches. However, within this extensive body of writing there is still room for more, particularly at the local level and such studies, because of the diversity of the manner in which the law was interpreted and applied, present a logical progression in the development of historiography. Brundage remarked –

It is, of course, misleading to describe the Old Poor Law as a “system” if this is taken to imply national uniformity. There were, from the beginning, marked differences in practice in various parts of the country, not simply local variations in applying statutory law but, because the law was not statutory at all, a collection of customs and practices which, in the absence of a controlling central administration, sprang up and flourished in luxuriant profusion. <sup>85</sup>

The implication here is that whatever the legislature decreed should happen each authority took it upon itself to interpret the law as according to its own local circumstances and, as Dorothy Marshall observed, “These local differences can only be brought out by a painstaking examination of local records.” <sup>86</sup> John Brown made exactly the same point saying that “a complete picture of how [the Poor Law] operated can only emerge from a series of local studies” <sup>87</sup> and Oxley’s plea for more attention to the treatment of children applies with equal validity to the whole spectrum of poor relief at the local level. <sup>88</sup> Oxley published his book in 1974 and although the following quarter-century produced the volume of work which has been noticed here, King made the same point in 2000 when he commented that “What we . . . need are more detailed community studies.” <sup>89</sup> These calls have not gone unheeded particularly by students who have seen the poor of their township as a topic for investigation. Ann Noye studied the Surrey parish of Shere. <sup>90</sup> Rhodes Boyson examined the East Lancashire unions <sup>91</sup> and Julie Waite discussed the township of Poulton-le-Fylde. <sup>92</sup> Family and local historians have also taken up the cause. F.H.Lofthouse, whose great grandparents were the first Master and Matron of the Clitheroe Workhouse, studied

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<sup>85</sup> BRUNDAGE. *Op.cit.* Making. P.2.

<sup>86</sup> MARSHALL, Dorothy. *Op.cit.* Unpaginated Preface to 1969 reissue.

<sup>87</sup> BROWN, John. *Op.cit.*

<sup>88</sup> OXLEY. *Op.cit.* P.78.

<sup>89</sup> KING. *Op.cit.* Poverty. P.7.

<sup>90</sup> NOYES, Ann. Shere Poverty: from Parish to Union Workhouse. Gomshall, Twigma Books. 1996.

<sup>91</sup> BOYSON, Rhodes. ‘The History of Poor Law Administration in North-East Lancashire.’ M.A. Dissertation. Manchester University. 1960.

<sup>92</sup> WAITE, Julie C. ‘The Poor Law and its Administration in Poulton 1700-1834.’ Undergraduate Essay. Poulton-le-Fylde College. 1972.

the operation of the that Union and Peter Shakeshaft's history of Freckleton devoted a chapter entirely to the poor.<sup>93</sup> However there is still plenty of scope for yet more local studies. Taking King's words, these further studies need to investigate in detail the experience of being poor at the level of the community and to take the discussion on from purely administrative themselves.

Thus has the need for more and more local studies been emphasised by authorities in the field. Such studies need to take account not only of the formal mechanisms of poor relief but also of other aspects of the economy of makeshifts such as charities and friendly societies. The present study, which looks at the formal system of relief, is just one such whose aim is to add to the sum of knowledge about the poor as people and the experience of being poor particularly in a small Lancashire town and its neighbouring villages.

## **2 - Legislation**

Such is the background to the historiography of the poor, their pauperdom and its relief. It has been stressed that writers have seen the formal system of poor relief as only a part of the economy of makeshifts adopted by the unfortunate. However, as it is with the manner in which the formal system operated at the local level and with the contrast, if indeed there were any, between the operation of the Old and the New Poor Law, with which this study is concerned, it is necessary briefly to outline the major developments in the legislation and to present an overall view of what the law said should happen against which local practice may be compared for, as Joanna Innes commented, "the statutes provided a poor guide to what was happening in the localities."<sup>94</sup> Lees, too, drew attention to the individually local manner in which relief was administered when she wrote –

Although the transaction [of an application for relief] accentuated differences of class and income, the force of law and habit bound both sides in the welfare transaction together into a Morris dance of interlocking obligation. Rich and poor faced one another to contest the distribution of local

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<sup>93</sup> LOFTHOUSE, F. H. Keepers of the House: a Workhouse Saga. Settle, Hudson History. 2001. SHAKESHAFT, Peter. The History of Freckleton. Lancaster, Carnegie Publishing Ltd. 2001.

<sup>94</sup> INNES, Joanna. Inferior Politics: Social Problems and Social Policies in Eighteenth Century Britain. Oxford, Oxford University Press. 2009. P.9.

resources and to reallocate them according to some locally recognised standard of need and desert.<sup>95</sup>

It had always been so. Local provision was clearly important in mediæval and early modern times when the care of the poor was the duty of church, monasteries and charitable institutions. Such legislation as Parliament passed was concerned with the control of what were perceived as threats to the social order rather than with the benevolent relief of poverty of itself. However, by Tudor times it was accepted that there were members of society who were unable on account of youth, age, disability, or sickness to provide for themselves and that there were families “over-burdened with children” who, try as they might, could not adequately make shift. All these groups deserved some assistance. The sixteenth century saw the Dissolution of the Monasteries and therefore experienced what Paul Fideler characterised as marking the transition from “religion centred to secular-motivated giving” and in 1601 the several acts of the preceding century were brought together into a consolidating act, the Great Elizabethan Poor Law.<sup>96</sup> This laid responsibility for the relief of the poor on the parishes of the Church of England and upon their vestries and churchwardens. It provided for the raising of money to relieve the poor the provision of a supply of materials upon which the poor were to be set to work and the building of “convenient houses or dwellings for the impotent poor.” This Act, with its emphasis on the provision of work for those who could, set the pattern of relief for over two hundred years.

Writing of the Act, Steven King noted that –

Of course there were stark variations in local practice. This was to be expected given that the 1601 codification act which implemented the old poor law had established for all parishes a duty to relieve the deserving poor but had allowed local administrators to decide both who deserved and who not, and on the form and generosity of relief.<sup>97</sup>

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<sup>95</sup> LEES. *Op.cit.* P.11.

<sup>96</sup> FIDELER. *Op.cit.* P.88.

<sup>97</sup> KING, Steven Andrew. ‘Making the Most of Opportunity: the Economy of Makeshifts in the Early Modern North.’ In KING, Steven Andrew and TOMKINS, Alannah. *Eds. The Poor in England 1700-1859 – an Economy of Makeshifts.* Manchester, Manchester University Press. 2003. P.229.

The freedom thus allowed to local officials to implement national legislation in accordance with local circumstances was to be a feature of both Old and New Poor Laws and possibilities for diversity were increased by the fact that legislation was sometimes adoptive rather than compulsory.

A later Act, the formalisation of established practice rather than a new initiative, was the 1662 Act for the Better Relief of the Poor of the Kingdom, otherwise known as the Act of Settlement. The notion that every person had a settlement, a place to which he legally belonged and which was responsible for providing relief in times of need, was not new and here Oxley observed that -

It must be remembered that parishes were familiar with the problem of settlement long before 1662. The legislation of that and subsequent years was introduced to strengthen their hand. <sup>98</sup>

Whilst the Act itself was compulsory rather than elective each parish nevertheless had the freedom to choose how strictly they operated it and whilst the principal intention of the Act was to give the authorities the right to refuse relief to people who were not of their settled poor, it was also a matter of concern to the poor themselves who appreciated the virtue of having their place of settlement clearly acknowledged against the day when they might need relief.

The paternalism of the Stuart era had seen a relatively generous attitude towards the poor but by 1700 it had become, says Dorothy Marshall, “increasingly fashionable to regard poverty as a crime caused by the excesses and follies of the poor themselves.”<sup>99</sup> Severe discipline was seen as the answer and an act of 1723, Edward Knatchbull’s Workhouse Test Act, gave parishes the power to exercise this through the medium of the Workhouse. Parishes were permitted to combine to operate such an institution and, if they wished, to deny relief to anybody who refused to accept their offer of “the House.” Thus, said Dorothy Marshall -

It was possible for a parish or several parishes to build a workhouse and concentrate all the business of poor relief in it. At one step it rendered

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<sup>98</sup> OXLEY. *Op.cit.* P.39.

<sup>99</sup> MARSHALL, Dorothy. *Op.cit.* P.14.

possible the abolition of all weekly pensions, the payment of rent and the boarding out of children. <sup>100</sup>

Whilst this act was permissive rather than compulsory, many parishes took advantage of its provisions in the hope that it might prove more economical. Commenting on these buildings, John Walton says again that they were often “small and unassuming, with few pretensions to deterrence or industrial efficiency” and that they were the “repositories for the aged, ill, infirm and unmarried mothers with children.” <sup>101</sup> The experiment was often of short duration as officials quickly discovered that, far from being cheaper, a workhouse with its overheads and management problems was less cost-effective and more troublesome. Workhouses” as Slack noted “were vulnerable to the accusation that they increased rather than reduced the charge of the poor, with their huge capital outlays and heavy running costs.” <sup>102</sup> “By the 1760s” wrote Bernard Harris, “many overseers believed that it would be cheaper to relieve the able-bodied poor in their own homes.” Thus “By 1775 a new sympathy to the poor was appearing in writer after writer.” <sup>103</sup> “The idea of confining the aged and the very young in the dens of horror which the pamphleteers revealed many workhouses to be was repugnant to this new sentiment.” <sup>104</sup>

This “new sentiment” found response in Thomas Gilbert’s act of 1782 which, King noted, was “located firmly within a tide of sentiment against the harshness of the poor law embodied in 1722-23.” <sup>105</sup> Like Knatchbull’s act, it was elective rather than mandatory but it opened the way to the restoration of out-relief with the able-bodied being found work where possible and their income subsidised from the poor rate. Parishes were again permitted to combine to set up a workhouse whose only residents were to be the young and the aged. Although these years were a period in which the poor were viewed in a more sympathetic light when, Lees observed, “the weekly dole became fixed in popular imagination as part of the rights of the English” the germs of

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<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.* P.128.

<sup>101</sup> WALTON. *Op.cit.* P.89.

<sup>102</sup> SLACK. *Op.cit. Reformation.* P.118.

<sup>103</sup> MARSHALL, Dorothy. *Op.cit.* P.55.

<sup>104</sup> *Ibid.* P.159.

<sup>105</sup> KING, *Op.cit. Poverty.* P.24.



subsequent change were already in the air. <sup>106</sup> Harris noted that “During the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries a number of different strands of opinion began to converge in favour of a harsher and more restrictive attitude in the provision of poor relief.” <sup>107</sup> Katrina Honeyman similarly commented that –

In the later eighteenth century the English were preoccupied with poverty. The growth in numbers seeking poor relief not only burdened ratepayers but also exposed the administrative limitations of the system.  
<sup>108</sup>

The Old Poor Law was thrown into crisis. The French wars with their attendant expense not only put a strain upon the national economy but also restricted the import of grain from abroad and this, together with bad harvests at home with the consequent increase in the price of the staple food of the poor, falling wages, an expanding population, the processes of industrialisation and urbanisation, increased enclosures in the countryside and a degree of civil unrest in the shadow of the French Revolution combined to produce a change in attitude as the numbers requiring relief grew and those able to fund their requirements decreased. According to King –

From the late 1790s relief expenditure was again a source of concern and the humanitarian ideals of the 1780s were replaced by a situation in which contemporaries came to see the needs of the poor as a threat to their own prosperity. <sup>109</sup>

The price of wheat doubled between 1783-1793 and 1803-1813 whilst wages rose by only 60% and, given this, it is easy to see why the cost of poor relief per head of population rose from an estimated 3s 10d in 1776 to 8s 3d in 1801, 12 8d in 1813 and 13s 3d in 1818. Various initiatives, the Speenhamland System amongst them, were tried locally to deal with the problem and Oxley observes that “The overwhelming impression created by the parish records is one of desperation as parishes lurched from one expedient to another. <sup>110</sup>

These strategies were accompanied by cries that “something must be done” and by debate about the causes of the problem and possible cures. The government’s

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<sup>106</sup> LEES. *Op.cit.* P.81.

<sup>107</sup> HARRIS. *Op.cit.* P.42.

<sup>108</sup> HONEYMAN. *Op.cit.* P.15

<sup>109</sup> KING. *Op.cit. Poverty.* P.26.

<sup>110</sup> OXLEY. *Op.cit.* P.117. For the Speenhamland System, see BRUNDAGE. *Op.cit. English.* P.27 *et seq.*

response was the appointment of a Select Committee which reported in July 1817. Its outcome was the Select Vestries Acts of 1818 and 1819, known as the Sturges Bournes Acts after their sponsor. Both were adoptive rather than mandatory but where adopted their effect was to reassert the power of those who paid the poor rates over those who distributed and received them and to provide for a closer examination of requests for relief including assessment of the personal character of the applicants. These measures, King observed, “had potentially fundamental consequences for the experience of being poor.”<sup>111</sup>

The problem, although eased by this legislation, was by no means solved and during the next decade there was continuing discussion and debate stimulated by, amongst others, the Reverend T. Malthus who’s ‘Essay on Population’ first appeared in 1798 and by the Swing Riots of 1830.<sup>112</sup> Parliament’s response was to set up in 1832 a Royal Commission to enquire into the whole matter of the poor laws. The background to the Commission, its Report, the legislation which followed in the form of the Poor Law Amendment Act of 1834, and the implementation of this Act have all been discussed at length.<sup>113</sup> Although the act was passed in a period of falling poor rates it was nevertheless partly an exercise in the control and reduction of expenditure which was to be achieved by the adoption of three basic principles. Firstly, the old system of relief in the parishes controlled by local people who had local knowledge was to be replaced by a central Poor Law Commission which, based in London and responsible to directly to Parliament rather than to a Minister, would lay down national practice and enforce it. The infinite variety of the pre-1834 arrangements was to be replaced by a single uniform system. The country would be organised into Poor Law Unions to be controlled, under the direction of the Commission and Assistant Commissioners, by

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<sup>111</sup> KING, *Op.cit. Poverty*, P.26.

<sup>112</sup> For a discussion of the Reverend T. Malthus, see LEES, *op. cit.*, P.91 For the Swing Riots, see HARRIS, *Op.cit.* P.31. Malthus argued that the poor law, by providing a safety net only encouraged the poor to have more children and thus added to the total burden of relief. The *Swing Riots* “were a revolt of agricultural labourers who objected to the introduction of new methods of production . . . and the [consequent] increased level of poverty in rural districts.”

<sup>113</sup> By, *inter alia*, BRUNDAGE, *op.cit. Making*, KIDD, *op.cit.*; KING, *op.cit.*, *Poverty*; LEES, *op.cit.* KING, *op.cit.*, *Poverty*, P.44., also draws attention to the debate over what the Act was intended to achieve.

elected Boards of Guardians whose members, it was considered, would not be hampered in their decisions by loyalty to a particular community although the fact that much of the membership of these new Boards was likely to consist of some of the men who had operated the old system was possibly overlooked. Secondly, all out-relief was to be abolished for the able-bodied and the “Workhouse Test” introduced. This test was essentially self-examination for the poor: did they wish to go into the Workhouse with all that entrance would entail or did they not? It was to be one or the other. Thirdly, the principle of “less eligibility” was introduced. Conditions in the Workhouse were to be at a level below that enjoyed by even the poorest person on the outside. This was the ultimate deterrent: only if the poor were in direst need would they consider themselves to be better off on the inside and accept the necessity of relinquishing their independence to “The Union” and “the House.”<sup>114</sup>

The Commission and Secretary Edwin Chadwick set to work. In the country the process of creating the new unions went ahead although not entirely without opposition, particularly in the north. Further acts, largely of an administrative nature, were passed and orders and memoranda flowed from the Commission’s London headquarters.<sup>115</sup> A major concern, as directed by the Act, had been the provision of out-relief, particularly to able-bodied males and this was the subject of the 1844 Outdoor Relief Prohibitory Order of December 1844 and the General Order of July 1847. The latter, one of the last actions of the Poor Law Commission before it became the Poor Law Board, consolidated “the most important of the general regulations they [the Poor Law Commissioners] had issued.”<sup>116</sup>

A further act, dealing with settlement which was always a contentious matter, appeared on the Statute Book in 1846. Its principal provision forbade the removal of

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<sup>114</sup> For a discussion of the New Poor Law, see BRUNDAGE, *op.cit.*, Making, KING, *op.cit.*, Poverty and LEES, *op.cit.*

<sup>115</sup> Such acts included one in 1836 dealing with rating matters and another in 1839 dealing with paid collectors and assistant overseers. See ASCHROTT, *op.cit.*, P.48 *et seq.*

<sup>116</sup> *Ibid.* Originally given a life of only five years, the Commission’s mandate was renewed annually from 1839 until 1842 when it was given another five year term and then, following a series of scandals, was abolished and replaced by the Poor Law Board in 1847.

the poor if they had been in residence in a township of the Union for a period of five years.<sup>117</sup> The result was that a considerable amount of what had previously been out-relief paid by rural parishes to the towns where the paupers were actually living was transferred to the towns themselves and whilst the rural landowners who had been much in favour of the act were content with its results, the reverse was the case with those who had to fund relief in the towns as the burden now fell upon them. Such was the outcry that an amending act was passed in the following year removing the expense of maintaining these paupers from the township of residence to the Union as a whole and thus “Union Settlement” was established in practice if not in theory.<sup>118</sup>

Writing of this period Aschrott noted that –

The year 1860 inaugurated a new period of progress. Previously attempts had been made to cure the defects discovered by the Royal Commission of 1834 by improvements of administrations, by repeal of the worst provisions of the Law of Settlement, and by the establishment of a larger and more convenient poor law area in the place of the parish which was for various reasons too small for the purpose<sup>119</sup>

whilst Brundage drew attention to the “increasingly urban character of poor relief”, to the erosion of rigour in dispensing poor relief and to the increase in out-relief, a clear departure from the principles of 1834.<sup>120</sup> The pace of life in Victorian England was accelerating and the relief of the poor again found its place on the national agenda.<sup>121</sup> Aschrott recorded that “in the beginning of the sixties, public opinion began to occupy itself with the details of poor law administration” and noted that “At the Social Science Congress in Glasgow in 1860 there were not less than four speakers who discussed the existing system in detail.”<sup>122</sup> Parliament responded to this increased interest just as it had in 1832 and set up a committee. Meeting first in 1861, it presented its report

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<sup>117</sup> *Ibid.* P.52. There were certain exceptions and subsidiary provisions. The period was reduced from five to three years in 1861. See also BRUNDAGE. *Op.cit. English.* P.104.

<sup>118</sup> See BRUNDAGE. *English.* P.104 *et. Seq.* A further act of 1865 finally established the principal of “Union chargeability” with all types of expenditure including relief to individual paupers becoming a charge upon the Union as a whole rather than upon the township of residence.

<sup>119</sup> ASCHROTT. *Op.cit.* P.64.

<sup>120</sup> BRUNDAGE. *Op.cit. English.* P.104 *et seq.*

<sup>121</sup> For the background to this period see MAY, Trevor. *An Economic and Social History of Britain 1760-1990.* 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. London, Longman. 1995 and THOMSON, David. *England in the Nineteenth Century.* Harmondsworth. Penguin Books. 1950.

<sup>122</sup> ASCHROTT. *Op.cit.* P.64 *et.seq.*

in May 1864 <sup>123</sup> but it was decided to implement its recommendations separately rather than as a whole as in 1834. Legislation included the provision of pensions for union officers, an indication of the increasing professionalism of the poor law service. An act dealing with homeless poor followed in 1864 and then, in 1865, the Union Chargeability Act was passed which transferred the total cost of maintaining the poor to the Union as a whole rather than to the individual parish or township in which they were settled.

This is an appropriate point at which to end this survey of the legislation as the focus of the thesis is the first decades of the nineteenth century and the change-over between the Old and the New Poor Law. However, it was by no means the end of the story. The course of the committee's deliberations had been influenced by the Lancashire Cotton Famine of the early 1860s which not only threw large numbers of laid-off mill operatives onto the poor law but also had what Brundage refers to as a "ripple effect" as lack of wages amongst the workers inevitably reduced the takings of shops and public houses. <sup>124</sup> The outcome was an increase in out-relief to the able-bodied as the workhouses could not accommodate the large numbers of those temporarily out of work. The general dissatisfaction with the level of out-relief reached its peak in the late 1860s culminating in the Goschen Minute of 1868 and the creation of the Local Government Board which replaced the Poor Law Board and was made responsible for other activities such as public health and Civil Registration in 1871. <sup>125</sup> Thus by the early 1870s administration of the poor law was undergoing considerable change of which the "crusade against out-relief" was to be a major characteristic. <sup>126</sup>

### **3 – Conclusion**

This chapter has considered the historiography of poor relief and the legislation governing its administration. Looking firstly at the literature, it was seen that there

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<sup>123</sup> *Ibid.* P.66.

<sup>124</sup> BRUNDAGE. *Op.cit. English.* P.105.

<sup>125</sup> The Goschen Minutes, issued by the President of the Poor Law Board, G. J. Goschen, set the face of the poor law firmly against out-relief to all except the totally destitute. See BRUNDAGE. *Op.cit. English.* P.108 *et.seq.*

<sup>126</sup> For a discussion of the crusade see HURREN, Elizabeth T. Protesting about Pauperism: Poverty, Politics and Poor Relief in Late-Victorian England, 1870-1900. Woodbridge, Boydell Press. 2007.

was a progression from the early work of writers such as Eden with a contemporary rather than historical interest in the poor and their relief through to the twenty-first century and to historians' interest in the poor themselves and the ways in which they made shift. This progression was by way of wide-ranging surveys such as those of the Webbs, Leonard, the two Marshalls, Michael Rose, Paul Slack and Anne Digby and of interest in the institutions as demonstrated by Crowther and Fowler. The matter of regionality was seen to have been highlighted by Steven King and Snell with the former suggesting that there was not just one poor law for England but two or more based on two defined regions and their sub-regions. The growth of interest in social history during the 1960s which Dorothy Marshall observed was seen as having led to a new interest in the poor as people rather than as numbers and statistics in what Steven King has described as a "left turn."<sup>127</sup> This saw a focus on the poor's economy of makeshifts which attracted the interest of Alan Kidd, Alannah Tomkins and Joanne Innes who recognised the importance of charity and the community as mainstays in the life of the poor. Equally of interest have been the minutiae of their existence such as their clothes, their food, and their bastards. It was also noted that historians who have looked at topics relevant to society as a whole, clothing, medical care or funerals for example, or at the total history of individual settlements have taken account of the poor in varying degrees. The outcome of this activity has been to provide an increasingly focussed picture of the experience of being poor. However, the literature has stressed the need for studies which set out in detail the provision made for the poor at the parish and township level.

As to the legislation it was apparent that from the sixteenth to the nineteenth century Acts of Parliament concerning the poor were often the outcome of common debate and the formalisation of established practice influenced by public sentiment rather than completely new initiatives. The statutes when eventually passed were loosely drawn and sometimes elective rather than mandatory so that even the smallest township was able to relieve its poor entirely according to local need and its prevailing ethos. Work

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<sup>127</sup> Personal Discussion. Oxford Brookes University.

was to be provided for the able-bodied, but who precisely were they, and what were they to do? Relief could be provided in cases of sudden emergency, but how sudden and what constituted an emergency? The law did not say so townships had to decide for themselves – and they did. Hence the wide variety of provision noted by historians. The situation was not improved by the Poor Law Amendment Act despite its intentions in this direction. The act left the details of its administration to the Poor Law Commission, their Assistant Commissioners and to the Boards of Guardians. Whilst the number of the new Unions was only about 4% of the number of townships who had previously managed relief, 600 compared with 15,000, there was still room for variation, either for generosity or parsimoniousness, particularly as the Boards of Guardians controlled the finances and, at least for the period of this study, the township rather than the Union was the basis of settlement. Kidd summarised the situation when he wrote –

What became known after 1834 as the “Old Poor Law” was highly decentralised, based as it was upon the parish as the basic unit of organisation, tempered by the eye of the supervisory eye of the county magistracy and only ultimately responsible to Parliament. In terms of practice, its chief hallmark was its “face to face” character. Overseers of the poor usually knew those they relieved, especially in the small village communities that generally made up the 15000, mostly rural, parishes. <sup>128</sup>

but -

Despite the intention of the reformers, subsequent official policy was the result of compromises between central and local interests which varied *between* regions and, as had been the case before 1834, also varied *within* regions. . . . Among the consequences of resistance . . . [to the New Poor Law] was a system which, whilst centrally organised in principle retained great potential for local autonomy in practice. <sup>129</sup>

It is this fluidity and lack of precision which makes detailed studies essential to a fuller understanding of the experience of being poor. However, before considering relief in the Fylde in detail it is necessary to sketch in the background. This chapter has done this with regard to the historiography and legislation of relief. The focus must now be narrowed onto the townships themselves. This is the function of Chapter Two.

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¹²⁸ KIDD, *Op.cit. State.* P.13.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.* P.30. The italics are Kidd’s.

Chapter Two Lancashire, Kirkham and Lund in Context

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Chapter One reviewed the historiography of pauperdom and outlined the legislation affecting the poor. This chapter locates the county of Lancashire, the parish and town of Kirkham and the townships of Newton-with-Scales and Clifton-with-Salwick in their geographical and historical context. Firstly, it sketches the Lancashire background and discusses the viability of the county as an identifiable region. Secondly, it sets Kirkham within the wider context and justifies the choice of the township and its two neighbouring townships as valid subjects for a study which contributes to the need emphasised in Chapter One for more detailed investigations into the relief of poverty. Together these places provide the foundation for an examination of the operation of the poor laws in the first six decades of the nineteenth century.

Nationally, it has long been recognised that England was divided into two parts namely the highland north and west and the lowland south and east. As early as the fourteenth century Geoffrey Chaucer recognised the divide when he referred to a place as being “fer in the north, I kan not telle where” and nineteenth century novelist Elizabeth Gaskell made the division the focus of her novel “North and South.”¹ These two were not geographers or historians. They were literary writers giving expression to a commonly held feeling later to be expressed by Charles Dellheim, Helen Jewell, Steven King and Jon Stobart.² The latter, with a geographer’s eye, drew attention to the interdependence of the factors which give a region its peculiar characteristics and Steven King followed a similar track in attributing the divide principally to geographical factors. He might also have mentioned that ethnicity also played a part

¹ CHAUCER, Geoffrey. The Canterbury Tales. Numerous editions. GASKELL, Eizabeth. North and South. Numerous editions.

² DELLHEIM, Charles. ‘Imagining England: Victorian Views of the North.’ Northern History. Vol. 22. 1986. P. 216. JEWELL, Helen M. The North-South Divide: the Origins of Northern Consciousness in England. Manchester, Manchester University Press. 1994. KING, Steven Andrew. Poverty and Welfare in England 1700 – 1850: a Regional Perspective. Manchester, Manchester University Press. 2000. STOBART, Jon. The First Industrial Region: North-West England, c1700-60. Manchester, Manchester University Press. 2004.

as the lowland south and east of the country were subject to Roman and continental influences in their early development to a far greater extent than the highland north and west where Anglo-Saxon and Scandinavian influences were the more dominant.³

Within the great divide there were a number of separate regions and discussion is possible about the factors which separate one region from another. The question then moves to a consideration of sub-regions and to the extent to which such a dissection of the country is valuable in historiographical terms. In this area only one point is clear. It is, as King pointed out, that “identifying a region or even a community is by no means an easy task.”⁴ Here J.D.Marshall sounded a note of caution saying that –

whilst the in-depth study of individual places can be powerfully justified [it is] always provided that those places are set within a general framework of information relating to a relevant neighbourhood, sub-region or region.”⁵

2 – Lancashire

In considering whether or not Lancashire might be considered a definable region and, if so, what made it so, the historian is faced with a number of factors including the perception of the inhabitants and those of the adjoining regions, together with the fact that in terms of area it was historically one of the largest counties in England. However, regionality, like history itself, does not always observe rigid boundaries as one area shades gradually into the next. Although Lancashire had three clear natural boundaries namely the River Mersey which separated it from Cheshire in the south, the Pennine range which divided it from Yorkshire in the east and the Irish Sea and Morecambe Bay in the west, it is arguable that the boundary in the north is less well defined but the area north of the County Town of Lancaster looks as much to the Cumberland towns of Kendal and Kirby Lonsdale as to Lancaster itself and the county’s administrative centre at Preston and this might be thought to constitute a recognisable if indistinct boundary of what is otherwise a well-defined region and,

³ See SHAW, Roland Cunliffe. Kirkham in Amounderness: the Story of a Lancashire Community. Preston, R. Seed and Sons. 1949. P.1.

⁴ KING, Steven Andrew and WEAVER, Alan. ‘Lives in Many Hands: the Medical Landscape in Lancashire, 1700–1820.’ Medical History. Vol. 45. 2000. P.2.

⁵MARSHALL, John Duncan. The Tyranny of the Discrete: a Discussion of the Problems of Local History in England. Aldershot, Scolar Press. 1997. P.83.

whilst King argued “that Lancashire was not a self-contained regional unit”⁶ John Walton provided support for the view put forward here when he noted that –

Lancastrians know they live in Lancashire, and that this makes them different from Yorkshire or Derbyshire people; and this sense of identity, although elusive to the scientific measurer, provides a rationale for what follows.⁷

He then characterised the county as being “a recognisable area which was intelligible to contemporaries and important to them” noting that “the county as an administrative unit has deep enough historical roots for it to be an essential focus of traditional loyalty at a comprehensible intermediate level between the locality and the nation.”⁸

Within Lancashire itself King identified six sub-regions. These were the north, the north-west, the north-east, the central, the south-west and the south.⁹ As an overlay to this framework, Michael Anderson defined five types of community namely towns, industrial villages, mixed villages, agricultural villages and miscellaneous villages.¹⁰ Anderson’s grouping was further refined by King who put forward a grouping of rural settlements, typified by Clifton and Newton, traditional market towns of which Kirkham presents an example, immune towns, newly-emerging towns and nineteenth century new towns.¹¹ Whichever of these groupings is considered, there can be few settlements which did not feel the effects of the urbanisation and industrialisation which were major features of Lancashire’s history from about 1760 onwards.

In 1801, the majority of England’s people lived in rural surroundings or in small towns such as Kirkham which were within easy reach of the countryside. Even those employed in the water-powered mills in the Forest of Bowland or the foothills of the Pennines lived in an environment still largely rural. By 1851 this situation had changed as the movement later referred to as the Industrial Revolution reached its

⁶ KING. *Op.cit. Poverty*. P.5.

⁷ WALTON, John Kimmons. Lancashire: a Social History 1558–1939. Manchester, Manchester University Press. 1987. P.2.

⁸ *Ibid.* P.2.

⁹ KING. *Op.cit. Lives*. P.9.

¹⁰ ANDERSON, Michael. Family Structure in Nineteenth Century Lancashire. Cambridge. Cambridge University Press. 1971. P. 38.

¹¹ Personal discussion. Oxford Brookes University.

height and England became a nation of town-dwellers. Lancashire was by no means the only county to experience the combined effects of population expansion, industrialisation and urbanisation but here the effects were probably felt to a greater extent than almost anywhere else in the country with the exception of Yorkshire..

During these years England's population doubled from under nine millions to nearly eighteen millions. In the same period the numbers in Lancashire trebled. These figures conceal local variation. Some places, small rural settlements like Singleton near Kirkham for example, experienced a modest decline. Others such as Accrington saw a rate of growth which deviated only slightly from the national average. At the opposite end of the scale expansion was tremendous and experienced not only in the towns of the north-east of the county where textiles held sway but also in the south where mining, chemical processing and glass manufacture were important. The population of Wigan, for example, which combined textiles with ironwork, grew almost threefold. In the cotton districts Burnley quadrupled its population whilst the number of people living in Preston grew by a factor of five and a half. The population of Lancashire was not only growing, it was concentrating itself in the towns. ¹²

It was not only the population which was concentrating itself in the towns. So were the means of production as the county's principal industry, textiles, underwent the transition from a domestic activity to one accommodated in an ever-increasing number of mills. Six factors in combination contributed to this development. ¹³ These were the damp climate particularly favourable to cotton spinning; the availability of stocks of coal to power the steam engines which ran the machinery in the factories; the improvement in communications by road, canal and rail; the invention of new machinery which increasingly mechanised the production process and the expansion

¹² For population growth see EVANS, Eric J. The Forging of the Modern State: Early Industrial Britain. London, Longman Group. 1983. P.404. *et seq.* For Lancashire changes, see WALTON *Op.cit.* P.218. Population figures for individual townships are from VICTORIA HISTORY OF THE COUNTY PALATINE OF LANCASTER. 7 Vols. Reprinted London, The University of London Institute for Historical Research. 1966. Volume 2. P332 *et seq.* For the industrial background, see WALTON, *op.cit.* and PHILLIPS, Colin Bonham and SMITH, J. H. Lancashire and Cheshire from AD1540. Harlow, Longman Group. 1994. P.169 *et seq.*

¹³ See STOBART. *Op.cit.*, P.2 *et seq.*

of commercial services providing capital and credit facilities, together with the growth of a network of agents and company representatives supplying the essential link between raw material suppliers, manufacturers and purchasers. Finally, there were men of the stamp of the Birley and Hornby families, both originally of Kirkham and later of Blackburn and Manchester, who were prepared to invest their time, entrepreneurial talents, money and energy in the industry. ¹⁴

Thus, as Edwin Butterworth wrote, “Lancashire is the first manufacturing county in England, if not the world” and “Its pre-eminence in trade arises from the vast natural resources, and the enterprise of its inhabitants.” ¹⁵ He went on to record that -

In 1787 the County is said to have contained 42 cotton manufactories; in 1825, 600; 1835, 947; 1839, 1,213 . . . The total number of manufactories was 1,278, principally in Blackburn and Salford Hundred . . . In 31 parishes there are cotton and other mills; in 16 cotton weaving prevails, and in 21 there are no other manufactures. ¹⁶

Alan Crosby provides confirmation of this growth noting that that “imports of raw cotton, most of it destined for Lancashire, rose from four million pounds weight per annum in the early 1770s to 452 million in the late 1840s” ¹⁷ and although Walton commented that whilst “convincing figures are impossible to obtain” there is no doubt that the factoryisation of the textile industry was proceeding apace and that large numbers of the inhabitants of the major settlements were dependent on factory-based activity for their livelihood. ¹⁸

Butterworth further noted the numbers of children employed in the various branches of the textile industry, stating that, of the total of 166,493 hands employed, 63,364, or well over 30%, were “young persons from 13 to 18.” ¹⁹ This is of interest not only because it indicates the reliance of the industry on young people but also shows the importance of their earnings to the family economy. Again Walton reinforces the point

¹⁴ WALTON. *Op.cit.* P.129 and SHAW, Roland Cunliffe. Kirkham in Amounderness – the Story of a Lancashire Community. Preston, R. Seed and Sons. 1949. P.696 *et seq.*

¹⁵ BUTTERWORTH, Edwin. A Statistical Sketch of the County Palatine of Lancaster. London, Longman & Co. 1841. See also See also Walton. *Op.cit.*. P.106.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ CROSBY, Alan. A History of Lancashire. Chichester, Phillimore and Co. Ltd. 1998. P. 74.

¹⁸ WALTON. *Op.cit.* P.106.

¹⁹ BUTTERWORTH. *Op.cit.* P.XXVII

observing that in 1851 some 40% of teenage girls and 29% of teenage boys worked in the cotton industry. ²⁰

It might, however, be argued that the increasing importance of the mills as a source of employment reduced the work opportunities for younger children, a factor further influenced by legislation controlling the working conditions of children which was progressively enacted in the early years of the century. In human terms, the concentration of the means of earning a living in a smaller number of enterprises greatly increased the vulnerability of the workers and their families to a reduction or complete cessation of work and wages in the event of strikes, lockouts, shortages of raw materials, closure or even dismissal for any of a number of trivial reasons and this had implications for the level of demands upon the mechanism of poor relief. The factory owners could not, of course, entirely escape the consequences of some of these events as their factory overheads and domestic expenses continued to run on even though their income was reduced or temporarily non-existent. However, they did have some resources, some wool on their backs, on which to live in times of hardship. Their employees were not as fortunate.

Lancashire, then, was growing and thriving as the long eighteenth century approached its end. Villages were developing into small towns and small towns were expanding. Even small townships like Clifton and Freckleton had their canal wharf, railway goods yard or factory. The barges and trains which passed through town and country together hauled the raw materials and supplies necessary to the factories and, in the opposite direction, the finished products on their way to markets at home and abroad. The bulk of these products, as has been noted, were textiles. Not for nothing was Manchester referred to as "Cottonopolis" and the county said to be ruled by King Cotton.

This entrepreneurial activity which affected every stratum of Lancashire society and almost every corner of the county has received considerable attention from

²⁰ WALTON. *Op.cit.* P.111.

historians. Three of the major works, those by Crosby, Stobart and Walton, have already been noticed. Of the histories, Crosby is the most recent and provides a broad overview. Walton is longer and more detailed whilst Stobart takes the geographer's view and discusses the regional context. Passing over the several of books of old photographs and town trails, although these do have their place, there are other works which need to be noticed. ²¹ An early work is Henry Fishwick's study of the county. ²² More substantial is the Victoria County History which reveals its age in its concentration on manorial and ecclesiastical history although education and charities both receive attention. ²³ Other succinct overviews of the county's story are provided by J.D.Marshall ²⁴ and J.J.Bagley ²⁵ whilst Chris Aspin views the county from an industrial viewpoint. ²⁶ However, although Walton does give some attention to the topic, the student of the relief of poverty will find little immediately of interest in these titles.

Individual communities have their own histories such as that by David Hunt on Preston. ²⁷ They usually contain little more than passing references to poverty and the poor although Peter Shakeshaft's study of Freckleton with its separate chapter on the poor is an exception. ²⁸ The county's historians, like its entrepreneurs, have been greatly occupied but in historiographical terms the poor have been neglected. Thus is the need for further detailed local studies, referred to at the start of this chapter, re-affirmed.

²¹ For example, ROTHWELL, Catherine. Around Kirkham in old photographs. Stroud, Alan Publishing Ltd. 1994. RAMSBOTTOM, Martin. Kirkham – a Town Trail. Preston, Lancashire County Books. 1992

²² FISHWICK, Henry. A History of Lancashire. London, Elliot Stock. 1894.

²³ THE VICTORIA COUNTY HISTORY OF THE COUNTY PALATINE OF LANCASTER. 7 Vols. London, University of London Institute for Historical Research. Reprinted 1966.

²⁴ MARSHALL, John Duncan. Lancashire. Newton Abbot. David and Charles. 1974.

²⁵ BAGLEY, James Joseph. Lancashire. London, Batsford, 1974 and A History of Lancashire. London, Phillimore and Co. Ltd. 1976.

²⁶ ASPIN, Chris. The First Industrial Society: Lancashire 1750 – 1850. Helmshore, Helmshore Local History Society. 1969. Rev. ed. Preston, Carnegie Press. 1995.

²⁷ HUNT, David. A History of Preston. Preston, Carnegie Publishing. 1992.

²⁸ SHAKESHAFT, Peter. The History of Freckleton. Lancaster, Carnegie Publishing Ltd. 2001

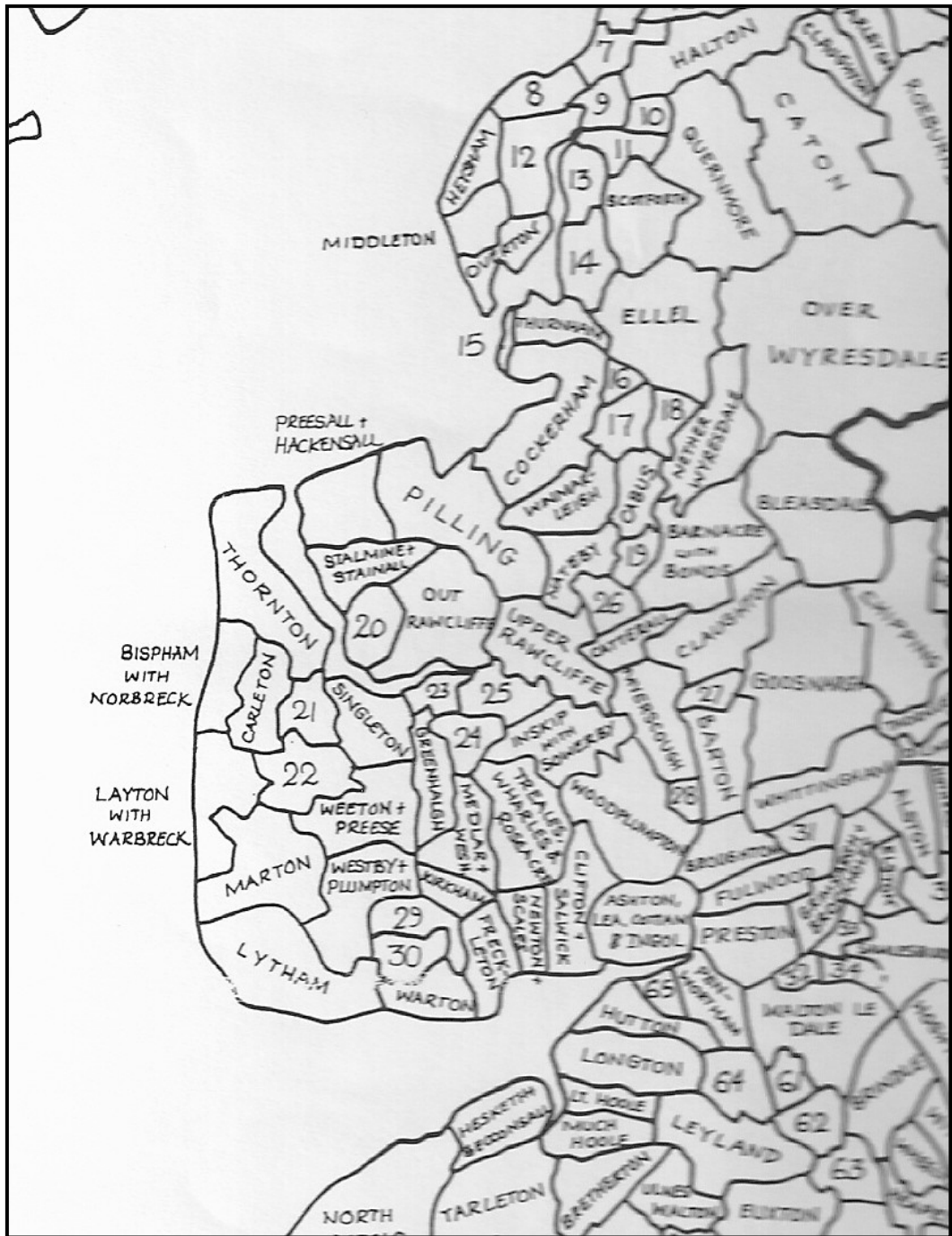
Narrowing the focus, within King's north-west sub-region lies the area known for centuries as the Fylde.²⁹ Its geographical boundaries are the River Ribble in the south, the Irish Sea and Morecambe Bay in the north and west and, to the east, the Savick Brook, the Preston to Lancaster Canal and the River Wyre. Within the Fylde there were four ancient parishes - Bispham, Kirkham itself, Lytham and Poulton. Of the four only Lytham was a single township co-extensive with the parish. The others consisted of a number of small townships all owing their ecclesiastical allegiance to the parish church in the major town. Kirkham parish, shown in Map 2.1, was the largest and extended over fifteen townships including the town of Kirkham itself and the two nearby townships of Clifton-with-Salwick and Newton-with-Scales. The two latter together constituted the Chapelry of Lund and they provide the material for the study which is to follow.

3 - Kirkham

Looking at Kirkham township, whatever Lancashire felt in the first half of the nineteenth century was also experienced by Kirkham although not always with the same severity.³⁰ Cruciform in configuration, the town lies in King's category of "traditional market town" whilst Anderson would have described it as a mixed village. The site of a Roman settlement, an early ecclesiastical foundation, and a Domesday town with a mediæval market and charter, it was arguably the most important settlement in the Fylde and certainly the largest in population terms and it remained so until being eclipsed by the rise of the seaside towns of Blackpool, Fleetwood and Lytham. Its importance was further enhanced in 1837 when, despite the rival claims of Poulton-le-Fylde which accommodated the only other parish poor house in the area, the town became the centre of the new Fylde Poor Law Union. The citizens also considered their home as being of importance, referring to it as a town in official documents such as the records of the overseers of the poor.

²⁹ See PORTER, John. History of the Fylde of Lancashire. Fleetwood, W.Porter & Sons. 1876. P2.

³⁰ From this point, unless specifically otherwise stated, "Kirkham" will refer to the township rather than the parish.



Map 2.1
West Lancashire showing Kirkham Parish
Kirkham Town and the Townships of Clifton and Newton

Boundary of Kirkham Parish

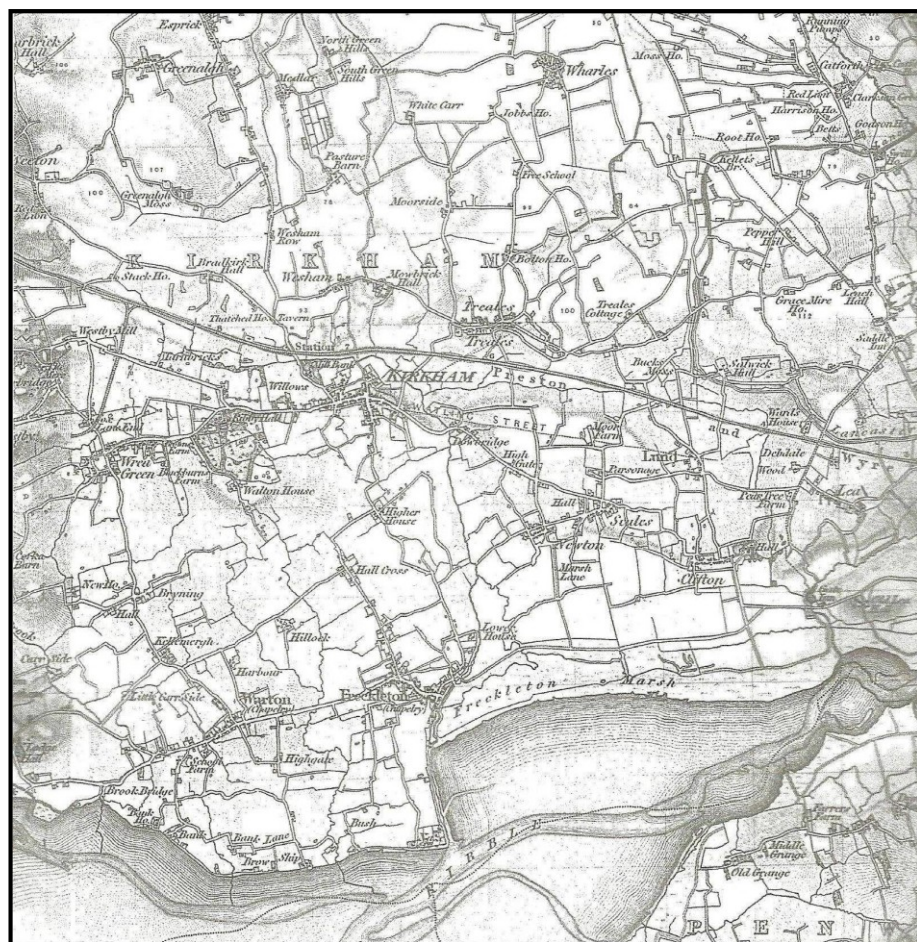
Kirkham

Newton Clifton

With acknowledgements to Dr. Alan Crosby
and the Friends of Lancashire Archives

What, then, was the state of Kirkham as the long eighteenth century drew to a close? Briefly, much as it had been for many years. The Parish occupied an area of some 44,000 acres. The town itself, at 900 acres, was about 2% of the whole. The principal “owners of the soil” as the contemporary expression had it, were Christ Church, Oxford, and Lord Derby together with the mercantile families of Birley, Hornby and Langton. ³¹

The first Ordnance Survey map of the area, reproduced as Map 2.2, clearly shows the cruciform shape of the town which was little more than a mile and a half from east to west and three quarters of a mile from north to south.



Map 2.2
The South Fylde showing the location of Kirkham
Newton-with-Scales and Clifton-with Salwick in 1843
From the 1843 Ordnance Survey Map with Thanks

³¹ For the history of the mercantile families of Kirkham, see SHAW, *op.cit.* and SINGLETON, Francis Joseph. *Kirkham: a Short History*. Kirkham and District Local History Society. 1980.

In 1780 the population was 1,425 people who lived in 322 houses, an occupational density of 4.25. ³² By 1801 the population was 1,561, an increase 9%. Ten years later the number of people in the town had grown to 2,214, an increase of 41%. There were 424 houses affording accommodation to 452 families, an occupational density of 5.2. Of the 452 heads of households, the majority, 86.5%, were engaged in “trade, manufacture or handicrafts.” A further 7%, were engaged in agricultural occupations and the remaining followed sundry other employment. Those engaged in “trade, manufacture or handicrafts” included not only the sailcloth factory owners, the Birleys, Hornbys and Langtons, but also their numerous employees whilst other townspeople found work as domestic handloom weavers of cotton, an activity which had come into the town in the late 1700s. ³³

Kirkham continued to grow. By 1851 the population was 2,799, an increase of almost 80% over 1801 and there were by then 481 occupied houses in the town. Occupancy rates for these years were 5.22 and 5.81. Of the 1851 residents, 34% were under the age of fifteen. Within this figure, the age cohorts of birth to 4, 5 to 9 and 10 to 14 were almost evenly represented at 31%, 34% and 35%. The overall sex split was 48% boys and 52% girls. At the other end of the age scale, 5% of the total population were aged 65 or over. Of these 37% were men of whom 5 were in the Workhouse, a fate which the 87 older women, 63%, had managed to avoid. Whilst there was population expansion, the growth in the population between 1801 and 1851, at some 80%, was less than that of the country as a whole and considerably less than that of Lancashire and the difference may be explained by out-migration to Blackpool, Fleetwood, Lytham and Preston and the east Lancashire cotton towns. In-migration to work in the sailcloth factories there certainly was but equally certainly, it failed to keep pace with movement in the opposite direction.

³² Quoted in SINGLETON. *Op.cit.* P.67. Other data in the section derive from the 1851 Census as transcribed and printed by the Lancashire Family History and Heraldry Society. Volume 13.

³³ Singleton notes that these handloom weavers drew their raw material from agents of Messrs. Swainson, Birley of Preston and Messrs. Birley and Hornby of Blackburn. *Ibid.* P.64.

Some of the townspeople lived in new properties erected either at the western end of the town largely for the workers at Birley's mill, many of them recently arrived from Ireland, or at the southern end of Freckleton Street near the premises of the other major sailcloth-manufacturing operation in the town, that of Messrs. J., T. & W. Hornby.³⁴ The growth of the housing stock in this period is reflected in an 1811 Directory where, of the sixty men listed who were engaged in "trade, manufacture or handicrafts", 25% were working as builders, nailmakers, glaziers or plasterers.³⁵ Of the other forty-five, they were either shopkeepers such as J. Billington who is described as a "grocer, linen and woollen draper", craftsmen such as clockmaker William Costen, or providers of services for the farming community such as miller Thomas Parkinson and farrier George Venables.

At the publication of the 1851 Report to the General Board of Health there were 547 houses in the town.³⁶ Building styles varied. The imposing houses recently erected by the mercantile families stood alongside the burgage cottages, the smaller dwellings of handloom weavers and mill-workers, squalid lodging houses and numerous inns and beerhouses. Near the parish church the vicarage housed only seven people including Vicar George Lodowick Parsons, his wife, his infant son and their four servants. Edmund Birley lived in style at Hillside on the south side of Preston Street with his wife Caroline, two daughters, his brother-in-law, a cook, a nurse, a housemaid and a footman. By contrast, no more than fifty yards from Hillside, cowkeeper William Eccleston occupied a house a quarter of the size of Hillside along with his wife and eight children and nearby in a similar property Martin Devaney dwelt with his wife and ten lodgers nine of whom, like Devaney himself, came from Ireland.

³⁴ For the part of the Irish in Kirkham's history, see BARKER, John Andrew. A Fondness for Snuff and Porter: Investigating the Social and Economic Impact of the Irish upon Kirkham in the Fylde 1851 – 1871. B.A. Dissertation. University of Central Lancashire. 2000.

³⁵ HOLDEN'S ANNUAL LONDON AND COUNTY DIRECTORY . . . FOR THE YEAR 1811. 3 Vols. London, W. Holden. 1811.

³⁶ GREAT BRITAIN. GENERAL BOARD OF HEALTH. Report to the General Board of Health on a Preliminary Enquiry into the Sewerage, Drainage, and Supply of Water, and the Sanitary Condition of the Inhabitants of the Township of Kirkham. London, H.M.S.O., 1851. P.7. Subsequently referred to as the Board of Health Report.

Lodging houses such as Devaney's attracted the particular attention of the Board of Health's inspector when he visited the town in 1850. He observed that he had "scarcely visited a town in which the lodging houses are worse than in Kirkham . . . the condition of the back premises as to filth was indescribable."³⁷ Some of the private dwellings were little better and the inspector's report contained frequent references to the inadequacy of the arrangements for the disposal of sewage most of which found its way onto the streets and down Church Street towards the church gates. This situation attracted the notice of the Board's inspector who recorded that "The liquid runs over the surface and being so near the houses is complained of."³⁸ However, there were newer and better houses including those which had been erected by the Birleys and Hornbys. The Birleys "have also improved the surface channels, built new privies at a proper distance from the houses, and have formed an underground drain"³⁹ but for all the efforts of the Birleys and Hornbys, Kirkham does not appear to have been an attractive place in which to live and it was undoubtedly the lack of adequate sanitation and a clean water supply which produced a death rate in excess of the surrounding rural area and a life expectancy of under twenty-eight years compared with that of nearly thirty-four years in the country districts and epidemics of typhus, measles, influenza and diarrhoea being common.⁴⁰ This high death rate was also a contributory factor to the town's limited population growth which, as noted above, was not inconsiderable but less than that of England as a whole and of Lancashire in particular.

The ways in which the inhabitants of the town earned their livings have already been hinted at but analysis of later directories, of the like of that published by Mannex and of the 1851 census enumerators' schedules gives a more detailed picture.⁴¹ The

³⁷ Ibid. P.25.

³⁸ Ibid. P.15.

³⁹ Ibid. P.25.

⁴⁰ Ibid. P.11-12.

⁴¹ MANNEX & COMPANY. History, Topography and Directory of Westmorland and the Hundreds of Lonsdale and Amounderness in Lancashire. Beverley, Mannex & Co. P.571 *et seq.*

distribution of trades and services is show in Table 2.1, the occupations of the heads of households in Table 2.2 and the social composition of the town in Table 2.3. ⁴²

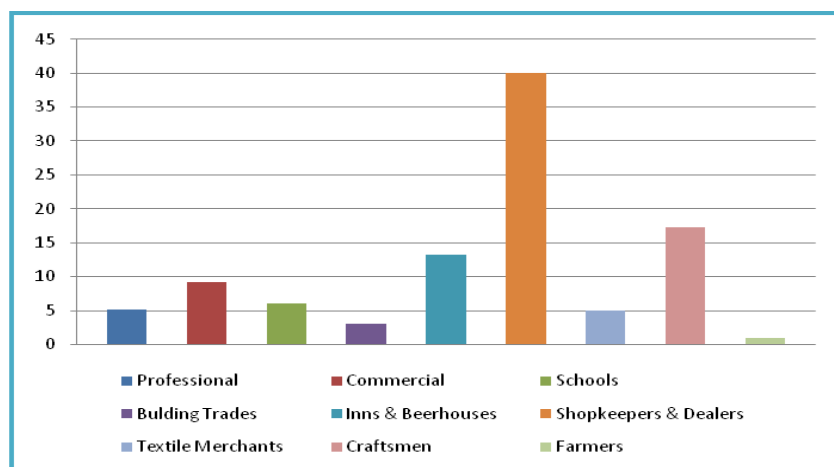


Figure 2.1
Kirkham – Trades and Services 1851 - %
[Mannex Directory 1851]

The principal activities apart from textiles appear to have been the provision of educational facilities and the supply of alcoholic beverages as six schools and thirteen public houses and beer houses are listed. The directory reveals that the town was providing goods and services of the variety to be expected in a market town and commercial centre. These included a hairdresser, milliners, chemists, drapers, a carter, a stationer and a tailor. The importance of the town is further emphasised by the presence of a court house and, of course, the workhouse. Examination of the occupations of the 522 heads of households whose occupations were stated reinforces the importance of textiles in the town. Five such enterprises are listed in the 1851 directory, the chief of which was the sailcloth manufacturing business of John Birley and Sons which employed five hundred people.

Another firm, Messrs. Richards and Whalley, the sole cotton manufacturer to be listed, employed a hundred hands. Agriculture was the next most important group followed by a variety of shopkeepers and, finally, a group consisting mostly of the unskilled.

⁴² The groupings in Figures 3.1 and 3.2 have been selected locally to demonstrate the wide spread of the town’s activities. The groupings in Figure 3.1 are those of the Registrar General’s Classification as used by W. A. Armstrong in his work on York.

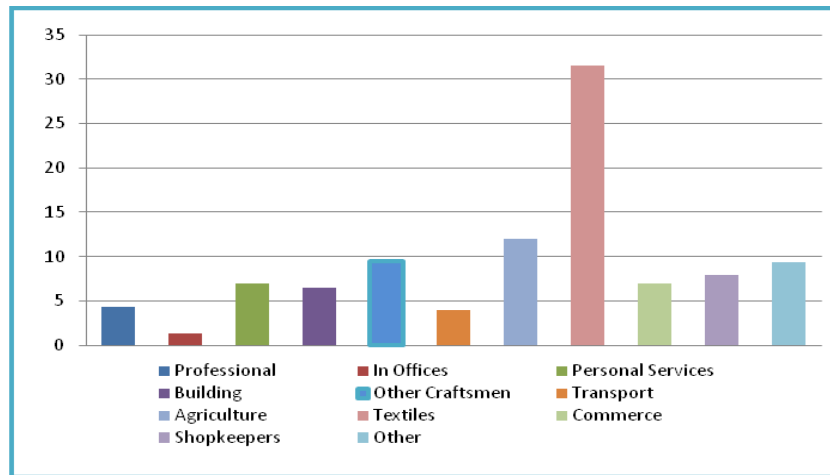


Figure 2.2
Kirkham – Occupations of Heads of Households – 1851 - %
[1851 Census]

As might be expected, the social structure of the town reflects the business and occupational structure and an analysis is given in Table 2.3. Most of the heads of households belonged to the lower middle class of skilled operatives.

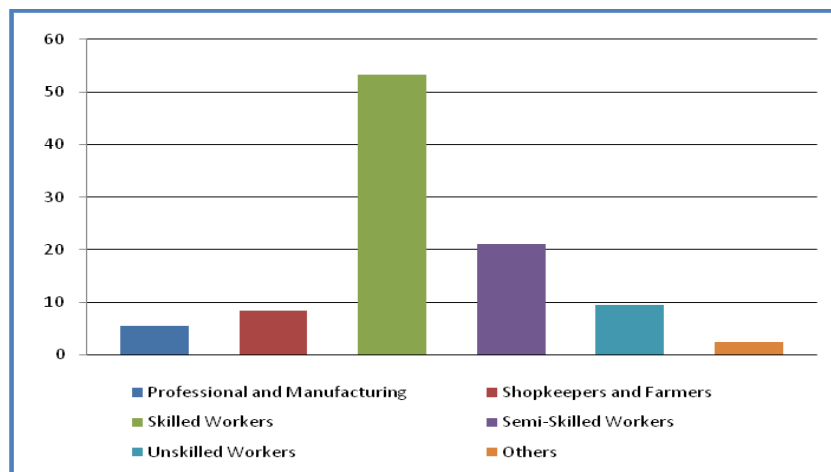


Figure 2.3
Kirkham – Social Classification of Head of Households – 1851 - %
[1851 Census]

This group made up 53% of the total with unskilled labourers, domestic servants and paupers accounting for a further 21%. Professional men, those in public offices such as the Governor and Governess of the Workhouse and those with capital such as annuitants, landed proprietors and innkeepers, namely the upper and upper middle classes, accounted for 14% whilst the balance of 12% was accounted for by unskilled labour and other descriptions including that of “pauper.”

The upper class included members of the clergy of the several congregations in the town including the Established Church of England, the Roman Catholic community, which had been reinforced since the turn of the century by numbers of Irish immigrants, the Methodists and the Congregationalists. Also here were teachers at the Free Grammar School, the Girls' Charity School, the National School affiliated to the Church of England and the Roman Catholic School which, despite its religious affiliation, accepted pupils of all denominations. It was the upper and upper middle classes who provided the town's ruling élite and the Birley family were particularly prominent even if only because they were so numerous.

To summarise, in the first half of the nineteenth century Kirkham was a growing market town with an expanding textile industry. It was the focus of the villages of the surrounding countryside and the provider of a range of goods and services. It had a well-defined system of local government through its Borough Council, its Manorial Court and its Parish Vestry.⁴³ Its mills were busy and expanding. Its schools provided education for the children, its churches catered for the spiritual welfare of its inhabitants and its friendly societies and public houses provided relaxation and recreation. Economically it was probably thriving and the number of friendly societies, which had been two in 1803 had doubled to four by 1851 suggests that this was the case. Each of them had medical officers attached to them and "the members constitute a considerable proportion of the adult male working population."⁴⁴ This was the positive aspect of the town. The other side of the coin was the lack of sewage disposal, the heaps of raw human waste polluting the streets, the public nuisances such as the lodging houses, the lack of an adequate water supply and the combined effect of all of them on the general state of health of the community.

⁴³ See SINGLETON. *Op.cit.* P.12 *et seq.*

⁴⁴ GREAT BRITAIN An Abstract of the Returns made by the Overseer of the Poor. 1804. There were 255 members. BOARD OF HEALTH REPORT. *Op.cit.* P.11. The number of members is not stated but an estimate based on the number of males over the ages of 20 would indicate a figure of about 325.

Despite the poor sanitary conditions, the apparently favourable state of the town and of its economy might be expected to have had an effect upon the administration of relief and the amount collected to poor rate appears to have progressively decreased during the period. The amount collected for the two years 1812/13 and 1813/14 averaged at £1,084; for 1826/27 and 1827/28, £959; and for 1832/33 and 1833/34, £627. ⁴⁵ Five calls on the payers of the poor rate were made in 1812/13 and four in 1813/1814, suggesting a need to keep the funds topped up. The same number of calls was made in 1826 to 1829 but in 1832/33 and 1833/34 it was found necessary to make only two calls in each year. The growth in the number of friendly societies, noted above, with many heads of households apparently having at least some disposable income and the increase in the number of manufactures and merchants as revealed in the directories of the town both suggest a fair level of employment which would be reflected in shorter queues at the Overseer's desk. All this was against the background of a rising population. However, it is of interest to note that in giving evidence to the Board of Health Inspector one of the town's medical practitioners, Dr. Thomas Shaw, noted that "The diminution of disease and mortality would, of course, decrease the amount of the poor rates. The poor-rates in Kirkham have been very high compared to other places." ⁴⁶ In other words, Kirkham appears to have been spending a high proportion of its poor-rate on the sick and if the town were a healthier place in which to live, the poor-rates would be lower.

Historiographically, Kirkham has been well-treated and the two principal works, those by Shaw and Singleton, have already been mentioned. Shaw, who had the benefit of access to the manorial archives from Christ Church and its successor as Lord of the Manor, Mr. E. G. Sergeant, provides a detailed exposition of the town's history from prehistoric times to the closing years of the nineteenth century. Its strengths are manorial and ecclesiastical, educational and genealogical. Topics of interest to the social historian including railways, industry and the relief of poverty are not so thoroughly treated although all receive mention and there are sections on charities

⁴⁵ Kirkham. Overseers' Rate Books. L.R.O. PR817 and PR 818. These sums include money required for purposes other than the relief of the poor.

⁴⁶ BOARD OF HEALTH REPORT. *Op.cit.* P.11.

and poor relief. There are copious transcripts of original documents, mostly from Christ Church, and genealogical tables of the principal families. All these combine to make it a valuable work of reference. Singleton's history gives equal attention to the varying aspects of its subject and its marked attention to the Birley family is accounted for by the fact that, as has already been observed, they were prolific and prominent in the civic life of the town. Two other titles from the late nineteenth century require mention. There is Henry Fishwick's "History of Kirkham" the contents of which reflect the antiquarian style and interests of the period.⁴⁷ The church, its vicars, curates and monuments are covered. So are the charities and the Free Grammar School. The Thirty Men of Kirkham also feature along with extracts from their records and these with the accompanying comments by the author give an insight into the work of the Vestry although not to any activity concerning the poor. The second is John Porter's "History of the Fylde of Lancashire" which is effectively in three sections.⁴⁸ The first presents an overview of the Fylde from pre-history to the middle nineteenth century. The second considers topics such as "costumes, country, rivers and sea" whilst the third devotes separate chapters to the individual towns and villages including Kirkham, Newton and Clifton. The book concludes with a brief chapter on "Pauperism and the Fylde Union." Porter had the advantage of the fact that much of which he was writing, particularly the growth of the coastal resorts and the development of the rail network, had occurred if not in his own lifetime, at least in the lifetime of the preceding generation and he appreciates the importance of changes in local government institutions and transport. Finally, there is David Foster's "Excursions into Fylde History." which presents a succinct overview of the historical geography of the Fylde and of Kirkham in particular.⁴⁹ These titles together present a corpus of information on the history of the town. They do not as a group entirely neglect poverty and the way in which the town dealt with it but they provide no more than a foundation upon which the theme might be developed.

⁴⁷ FISHWICK, Henry. History of the Parish of Kirkham in the County Palatine of Lancaster. Manchester, Chetham Society. 1874.

⁴⁸ PORTER. *Op.cit.*

⁴⁹ FOSTER, David. Excursions into Fylde History. Nelson, Hendon Publishing Co. Ltd. 1975.

4 - Lund: Newton-with-Scales & Clifton-with-Salwick

Whilst the town of Kirkham provides the major focus of this work, the two townships of the Chapelry of Lund, namely Newton-with-Scales and Clifton-with-Salwick, are presented as comparative foils to show the poor law in operation in an area whose character was noticeably different from that of its larger neighbour. Lund, as Maps 2.1 and 2.2 show, lies directly to the east of the town of Kirkham and the two hamlets together extend to some 5,300 acres, almost six times the size of Kirkham.⁵⁰ As shown on the Map 2.2 the hamlet of Newton itself is situated a mile and a half to the south-east of Kirkham and Clifton village just over a mile to the east of Newton. Both are street villages but land ownership could hardly have been more different. The manor of Clifton was owned, as it had been since the twelfth century, by the Clifton family.⁵¹ Newton on the other hand had no single landowner and included the Reverend Richard Moore and the Bryning, Hornby, Loxham, Swainson and Westby families amongst the principal owners of the soil. Clifton's population in 1801 was 552, Newton's 269. Contrary to the national pattern of steady growth, both hamlets experienced fluctuating numbers. At Clifton, a peak of 608 in 1821 was followed by a decline to 471 in 1851. Newton's experience was similar although the later decline was not as marked with a peak figure of 381 in 1831 falling to 299 in 1851. These variations were probably due to out-migration. Taking the population of the chapelry as a whole, 53% were male and 47% female. 235 of the inhabitants were children under the age of twelve years; 60%, were boys and 40%, girls. These included ten boys and two girls who were boarders at the Blue School.⁵² Such concentrations of population as there were lay in the village of Clifton itself and, at Newton, in a collection of a few houses situated about a quarter of a mile to the south of the main road. According to the census there were 138 houses giving an average occupancy rate of 5.4, a figure similar to that of Kirkham.⁵³ The occupations of the inhabitants were largely agricultural as appears in Figure 2.4.

⁵⁰ Clifton covered 3,776 acres. Newton covered 1,525 acres.

⁵¹ For the place of the Clifton family in the Fylde, see KENNEDY, John. The Clifton Chronicle. Preston, Carnegie Press. 1990. At this period the family seat was at Lytham.

⁵² Not 'Bluecoat.' See Shaw, *op.cit.*, P.203.

⁵³ 1851 Census as transcribed by the L.F.H.H.S. Volume 13.

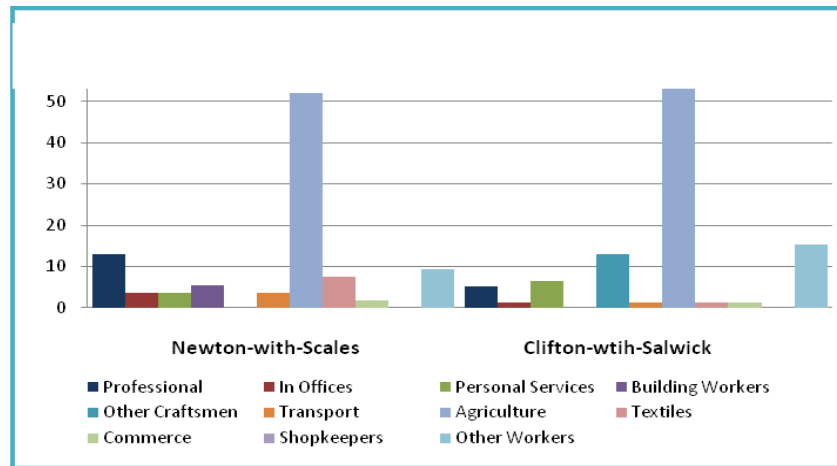


Figure 2.4
Newton and Clifton – Occupations of Heads of Households - 1851 - %
[1851 Census]

Of the 133 heads of households listed in the 1851 census 71 were either farmers or agricultural labourers. Another ten described themselves as labourers and amongst the rest there were nine, three blacksmiths and a blacksmith’s labourer, three gamekeepers, two sawyers and a wheelwright, all of whom worked on the fringe of agriculture. There was a total of thirty-four farms throughout the parish ranging in size from Joseph Shepherd’s eleven acre holding which he farmed with the help of a daughter “employed at home” and one labourer to Archibald Scott’s 370 acre holding on which he employed fifteen labourers. Scott’s household was substantial. In addition to his wife Mary and his mother Jane, he had three daughters and two sons who were cared for by a governess, two house servants and four live-in farm labourers.

The upper and professional classes were poorly represented. The Reverend Richard Moore, his wife, daughter, a cook and a housemaid lived in the spacious vicarage. Preston Alderman and banker Richard Pedder resided at Clifton Hall with his wife Amelia, two daughters, a governess, footman, groom, two housemaids and a kitchen maid and civil engineer Joseph Roscoe Allen occupied the substantial Salwick Hall at the northern end of the township. Also in the group were a schoolmaster and a school mistress at the Blue School, six annuitants, proprietors of houses and a couple of innkeepers, one at the Clifton Arms in Salwick, the other at The Highgate which was situated on the road to Kirkham. Several of the remaining heads of households were probably employed in the larger houses. They included a washerwoman, a

charwoman, a woman who “does housework” together with a housekeeper, coachman, gardener, house servant and a laundress. Industry was practically non-existent although bricks and tiles were made in the area, an activity which employed three people. There were also four handloom weavers, one described as a pauper, and the rest of the heads of households followed occupations as diverse as shoemaker, paver, carpenter, grocer, tea dealer, railway labourer and tailor.

Lund’s historiography is small. There is Ian Nichol’s history of the Blue School.⁵⁴ There are brief sections in Porter and Fishwick and references in Shaw.⁵⁵ Former teacher at the Blue School, James Plummer, has written on Clifton, Salwick and Newton⁵⁶ Finally, Ian McDermott has published a population study based on census material and trade directories.⁵⁷ Plummer’s work covers the area from the Roman period through to the post second world war period. He concentrates on the buildings and farms and the poor get no mention. They similarly escape attention in McDermott’s work. However, they do find place in Nichol’s work on the school which was founded as a charitable institution specifically for to provide an education for the poor children of the village.

This, then, was Lund in the early nineteenth century. Its inhabitants were pursuing a way of life not dissimilar to that of earlier generations and which not even the advent of the Preston to Lancaster Canal, opened in 1796, or the building of the Preston to Wyre Railway from 1835 did much to disturb. As at Kirkham there were obvious extremes in standards of living. The substantial households of the Vicar, banker Richard Pedder and farmer Archibald Scott have already been noted. At the other end of the scale the households of 77 year old William Richardson, described as a pauper shoemaker, of 64 year old Ellen Entwistle, who lived alone and is described as a

⁵⁴ NICHOL, Ian Steven. A Short History of Newton Charity School. Newton, The Author. 1977.

⁵⁵ PORTER. *Op.cit.* FISHWICK *Op.cit.* SHAW. *Op.cit.*

⁵⁶ PLUMMER, James Christopher. Clifton – Some Aspects of its History. Newton, The Author. N.D. Newton-with-Scales Past and Present with References to Clifton and Salwick. Newton, The Author. 1992. Salwick - Some Aspects of its History. Newton, The Author. 1992.

⁵⁷ McDERMOTT, Ian Howard. Who Lived Where and When in Newton-with-Scales 1838-1891. Clifton, The Author. 1993.

pauper weaver and of Robert Backhouse, 68 years, also a pauper weaver, indicate the existence of a group of people who were at the other end of the social scale. It is the object of the following chapters to consider this group of inhabitants, its nature and the nature of the assistance which was given to them with a view to making a comparison with its neighbour, the more complex town of Kirkham.

5 - Conclusion

This chapter has set Lancashire, Kirkham and Lund in their geographical and historical context and has surveyed their historiography. The existence of Lancashire as a separate region was discussed as was a typology of settlements. The growth in population and the increasing industrialisation and urbanisation of the county were noticed but particular attention was given to providing a picture of Kirkham in the first half of the nineteenth century. It was shown to be an important settlement within the locality and an active, growing and thriving community with a firm economic and industrial base providing commercial services for the surrounding villages. Its population growth was noted although this was seen to have been affected by the growth of nearby seaside towns and Preston. Sanitary conditions, the supply of fresh water and the disposal of sewage posed a problem for the town's authorities and had an effect upon the health of the inhabitants. The coming of the cotton industry to the town was also noticed and, with a third of households being directly reliant on textiles and many others, particularly shopkeepers and publicans, being at least partly so dependent, its people were seen to be susceptible to any disruptions in that industry. This, in turn, would have had an effect on the level of demand on the Poor Law. By contrast Newton and Clifton were largely agricultural although Newton had some hand-loom weaving and brick making. Their inhabitants pursued a way of life which had altered little over the centuries and which even the coming of the Preston to Lancaster Canal and the Preston to Wyre Railway did little to change.

The three townships, whilst different topographically and economically, were similar in the lack of historiographical attention to their poor. Churches, schools, old families, even transport and industry have received attention but the poor, despite their numbers, have been largely forgotten. This work seeks to fill the gap by its

examination of the relief of the poor in Kirkham, Newton and Clifton. Comparisons of the nature of relief will be drawn between the three individual settlements looking not only at differences and similarities between the urban and the rural but also between the two rural settlements. In 1837 all became part of the Fylde Poor Law Union and the extent to which their paupers felt the effects of the regime which the New Poor Law introduced will also be assessed. The final outcome will be a contribution to the calls for further local studies of the poor, their treatment and the experience of men such as Christopher Waddington who introduced the work. It will also be a contribution to the historiography of the town of Kirkham which for centuries was the dominant settlement in the Fylde.

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**Chapter Three**  
**Kirkham and Lund - the State of their Poor in the**  
**Early Nineteenth Century**  
**1803 to 1820 – 1 - Overview**

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1 - Preliminary

Having set the historiographical, legislative and topographical background, attention now turns to the poor and their relief. Reduced to its elements this was a simple matter. The overseers collected money from the ratepayers with one hand and paid it out to the poor with the other but this apparent simplicity conceals variation not only in practice from one area to the next and over time but also in the treatment of individual paupers. Communities differed in their geography and history, their religious, social and commercial composition. The poor themselves varied in their ages, marital condition, employment status, family size, degree of desperation and their attitude to “the parish” and whilst some were born into pauper families, others sank into pauperdom through sloth and yet more had it forced upon them by events over which they had no control. All these factors had a bearing on the distribution of the poor’s rate in the individual townships and, as Lynn Hollen Lees observed –

The law granted individuals the right to subsistence in a particular place, yet opinion could begrudge that right to people because of character, age, physical condition, ethnicity or occupation. ¹

Just as variable and influential was the attitude of the local élites who controlled the system, of their representatives and, not least, of the townspeople who funded the poor rate. These people were not necessarily always sympathetic to the demands of the poor and as Robert Dryburgh noted, the principal guide to the operation of the poor laws was the convenience of those who operated the system rather than the benefit of the poor. ² Indeed, it might well have been the case that parish officials sometimes saw their positions as presenting opportunities for improving their own lot and that of their associates, exploiting the poor rather than alleviating their poverty, with those who supplied goods to the workhouse and pauper families taking advantage of their contracts to inflate profits at the expense of the ratepayers and vestry. This infinite

¹ LEES, Lynn Hollen. The Solidarities of Strangers: the English Poor Laws and the People, 1700-1948. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press. 1998. P.12.

² DRYBURGH, Robert. ‘Individual, Illegal, and Unjust Purposes: Overseers, Incentives, and the Old Poor Law in Bolton, 1820-1837.’ University of Oxford Discussion Papers in Economic and Social History. Number 50. 2003. P.5.

diversity provides the justification for what follows, namely a study of the relief of the poor of Kirkham, Lund and the Fylde in the first decades of the nineteenth century, a study which will make a contribution to the historiography of the relief of poverty and so to a better understanding of the Poor Laws in operation.

As the focal township of a large and ancient parish, Kirkham was experienced in dealing with the poor. Beggars, orphans, wandering Irish, those with no settlement and the inhabitants of the town's 1726 Workhouse as well as the resident poor of the town all demanded relief over the decades and during the later years of the eighteenth century their numbers were increasing.³ The totals of those relieved in Kirkham town during the closing years of the long eighteenth century in the period up to 1816 are set out in Figure 3.1 which demonstrates that at this time the town's overseers were facing an upward trend in the number of people calling upon them for assistance.

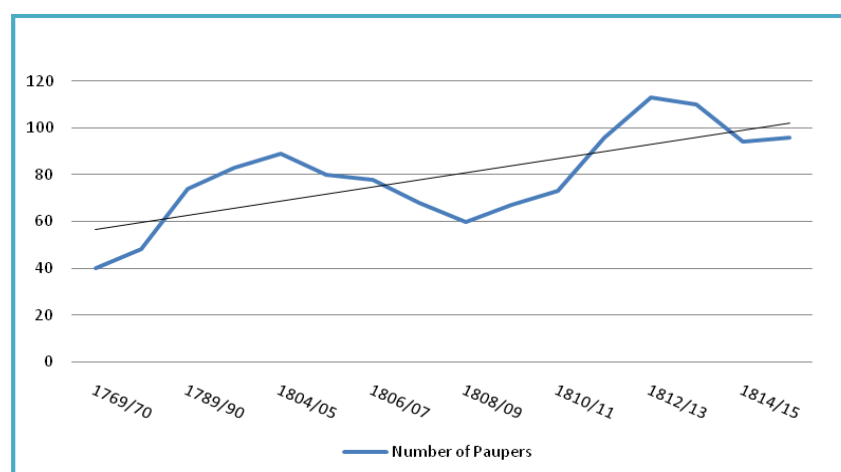


Figure 3.1
Kirkham – Numbers of Paupers Relieved - 1769 to 1816
 [Overseer's Accounts PR797, PR798, PR802 & PR806 – L.R.O.]⁴

They were not alone for this was a national problem as Steven King has shown.⁵ Against the background not only of the domestic upheavals outlined in Chapter One but also of events on the international scene such as the American War of Independence and the French Wars, the cost of poor relief doubled between 1783 and

³ See SHAW, Roland Cunliffe and SHAW, Helen. *Eds. The Records of the Thirty Men of the Parish of Kirkham in Lancashire*. Kendal, Titus Wilson & Son. 1930.

⁴ Chart References are to the L.R.O. unless otherwise stated.

⁵ KING, Steven Andrew. *Poverty and Welfare in England 1700-1850: a Regional Perspective*. Manchester, Manchester University Press. 2000. P.165. Figure 6.6.

1803 and this rising trend, with the concomitant growth in size of the pauper host, was to continue into the nineteenth century. The legislation governing the relief of the poor, much of it enacted two hundred years previously, and the system which implemented it were now under strain and the whole question had become a matter of increasing concern particularly amongst those who were funded the poor rate. The extent to which the experience of Kirkham reflected these trends and how it found expression in the treatment of the area's poor and their families forms the basis of the subsequent discussion.

These families, whose misfortunes are hinted at in the records, were by no means all of a kind. Legislators and practitioners had long recognised the distinction between the deserving and undeserving poor, a distinction in which a degree of subjectivity is inherent but King has suggested a four-fold more detailed classification.⁶ This categorises the paupers as, firstly, the casual poor who made only single or very occasional appearances in the relief lists; secondly, those who received relief continuously for several years – the continuous poor; thirdly, the families who received relief through two or more generations – the inheriting poor, and, fourthly those who flitted through the records not so much on account of their changing circumstances but rather because they were no more than strangers passing through the parish – the transient poor. All of these feature in what is to come.

2 – Kirkham - The 1803 Parliamentary Return

Early in the nineteenth century, seeking to quantify the extent of poverty, Parliament sought information from the parishes. This was duly presented and published.⁷ The Return presented a snapshot of relief in Kirkham in the third year of the new century and it calls for comment on a number of accounts. Firstly, the Kirkham rate of 7s 6d was one of the highest in the Hundred of Amounderness where the average assessment of the 59 settlements which made a rate that year was 4s 8d. The lowest was the sparsely populated rural parish of Bleasdale at 1s, whilst the highest was the

⁶ Personal discussion. See also KING. *Op.cit.* P.159.

⁷ An Abstract of the Returns made by the Overseers of the Poor of the Several Parishes, Townships, Places or Divisions separately maintaining their Poor in the County Palatine of Lancaster pursuant to 43rd Geo.11, Cap. 144. 1804. Copy in L.R.O.

seaside township of Lytham which levied a rate of 8s 9d.⁸ The only other settlements rated more highly than Kirkham were Haighton at 7s 8½d and Newton-with-Scales at 7s 0½d. Clifton-with-Salwick's rate was amongst the lower rates at only 4s 10d.⁹ However, these raw figures provide little guide to the level of care provided for the paupers as the rate was also required to pay for *Expenditure for any other Purposes, Church Rate, County Rate, Highways, Militia, etc.* Extracting the sums actually spent on the poor, Kirkham is calculated to have spent an average of £4 4s 3d per pauper. Bleasdale's paupers cost £3 13 0d each whilst Lytham spent an average of £4 13s 0d. In Lund, Newton's pauper cost was an average £6 13s 4d whilst at Clifton the figure was £5 15s 0d.

These figures include expenditure on *Number of persons relieved occasionally*. If these people are removed from the equation, the average expenditure was £6 14s 9d per pauper at Kirkham, £4 10s 03d at Bleasdale, £7 1s 3d at Lytham, £8 11s 3d at Newton-with-Scales and £12 16s 0d at Clifton-with-Salwick. Even amongst the *number of persons relieved from the Poor's Rate permanently* there was variation. Of the 21 such persons relieved at Bleasdale, nine were children under the age of fifteen years. Kirkham relieved 23 children, Lytham relieved 20 whilst at Newton-with-Scales, a single child was amongst the fourteen paupers relieved. All Clifton's paupers who were regularly relieved appear to have been either children or people over 60 with children representing 36% of the total. This diversity serves to reinforce the point that there was considerable variety in the operation of the system, which, in theory, was universal throughout the country and that it was capable of alteration to meet local circumstances. King commented on the diversity noting -

First, the strictures of statute law ["the law"] in the whole period 1700-1850 were only one version of the poor law and welfare reality. Magistrates, custom, the specific characteristics of local need, the size of the local rate base, and the very public nature of debate over the poor

⁸ Lancashire as a whole was the lowest-rated county in England. See POYNTER, J. R. Society and Pauperism: English Ideas on Poor Relief, 1795-1834. London, Routledge and Keegan Paul. 1969. P.188.

⁹ The Return shows that rates in other parts of Lancashire ranged from as little as 1d at Dunnockshaw Booth, 3d at Altham and 9d in Accrington to 12s 8d at Marsden, 13s 6½d at Weelton [sic] and 14s 7½d at Farnworth.

law, all influenced the way in which the law filtered through to local poor law practice. ¹⁰

This makes detailed local analysis all the more essential to a fuller understanding of the total mechanism of the alleviation of poverty and pauperdom.

The second point which calls for notice in the Return is the matter of relief provided in the Poor House. In the whole of the Hundred of Amounderness only ten of the sixty-three townships or parishes are recorded as having spent money on relieving paupers in their workhouses. Of these ten, the Borough of Preston spent £765, by far the greatest amount. Only two of the remaining nine, Weeton-with-Preese and Goosnargh, were constituent townships of the Parish of Kirkham, the latter being a detached township situated some fourteen miles away with its own workhouse. The township of Kirkham itself is not recorded as having spent anything under the heading and this has to be queried as the town undoubtedly had a Poor House, the establishment of which has already been noticed. However, the sum of £4 10s 11½d is shown as having been earned by workhouse inmates towards the cost of their own maintenance. Again, there is the simple statement with no details and the nature of the work undertaken has to be questioned although it was likely to have been weaving as the House certainly had looms on which the poor were taught to weave. The probable explanation of these discrepancies, as James Taylor suggested, was that “parishes did not always keep separate workhouse accounts,” that the person responsible for making the Return simply did not know, that the figures had been lost or subsumed under other headings or even that no figures had been kept at all. ¹¹

Thirdly, Kirkham supported two friendly societies with a combined membership of 255 people. ¹² These were the only two such societies in the entire parish of Kirkham and

¹⁰ KING. *Op.cit.* Poverty. P.39.

¹¹ TAYLOR, James S. ‘The Unreformed Workhouse 1776-1834.’ in MARTIN, Ernest. Walter. Comparative Development in Social Welfare, London, George Allen & Unwin. Ltd. 1972.

¹² For the position of Friendly Societies see KIDD, Alan. State, Society and the Poor in Nineteenth Century England. Basingstoke, MacMillan Press Ltd. P.112. He notes that “Although there are no entirely reliable figures, returns for 1815 and 1831 suggest a situation in which Lancashire had by far the largest number of members of local societies and, at 17%, the highest proportion of population who had joined a society.”

their membership may have included people from other townships. Subscriptions to these bodies would be paid not only by those who had some disposable income but also, as part of their economy of makeshifts, by the those who hovered above the level of pauperdom for, at their most basic, the societies provided insurance against the shame of a pauper funeral. Making shift was certainly not the preserve only of the pauper class.

Finally, it is of interest to compare the numbers of paupers relieved with the population of the townships mentioned above. According to the 1801 Census, Kirkham's population numbered 1,561. The number of resident adult paupers who were relieved for any period was 93 which suggests that 6% of households received assistance. At Bleasdale, the population was 220 with 7.7% relieved. In Lytham the figure was 6.5% relieved and at Newton-with-Scales, 6.3%. The average percentage was 6.6%. ¹³ If an household occupancy figure of five people is assumed, which the discussion on Kirkham in Chapter Two suggests would be reasonable, it seems that at least a third of the population were "on the parish" for some of their lives. ¹⁴ There is no clear indication of the length of time for which people were relieved, of how many people applied for assistance only to be turned away or of those who thought the chances of their application's being accepted were so slight that they simply did not trouble to apply. There is also the question of the stage in their descent into poverty at which the poor finally decide to appeal for relief and with what degree of success. As King remarked -

The communal welfare system in the north and west turned down large numbers who felt poor enough to apply and intervened late in the descent of families towards complete destitution. ¹⁵

See also GORSKY, Martin. *The Growth and Distribution of English Friendly Societies in the early Nineteenth Century*. Economic History Review. Vol.51. 1998. P.489.

¹³ Population figures are from Volume 2 of the VICTORIA COUNTY HISTORY OF THE COUNTY PALATINE OF LANCASTER. London, University of London Institute for Historical Research. 1966. The numbers of paupers are taken from columns 10 and 12 of the *Accounts*.

¹⁴ See *supra* Chapter Two P.48

¹⁵ KING. *Op.cit.* Poverty, P.184. Similarly, Dryburgh, *op.cit.*, P.9, in his work on Bolton found that in a five-year period calculated that only some 37% of applications were accepted as initially submitted. 25% were rejected outright and the balance referred for investigation.

Furthermore, the nature of the relief ethos in a particular locality would be well-known amongst the indigent who would probably take it into consideration when deciding whether or not to become paupers instead of being merely poor. As Lees has noted, "Even if they did not like the alternatives they faced, most poor people had some choices to make."¹⁶

This, then, was the "State of the Poor" in Kirkham in 1803 and although the official Return provides a considerable amount of basic information, it poses a number of questions, particularly concerning the use of the Workhouse and the position of the Friendly Societies. Attention will now be turned to the local records, the accounts of the town's overseer.

3 - Kirkham - The Overseer's Accounts 1804/05

The Accounts of the Overseers of the Poor give detailed information about the relief provided in Kirkham Township and these examples indicate the type of relief provided for the town's poor.¹⁷

Betty Cowbrand. Weekly Pay – 52 weeks @ 1s 3d = £3 5s 0d; Clothing, footwear & bedding £2 1s 7d; Paid for wheel repairing 2s. Total £5 8s 7d.

Sally Johnson. Paid for delivering & lying-in £2 0s 6d; Paid for Order 3s; Weekly Pay – 45 weeks @ 2s 8d = £6 0s 0d. Total £8 3s 6d.

Jenny Simpson. Weekly Pay – 79 weeks & 1s - £3 19s 0d; Clothing, footwear and coals £3 5s 1d; Additional payments daughter sick 16s 6d; Coffin, church expenses & bread and ale £1 2s 4d. Total £9 2s 11d.

Betty Pickering. Paid Preston Bills – 4 times £6 10s 0d; Paid for daughter at Brindle £2 7s 3d; Going to get daughter's child fathered 12s; Paid for a man seeking father 2s. Total £9 11s 3d.

Widow Raby & Son. Paid to Mother – 54 weeks @ 1s = £2 14s 0d; Paid for son going to Liverpool 17s; Gave at same time in cash 1s; Paid to son 40 weeks @ 3s 6d+ extra £7 4s 0d; Clothing £3 15s 7d. Total £14 11s 7d.

Thomas Taylor. Rent £3 1s 6d; Being lame 3s; Having no work 13s; Being sick £1 8s 6d; Clothing £3 13s 2d. Total £8 19s 2d.

The range of relief in kind was typical and Geoffrey Oxley confirmed that rents, medical care, food and clothing as well as additional *ad hoc* sums were a normal part of the relief pattern throughout the country.¹⁸ Lees likewise showed that -

¹⁶ LEES. *Op.cit.*. P.37.

¹⁷ L.R.O. PR802.

Not only were rents paid, but nursing services offered and shelter given in parish cottages or the workhouse. Parish account books for the poor list charges for fuel, tobacco, shoes, shrouds and spectacles much of which was funnelled to elderly pensioners.¹⁹

Taken together these examples illustrate the pervasive and life-time nature of the relief which the Kirkham overseers provided although the absence of any mention of tobacco and spectacles, which were not absolutely essential, might be taken to suggest a certain carefulness. Comment on the level of payments is more difficult, conditioned as they must have been by local circumstances such as the prices of staple goods and the perceptions of the community as to what pauper expectations were reasonable.

Whilst these six paupers, representatives of the continuous poor, received relief regularly throughout the year there were eleven people at the other end of the scale, the casual poor, who were relieved on only a single occasion. These included Peggy Margerison who was allowed £1 1s 7½d for new clothing, shoes and a suit for her son. Alice Taylor's rent of £2 10s 0d was paid as were the rents of James and Thomas Allanson, both living in Catforth but settled in Kirkham. James Cross of Marton but settled in Kirkham, received a single cash payment of £1 8s 0d. Henry Raby was allowed the sum of £6 12s 6½d "whilst insain" and heckler Robert Clarkson received £1 2s 6d after he had broken his arm. These payments are shown as one entry in the books but the amounts suggest that the money was paid over a period.

The total relief figure for the year was £484. The number of paupers relieved was 89. Of these, the 44 men received £252 or 52% of the expenditure whilst the 45 women were granted £232 or 48% of outlay. In round figures there was thus an almost equal balance between the sexes and between the total amounts they received. These, however, are overall totals and therefore conceal some variation. Young able-bodied single males temporarily out of work, for example, would be likely to receive a lower rate than a middle-aged widow with children to support and a working man with a large young family, although earning, might nevertheless still need relief to

¹⁸ OXLEY, Geoffrey W. Poor relief in England and Wales 1601 to 1834. Newton Abbot, David & Charles. 1974. P.62 *et seq.*

¹⁹ LEES. *Op.cit.* P.52.

supplement his wages. ²⁰ Of the women, two were specifically mentioned as being widows although a further four were described as “wife of” with no indication of whether the husband were dead, absconded, imprisoned or otherwise away or whether relief had been given specifically to the wife although she was still living with her spouse. Seven recipients, three men and four women, were noted as having a son or daughter, although the ages of the children were not stated and a further four paupers received payments specifically for items for their children.

The various disbursements may be categorised under four headings namely weekly pay, additional cash at need, relief in kind and administrative expenses including payments to out-paupers. These groupings respectively absorbed £240, £146, £49 and £49 or, in percentage terms, 50%, 30% 10% and 10%. Here, as Oxley observed, weekly pay appeared with the greatest frequency -

Throughout the period of the old poor law one method of giving relief stood out above all others as characteristic of the system. This was the pension, the regular, weekly, fortnightly or monthly cash payment. ²¹

Twenty-two paupers, of whom six were men and sixteen women, received regular weekly pay for the whole of the year. A further twelve, four men and eight women, received weekly allowances for at least nine months whilst the balance of fourteen, three men and eleven women, received regular allowances for shorter periods. The payments varied from 1s a week, the amount regularly received during the whole year by Jenny Comstead, to 3s 6d, the sum received for ten weeks by William Walton. However, the weekly allowances, usually 1s or 1s 6d, even when regularly paid, were hardly generous when it is considered that a pair of stockings or a hat cost 2s 3d, a pair of shoes almost three times as much at 6s 4d and that a year’s rent was as high as three guineas or 1s 3d a week.

Expenditure on cash at need was £140 which was paid out for rents, sick, medical and maternity costs, funeral expenses, boarding-out charges and additional cash in hand for unspecified purposes. The greatest expenditure under this heading, £82, was the payment of rents for 28 paupers. The amounts varied from 17s 6d which

²⁰ For a discussion on this point, see LEES. *Op.cit.* P.52 *et seq.*

²¹ OXLEY. *Op.cit.* P.62.

represented a quarter's rent for Ishmail Salisbury, through a half year's rent of £2 for John Fairclough who appears to have been living in Preston although settled in Kirkham, to a total of £4 14s 6d for Jenny Backshaw, a figure which covered a period of eighteen months. 16 men and 12 women were assisted with the payments, those on behalf of men amounting to 58% and those for women to 42%. Average annual rentals were of the order of £2 13s 0d with the lowest being as little as £2, paid for Robert Clarkson, John Fairclough, Edward Smith and Ellen Smith, and the highest £5 5s 0d for James Wood. Oxley commented on the extent to which rental payments feature in the relief lists -

Of the basic necessities housing was the one most frequently removed from the general cover of the pension and provided by the parish as a separate item. The usual reason for this was that rent was an annual or twice yearly payment. Therefore there was always a danger that the pauper might fail to save enough from his pension to pay it and be obliged to go back to the parish for a supplementary payment to save him from eviction. ²²

On occasion rents were paid directly to the landlord thus avoiding the possibility of the paupers' spending the money on other and more immediately pressing necessities such as food or footwear or of its diversion to the beer house. The provision of goods and supplies, relief in kind, absorbed some £61, 13%, of the remainder. Clothing and footwear were provided at a cost of £40, equally divided between the sexes, and fuel to the tune of £15 was provided, mostly to women. Bedding, tools of trade and house repairs also appear in the accounts although the individual amounts were always small as was the number of recipients. The balance of £55, 12%, was spent on payments to Kirkham paupers living elsewhere, transport costs, often in connection with removals, and a single apprenticeship fee.

The out-paupers included Thomas Lingart who cost the town £17; Thomas Ogden, £8; and Betty Pickering £9 whilst William Greenall and Grace Taylor received the remaining £6. The provision of relief to the town's poor settled elsewhere was a common feature of the old poor law. Payments to these out-paupers were usually initiated by the pauper himself, often in the form of a letter which might be written either by the applicant in person or somebody writing on his behalf and Pamela

²² OXLEY. *Op.cit.* P.63.

Sharpe makes it clear that the poor saw these communications as being an important part of the process of negotiation of relief with phrases such as “your humble servant” and “your’s respectfully” being employed to ingratiate the writer with those who had the granting of relief.²³ Such epistolary phrases were, of course, in common use but their employment in this context gave an added edge to pauper pleas. The scale of such payments would normally be determined by the parish of settlement but on occasion, particularly where greater distances were involved, the “home” parish would ask the parish of residence to treat the non-settled pauper “as if he were you own” on the grounds that the overseers there were in a better position to decide what was needed.²⁴

It was noted above that of those receiving relief, the gender ratio of males to females was almost equal, there being 44 men and 45 women. This is reflected in the amounts paid out with the men receiving £252 and the women £232. On this basis the average amount paid to the men was £5 14s 0d, to the women £5 3s 0d. The gender of the applicants appeared to make little difference to the total amounts received. However, the same equality is not to be found in the distribution of weekly pay. Of the 44 men, twelve received regular weekly pay amounting in total to some £75 or £6 5 0d each; of the 45 women, 37 received regular weekly pay amounting to £167 or £4 10s 0d each. Of the 48 paupers who received weekly pay, eleven also had some or all of their rent paid and a further twenty received assistance in other forms. These 31 people must be considered as being the most needy and destitute in the town.

Little information can be gleaned from the accounts as to the personal circumstances of the paupers apart from the fact that they were, by definition, greatly impoverished.

²³ See SHARPE, Pamela. ‘The Bowels of Compaition: a Labouring Family and the Law, c1790-1834.’ In HITCHCOCK, Tim, KING, Peter, and SHARPE, Pamela. Eds. *Chronicling Poverty: the Voices and Strategies of the English Poor, 1640-1840.* Basingstoke, MacMillan Press Ltd. 1997 and KING, Steven Andrew. ‘Introduction: Voices of the Poor in the Long Eighteenth Century’ in KING, Steven Andrew, NUTT, Thomas and TOMKINS, Alannah. Eds. *Narratives of the Poor in Eighteenth-Century Britain.* Volume 1. *Voices of the Poor: Poor Law Depositions and Letters.* London, Pickering and Chatto. 2006.

²⁴ See KING. *Op.cit. Poverty.* P.186 *et.seq.* He makes the point that the overseers of the parish of residence might have paid casual relief before making an approach to the parish of settlement.

Ages and marital status were infrequently stated and only widows were sometimes singled out for mention. There were but two of these – Widow Raby and Widow Richmond – but there were at least three women of child-bearing age – Sally Johnson, Martha Moss and William Gregson’s wife. Sally and Martha received the payments in their own right so it is possible that their children were illegitimate. There were other cases in which money was given specifically for the needs of the children. John Parkinson received weekly pay at the rate of 10s 6d for 10 weeks for children and a total of 17 weeks at 2s 6d for his un-named son. William Backshaw appears to have had nothing for himself as the entry specifically states “William Backshaw’s Children.” Money was also paid to the daughter of Edward Smith and it appears that the Overseers were keen to locate the father of her infant for they “paid for a man to take the man 2s 6d.” Mary Tyrer was similarly assisted. The overseers paid for a warrant for John Fisher, the father, and then paid 1s 6d “to a man to enquire after John Fisher.” These were obviously adult children and yet others who might be presumed to be of adult status received assistance. William Houghton’s son, for example, had his rent paid in the sum of 4s. However, most of the children were probably of relatively tender years and would share in the cash paid to their fathers although sometimes there are references to the purchase of clothes and footwear specifically for the children of the family. Of the entries for the 90 heads of households 21 contain child-related entries ranging from lying in expenses to rent. ²⁵

The foregoing presents a snap-shot of Kirkham pauperdom and the distribution of relief in a single year. Firstly, relief was given not only on a regular basis in the form of weekly pensions but also in the form of *ad hoc* cash payments for unspecified purposes and also to meet specific circumstances from birth through unemployment and sickness to death and for particular needs such as clothing, fuel and rent. Secondly, relief, at a figure of about 2s a week, was hardly generous when this figure is compared with the cost of rents and clothes. It was certainly nowhere near the

²⁵ The data here are extracted from the overseer’s account books PR798, PR802 and PR806.

amount that an adult male might earn. ²⁶ Thirdly, men and women in almost equal proportion benefited from the parish purse. If any difference can be discerned, it is that men received more in regular weekly pay and women more in *ad hoc* payments, possibly because men were responsible for maintaining families. This close analysis is necessary in order properly to establish the base against which comparisons of expenditure in future years may be made, comparisons not simply of “what” but also of “how much” and “to whom.” It also identifies the various headings under which expenditure was incurred. These include regular weekly pensions together with cash at need which including additional money in hand and for rents, sickness, maternity, funeral costs and club dues. Relief in kind included fuel, clothing, footwear, repairs, bedding, unspecified goods, food, board, tools and equipment whilst administration costs covered items such as legal and settlement costs, transport and apprenticeship charges. Adopting this, the expenditure for 1804-1805 is apportioned thus, the first column being the amount in cash terms and the second the percentage of the total.

Weekly Pay	240	50%
Sickness	016	03%
Maternity	006	01%
Funerals	005	01%
Club Dues	-	-
Additional Cash	009	01%
Rents	082	17%
Fuel	004	01%
Clothes & Footwear	038	07%
Repairs	003	01%
Bedding	002	01%
Unspecified Goods	-	-
Food	-	-
Board	020	04%
Tools & Equipment	001	-
Transport	006	01%
Apprenticeship	005	01%
Legal costs	008	03%
Removal	-	-
Other parishes	039	08%
Total	484	100%

From these figures it appears that, with the greatest expenditure being on weekly pay, together with the payment of rents and other cash allowances such as sickness and

²⁶ Wage rates are occasionally mentioned. In 1813 James Matthews “gets if in full work about 12s a week” and Thomas Hall “gets about 14s a week.” In both cases other members of the family were earning. Two of James’s children were both bringing in seven or eight shilling a week “when at work” and three of Thomas’s family were earning between them 11s. L.R.O. PR810.

lying-in payments, the overseers were concerned to keep the poor in their own houses rather than bring them into the workhouse. It is also clear that for the most part the weekly payments were intended to be supplements to other income rather than total family income.

This is the background against which the examination of formal poor relief in action in Kirkham unfolds itself. It provides a fresh template against which relief given to individual paupers and their families can be analysed in considerable detail, right down to the delivery of a single load of coal, the purchase of a pair of stays or repairs to the family loom, and it thus forms the basis upon which comparisons not only with Newton and Clifton, as in the present work, may be made but also furnishes a reference point for comparative investigation in other areas.

4 - Newton and Clifton Parliamentary Returns

Looking now at the *Returns* for Clifton and Newton, Clifton, as noted above, levied a rate of 4s 10d in the pound, collecting £289 for poor relief. Newton's rate at 7s 10½d produced £121. Neither appears to have incurred expenditure in keeping their poor in the workhouse. Clifton relieved a total of 75 people of whom 26 were children under the age of fifteen years, fifteen were over sixty, two people who were not parishioners and 32 were relieved occasionally. Newton relieved 43 paupers including one child, one over 60, 25 people who were not parishioners and four on a casual basis. The detailed record for the following year notes that that eleven paupers, six men and five women, were relieved at a total cost of £92 6s 0d, an average of £8 10s 0d per pauper, a figure which contrasts noticeably with the corresponding amount at Kirkham although this figure does not include 20 passengers who were variously relieved with a few pence.

Examining more closely the Newton figures for 1804/05 to make a comparison with Kirkham Town, the overseers collected a total of £139 14s 0d which they distributed amongst 20 paupers, 10 men and 10 women, an average payment of some £10 for men and £4 for women. The percentages show that whilst men constituted 50% of the recipients, they received almost 70% of the relief paid, a contrast with Kirkham where

both the number of paupers and the total amounts received were very similar. Weekly Pay here accounted for 73% of the total as against 48% at Kirkham suggesting that in the larger place the overseers preferred more to keep weekly pay down and supplement it with additional relief where necessary whilst at Newton the concern appears to have been to maintain household incomes. At both places payment of rents at this time was a major consideration. Newton paid out almost 14% of the total under this heading and Kirkham 18%. The only other relatively major heading at Newton was the cost of funerals at 5% with the balance going in small amounts of *ad hoc* cash payments, clothing and footwear, fuel, and board and bedding. Taking the allocation of headings shown above for Kirkham, the Newton figures present thus -

Weekly Pay	101	74%
Sickness		
Maternity	-	-
Funerals	006	04%
Club Dues	-	-
Additional Cash	-	-
Rents	020	14%
Fuel	005	03%
Clothes & Footwear	003	02%
Repairs	001	01%
Bedding	001	01%
Unspecified Goods	-	-
Food Drink & Board	-	-
Board	002	01%
Tools & Equipment	-	-
Transport	-	-
Apprenticeship	-	-
Legal costs	-	-
Other parishes	-	-
Total	139	100%

These two sets of figures show significant variations and, although too much should not be read into a single year's analysis, the data sound warning bells for the subsequent investigation. They do, however, provided the statistical foundation for the analysis.

5 - Kirkham – Total Relief 1804/05 to 1816/17

The study now turns again to Kirkham town. During the first twenty years of the century the population grew fairly evenly and steadily by something in the order of 75%, from 1,561 people in 1801 to 2,214 in 1811 and to 2725 in 1821. Growth in the first decade averaged 4.2% *per annum*, slowing to an average of 2.3% on the 1811

figure during the second decade.²⁷ Little is known about the general state of the town's economy during these years although the fact that the principal employers, Messrs. John Birley and Sons, installed a steam engine in their sailcloth factory in 1807 at a cost of over £1,800 for the machinery alone might be taken as evidence of a thriving concern providing plenty of work for its employees and thus putting food on many of the town's tables.²⁸ This view is reinforced by the fact that membership of friendly societies rose from 255 in 1803 to 567 in 1813 and to 663 in 1815.

Considering now the distribution of relief for the period 1804 to 1816, this resolves itself into two basic questions.²⁹ The first concerns the amount of the expenditure and its allocation to separate headings. The second involves the number of recipients, their age, sex, marital status and family size. As this chapter has already observed, the question of poor relief is, at its most basic, simply a matter of "who got what?" However, this question carries the implication that every request for relief was approved, that once assistance was granted, it was not withdrawn and that any diminution in overall expenditure was pauper driven, that is, there was less demand because of improvements in their general circumstances. This was not necessarily the case.

The overall trend of total poor relief expenditure in Kirkham for the twelve year period is shown in Figure 3.2. Total expenditure amounted to slightly over £7,000 averaging almost £600 a year. Of this sum, some £2,800, representing 40% of the total, was paid to the Governor of the Workhouse for the care and upkeep of the inmates.³⁰ The balance of a little over £4,300, 60%, was devoted to out-relief. Annual expenditure declined from almost £700 in 1804/05 to a low of under £350 in 1808/09.

²⁷ Population figures from VICTORIA COUNTY HISTORY OF THE COUNTY PALATINE OF LANCASTER. *Op.cit.* P.332 *et.seq.*

²⁸ SINGLETON. *Op.cit.* P.47. Much of the company's output was in the form of sailcloth for the ships of the Royal Navy which at this time was occupied by the French wars.

²⁹ A third question concerns the people who were called upon to provide the money for the overseers to disburse but this is outside the scope of the present work.

³⁰ The figures for the amounts paid to the Governor of the Workhouse do not appear for the first two years of the series. They have been estimated for the purpose of this discussion.

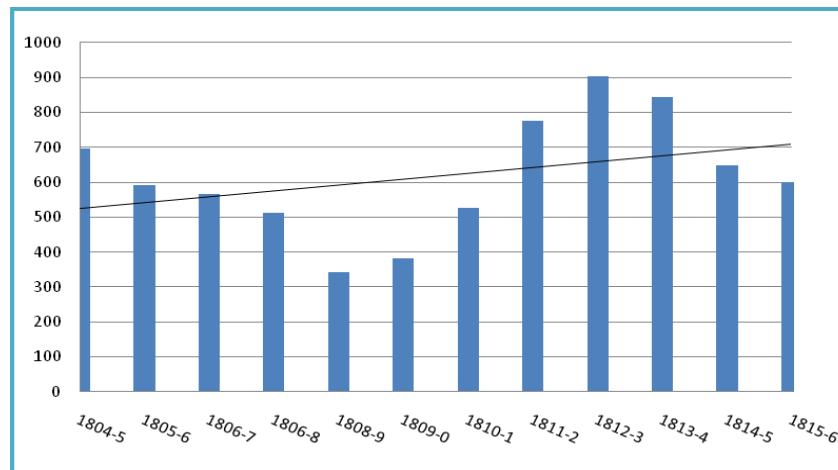


Figure 3.2
Kirkham – Poor Relief Expenditure - 1804 to 1816 - £s
[Overseer’s Accounts PR798, PR802 & PR806]

From there a progressive increase is observed to just over £900 in 1812/13 before decline again set in with only some £650 being spent in 1814/15 and £600 in the final year of the series. Despite these fluctuations, the figures show an increasing trend of something in the order of 2.75% a year over the period. These figures are at variance with the national picture which shows a consistent increase from the late eighteenth century to 1813 with a falling-off to 1815/16. ³¹ However, Powick for example, appears to follow the Kirkham pattern with expenditure in the decade 1801-1810 being but some 60% of the previous ten years with a rise to 95% of the earlier figure during the later decade. ³²

The reasons for these movements are unclear. King commented that “If the communal welfare system paid out less to fewer people . . . it was either because it did not have to or because its administrators chose not to be more benevolent.” ³³ There are, of course, two possible reasons for such a choice, namely that authority did not want to, that is, the overseers were bent upon cost reduction, or that it was felt that they should not. Poverty was divinely ordained and it was not for mere man to go against what was seen as the natural order of things. As Bernard Harris noted –

In the early nineteenth century, the majority of Evangelicals believed that hardship and misfortune were the predictable consequences of human

³¹ See KING. *Op.cit.* Poverty. P.81.

³² See JOHNSTON, J. A. ‘The Parish Registers and Poor Law Records of Powick 1663-1841.’ Transactions of the Worcestershire Archæological Society. Vol.3. 1984. P.55.

³³ KING. *Op.cit.* Poverty. P.184.

error. They believed that governments should intervene as little as possible in order to give people the responsibility for their own lives. ³⁴

Joanna Innes similarly commented on “the belief that, even when resources were available, it was not good to share them with those who needed spurs to labour, or who, if more generously funded, would only breed more paupers.” ³⁵ However, there is, it is suggested, a third possibility, namely a falling need or demand operating in combination with an increasingly parsimonious vestry recognising and taking advantage of the natural trend. Furthermore, it is possible that if it became generally known in the community that the vestry were taking a harder line, some of the borderline poor might have thought it pointless to apply for relief.

Which of these three was in operation in Kirkham between 1804 and 1816 can only be surmised but in view of the extent of the decline between 1804 and the low point in 1808 the third reason must be at least a possibility. Annual expenditure in each of the three years 1807, 1808 and 1809 was about half that in 1804 and it seems reasonable to query whether either reduced demand or increased parsimony would on its own have produced so marked a diminution. However, such evidence as there is, together with the general trend in the cost of living, would support the contention that need was indeed reduced. These movements are shown in graph form in Figure 3.3 which demonstrates how the rate of relief expenditure echoed the movement of prices in the years after 1806. However, there is also evidence that the Vestry was keen to trim its expenditure. In 1806/07 fourteen paupers had their rent payments withdrawn and some ten applications for relief, mostly for clothing, were “not allowed.” ³⁶ A further eight people were “summonsed to the Poor House” and yet another seven were given the option of going into the House if they could not be satisfied with what was already allowed to them.

³⁴ HARRIS, Bernard. The Origins of the British Welfare State: Social Welfare in England and Wales 1800-1945. Basingstoke, Palgrave MacMillan. 2004. P.34.

³⁵ INNES, Joanna. ‘State, Church and Voluntarism in European Welfare, 1690-1850.’ In CUNNINGHAM, Hugh & INNES, Joanna. eds. Charity, Philanthropy and Reform from the 1690s to 1850. Basingstoke, Macmillan Press Ltd. 1998. P.43,

³⁶ L.R.O. PR810.

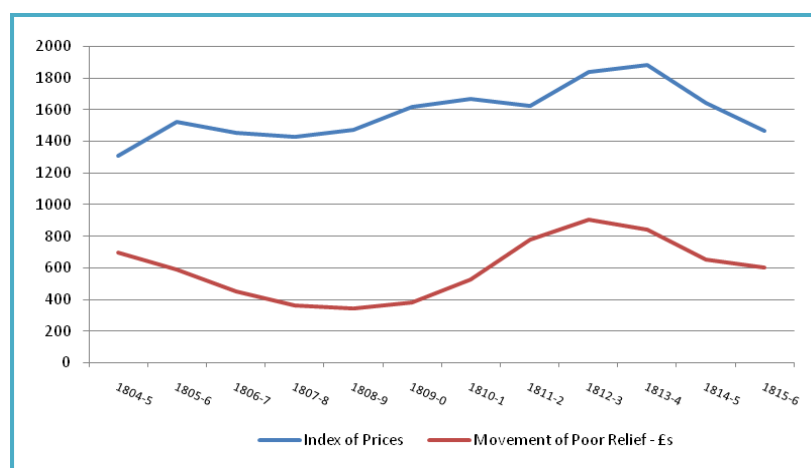


Figure 3.3
Kirkham – Movement of Prices and Poor Relief – 1804 to 1816
 [Poor Relief: Overseer’s Accounts PR798, PR802, PR806. Prices: Burnett – Cost of Living ³⁷]

Four paupers, including some whose rent payments were withdrawn, also had their weekly pay stopped. Other decisions of the vestry add weight to the notion that cost-cutting was the order of the day: “June 3rd, 1806 – Margaret Carter to have nothing else” and “November 2nd, 1806 – Ellen Smith must have relief occasionally and not weekly.” This was not the language and these were not the actions of vestrymen bent on showing generosity. Indeed the use of the word “summonsed” suggests a degree of exasperation on the part of the authorities who might have seen the threat of “the House” as a positive means of discouraging applications. The notion of a vestry bent on cost cutting is reinforced by the decision on April 2nd, 1807 when it was -

Ordered that boards shall be placed at the end of Preston Street near the mill, at the end of Freckleton Street near Mr. Birley’s barn and at the end of Poulton Street where the two roads join prohibiting all Strollers and Vagabonds from entering the town on pain of prosecution. ³⁸

In November of the same year it was further decided that “a list should be made out of the Ages of all Children on whose account the town is at any charge”, ³⁹ This is yet another minute the wording of which suggests that the Vestry was making a serious effort to quantify its liabilities, the most likely reason being a desire to ensure that

³⁷ BURNETT, John. A History of the Cost of Living. Harmondsworth, Penguin Books Ltd. 1969. P.200.

³⁸ Reinforced by a further instruction on August 4th, 1807 when it was “Ordered that the Overseer cause all vagrants to leave the town and take them into custody before the magistrates in case of need.” *Ibid.*

³⁹ *Ibid.* The list was recorded in the entry for October 9th. It includes 17 children, some being described as “lawful”, some as “bastard”, of 13 mothers. Two of the fathers had absconded; another two fathers were supporting their children and, for the rest “the Town pays.”

expenditure was kept down wherever possible. Even the Governor of the Workhouse did not escape this parsimony as the Vestry at its meeting in the same month ruled that he was “to have no other allowance on journeys on the Poor House account than expenses.”⁴⁰ If the argument about reduced expenditure is to have any weight, an explanation must be sought for the increase in expenditure during the period from 1810. Here the reason has to be that the increase was, quite simply, demand led although it is still possible, indeed likely, that the vestry and overseers were continuing to exercise frugality. Again, the cause is unclear but rising prices may well have been a contributory factor. There are evident dangers in applying national statistics to a small locality but, as Figure 3.3 has shown, the price of a composite unit of consumables rose in 1804 and again in 1805 to fall in the next two years. This was followed by a further rise in 1808 and then steep rises in 1810, 1812 and 1813 before a slight fall in 1814.⁴¹ The question has to be asked as to how far the experience of Kirkham was typical. Locally at any rate it appears that it might not have been, as Figure 3.4 suggests.

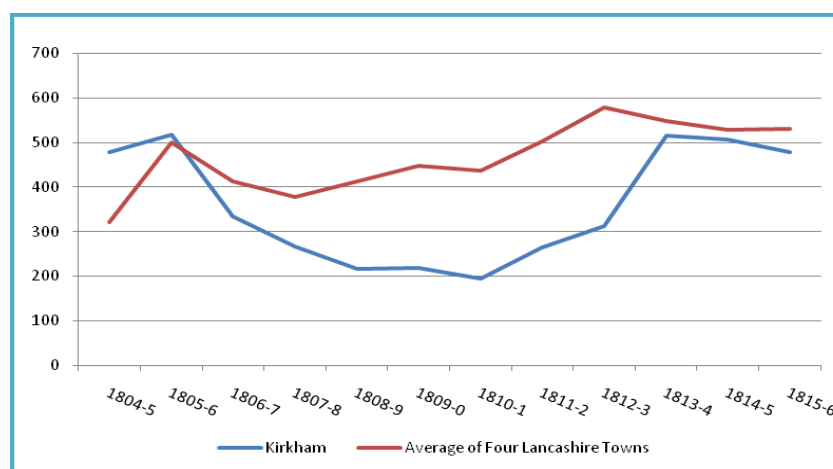


Figure 3.4
Kirkham and Average of Four Lancashire Towns
Poor Relief -1804 to 1816 - £s
 [Return of Overseers and Constables on Poor Relief 1800 – 1817. CTV3/1-2]

⁴⁰ L.R.O. PR810.

⁴¹ Calverley, in the West Riding of Yorkshire appears to exhibit a similar experience. See KING, Steven Andrew. “Reconstructing Lives: the Poor, the Poor Law and Welfare in Calverley, 1650-1820.” *Social History*. Vol. 22. No.3. October 1997. P.324. Powick, Worcester, shows a similar trend. See JOHNSTON. *Op.cit.* P.55. However, three Lincolnshire parishes all exhibited different movements, none of which reflect those of Kirkham. See JOHNSTON, Jim. “The Management of the Poor Law in Seven Parishes of Western Lincolnshire 1790-1834.” *East Midland Historian*. Vol.8. 1998. P.21. Fidler also has noted the connection between poverty and prices. See FIDELER, Paul A. *Social Welfare in Pre-Industrial England: the Old Poor Law Tradition*. Basingstoke, Palgrave MacMillan. 2006.

This compares expenditure in Kirkham for the period 1803 to 1817 with the average yearly expenditure of four other similar Lancashire towns.⁴² Whilst in the early part of the series, Kirkham was spending considerably more than the average of the other towns and was at an almost identical level at the end, the town's outlay shows a substantial falling off in the middle of the period at time when that in the other towns was clearly rising. Figure 3.5 compares the trend of Kirkham's outlay with that of Clifton and Newton and, although the total amounts are different the trend shows that at the time when Kirkham's expenditure was reducing that in these other two townships was either steady or even slightly increasing.

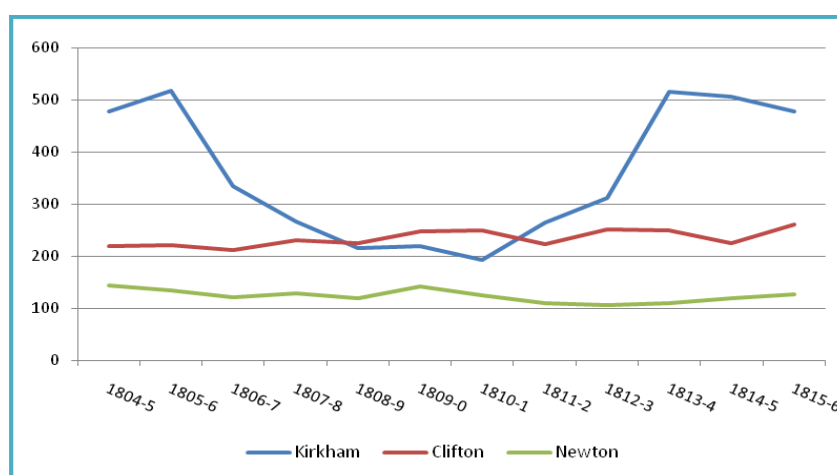


Figure 3.5
Kirkham, Clifton and Newton - Poor Relief - 1804 to 1816 - £s
[Return of Overseers and Constables on Poor Relief 1800 - 1817. CTV3/1-2]

On the basis of the data summarised above it seems likely that the town did not follow the national pattern, a pattern which saw the doubling of total Poor Law expenditure between 1803 and 1818.⁴³ Indeed, in Kirkham the expenditure figure for 1804 was not reached again until 1811 and the returns for 1813, 1814 and 1815 show a decline in total expenditure on the poor of some 24% over the three years. If this is in fact the case, there were probably two contributory factors. The first is provided by Singleton who quoted from a statement of the Vicar of Kirkham, the Reverend Dr. James Webber, in 1817. In that year, Singleton noted –

⁴² The towns are Garstang, Leyland, Ormskirk and Poulton-le-Fylde. All, like Kirkham, were focal points for their area, market towns and ecclesiastical centres. The figures are extracted from returns made by the individual townships "... of the Amount of the Poor's Relief from the Year Ending Easter 1800 to Easter 1817." L.R.O. CTV3/1 and CTV3/2.

⁴³ HARRIS. *Op.cit.* P.43 and KING. *Op.cit.* Poverty. P.81. Figure 4.1

Vicar Webber summed up the situation when he stated that the rectorial tithe in a parish of 25,000 statute acres had increased prodigiously during the last fifty years, owing to the great improvement of agriculture throughout the Fylde which is now becoming a very fine corn country. ⁴⁴

and even if the poor were unable to buy the quantities of grain and other crops as they might have wished, there must have been opportunities for gleaning. The second reason for this position may be found in the fact that the town's principle employer, Messrs. John Birley and Company, was making sails for the ships of the Royal Navy which at this period was actively engaged with the French and thus in need of Birley's products. These enterprises assuredly helped to put food on many of the town's tables.

6 - Kirkham's Parish Workhouse



Illustration 3.1
Kirkham's Parish Workhouse on Back Lane
Circa 1950
[From an aerial photograph in writer's Collection]

The comment has already been made in this work that poor law legislation frequently did but give formal recognition to what had become accepted practice and this, as Dorothy Marshall noted, was the case in the establishment of workhouses. ⁴⁵ In general terms, as Alannah Tomkins pointed out, workhouses became, particularly after the 1720s, an important element of the relief strategy although the balance between using the House and paying out-relief varied with the times, the level of local

⁴⁴ SINGLETON. *Op.cit.* P.41

⁴⁵MARSHALL, Dorothy. The English Poor in the Eighteenth Century: a Study in Social and Administrative History. London, Routledge & Keegan Paul. 1926. P.128 *et seq.*

demand for relief, the ethos of the community and the character of the applicants. ⁴⁶ The importance of its role as a place of employment also varied from time to time although few if any institutions appear to have returned in a profit on the investment. Their management was generally retained in the hands of the town or parish. At some periods it was farmed out to a contractor who operated the establishment either for a fixed fee or a *per capita* payment, an arrangement which, whilst it would operate to the advantage of the authority in that it kept costs at a known fixed level, could hardly be in the interests of the paupers who would inevitably feel the force of the contractor's profit motivation. ⁴⁷ Kirkham's workhouse was erected in 1726, following Knatchbull's Act of 1723. ⁴⁸ It appears to have been an initiative of the town rather than of the parish, although it is possible that other townships of the parish made use of the facility. ⁴⁹ It is equally possible that the management of the establishment followed the general pattern described by Dorothy Marshall ⁵⁰ and, certainly, R.C. Shaw notes that in 1755 there was a Housekeeper. ⁵¹ Figure 3.6 shows the amounts of money paid to the Governor together with the cost of Out-Relief and Figure 3.7 shows the movement in cash terms of the purely workhouse outlay.

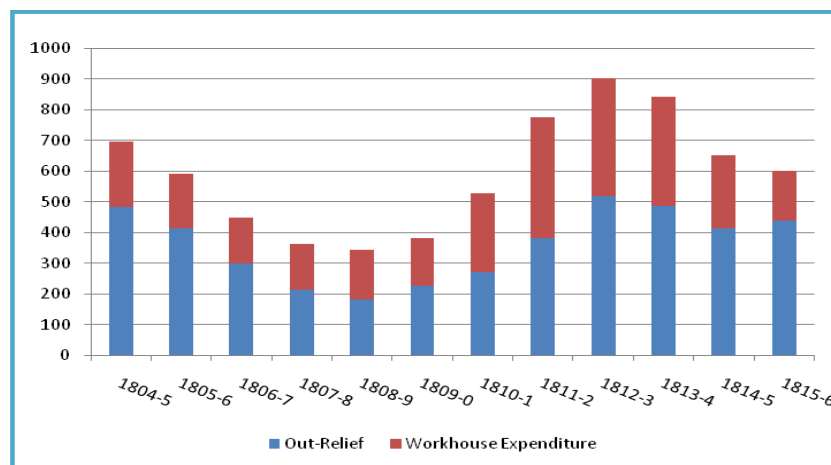


Figure 3.6
Kirkham – Workhouse Expenditure and Out-Relief – 1804 to 1816 - £s
[Overseer's Accounts PR798, PR802 & PR806]

⁴⁶ TOMKINS, Alannah. The Experience of Urban Poverty, 1723-82. Manchester, Manchester University Press. 2006.

⁴⁷ See KING. *Op.cit.* Poverty. P.24.

⁴⁸ SHAW, Roland Cunliffe. Kirkham in Amounderness – the Story of a Lancashire Community. Preston, R. Seed and Son. 1949. P.410.

⁴⁹ Newton-with-Scales made a specific agreement to this end in 1772. L.R.O. PR838.

⁵⁰ MARSHALL, Dorothy. *Op.cit.* P.130.

⁵¹ SHAW. *Op.cit.* P.411. "1755. 22nd June to the Housekeeper at the Poor House for attending on Ellen Carter in her sickness 5s."

Expenditure under both headings adhered to the trend just described. However, it is noticeable that whilst the total amount of relief was declining in the middle of the period, the percentage expended on the inmates in the House was rising. From an estimated 30% in 1804 it rose to over 40% from 1807 to 1810 and in the following year actually exceeded 50% before dropping back to some 36% in 1815/16.

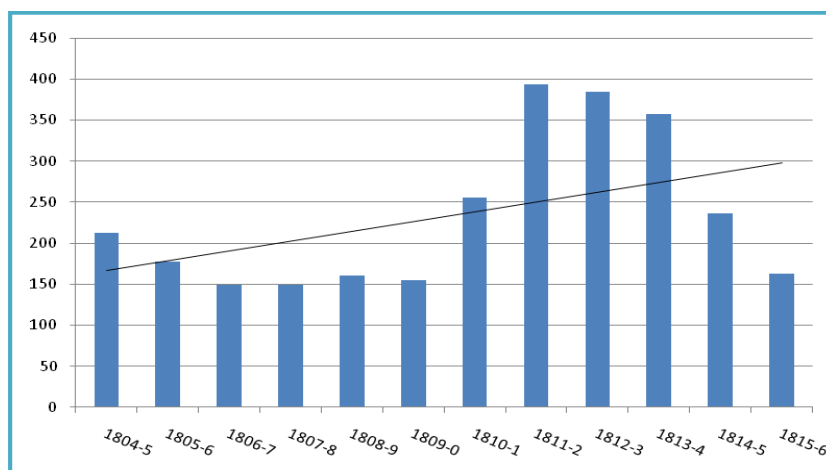


Figure 3.7
Kirkham – Workhouse Expenditure – 1804 to 1816 - £s
[Overseer’s Accounts PR798, PR802 & PR806]

This provides some confirmation of the assertion made above that whilst the overseers might have preferred to keep the poor in their own homes where possible, they might, when bent on the cost reduction exercise in the middle years of the period, have preferred to make an offer of “the House” rather than increase out-relief and to make its acceptance a condition of relief particularly in the hard cases. This deterrent use of the workhouse was, of course, but one side of the coin, the other being, as Brundage has pointed out, its provision of accommodation for “aged and impotent paupers unable to care for themselves.”⁵²

The structure itself was some eighty years old at time of the 1803 Return. Three storeys in height, utilitarian in appearance and with no suggestion of architectural elegance, its upper floor and cellar were used to house the town’s wrong-doers.⁵³ It

⁵² BRUNDAGE, Anthony. *The English Poor Laws 1700-1930*. Basingstoke, Palgrave MacMillan. 2002. P.11.

⁵³ ROTHWELL, Catherine. *Around Kirkham in Old Photographs*. Far Thrupp. Alan Sutton Publishing Limited. 1994. P.57. “The ‘iron cage’ or prison was accommodated in the top storey.

became the Fylde Poor Law Union's first Workhouse, served that function until 1845, and was subsequently used by the town for other purposes, including that of a common lodging house, until its demolition. ⁵⁴

Geoffrey Oxley commented that "No aspect of old poor law workhouses is as badly documented as the question of what conditions were like inside them." ⁵⁵ However, using records from Loughborough, he presented a picture of the daily routine in a workhouse although how far the picture which he paints of cleanliness and good order was typical must be open to question. ⁵⁶ No inmates are recorded as being in residence at the time of the 1803 Return either from Kirkham township or from other townships of the Parish although this might be, as noted above, that no records were kept or that they were lost. ⁵⁷ According to the 1813 to 1815 returns, there were 18 residents in 1813, 15 in 1814 and 11 in 1815 and comparison with the 1841 Census, which lists fifty inmates under the supervision of a Governor and Matron, suggests that there was room to spare. ⁵⁸ The general notion of workhouse conditions at this period is one of filth, disease and squalor, a notion supported by contemporaries. ⁵⁹ There is no reason to suppose that Kirkham's was a particular exception to the general rule although it seems that inspections were carried out by leading citizens of the town. ⁶⁰ The paupers were provided with beds, other furniture and bedding as the minutes of the Fylde Board of Guardians for April 1845 which record the preparations for moving to a new workhouse particularly refer to these items. ⁶¹

⁵⁴ Personal communication from Dr. George Haslam who as a boy in the 1950s lived nearby and delivered milk there. He recalls its condition as being "rather unsavoury."

⁵⁵ OXLEY, Geoffrey O. Poor Relief in England and Wales 1601-1834. Newton Abbot, David and Charles.1974. P.93.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

⁵⁷ *Supra*. P.65.

⁵⁸ TAYLOR. *Op. cit.* P.77. He records that in Lancashire in 1813-15 only a third of the county's workhouses had less than ten inmates so in this respect Kirkham was with the majority. Kent, he notes, had the same occupancy but Oxford's was higher, with only 16% of its houses having less than ten residents.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.* P.57.

⁶⁰ L.R.O. PR810. "The House visited by W.Hornby and J.Birley and from the information received think it necessary that a [unreadable] be ordered to stand in the kitchen and will [unreadable]heating of the large oven."

⁶¹ Minutes of the Meeting of the Fylde Union Board of Guardians for April 15th, 1845 held in the "old" workhouse. L.R.O. PU/F1-3.

The Workhouse was certainly an integral part of the Town's strategy for dealing with its poor and to an extent this usage presages the "less eligibility" strategy of the years after 1834. In the overseer's payment book for 1806/07 there are twenty-four references to the Poor House.⁶² Fourteen of these imply compulsion on the pauper either to accept what relief was offered by the overseers or the offer of the House. Amongst these were Jenny Simpson, Mary Silcock and William Walton who were given the choice in June 1806, and Alice and Nanny Taylor who were give the same option the following year.⁶³ Ishmail Salisbury and his family suffered the additional sanction of being told that he would "be set to work to weave sailcloth."⁶⁴

In some cases the policy was reversed and applicants for admittance to the House, probably seeing it as an easier option, had their applications refused with the injunction to make shift. Sarah Arnold, for example, was told "To apply for work for the present"⁶⁵ and Paul Fleetwood, another pauper who appears frequently in the records, applied to go into the House along with his family but was refused and given two guineas "to go to seek work in Yorkshire."⁶⁶ On the other hand, others, having gained sanctuary, later requested their release and their requests were generally granted with, on occasion, additional assistance being provided. However, the sick, the pregnant and the unwanted children found succour there. When John Clarkson and his wife, both being sick, applied for relief, they were accommodated. So was Sarah Benson who, in June 1810, was "lately delivered in the Poor House of a son."⁶⁷ and accomodation was apparently found for the son of recently remarried widow Mary Bamber whose newly acquired spouse refused "to let him remain with him any more" and "She applies for his admittance to the Poor House."⁶⁸

⁶² L.R.O. PR810.

⁶³ *Ibid.* For example "Jenny Simpson allowed 1s a week or to be sent to the Poor House" and "William Walton to have 2s a week or the Poor House."

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶⁶ *Ibid.* He appears to have been admitted later in the year as in the following year he requested permission, which was granted, to leave the House.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

The building was regularly insured, taxes were paid on it and other costs, not always specified but generally concerned with the fabric of the building, were also incurred. ⁶⁹ As to its staff, the only references are to the Governor who was regularly paid £26 a year. ⁷⁰ In January 1810 William Abbott left the post and a William Fenton was appointed in his place. He does not appear to have been in post overlong as in May 1812 salary was paid to a William Janson. ⁷¹ Shaw notes that as early as 1755 there was a housekeeper but there is no indication of the existence of such a post in the period here being considered. ⁷² Purchases of a personal or domestic nature appear from time to time. In May 1806, the overseers paid ten shillings for making twenty shirts. ⁷³ In the following month they paid £1 4s 0d for “stores” and in September of the same year they purchased blankets. ⁷⁴ These were followed by a quilt at a cost of 6s in February 1813. ⁷⁵ In October 1810 looms, quantity unknown but to the value of £10 9s 6d, were purchased. Whilst some of them were placed in paupers’ houses, either on loan or on a “pay-as-you-weave” basis, machines were also set up in the workhouse itself, the overseers being intent on occupying the otherwise idle hands resident there. ⁷⁶ The making of shirts suggests that a stock of clothing was maintained for the inmates and it also appears that the governor and the overseers were in the habit of using cast-off clothing or that belonging to deceased paupers. Peggy Porter, for example, died in May 1807 and her funeral was paid for by the Town. In the following month the overseers “Ordered Mary Silcock and Alice Clarkson part of

⁶⁹ October 14th, 1807 “Paid Poor House assurance £1 17s 06d. L.R.O. PR798. September 1st, 1805 “Paid Property Tax for Workhouse 1/6d. L.R.O. PR802. March 21st 1807 “Hornby for doors for Poor House £2 1s 0d. *Ibid.*

⁷⁰ L.R.O. PR798, PR802, PR806.

⁷¹ L.R.O. PR810.

⁷² SHAW. *Op. cit.* P.411. “1755. 22nd June. Paid to the Housekeeper at Poor House for attending on Ellen Carter in her sickness 5/0d.”

⁷³ L.R.O. PR802. May 7th, 1806.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

⁷⁵ L.R.O. PR804.

⁷⁶ Also Overseer’s Payment Book. “Catherine Hatch applies for a pair of cotton looms to set to work her daughter Betty aged 12 nearly. Agreed to find a pair of looms to belong to the town till she repays the cost.” L.R.O. PR798. Overseer’s Payment Book February 7th, 1809. “Ordered that Ishmail Salisbury’s family come into the Poor House and that he be set at work to weave sailcloth.” L.R.O. PR798.

Peggy Porter's clothes. The rest to the Poor House.”⁷⁷ Ellen Smith also had two flannel waistcoats and two shifts which were “part of Peggy Porter's stock.”⁷⁸

The purposes of all these purchases and provisioning is clear. What is not quite as obvious is the reason for the fact that, in January 1807, the sum of £2 4s 0d was paid to James Hardman, the landlord of the Grapes Hotel in the adjacent township of Wrea Green for “liquor.”⁷⁹ To what extent the vestry and the overseers supervised the Workhouse and its governor is also unclear. Indeed the only reference to any sort of supervision appears in September 1810. The entry in the overseers' records is partly illegible but it appeared that the House received a visit from William Hornby and John Birley who recommended that some work be carried out in the kitchen.⁸⁰ From this it appears that something in the nature of a workhouse visiting committee existed.

7 - Kirkham – Out-Relief 1804 to 1816

Leaving the workhouse inmates in the care of the Governor, attention must now be paid to expenditure on out-relief. A total of some £4,300 was disbursed throughout the period 1804/05 to 1816/1. The annual totals and general trend are shown in Figure 3.8. Comparison with the movement of prices as shown in Figure 3.3 shows that again expenditure largely mirrored prices.

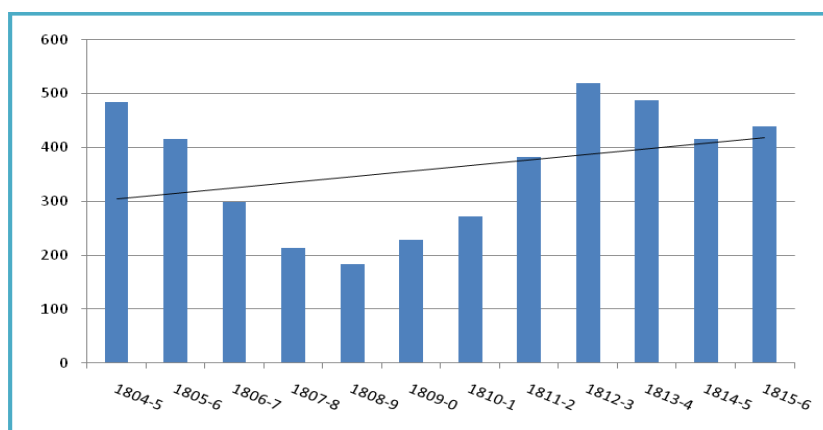


Figure 3.8
Kirkham – Out-Relief Expenditure – 1804 to 1816 - £s
 [Overseer's Accounts PR798, PR802 & PR806]

⁷⁷ L.R.O. PR810.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.* Peggy's household goods were similarly disposed of: “Gave Nancy Finch a pea kettle and a spoon of Peggy Porter's.”

⁷⁹ L.R.O. PR802. A treat for the inmates, for medical reasons, for beer at funeral wakes or facilitating the discussions at meetings of the Vestry.

⁸⁰ L.R.O. PR810. These two men were members of families of the same name, both engaged in the sailcloth industry and leading citizens of the town at his period.

Annual expenditure averaged in the region of £360 with an overall upward trend in the order of 9% over the period but there was considerable variation. From a sum of £484 in 1804/05 there was a steady decline to £183 in 1808/09 after which the amount spent increased progressively to £519 in 1812/13 before falling to £415 in 1814/15 with a modest rise to £439 in 1815/16. The trend is reflected in the numbers of paupers who received out-relief in each year and their distribution is shown numerically in Figure 3.9. Eighty-nine people were relieved in the first year; in the year of lowest expenditure only 60 folk received assistance. By 1812/13 the figure had almost doubled, to 113, with a slight reduction to 94 and 96 in the two final years of the series.

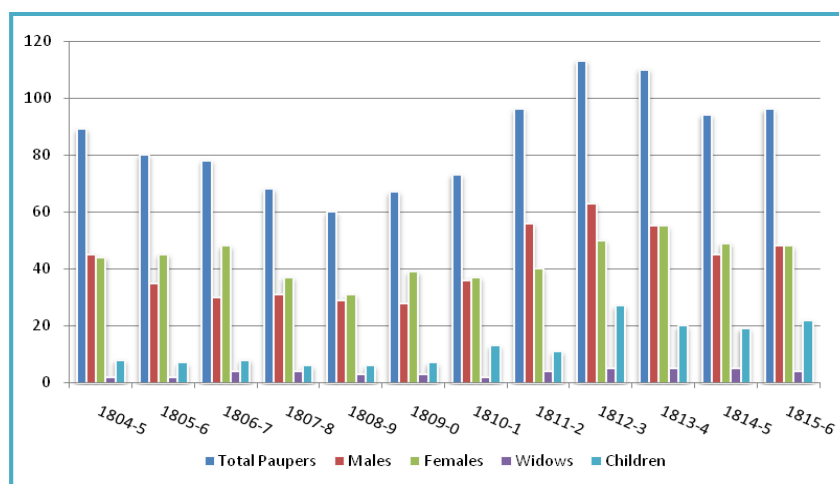


Figure 3.9
Kirkham – Number of Paupers relieved – 1804 to 1816
 [Overseer’s Accounts PR798, PR802 & PR806]

Overall this reflects the trend noted by King who shows in both the north and south of the country a rise in the number of paupers which reached a peak in 1810 with a gradual falling-off during the next decade although in Kirkham the peak came slightly later, in 1812. ⁸¹

The average number of paupers relieved annually was 85, most of them presumably heads of households. If it is assumed that the average household size was 5.2 people this suggests that at this time some 20% of the population were more or less

⁸¹ KING. *Op.cit.* Poverty. P.165 Figure 6.6 and P.209 Figure 7.6.

dependent on relief. This figure appears to be lower than that quoted by King, ⁸² possibly reinforcing the previous assertion that the Kirkham authorities were being careful.

Of the 305 Kirkham citizens who received relief, 166, 55%, were men with the women numbering 139, 45%. The annual split between numbers of males and females receiving relief is shown in percentage terms in Figure 3.10 and the amounts received, also in percentage terms, are presented in Figure 3.11 Over the period, the women received some 57% of the total expended, the men receiving 43%. Whilst there is a little variation in the balance over time the figures, considered along with Figure 3.8 do suggest that when expenditure was decreasing, the women tended to receive the greater proportion. Recorded widows were small, numbering only 9, and in 12 cases money was granted specifically to wives. There must also have been some spinsters and, indeed, some bachelors, but these are not specifically noted.

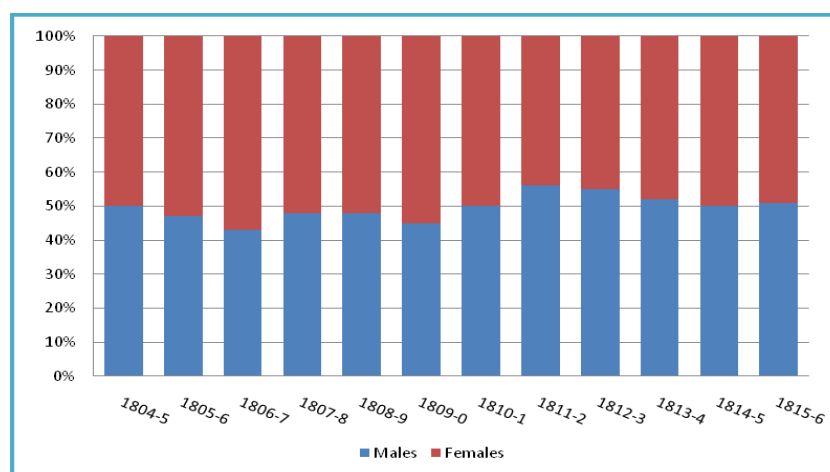


Figure 3.10
Kirkham – Numbers of Males and Female Paupers – 1804 to 1816 - %
[Overseer’s Accounts PR798, PR802 & PR806]

However, of the 166 men listed, there are 47 whose appearances in the records make no specific reference to children and of the 139 women there are 81 who appear to be childless. The gender split between males and females receiving relief over the period is fairly constant, averaging almost exactly 50% for each sex but ranging from, with the figure for males first, 44% and 56% in 1805/06 to 58% and 62% in 1811/12.

⁸² KING. *Op.cit.* Poverty. P.83.

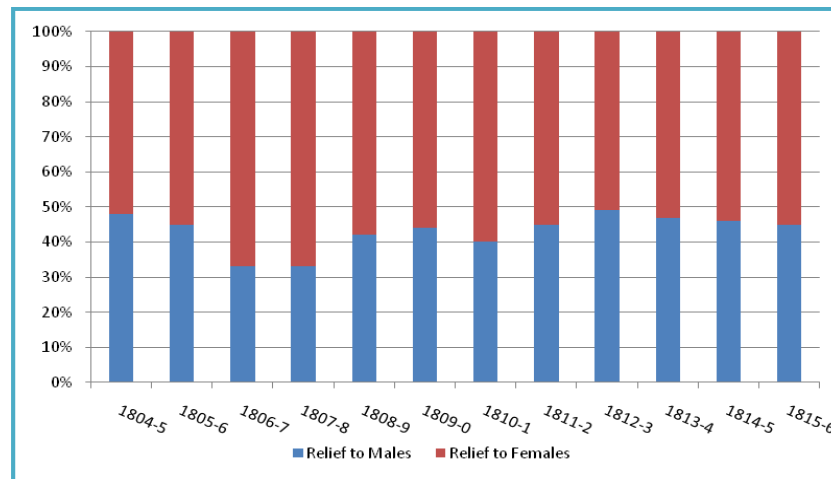


Figure 3.11
Kirkham – Out Relief Paid to Male and Female Paupers - 1804 to 1816 - %
[Overseer’s Accounts PR798, PR802 & PR806]

The figure for the following year shows a similar bias in favour of males before almost equilibrium is reached in the last two years of the sequence. Here again Kirkham appears to be at variance with the national picture as presented by King who shows that from 1800 to 1820 women formed the greater part of relief recipients but that their proportion of the relief fund declined from something of the order of 60% in 1800 to some 40% in 1820.⁸³ However, the 1810 figures, which is the only year for which the present series and King’s coincide, both show the sex split being virtually equal but King’s women were absorbing half of the out-relief funds whilst Kirkham’s were spending some 60%.

6 - Kirkham - The Bailiffs’ Charity

A secondary measure of the extent of poverty in the town is provided by evidence from the Kirkham Bailiffs’ Book which details payments made from the town’s principal public charity.⁸⁴ Figure 3.12 shows the total numbers of townspeople, men, women

⁸³ KING. *Op.cit.* Figure 6.8 P166 and Figure 6.9 P.167.

⁸⁴ I am grateful to Mrs. Barbara Kay of Kirkham for drawing my attention to this item and to the Trustees of the Kirkham United Charities for allowing me to make use of it. The Kirkham Bailiffs’ Book, which was in use from the 1740s to the 1970s, provides information concerning the disbursement of the Bailiffs’ Charity for virtually the whole of the period covered by this study. The money for the charitable payments, which were given in the form of a annual single payment in the days immediately prior to Christmas, was derived from rents received for fields which had been purchased by money left to the town for the relief of the poor. According to the book, payments were made in 1785 to 1788 then in 1807, 1808 and 1812. From 1814 payments were made every year until 1838. Payments from then until then end of the period covered by this work were again intermittent and tended to be in kind rather than in cash. Average sums paid, which were more or less the same for every pauper in each year, were 1/8d

and widows, receiving the annual Bailiffs' Charity for the nine years for which the figures are given in the period 1807 to 1820. Just how the recipients were chosen is unclear but it is possible that those who wished to benefit from the charity had to make application as some of the lists contain the names of "New Applications."

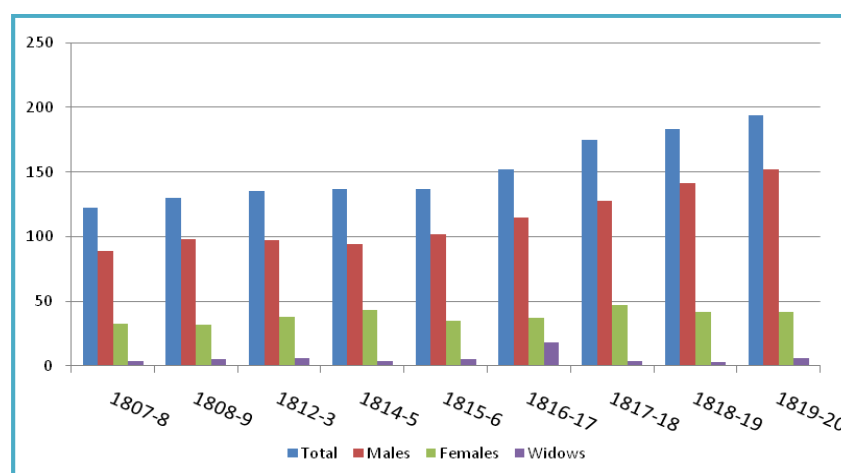


Figure 3.12
Kirkham – Numbers of Recipients of Bailiffs' Charity
1807 to 1819
[Kirkham Bailiffs' Book]

Application did not guarantee payment: there were four supplicants in 1808 but none were included in that year's payment list and only two of them appeared in the list for 1812, the next year for which figures are available. Selection was probably made by the bailiffs themselves who, at this period, included Thomas Birley, William Birley, Yate Birley, Henry Moon, John Park, John Porter and Hornby Roughsedge, all prominent citizens in the town.

The actual distributions were made by J. Jackson, the overseer of the poor, who received 1s 6d for this work and it is likely that the combination of the two functions in one official had its influence on the selection of those chosen to receive the "flesh money" as it was generally known. The number of recipients increased progressively from 122 at Christmas 1807 to 194 in 1819. This contrasts with the decline and

in 1807, 1/6d in 1808, 2/6d in 1812 and 1813 and 2/1d in 1815. See SHAW. *Op.cit. Kirkham*. P.412 *et seq.* TOMKINS, *op.cit.*, *Experience*, has also undertaken work on the correlation between formal poor law payments and charitable donations to individual paupers. Steve Hindle notes the place of such charities in the economy of makeshifts and Julie Waite draws attention to the place of charitable foundations in the relief strategy of Poulton-le-Fylde. See HINDLE, Steve. *On the Parish? – the Micro-Politics of Poor Relief in Rural England c.1550-1750*. Oxford, Clarendon Press. 2004. P.411 and WAITE, Julie C. 'The Poor Law and its Administration in Poulton 1700-1834.' Undergraduate Essay. Poulton-le-Fylde College. 1972.

subsequent rise noted in the amounts of relief paid out but the overall trend is identical. However, it needs to be noted that as the income was derived from rentals which not only increased over the period, from £10 2s 6d in the first year of the series to £16 12s 0d in the last, the funds were not subject to the downward pressures which were bore upon the poor rate. Indeed in seven of the nine years shown the bailiffs paid out either the whole or slightly more than the total amount collected, funding the shortfall by under-disbursement in the remaining two years.

Figure 3.13 compares the total paupers with those who received both out-relief and the Bailiffs' Charity. From this it is clear that not only was the number of people who received out-relief reflected in the numbers receiving the bailiffs' annual Christmas distribution but also that the number of recipients of the Charity was

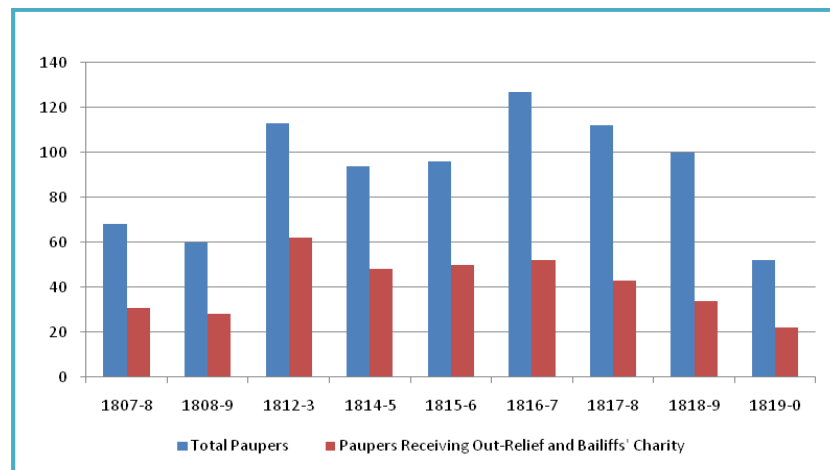


Figure 3.13
Kirkham – Numbers of Paupers receiving both Out-Relief and Bailiffs' Charity
1807 to 1819
[Kirkham Bailiffs' Book]

about 50% of the paupers who received out-relief. The same paupers did not necessarily receive the charity in every year, or even regularly, although there were some who did. These included Ellen Gregson, Betty Pickering, Widow Raby, Grace Salisbury, Margaret Swann, and widows Nanny Taylor and Alice Walton, all of whom were prominent in the out-relief lists during the period.

The town's bailiffs also had at their disposal money which they received from pew rents in the parish church. Whilst from about 1816 onwards this money was subsumed into the general fund, in 1815 the £1 10s 0d it produced was disbursed

separately to 18 paupers of whom 7 received 1s; 2 received 1s 6d; 7 were granted 2s and the remaining 2 had 2s 6d each. Ten appeared on the year's out-relief list and six of these ten also participated in the main bailiffs' distribution including Matthew Bagshaw and his family. Taken together these two lists suggest that whilst there was without doubt a hard core of paupers who were always dependent upon the parish for their survival there was also a stratum of families who were always in poverty and irregularly in pauperdom.

7 - Newton-with-Scales – Out-Relief

This was the position in Kirkham. The principal characteristic of the period was the general emphasis upon out-relief with a marked falling off in expenditure in the middle of the period, an experience contrary to similar towns, to the Hundred of Amounderness and to the County of Lancashire together with an apparent emphasis upon the Poor House in later years. What was the situation in Newton-with-Scales? In terms of population the township was much smaller than Kirkham, the numbers relieved and the total amounts spent were therefore smaller and these have already been commented upon with the annual movements of the total being shown in Figure 3.5. Figure 3.14 shows the movement of expenditure on Relief, the greatest part on out-relief as the township had no workhouse of its own and used the facilities of Brindle Workhouse when necessary.

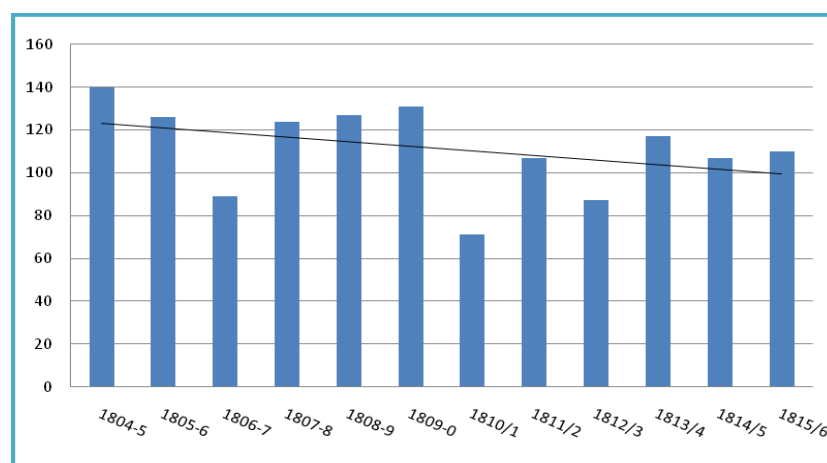


Figure 3.14
Newton – Poor Relief Expenditure -1804 to 1816 - £s
 [Newton Poor's Books DDNW9-7]

Whilst variations may be observed, they are by no mean as extreme as those seen in the mother township and the overall trend of money spent upon the paupers is in a downward direction in contrast to the experience at Kirkham. The number of paupers was fairly evenly split between men and women and the division is shown in Figure 3.15. In total 73 paupers were relieved over the period with 46%, being male and 54%, female, the reverse of the situation observed at Kirkham where, over the period, 55% of recipients of relief were men and 45% women.

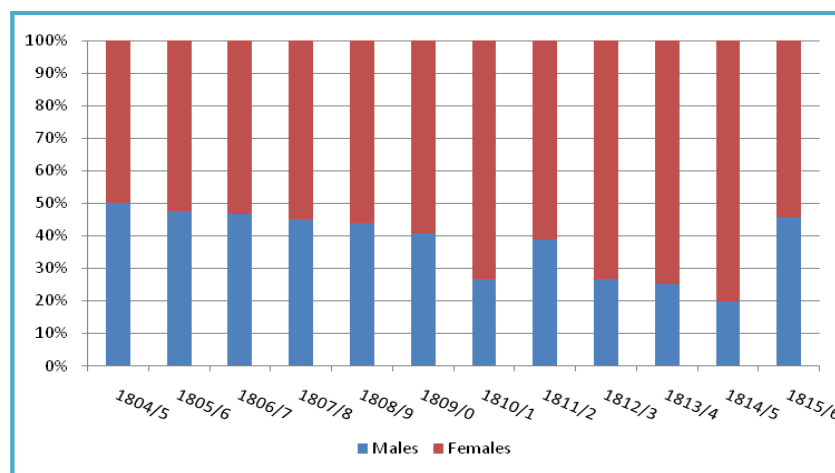


Figure 3.15
Newton – Numbers of Males and Females Relieved - 1804 to 1816 - %
 [Newton Poor's Books DDNW9-7]

The figure shows that in every year of the series apart from the first when the numbers were equal, women always exceeded men in terms of number of bodies, a contrast with the national figure presented by King.⁸⁵ Figure 3.16 presents the money disbursed to men and to women, again in percentage terms, and whilst in the period as a whole 46% of relief went to men and 54% to women, there were four years in which men received the greater part. However, as there were more women paupers than men, their individual allowance *per annum* was less, the average for the men being in the order of £6 13s 0d and for the women £5 18s 0d. This provides a comparison with Kirkham where, on average, all the paupers received less than their neighbours, at something in the order of £4 16s 0d *per annum* for males and £4 3s 0d

⁸⁵ KING. *Op.cit. Poverty*. P.210. Figure 7.7.

for females. These averages conceal great variation. The highest annual amount observed in the period was over £17, the sum received by Edmund Porter in 1804. ⁸⁶

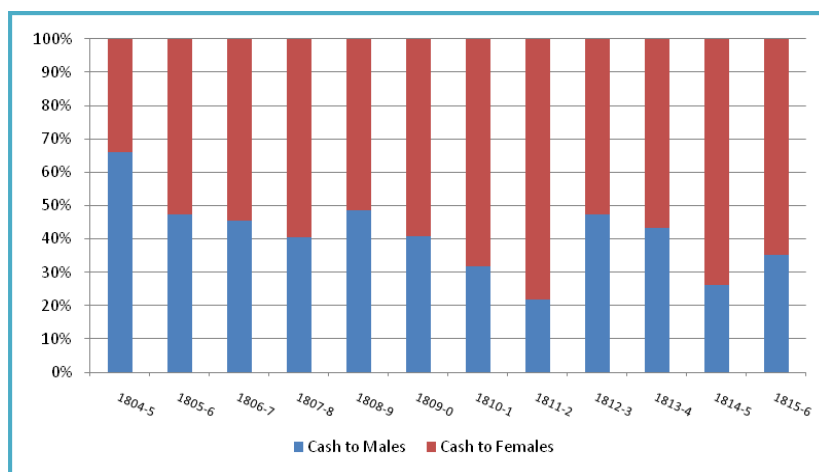


Figure 3.16
Newton – Cash paid to Males and to Females -1804 to 1816 - %
 [Newton Poor’s Books DDNw9-7]

Amongst the women who received apparently generous relief was Betty Backhouse who was granted almost over £14 in 1806, entirely in the form of weekly relief. Those who were less fortunate was Ginny Birch who made one appearance in the lists on whose behalf the sum of £1 1 0d was paid to “Dr.Knipe when took thumb off” and William Hankinson who, in the final year of the series, was given 5s and “lent” £1.

However, a consideration of the relationship of the total population and of the numbers receiving relief suggests that there were proportionately more poor in Newton than in Kirkham. On the basis of the population figures from the 1811 census and taking three years at random, in 1805/06, 80 Kirkham paupers were relieved out of a population of 2214, a ratio of 1:276. In Newton, in the same year 20 paupers from a population of 336 received assistance, a ratio of 1:67. In 1811 itself the ratios are, in Kirkham, 1:303 and, in Newton 1: 24. In 1816, in Kirkham one person in every 230 was relieved and in Newton one in every 14. These rough and ready figures support two possible interpretations. The first is that there was more recognised poverty in Newton than in Kirkham. The second is that Newton was more generous to its poor citizens than was Kirkham. In view of the trends of expenditure which have been

⁸⁶ This is the only year in which Edmund appeared in the lists: his £17 included over £4 for expenses in connection with his demise.

discussed, it seems likely that the latter was the case, particularly when the agricultural nature of Newton, which the possibility of greater possibilities for home grown produce, is taken into consideration.

8 - Clifton-with-Salwick Introduced

So far this chapter has examined with a wide focus the amounts spent on the relief of its poor by Kirkham in the years from 1804 to 1816 and Newton has been presented as a comparative foil. Clifton will be presented in a similar role from 1820 onwards, the period which forms the subject of Chapter Five. However, to impose a degree of continuity and conformity on the discussion, Clifton's relief in the year 1815/16 is presented in the same form as that in which Kirkham and Newton have been shown. It needs, however, to be mentioned that there are no references to any workhouse accommodation in the records and it is presumed that the houses at Brindle or Kirkham were used when necessary. In this year the Clifton overseers relieved 22 poor people. Of these 15 were men and 7 were women. Here is an immediate contrast with both Kirkham and Newton where the gender division was much more even. Only £40 was disbursed and of this only £9 was spent on women, presenting another contrast with previously observed experience. Taking the headings used previously for Kirkham and Newton the division of expenditure shows itself as follows.

Weekly pay	011 ⁸⁷	27%
Sickness	001	02%
Maternity	-	-
Funerals	001	02%
Club Dues	-	-
Additional Cash	-	-
Rents	007	24%
Fuel	001	02%
Clothes & Footwear	-	-
Repairs	-	-
Bedding	002	04%
Unspecified Goods	001	02%
Food & Drink	001	02%
Board	-	-
Tools & Equipment	001	02%
Transport	003	07%
Apprenticeship	005	12%
Legal costs	002	04%
Other Parishes	004	10%
Total	040	100%

⁸⁷ The overseer's payment book does not invariably make a clear distinction between weekly pay and additional cash.

The figures here are too small to enable firm conclusions to be drawn but there is a degree of common ground in the percentages of cash and rent payments which here account for more than half of the total, some 51% although this is less than at Kirkham where the percentage was 67% and at Newton 87%. This discussion of the Clifton figures will be developed in Chapter Five. However, Figure 3.17, which presents in graph form the figures just discussed from the three townships suggests some interesting possibilities. The percentages have been grouped under weekly pensions, other “cash at need”, rents, relief in kind, administration costs and out-pauper relief.

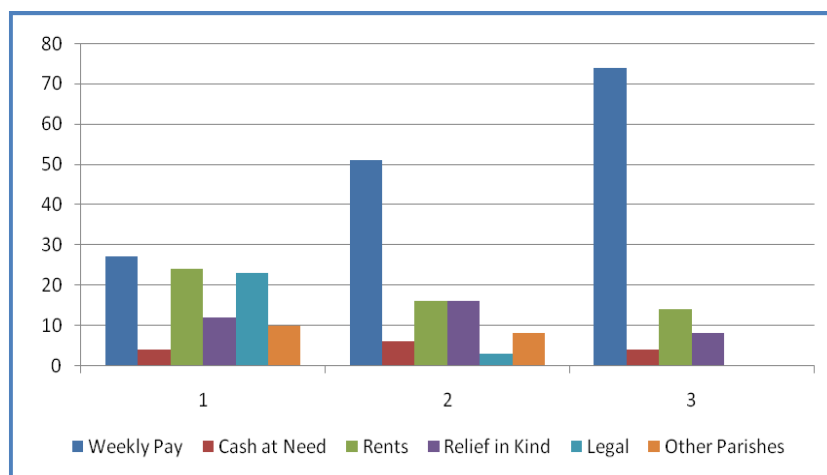


Figure 3.17
Comparison of Out-Relief Expenditure
Clifton 1815 [1] Kirkham 1804 [2] Newton 1814 [3]
[Clifton Overseer’s Payment Book. ⁸⁸ Kirkham PR798, 802 & 806. Newton Poores’ Books DDNw9-7]

At Kirkham, over half of the expenditure went on weekly pensions. This suggests a regime which chose to make regular weekly payments at a low level and supplement them when absolutely necessary. At Newton, Weekly Pay absorbed over 70% of expenditure with rent at some 16% being devoted to the bulk of the remainder. Here it appears that the overseers provided a relatively high level of weekly pensions, supplemented largely by rental payments with other payments being used infrequently when necessary, the paupers being expected to make shift on their pensions. At Clifton there was less discrepancy in the division which suggests a régime geared to reacting to the needs of the town’s poor as they arose. It is possible to argue that these three townships represent three forms of relief and the possibility will be taken into consideration in the analyses which follow, the first of which is a more detailed

⁸⁸ In private hands – see Introduction and Bibliography.

consideration of the expenditure in Kirkham and Newton during the early period of this survey. This will be the focus of the following Chapter four.

Conclusion

The discussion in this chapter opened against a background of rising costs of staple foods, increasing poor rates and a population whose numbers were rising year by year, a period when the poor law was under strain. However, whilst the poor themselves still believed they had a right to relief, those who paid the poor rate were beginning to question their entitlement. Using the 1803 Parliamentary Return it was shown that in terms of the poor rate levied there were differences between townships on the amount they spent on the poor and there also appeared to be differences in the *per capita* outlay. An examination of a single year's provision in the three places under investigation from their overseers' accounts revealed similarities in the range of relief provided but variations in the proportions. These variations were presented in graph form in Figure 3.17 which shows not only the type of relief provided – weekly pay or food, for example – but also indicates the degree to which they featured in the relief strategy. Rents, for example, were more important at Clifton than at Kirkham. However, items such as the tobacco and spectacles mentioned by Oxley appear to have been absent. Clearly these differences were driven by the needs of the individual paupers as seen through the eyes of the overseer and the ethos of the community both of whom had their own interests in mind. However, they were only a snapshot, a single year's expenditure. Would an examination of the extended period produce similar findings?

Looking in more detail at Kirkham town, it was seen that total expenditure on relief fell in the years between about 1807 and 1812 then rose but was again in decline at the end of the period. This was in contrast to the average of the four similar towns which showed a much smaller falling off and with Newton and Clifton both of which showed a slight increase in the middle years. Throughout the period the workhouse was an important part of Kirkham's relief strategy but this appears not to have been the case at Newton. The latter, however, made use of Brindle Workhouse apparently for ill or aged paupers.

When numbers relieved are considered, these followed the trend of expenditure and, over the period Kirkham male paupers out-numbered their female counterparts. Males were also seen to outnumber females as recipients of the Bailiffs' Charity although, whilst its annual Christmas distribution must have been welcomed, its part in the total economy of makeshifts of the town's poor was minimal. At Newton, in contrast to Kirkham women out-numbered the men in terms of numbers relieved. In both places women appear to have received the greater part of the relief fund.

In short, a snapshot of relief in Kirkham, Newton and Clifton supports the assertion that each place relieved its poor according to its own needs and that there were differences in type and amounts of relief given and in the people to whom it was granted. However, out-relief in all three places was the major part of the relief strategy throughout the period and the following chapter examines this in greater detail for Kirkham and Newton.

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**Chapter Four**  
**Kirkham and Lund - The State of their Poor**  
**in the Early**  
**Nineteenth Century**  
**1803 to 1820 – 2 - Who got What – and How Much**  
~~~~~  
1 – Preliminary

The previous chapter considered in broad terms the relief of the poor in Kirkham and in the Lund township of Newton whilst the chapelry's other township of Clifton was briefly introduced as a preliminary to a more detailed examination in Chapter Five. It suggested that the individual townships each provided a different style of relief, noting that whilst the range of relief was similar, the importance of individual forms of relief, particularly the split between accommodation in the Workhouse and out-relief, varied.¹ This chapter will examine the provision of the out-relief in Kirkham and Newton in greater detail.

At Kirkham distribution of relief appears to have been the responsibility of a committee which met monthly. The members were charged with levying and collecting the poor rate, receiving and adjudicating on applications for relief, giving instructions to the overseer and deliberating on other matters such as the deterrence of beggars. The poor presented themselves to request relief, thus making the transition from poverty to pauperdom. Those already on the relief lists re-appeared to plead for increases in their allowances or for extra cash and those whose requests had previously been refused tried again. The queue included the humble and the belligerent, the sick, the unemployed, the deserted mothers, the elderly and the ne'er-do-wells or, as Lynn Hollen Lees has categorised them, "the worthy, the workers lacking jobs, and the wicked."² Requests varied.³ Some asked just for "relief" whilst others were more specific. Some asked for money, others for relief in kind. Yet others asked for both. Whatever their demands, it is clear that applicants could not assume

¹ The possibility of divergence of practice at regional and intra-regional level has been discussed by Steven King in KING, Steven Andrew. Poverty and Welfare in England 1700-1850: a Regional Perspective. Manchester, Manchester University Press. 2000. WOOD, Peter. Poverty and the Victorian Workhouse and Victorian Britain. Far Thrupp, Alan Sutton. 1991. P.52, takes the discussion down to a local level.

² LEES, Lynn Hollen. The Solidarities of Strangers: the English Poor Laws and the People, 1700-1948. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press. 1998. P.23.

³ This section draws on the Overseer's Payment Book. L.R.O. PR810.

that their requests would be granted as the not infrequent terse note in the overseer's books "Not allowed" testifies.

Converting applications for relief and their acceptance, partial satisfaction or total rejection into meaningful statistics is, of course, problematical but examination of the Payment Book from July 1806 to December 1814 hints at the overseer's attitude.⁴ However, in making such an analysis one is faced with the problems discussed in the Introduction including the use of diminutive Christian names and lack of precision in stating matrimonial and familial relationships together with the fact that the overseer rarely gave full details of the applicant, did not always state the nature of the request and often omitted to say what relief, if any, had been allowed. Furthermore, it is not always clear whether or not the applicant was already receiving a weekly allowance or at what rate. Some assumptions are therefore unavoidable particularly concerning the marital status of applicants and the nature of their requests. For example, if the entry notes that the pauper requested 'relief' with no further details, it is taken that cash in hand was being asked for either as a lump sum or as a regular weekly allowance. Similarly where there is no reference to other relatives throughout the series it is assumed that the pauper is a single person either by death or design and whilst some women are described as 'widow' no men are designated as 'widower' although there are indications that some were unmarried. Finally, it has to be recognised that the situation of individual paupers might change over time in response to the vagaries of their life-cycle. However, despite their infinite variety and the diversity of requirements, it is possible to impose a degree of order upon the record and upon the poor and their requests.⁵

The poor themselves have been grouped into five categories. These are families, single parents, childless couples, spinsters/widows and bachelors/widowers. They range

⁴ L.R.O. PR810.

⁵ Robert Dryburgh in his study of Bolton noted similar difficulties. See DRYBURGH, Robert. 'Individual, Illegal and Unjust Purposes: Overseers, Incentives and the Old Poor Law in Bolton, 1820-1837.' Oxford University Discussion Papers in Economic and Social History. P.14.

from those such as William Clarkson and his wife, recognised as a childless couple and who made but a single appearance in the book in March 1813 when their request for a pair of blankets was refused, to serial applicants amongst whom the Bagshaws were pre-eminent. Matthew Bagshaw and his wife Lydia together with their increasing family made a total of twenty-six requests during the period, although not always successfully, and their requirements included, in additional weekly pay, extra cash at need, bedding, clothing, footwear, fuel and nursing assistance on Lydia’s lying-in. The single parents are typified by Alice Walton who had three children all noted as being “chargeable to the Town.”⁶ Alice was another serial applicant and approached the overseer on fifteen occasions during the series mostly, although not entirely, with success. Some of the single parents were so by having been widowed but one widow who appeared to be without dependents was Peggy Noblet. Her two applications, both in 1807, were made whilst she was sick and both were allowed. The final group, the single men, were represented by seventy-year old John Davies. Another relatively frequent attendee at the overseer’s distribution, he made ten applications over a period of seven years and, with one exception, his requests were all for clothing, the exception being a plea for some money when he was sick. All requests, including the latter, when he was allowed 2s a week, were granted. These people and their relief history testify to the infinite variety of applicants and of their needs.

Table 4a shows the numbers of applications made by Kirkham poor, the upper figure being the range of applications and the lower the percentage of total applications within that range. It shows that the vast majority of applicants made few calls on the overseer although it is possible that some of them were also in receipt of a weekly

1 to 5	6 to 10	11 to 15	16 to 20	< 21
80%	14%	3%	1%	2%

Table 4a
Frequency of Relief Applications – 1806 to 1815

⁶ L.R.O. PR810. October 8th 1807.

pension. In considering these figures, there are a number of considerations. Clearly, applications would be prompted by need and those who made the highest number of calls were largely those families with children whose requirements would be greatest. At the other end of the scale those who made few applications might have been conditioned not only by need but by the relief ethos in the community and the reputation of the overseers in regard to applications in a town which, as this discussion shows, was not inclined to be over-generous. In other words, there may have been those amongst the pauper flock who felt that it was just not worth their while to suffer the indignities which an application for relief, whether accepted or rejected, entailed.

During the period 415 paupers made 713 applications for a total of 879 items. Figure 4.1 presents the numbers of applicants as proportions of the total for the whole period and it is clear that family with children, whether with both parents or only one, constituted the greatest proportion of the applicants. Families with both parents represented 43% of the total whilst those with only one constituted 15%. Figure 4.2 presents the same data in annual form and shows that whilst there were variations in

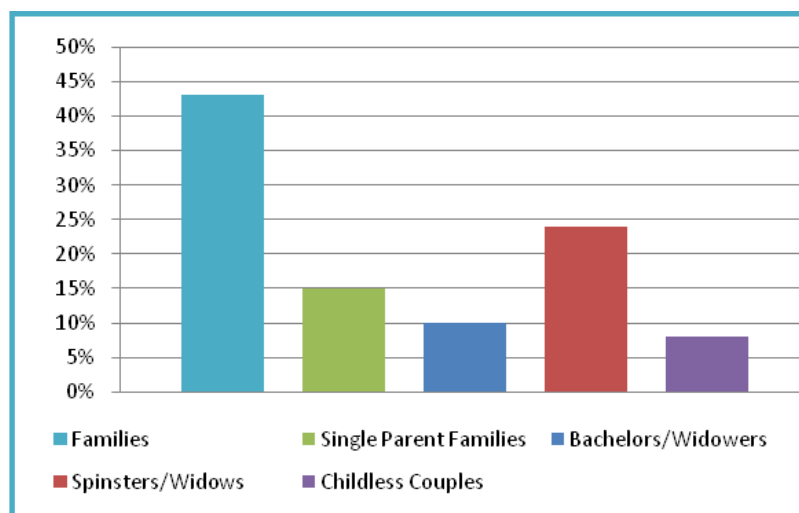


Figure 4.1
Types of Relief Applicants – Totals – 1806 to 1815 - %

the proportions over time, the general principal of family predominance applied throughout the period.

It was, of course, hardly likely to be otherwise for families probably constituted the greatest proportion of the population and were likely to have the most need. ⁷ Nor should the proportion of spinsters and widows be a cause of surprise as these unfortunates tended to be the most vulnerable members of the community with limited occupational opportunities. ⁸ Men and childless couples and even the relatively elderly all were expected to shift for themselves as much as possible and this accounts for the relatively small proportion of their numbers appearing in the payments book.

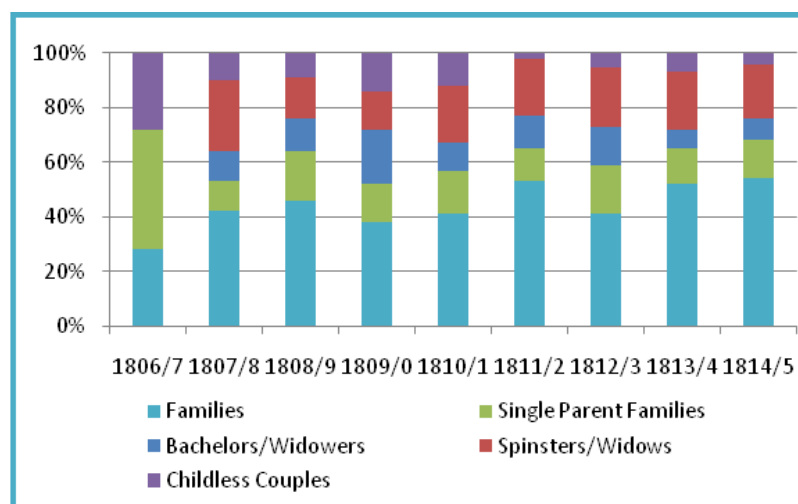


Figure 4.2
Types of Relief Applicants – Annual – 1806 to 1815 - % ⁹

Family sizes naturally varied and were subject to change over time with births, marriages and deaths all having their effect but the size of the family, whilst it influenced the number of calls upon the overseer, as the case of the Bagshaws reveals, did not prevent rejection or modification of requests. ¹⁰ The nature of requests also varied and Figures 4.3 and 4.4 show the total and annual numbers of the principal types of application. ¹¹ These demonstrate that clothing and footwear were most in

⁷ Were census data for the period available, a comparative calculation would have been of considerable interest to see to what extent the proportions of the population presented here represented those in the demographic structure of the town.

⁸ For a discussion on women as pauper see TOMKINS, Alannah. 'Women in Poverty.' In BARKER, Hannah and CHALUS, Elaine. Women's History in Britain 1700-1850. Routledge. 2005.

⁹ 1806/7 has only the nine months' records and thus the data for this year are incomplete.

¹⁰ Of the twenty-six requests made by this family, 16 were allowed in full, 5 were allowed in part and 5 were rejected or deferred.

¹¹ Other requests included one for Board – allowed; one for the payment of an apprenticeship fee – allowed; one for burial expenses – not allowed; four for admittance to the Workhouse of which three were allowed and one denied.

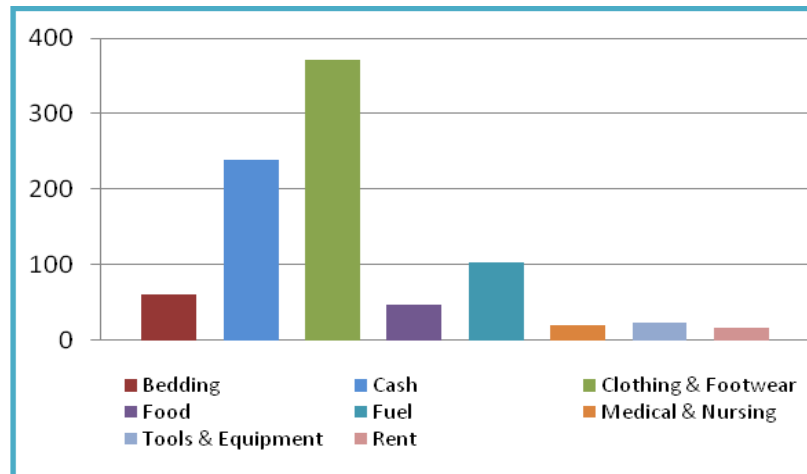


Figure 4.3
Types of Relief Requested – Totals – 1806 to 1815 - Numbers

demand followed by cash either as a new award, an increase in an existing allowance or as an *ad hoc* sum in the form of cash at need.

This predominance of clothing and footwear in the lists requires some explanation. Apart from the perpetual need for cash, items of clothing were probably those for which need arose most frequently.¹² Beds and looms, for example, did not wear out or become too small as was the case with clothes and shoes whilst house rents were due only at quarterly or yearly intervals. Items of clothing and footwear were also relatively expensive and thus outside the scope of the household's regular cash income. Two pairs of stockings, for instance, might cost as much as 3s 4d and a petticoat at 4s 9d was a sum considerably in excess of many weekly allowances.¹³ However, Robert Dryburgh has suggested that clothing was often supplied to the paupers by businesses operated by the overseers or their relatives and although there is no direct evidence for this in Kirkham the fact that purchases were made from a firm of the name of Birley and Marsden, Birley being the name of the major entrepreneurial

¹² For a discussion of pauper dress see JONES, Peter. 'Clothing the Poor in Early Nineteenth Century England.' *Textile History*. Vol.33. No.1. 2002. P.17 and STYLES, John. *The Dress of the People: Everyday Fashion in Eighteenth-Century England*. New Haven and London, Yale University Press. 2007.

¹³ "August 30th 1808. James Bamber. Paid for two pairs of stockings 3s 4d." L.R.O. PR798 and "October 3rd 1810. Betty Cowbrand. Paid for petticoat 4s 9d." L.R.O. PR798.

family in the town, could be more than mere coincidence. ¹⁴ It might also be the case that, whilst Kirkham was careful in its treatment of the paupers, authority might not

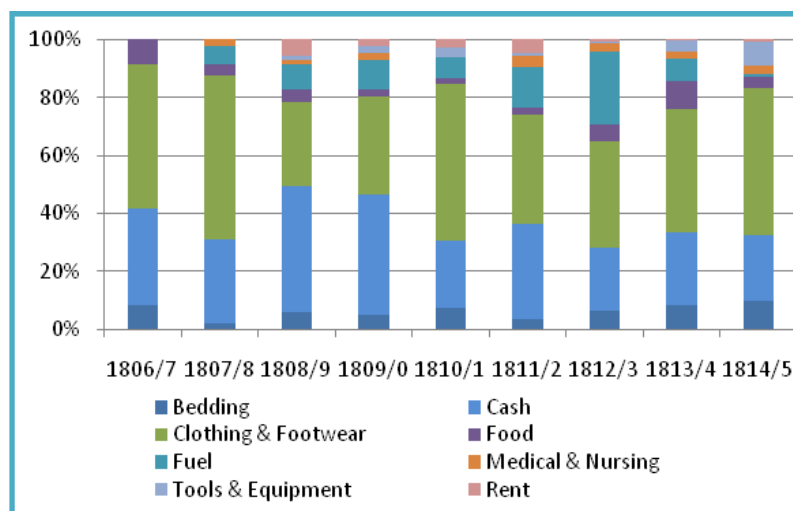


Figure 4.4
Types of Relief Requested – Annual - 1806 to 1815 - %

wish to see them threadbare in the streets of the town although whether this was to maintain the dignity of the vestry or of the paupers is open to question. Of the two types, footwear was particularly important for, unlike clothing which could be made and repaired by the paupers themselves, as indeed it was, the making and repair of clogs and shoes required skills unlikely to be possessed by the average supplicant although one shoemaker, Ben Clarkson, regularly appeared on the Kirkham relief lists. In this connection, Peter Jones has commented that “shoes . . . were one of the few . . . items of clothing for which no makeshift could suffice.” ¹⁵ These two charts have shown the total requests made regardless of their outcome. The following tables, 4.5 and 4.6, take the same figures and show them in five categories.

These are firstly those which were satisfied in full as requested; secondly, those satisfied in part as requested; thirdly those where relief in some form was granted in response for an open-ended request for relief; fourthly those which were deferred for later consideration or pending further enquiries or for which no decision was recorded

¹⁴ See DRYBURGH. *Op.cit.* P.5. October 30th 1804. “Paid Birley and Marsden No,16, 15s.” L.R.O. PR802.

¹⁵ JONES. *Op.cit.* P.23.

and finally those which were declined often with no reason being given although relief history and family income were sometimes a consideration. ¹⁶

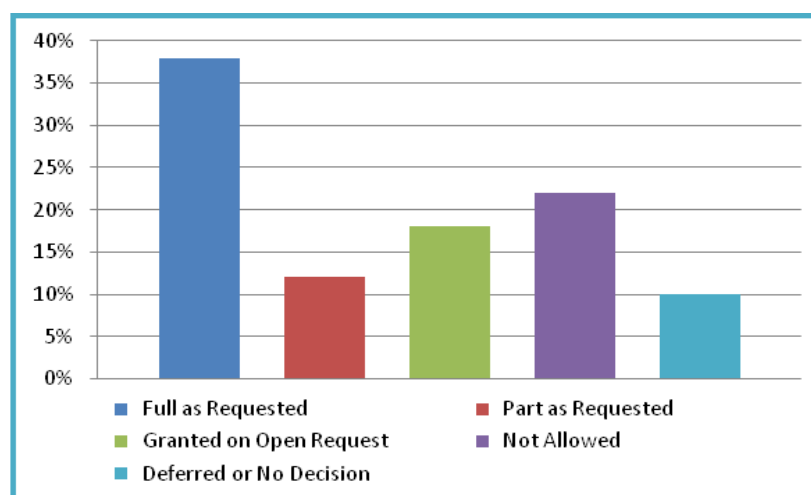


Figure 4.5
Approval/Rejection of Applications for Relief – Totals - 1806 to 1815 - %

From these illustrations it may be seen that something over 62% of requests were granted to some extent and this is the case when both the totals for the period and the annual figures are considered. However, only approximately a third of applicants appear to have received exactly what they requested. These figures are slightly below those which Steven King has found in three similar Lancashire townships where the figure was some 70% in 1805 and about 75% in 1810 although the percentage of successful requests had fallen to about the same level as Kirkham’s by 1815. ¹⁷ These figures make an interesting comparison with Dryburgh’s Bolton calculations which

¹⁶ [1] “January 6th 1807. Thomas Quick applies for a couple of shirts and two flannel waistcoats. Allowed.” November 3rd 1810. Edward Kirby’s wife applies for relief. Has four young children. Applies for coals, potatoes and clothes. Allowed.” [2] “March 3rd 1810. Thomas Watson’s wife want some coals and shirts for a little boy. Shirts allowed.” “October 5th 1813. Ellen Fleetwood, widow of Harry, applies for a load of coals and three pairs of clogs for children. Allowed three pairs of shoes or clogs.” [3] “June 6th 1813. William Molyneaux applies for relief. Allow 2s for present.” “March 3rd 1813. Alice Walton applies for some further relief. Get her shoes clogged [!] and allow her 10s. [4] “May 4th 1813. James Heys’ wife applies for Hannah aged 72 years. House Rent £5. To be examined.” “May 2nd 1814. Ellen Raby applies for a pair of blankets. Deferred for present.” [5]

¹⁷ KING, Steven Andrew. Poverty and Welfare in England 1700-1850: a Regional Perspective. Manchester, Manchester University Press. 2000. Figure 4.4. P101. The townships were Colne Garsang and Halliwell. *Ibid.* P.110. These figures are considerable less then he shows for the south of England which suggest a success rate of above 90% for the whole of the period. See Figure 4.3. P.99.

suggest that only 37% of requests were granted as submitted, 25% were refused and the remainder were either referred to the overseer or to a reviewing officer.¹⁸

Diversity clearly operated and the proportions changed from year to year giving force to the argument advanced elsewhere in this work that the Kirkham overseers were reactive rather than proactive and they appear to have responded to calls of the moment. This of course, was subject to the continuous search for economy which, apart from the clear decision to end the payment of house rents, is the only indication of any pre-determined policy.¹⁹ Kirkham's paupers could, therefore, expect to be given something in response to their requests but not necessarily all that they asked for at any one time. However, there is a hint in the final year of the series that authority was taking an even harder line as the payment book notes a greater interest in applicants' circumstances such as the numbers of children and total family income.²⁰

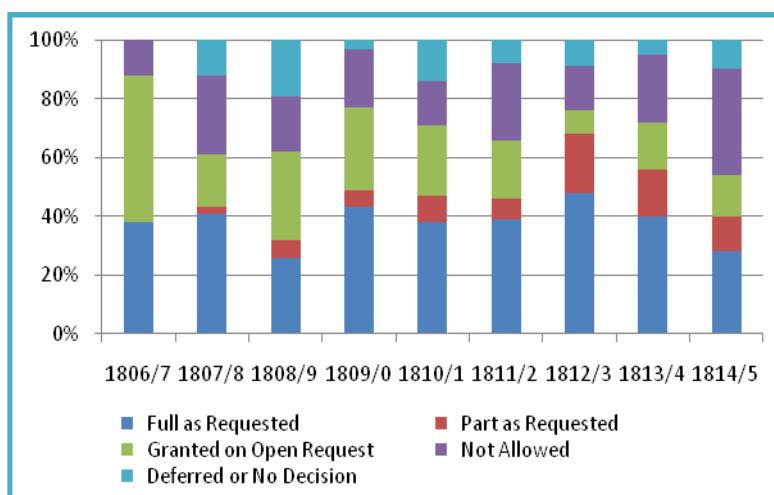


Table 4.6
Approval/Rejection of Applications for Relief – Annual – 1806 to 1815 - %

So far the composition of applicants, the nature of requests and their overall success rate have been considered. Two further questions remain. These are, firstly, the

¹⁸ DRYBURGH, Robert. *Op.cit.* P.9.

¹⁹ As discussed elsewhere in this record, the policy of paying pauper rents appears to have been reviewed in May 1806 and rental payments were almost completely withdrawn never to be reinstated at the same level. L.R.O. PR810. This presents a contrast with Dryburgh's finding in Bolton. See DRYBURGH. *Op.cit.* P.15. See also OXLEY, Geoffrey W. Poor relief in England and Wales 1601 to 1834. Newton Abbot, David & Charles. 1974. P.107.

²⁰ See *inter alia* the cases of William Hatch, James Higginson and Betty Tomlinson.

success or failure rate of applications by types of pauper and the success or failure rate of requests by type. Figure 4.7 presents the first of these configurations.

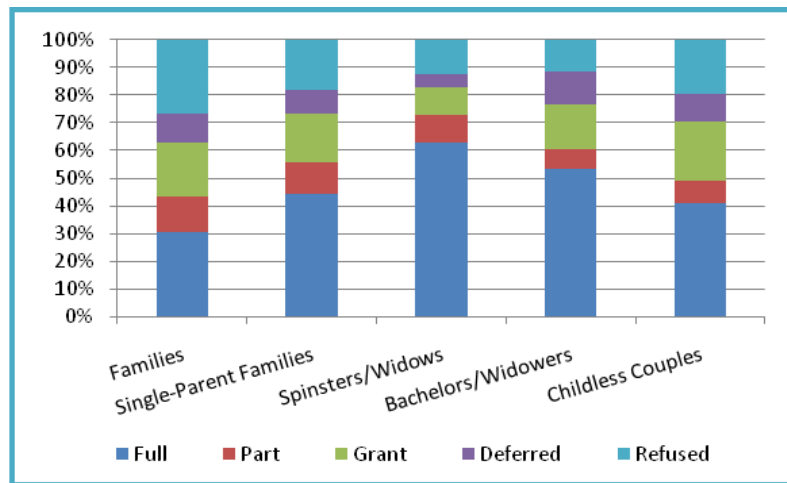


Figure 4.7
Acceptance/Rejection rate by Pauper Groups - Total - 1806 to 1815 - %

It was shown above in Figures 4.1 and 4.2 that families submitted the greatest proportion of applications followed by single-parent families with spinsters/widows coming third in order of number submissions. Figure 4.7 reveals that application did not automatically mean success and suggests that spinsters/widows, already identified as the most vulnerable group, had the highest success rate for their applications although families of one or the other type were not far behind and the figures are affected by the number of applications for which no decisions was recorded. If all such applications had been granted, families would clearly have had the greatest success rate. This reinforces the assertion that spinsters/widows were probably those with the greatest dependence on poor relief

The last chart in this section of the discussion, Figure, 4.8, shows the success rate of the principal types of application. The relatively small numbers of applications for, for example, bedding and food, the latter mostly in connection with the potato ground of the applicants, tends to distort the chart but what is clear is that, whilst tools and equipment had the highest success rates, applications for rent were the least successful. The former, which were usually for looms, ancillary equipment such as shuttles, or for the cost of the pauper's being instructed in their use, had the attraction either of enabling the pauper to support himself or, in the case of children,

preparing them to support themselves in later life thus reducing the possibility of their becoming chargeable to the poor rate. The low success rate of rental applications, the result of a deliberate decision by the authority in 1806, had brought about a considerable reduction in the vestry's relief account.

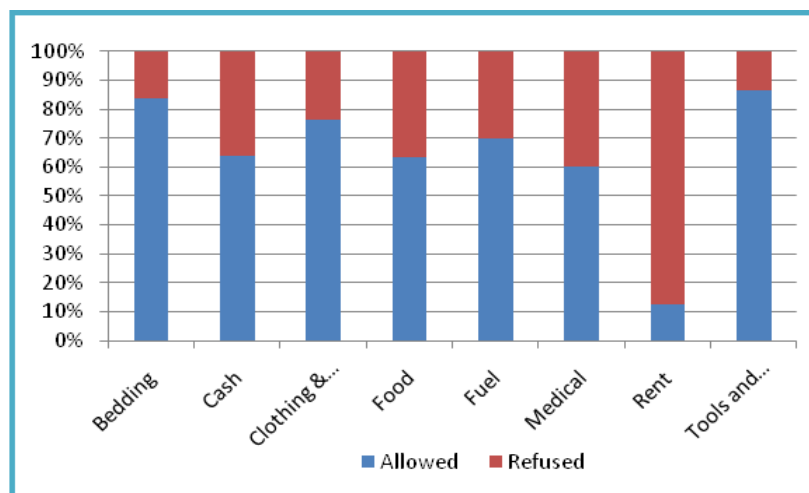


Figure 4.8
Success/Failure Rate of Applications by Type – Totals – 1806 to 1815 - %

One final point needs to be mentioned. This analysis of applications has considered requests from paupers and the responses of the overseer which, in general terms, were met or rejected as presented. However, there was a small number of cases in which the overseer exercised his power to offer an alternative – the offer of ‘The House.’ As shown the Workhouse was an important part of the relief strategy in Kirkham Town and the Payment Book shows the exercise of this power in practical terms.

What conclusions might be drawn from these data? Firstly, those paupers likely to be the most in need, the families with one or both parents, submitted the greatest proportion of applications. Those whom authority would most expect to make shift for themselves, the bachelors and widowers, submitted the smallest. However, it was the spinsters and widows, the most ‘at risk’, who were the most successful. The success rate of the various types of need also varied and, as has been seen, only rents can be tied to a positive decision of the vestry or overseer. There appears to be no correlation between types of pauper, the relief requested and the rate of full or partial acceptance or rejection of requests. Spinsters, families, bachelors and couples all had requests accepted and all had them rejected and although family size and total income were

occasionally taken into consideration in the relief decision the overseer appears to have had no over-arching policy in mind when making his decisions. Kirkham's paupers were certainly relieved but decisions concerning the granting of relief were, it seems, generally made on an *ad hoc* basis with little regard to any particular criterion such as moral standing, relief history or family size, a state of affairs doubtless the outcome of the continuing desire to keep costs to a minimum.²¹

These calculations reflect those made by King who also shows a declining level of acceptances at this time.²² Offers of "the House" showed a very minimal increase from one period to the next but as the alternative was nothing, it is clear that such offers were very much a part of the town's relief strategy, the overseer considering that in some cases admittance to the workhouse was a more cost-effective option. However, it was not only the overseer who saw an offer of "the House" as being the appropriate answer to a particular case: some paupers considered it as being preferable to the struggle on the outside although, as with other forms of relief, such applications were not always granted.

2 – Out-Relief in Kirkham

Before making a decision the committee would sometimes require the overseer to visit the applicant at home and then "allow what is necessary." The phrase is characterised by a degree of vagueness. On the one hand it suggests a certain generosity, on the other a degree of parsimony. It has already been asserted that the Kirkham overseers were careful and in the light of this, "what is necessary" probably meant "no more than is absolutely necessary" rather than "what the applicant says he wants."²³ However, these visits could work to as much to the advantage of the applicant as to

²¹ In this connection, the Minister of Lund Chapelry, in completing the Rural Questions noted that, Question 26, "An industrious orderly character would be more readily relieved than one who has brought himself into distress by his idleness and intemperance." GREAT BRITAIN. Poor Law Commission. Answers to Rural Queries. Parliamentary Papers 1834/XXX/282-292.

²² KING. *Op.cit.* Poverty. Figure 4.4. P.101. See also DRYBURGH, Robert. 'Individual, Illegal, and Unjust Purposes: Overseers, Incentives, and the Old Poor Law in Bolton, 1820-1837.' University of Oxford Discussion Papers in Economic and Social History. Number 50. March 2003.

²³ Kirkham was not the only town which followed this practice. Chorley and Garstang provide similar examples. See Chorley Workhouse Minute Book 1800 – 1818 held at Chorley Central Library, Local Studies Library and Garstang Vestry Minutes. L.R.O. DDX386/3.

that of the overseer. Where the latter was concerned, a call provided the opportunity to see the pauper at home and assess his circumstances more precisely. The applicant, however, was on his own ground and thus in a better position to argue his case. Nevertheless, in assessing “what is necessary” the overseer would be influenced by prevailing standards in the community and what was considered acceptable provision for the poor. In this connection King has drawn particular attention to the differences in standards from place to place, especially between the north and south of the country observing that –

“the issue of yardsticks against which to measure relief payments is a critical one given important differences between the north and west and south and east with regard to acceptable standards of dress, diet and housing.”²⁴

Furthermore, as Lees also observed, “Although they [the poor] had little direct power over authorities, they could manipulate the process in limited ways . . . and they knew it.”²⁵ As Michael Braddick and John Walter expressed it –

The disadvantaged in early modern society navigated their way in a world which afforded many sources of influence to their more powerful contemporaries. But in negotiating their way around these potential dangers they did not lack negotiating powers of their own”²⁶

3 - Weekly Pay and Cash at Need

It was noted in Chapter Three that the sum of just over £4,300 was disbursed to Kirkham’s paupers on out-relief in the period 1804 to 1816.²⁷ Given that the majority of applications for relief were granted even if only partially and that there was never a

²⁴ KING. *Op.cit.* P.191.

²⁵ LEES. *Op. cit.* P.39.

²⁶ BRADDICK, Michael J. and WALTER, John. Negotiating Power in Early Modern Society: Order, Hierarchy and Subordination in Britain and Ireland. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press. 2001. P.1. Peter King’s examination of the autobiographies of Joseph Mayett and Mary Saxby shows that not only did the poor have a strong sense of their own identity but also that they were not prepared to let authority have its own way without a struggle. See KING, Peter. ‘Social Inequality, Identity and the Labouring Poor in Eighteenth Century England.’ *In* FRENCH, Harry and BARRY, Jonathan. *Eds. Identity and Agency in English Society 1500-1899.* Ashgate, Palgrave MacMillan. 2004. This ‘sense of identity’ ties in with the work of Keith Snell in his Parish and Belonging: Community, Identity and Welfare in England and Wales 1700-1950. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press. 2006.

²⁷ *Supra.* P.46.

shortage of applicants, how was this money disbursed? Figure 4.9 shows the distribution in percentage terms of weekly pay, cash at need and relief in kind. ²⁸

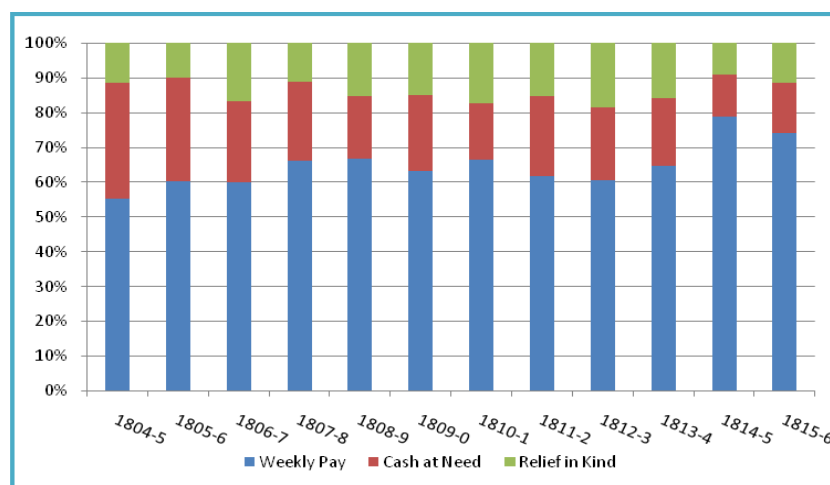


Figure 4.9
Kirkham – Division of Out-Relief – 1804 to 1816 - %
[Overseer’s Accounts PR798, 802 & 806. L.R.O.] ²⁹

Weekly pay always formed the greatest proportion of the outlay and in no year of the series was it less than 50%. In 1814/5 the proportion rose to almost 80% and it was only a little below that figure in the following year. In total, the division for the period 1804/05 to 1815/16 was 60% for weekly pay; approximately 20% for irregular cash payments and 14% for relief in kind. In addition a further 6%, was disbursed on administrative charges and payments to out-paupers. Steven King’s calculations suggest that a more general proportion of weekly pay was in the region of 40% throughout the period although there were fluctuations. ³⁰ Whilst he shows a slight increase in irregular payments which filled at least some of the gap left by the diminishing weekly payments in the middle of the period, his figure shows an increase in relief in kind, a situation which, even allowing for discrepancies in terminology and calculation, is contrary to that experienced by the Kirkham poor reinforcing the notion that Kirkham paupers were given weekly allowances and largely expected to make

²⁸ “Cash at Need” includes rent, all expenditure in connection with births, sickness and funerals, friendly society dues, boarding-out and apprenticeship as well as that itemised as “given” in the payment books. “Relief in Kind” includes the provision of bedding, clothing, food, fuel, goods and tools. Legal and administrative costs and payments to the town’s out-paupers, which accounted for only a small proportion, together less than 6% of the total over the whole of the period, have been disregarded in the charts and discussion upon them. Data discussed in this section are extracted from L.R.O. PR798, PR8802 and PR806.

²⁹ Chart references are to the Lancashire Record Office unless otherwise stated.

³⁰ KING. *Op.cit.* P.198. Figure 7.3.

shift with them. ³¹ Cash at need absorbed the greater part of the balance except for the last two years of the series when the split between relief in this form and in relief in kind was almost equal. This again is contrary to the wider picture presented by King who suggests that the balance between the two was almost equal throughout the period. ³² At Kirkham certainly the overseers appear to have acted as Lees has suggested - “What did overseers offer to the . . . poor? For the most part, money.” ³³ Figure 4.10 shows in percentage terms the division of the total cash amount of weekly pay between men and women. Overall, 30% was paid to men, a figure which shows a contrast with the regional picture as revealed by King ³⁴ where the proportion paid to males hovered above the 40% mark.

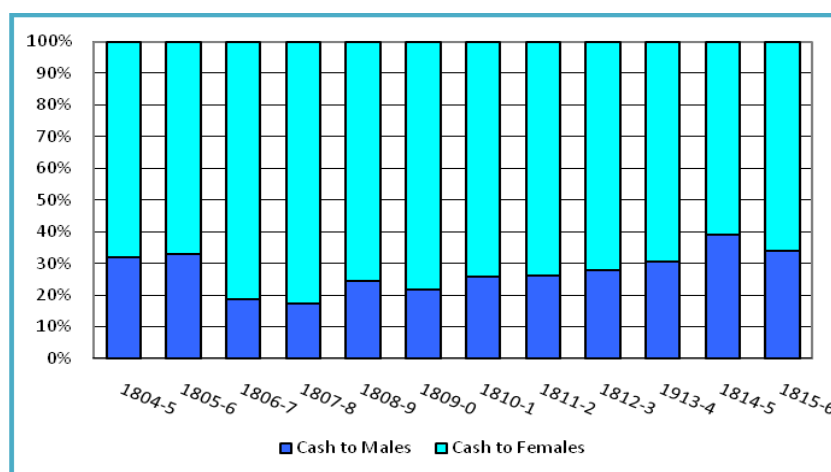


Figure 4.10
Kirkham – Weekly Pay – Cash to Males and Females – 1804 to 1816 - %
[Overseer’s Account PR798, 802 & 806]

Figure 4.11 shows, also in percentage terms, the split between the numbers of male and female recipients revealing that again men formed something under 30% of the total. In both cases the proportions varied from year to year and there appears to be no fixed correlation between the two sets of data and no suggestion of any fixed policy on the part of the overseers or her than to keep costs down, further indication of the

³¹ *Supra.* P.

³² *Ibid.*

³³ LEES. *Op.cit.* P.65. In this respect both King and Lees contrast with Robert Dryburgh’s findings at Bolton where he saw that “Applicants to the Relief Committee generally sought some other forms of relief apart from cash payments” See DRYBURGH. *Op.cit.* On the other hand, Jim Johnston, in his work on Lincolnshire found that “Between 1790 and 1808 . . . most of the poor rates went on weekly relief.” See JOHNSTON, Jim. ‘The Management of the Poor Law in Seven Parishes of Western Lincolnshire.’ *East Midland Historian.* Vol.8. 1998. P.13

³⁴ KING. *Op.cit.* P.212. Figure 7.8.

assertion that overseers tended to be re-active rather than pro-active, responding to the needs of the moment rather than working to any pre-determined policy. In the first year, for example, 25% of the recipients of weekly pay were male and they received more than 30% of the money.

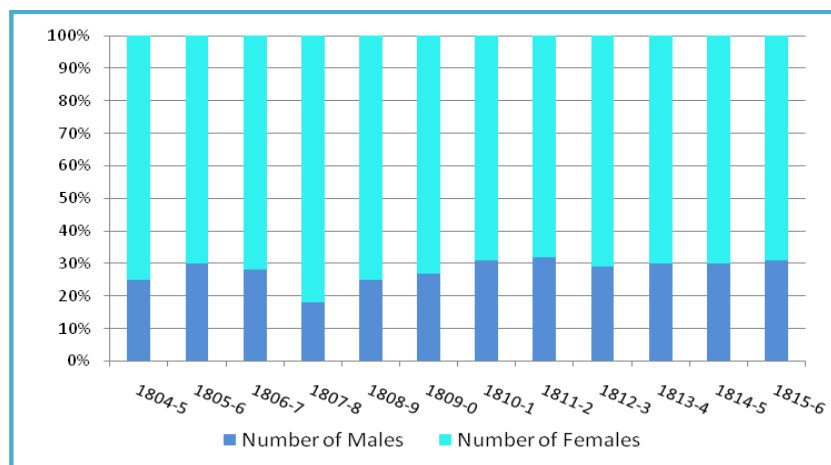


Figure 4.11
Kirkham – Weekly Pay by Numbers of Males and Females - 1804 to 1816 - %
[Overseer’s Account PR798, 802 & 806]

In 1810, male recipients constituted 32% of the total but they received only 23% of the cash whilst in the final year, 32% of male recipients received 33% of the total. The only, tentative, conclusion which can be drawn is that when looking at “weekly pay” women formed the vast majority of the pauper flock and received the greater part of money paid under this head. Here again the regional picture is reflected but the bias in Kirkham was more in favour of women. Regionally, in 1810, women made up some 55% of the total ³⁵ whilst in Kirkham in the same year they constituted nearer 70% and in the period from 1804 to 1816, they never accounted for less than 62%. This favouring of women against men might again be thought to reflect a careful attitude, the expectation possibly being that men were in a better position to make shift for themselves. However, as Alannah Tomkins has pointed out, women on the whole were less fortunate than men. Husbands not obliged to give them any of their earnings to their wives. Deserting spouses were not always easily traced and even when the overseer’s efforts were successful, there were sometimes difficulties in persuading errant husbands and fathers to return home. Those who had “good” husbands were

³⁵ KING. *Op.cit. Poverty*. P.210. Figure 7.7.

still faced with the problems of managing the family budget according to their own economy of makeshifts, taking care of a continuously expanding family and trying to earn a little on her own account.³⁶

Amounts of weekly pay ranged from as little as 1s to 7s 6d. The latter allowance was unusually high and suggests a short period of sickness or unemployment. Weekly figures of 1s to 2s 11d were more usual as Figure 4.12 reveals.

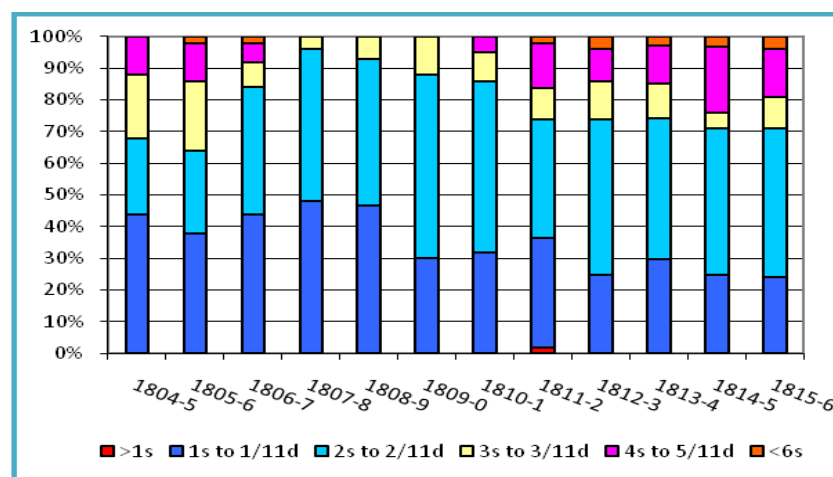


Figure 4.12
Kirkham – Variations in Rates of Weekly Pay – 1804 to 1816 - %
[Overseer’s Account PR798, 802 & 806]

The figure shows that for the whole of the period weekly pensions amounting to more than 3s a week never accounted for more than 36% of the total and in the years of lowest total expenditure, 1807, 1808 and 1809, they absorbed no more than 12%. This is in contrast to the wider picture presented by King which suggests that almost the reverse was the case with the proportion of weekly pay rates of less than three shillings showing a decline over the period.³⁷ In 1806 he indicates that some 70% of pensioners were receiving 3s a week or more whilst in Kirkham the figure was only about 15%. In 1811, the next year of King’s series, the overall figure was nearer 80% whilst in Kirkham it was not quite 30% and in the final year, 1816, whilst only 30% of Kirkham’s pensioners were being allowed more than 3s and above, the regional percentage was again nearer 80%. However, there is a trend as the series progresses

³⁶ See TOMKINS, Alannah. ‘Women and Poverty’ In BARKER, Hannah and CHALUS, Elaine. *Women’s History: Britain 1700-1850*. Routledge. 2005.

³⁷ KING. *Op. cit.* P.194. Figure 7.2.

from weekly payments less than 2s a week to figures between 2s and 2s 11d. What is clear is that as a general rule these sums were at best only a supplement to earnings which for a male factory hand were in the region of £1 a week and families were dependent upon the earnings of wives and children. ³⁸ Indeed it was often the case that families with a total income in excess of this amount had their applications rejected even if there were dependent offspring. ³⁹ Figure 4.13 shows the distribution of weekly sums paid to males whilst Figure 4.14 shows the amounts paid to women.

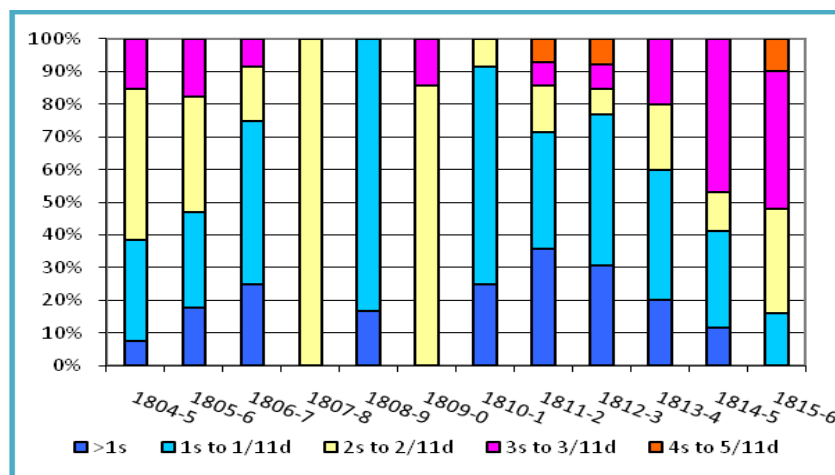


Figure 4.13
Kirkham – Amounts of Weekly Pay to Males – 1804 to 1816 - %
[Overseer’s Account PR798, 802 & 806]

From these it is clear that, whilst women formed the greater proportion of those in receipt of weekly pay, their rates tended to be lower than those paid to men on the

³⁸ From L.R.O. PR810 1814/15. Thomas Ball – weaves sailcloth 16s; Paul Fleetwood 10s; Thomas Dixon – starcher 14s.

³⁹ This is demonstrated by the cases of the Bagshaws and the Whitesides. October 2nd 1814 “Lydea Bagshaw applies for something towards getting up their potatoes. Matthew, 30 yrs, 17s. Lydea does housework; William, 13, weaves cotton, 7s; William, 8, goes to mill, 4s; John, 7; Henry 4, Thomas 3; George 1. Total of £1 8s Od. Not allowed.” Also Thomas Whiteside wants the Town to find him a house. Thomas, bleacher, 15s; Ann winds, 3s; Thomas, 16, weaves sailcloth, 10s. £1 8s Od. The Town will not interfere in this.” *Ibid.*

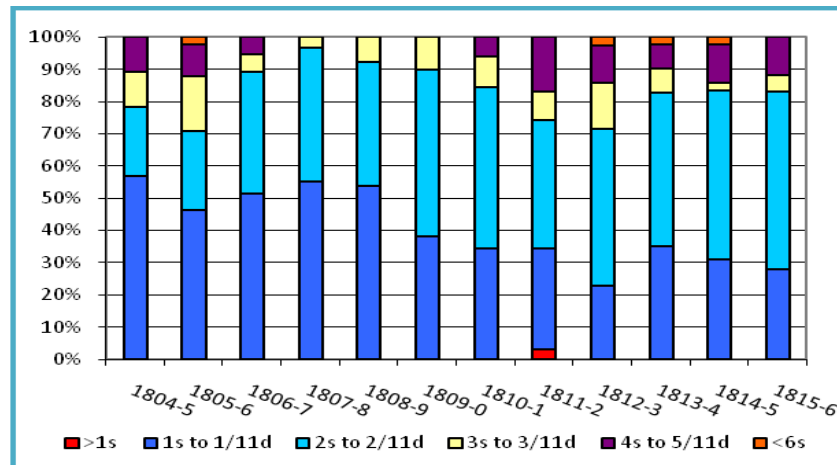


Figure 4.14
Kirkham – Amounts of Weekly Pay to Females – 1804 to 1816 - %
[Overseer’s Account PR798, 802 & 806]

grounds that on the grounds that men had wives and families to support whilst women were either single or widowed even if they had children to support. However, instances appear where relief was given to a woman with children being specifically noted.⁴⁰ The length of time over which weekly pay was received is shown in Figure 4.15.⁴¹

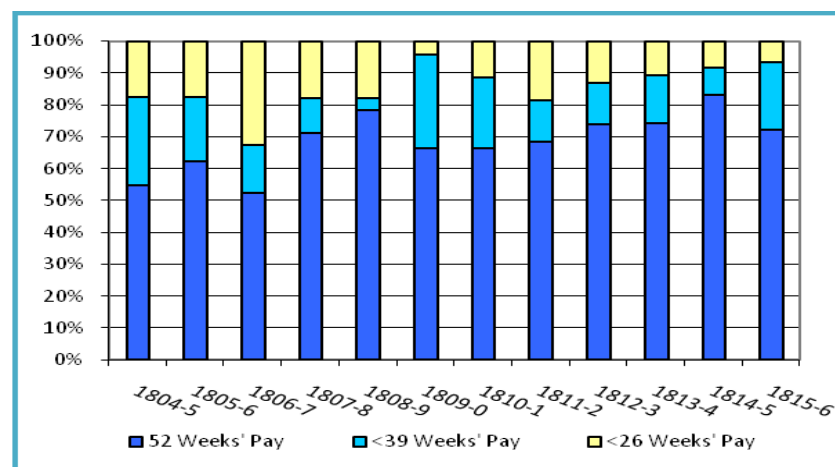


Figure 4.15
Kirkham – Duration of Payment of Weekly Pay – 1804 to 1816 - %
[Overseer’s Account PR798, 802 & 806]

Well over 50% of the recipients were regular pensioners and the figure may have been slightly higher as the graph takes no account of those who received pay for only a part of one year but who received it for the whole of the following and subsequent years. Of those who were regular pensioners for at least a part of the period 1804 to 1816, 35%

⁴⁰ For example, Betty Pickering “and daughter” – PR798 - and Sarah Benson “and children” – PR806 - both of whom made frequent appearances in the lists.

⁴¹ This section also derives its data from L.R.O PR798, PR802 and PR806.

were male and 65%, women. As Pat Thane has written, there were several reasons for this gender discrepancy including women's longer life expectancy⁴² and the fact that when single, either as spinsters or as widows, their earning possibilities were less than those of men.⁴³ However, they became with practice and sheer necessity "skilled manipulators of the Poor Law."⁴⁴

Some women, notably Widow Raby and Mary Silcock, were relieved in this way for the whole of the period. Others like Ellen Gregson and Ann Walton came and went although it is noticeable that their appearances increase in frequency with the passage of time, probably on account of advancing age. Some appear for several years in succession and then disappear. The reason is not always obvious but sometimes death was obviously the cause as in the case of Peggy Porter who received pay from 1804 to May 1807 when her funeral expenses were paid by the Vestry.⁴⁵ Pauper Rachel Cooper came onto the books in 1804, received £14 in weekly pay in her first year and was buried at the expense of the Vestry at a cost of £1 4s 8d in June 1805.⁴⁶ Times were getting harder for the Kirkham poor. Just how hard was demonstrated by the case of the Widow Lingart who in May 1814 "applies for 2 weeks allowance further, not being quite recovered. Allowed one week more."⁴⁷

The regular weekly pensions were supported by additional cash payments, those which King has described as "cash at need"⁴⁸ or "irregular cash payments" and these sums made up 22% of the total expenditure. Figure 4.16 takes the "cash at need" payments presented in Figure 4.9 and shows in percentage terms the allocation of this distribution to the various headings.

⁴² The onset of "old age" was a variable factor as noted in the Introduction to BOTELHO, Lynn & THANE, Pat. *eds. Women and Ageing in British Society since 1500*. Harlow, Pearson Education Limited. 2001. P.29

⁴³ THANE, Pat. 'Women and the Poor Law in Victorian and Edwardian England.' *History Workshop Journal*. 1978. Vol. 6.

⁴⁴ See HANLY, Margaret. 'Women and the Poor Law: 1760-1830.' *The Lancashire Local Historian*. No. 15. 2001/2002. P.29.

⁴⁵ L.R.O. PR798.

⁴⁶ L.R.O. PR802.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

⁴⁸ KING. *Op. cit.* P.199. Table 7.4.

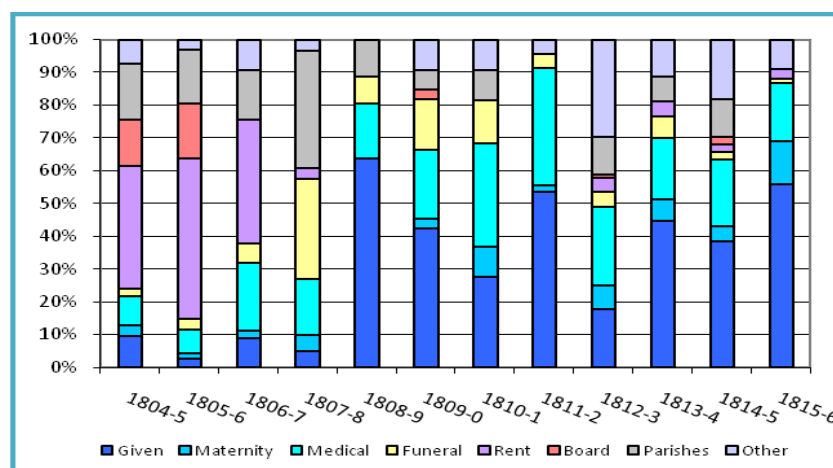


Figure 4.16
Kirkham – Distribution of Cash at Need Payments – 1804 to 1816 - %
[Overseer’s Account PR798, 802 & 806]

These included not only cash payments noted in the accounts as “given” with no reason specified but also money for medical expenses in connection with the life crises of childbirth, sickness and death together with the payment of rents, boarding allowances, friendly society dues and apprentice premiums.

The unspecified cash payments accounted for 28% of the total “cash at need” over the period although, as the figure shows, the amounts varied considerably from year to year and were greatest in years when relief expenditure was generally low, as in 1808/09. Given that this form of assistance was for spending at the pauper’s discretion, it had various functions in the overseer’s relief strategy.⁴⁹ Firstly, it could provide short-term assistance in cases of emergency such as shortage of work or accident. Secondly, it might be given as a temporary measure whilst a pauper’s case was assessed. Thirdly it was sometimes used as a supplement to regular weekly pay in cases of additional need. Finally, it was used as an alternative to regular pay, a strategy which allowed the overseers a greater degree of manoeuvrability and control over their resources as weekly pay, once established, often came to be seen, even if only by the paupers themselves, as a right. In this connection Lees commented that –

Many workers looked upon the poor laws as offering social insurance, which indeed they did. Despite all the problems and the

⁴⁹ *Ibid.* King suggests that “many of those payments described as ‘other’ might have been for rents.” Whilst that might have been the intention, they might well have been squandered on other necessities such as food or the support of the nearest alehouse.

niggling meanness of overseers the laws offered a shelter in bad times. They were a valuable resource to people well aware of the dangers of unemployment, illness and early death. ⁵⁰

Paupers who had this “given” supplement to their income included Nanny Allanson who was receiving weekly pay at the rate of 2s and to whom, in October 1811, the overseer “Gave at 5 sundry times 8s.” ⁵¹ On the other hand, Paul Fleetwood’s wife was allowed a total of 18s shillings in December and January 1807/08. ⁵² Another Paul, possibly the first Paul’s father, was allowed £1 4s 6d between January and May 1810, these being the only amounts granted to them in that year. ⁵³ Amounts varied. Widow Shaw was given sixpence in June 1807 and Mary Collins was granted the generous sum of £1 1s 0d in June 1810. ⁵⁴ Occasionally, the possibility of regular weekly pay was firmly discounted, the paupers having to rely on the irregular sums from the overseers. John Taylor, who applied for such relief in 1812, provides an example. He had five children and was described as “being in a poor way.” The overseers granted him “necessary relief until [he got] better” but he was “Not to have a weekly allowance.” ⁵⁵ Betty Richmond, 1813, provides another instance: “Applies for relief is now sick. Allowed some relief occasionally.” ⁵⁶ Finally, there were times when the overseers would advance money for unusual purposes such as in 1807 when they paid 17s 6d to redeem John Molyneaux’s “new coat” from a Warrington pawnbroker ⁵⁷ and they “gave or lent” William Walton 5s when he was sick, an amount which he subsequently repaid. ⁵⁸ These transactions suggest a flexible attitude to relief on the part of the overseers and the possibility of pawning goods was, as Alannah Tomkins noted, an established part of the economy of makeshifts. ⁵⁹ So was the occasional loan

⁵⁰ LEES. *Op.cit.* P.77. Peter Jones, in an article on pauper clothing, when writing of relief generally, notes that “As one contemporary put it, the poor sometimes called it “the county allowance”, sometimes “the Government allowance”, sometimes “the Act of Parliament allowance”, and always “*our income*.” See JONES, Peter. ‘Clothing the Poor in Early-Nineteenth-Century England.’ *Textile History*. Vol. 37. No.1. 2006.

⁵¹ L.R.O. PR798.

⁵² *Ibid.*

⁵³ *Ibid.*

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵⁵ L.R.O. PR810.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

⁵⁸ L.R.O. PR798.

⁵⁹ See TOMKINS, Alannah. ‘Pawnbroking and the Survival Strategies of the Urban Poor in 1770s York.’ in KING, Steven Andrew and TOMKINS, Alannah. eds. *The Poor in*

of sums of money as distinct from outright grants although as far as Kirkham and Lund were concerned, it was rare but the provision of deferred payment facilities for the provision of tools of trade, mostly looms, was not uncommon.

4 - Medical, Maternity and Funeral Expenses. Boarding.

Turning now to the expenditure occasioned by specific life crises, medical, maternity and funeral costs, these three headings accounted for 33% of the total cash at need.⁶⁰ It was sadly the case that birth, sickness and death were sometimes connected events, pleasure on the birth of an infant being followed by sickness and then by grief on the death of the baby, of the mother, or of both.⁶¹ Whilst, as King noted, there was no specific legislative provision under the old poor law for the care of the sick, the suffering were often subsumed under the heading of “deserving.”⁶² Medical knowledge was increasing as was the variety of the treatments and medicines available to the doctors for the care of even their poorer patients. As time progressed “doctors [surgeons and physicians] and to some extent apothecaries had made great strides in establishing a professional structure.”⁶³ By the early nineteenth century there was “an ever increasing depth of healthcare” where new treatments were being added to although by no means replacing, the traditional remedies.⁶⁴ The provision of medical care by the Town was not entirely altruistic in its motivation. Sick pay and its attendant costs were a drain on resources and it was desirable that sick paupers be returned to health and earning as quickly as possible. As Oxley observed –

There were good reasons why medical treatment should have been extended to the poor as soon as it became available. The parish was responsible for supporting the sick and their families and, even if it

England 1700-1850: an Economy of Makeshifts. Manchester, Manchester University Press. 2003.

⁶⁰ For a discussion of medical provision TOMKINS, Alannah. The Experience of Urban Poverty 1723-1782. Manchester, Manchester University Press. 2006, particularly Chapter 4 and KING, Steven Andrew. ‘Stop this Overwhelming Torment of Destiny: Negotiating Financial Aid at Times of Sickness under the English Old Poor Law, 1800-1840.’ Bulletin of the History of Medicine. Vol.79. 2005. P.228.

⁶¹ For example, the case of Mary Taylor who, in June 1807, received a total of £3 0s 2d of which £2 11s 0d was for “lying in” and the balance for her child’s coffin and funeral costs. L.R.O. PR798.

⁶² KING. *Op.cit.* ‘Torment’ P.229.

⁶³ STRINGER. Alison. ‘Depth and Diversity in Parochial Health Care: Northamptonshire 1750-1830.’ Family and Community History. Vol. 9/1. P.43. 2006.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.* For a discussion of these remedies, see Chapter Five of CHAMBERLAIN, Mary. Old Wives’ Tales: their History, Remedies and Spells. London, Virago Press Limited. 1981.

required additional expenditure, the sooner they could be cured and restored to independence the better. ⁶⁵

The lack of precision in the legislation as to what might be provided inevitably had its echo at parish and township level and Tomkins drew attention to the fact that “Sickness and physical debility were familiar accompaniments to the experience of being poor” noting that the incidence of sickness was often a double-edged sword as it could reduce family income at the same time as it demanded additional expenditure with consequent calls upon the Town. ⁶⁶ Medical expenditure generally was rising during the period with approximately 15% being allocated under this heading between 1800 and 1820. ⁶⁷ At Kirkham, expenditure of this nature was rather less. ⁶⁸ Even in the peak year, 1811/12, it absorbed little over 8% of the total expenditure and the average for the period 1804/05 to 1815/16 was around 5%. If the expenditure on funerals is included, the average figure was still only just over 7%.

In total 172 Kirkham families received assistance under these three headings and, whilst, as these included relief given just to men or to women or to families, precise analysis is not possible, an approximate split suggests that 51% of applications were in respect of, although not necessarily made by, women, 36% for men and the balance of 13% for children or grandchildren. However, the female percentage must be slightly weighted by the lying-in factor.

Here, as in all relief provision, there was diversity. Paupers such as John Gregson’s wife were relieved only once in this way whilst others featured regularly in the lists. Amongst the latter was the family of Thomas Ball whose first appearance was in January 1807 when he unsuccessfully applied for a grant towards the burial of a child. ⁶⁹ He and his wife were subsequently relieved in seven of the twelve years of the

⁶⁵ OXLEY, Geoffrey O. Poor Relief in England and Wales 1601-1834. Newton Abbot, David and Charles. 1974, P.65.

⁶⁶ TOMKINS. *Op.cit.* Experience. P.120.

⁶⁷ KING. *Op. cit.* Poverty. Figure 7.5. P.200.

⁶⁸ KING. *Op.cit.* Poverty. P.200. Figure 7.5. He indicates that the proportion of medical expenditure was rising from around 17% in 1800 to 20% in 1810 and 22% in 1820. Stringer. *Op.cit.* suggests that in Northamptonshire in 1800, sickness absorbed 10% of the outlay on poor relief.

⁶⁹ L.R.O. PR798, PR802, PR806 and PR810.

series and although both of them had periods of sickness, she became pregnant again on at least three occasions as she applied for “lying-in allowance” in February 1811, April 1813 and February 1816. ⁷⁰ Other relief included cash “being sick”, doctor’s fees, weekly pay, food, bedding, coals and tools of trade and the impression is given that the Ball family were amongst those which King was considering when he observed that applicants for relief were well aware of their rights and of how the system operated at the level of their community. ⁷¹

The purely medical payments covered a variety of provision which included cash advances “being sick” either because the illness reduced the weekly income of the family or additional expenditure was required. The doctor’s fees, including medicines, were also paid and nursing and ‘tenting’ costs occasionally met. Again, King drew attention to the fact that provision of relief in this category was not invariably straightforward and that it was often the outcome of “a wide-open country of delay, exclusion, posturing, demand, counteroffer, reapplication, and dispute” and that, in common with demands for other forms of relief, many applicants were rejected before their plight was ever recorded in the overseer’s books or had their requests rejected outright or met only partially. ⁷² Richard Aspinall’s wife, for example, applied, in May 1813 “for some linen for children now in smallpox.” ⁷³ The response was a terse “No old linen now in the House.” She got nothing. Similarly, November 1810, “Robert Dickson’s wife applies for relief, her husband being sick. Not allowed at present, having been relieved a month ago.” ⁷⁴ However, some paupers managed successfully to negotiate the wide-open country to which King referred. Amongst them was Ellen Bagshaw who, in March 1810, received a total of 7s 6d on two occasions in addition to her regular weekly pay of 2s 6d. ⁷⁵ Similarly, Jenny Simpson received money “daughter being sick” in addition to coals, clothing and footwear and, in February

⁷⁰ L.R.O. PR810.

⁷¹ KING. *Op.cit.* ‘Torment.’

⁷² *Ibid.*

⁷³ L.R.O. PR810

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

⁷⁵ L.R.O. PR798

1805, £1 2s 4d for her daughter's funeral. ⁷⁶ In contrast, John Taylor, in 1809, received £1 15s 0d in October and November with no further assistance that year. ⁷⁷ The nature of the sickness or disability was not always stated but Henry Raby received a total of £6 12s 6½d in 1804 "whilst insain" ⁷⁸ and in May and June the following year Molly Bamber was given a total of £2 0 6d "son in pox." ⁷⁹ Richard Raby was given 9s "being scalden" and John Hatch received £2 "cash being burned", both in 1805/6, ⁸⁰ whilst Frank Fleetwood "being lame of his leg" had 2s in October 1808. ⁸¹ Pox, ⁸² fever ⁸³ and typhus, ⁸⁴ are mentioned whilst two paupers, the daughter of William Hutchinson ⁸⁵ and Thomas McCounsel, ⁸⁶ suffered from rheumatic fever. However, in the majority of cases "being sick" is the only comment.

The distribution of the money allocated to this heading appears in Table 4c. £133 was paid directly to the paupers in the form either of additional cash allowances as instanced above or in fees to the tenters or nurses. Grace Taylor, for example, whose lengthy sickness in the autumn and winter of 1805 ended with her death and a parish funeral in January 1805, was allowed a tenter at a cost of 18s during the weeks immediately before her death. ⁸⁷ Other instances include Ruth Dennat who had 5s 3d allowed to her for "waiting and washing" in September 1809 ⁸⁸ and John Lingart who had a nurse for his wife for two weeks at a cost of 8s in March 1812. ⁸⁹ These varied descriptions of help covered, as Samantha Williams has noted, a range of skills for "The Parish also provided domiciliary care: when they were too sick or infirm, paupers

⁷⁶ L.R.O. PR802

⁷⁷ L.R.O. PR798

⁷⁸ L.R.O. PR802

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

⁸¹ L.R.O. PR798.

⁸² For instance Molly Bamber's son, Alice Robinson's children and John Taylor's son in 1805/6. L.R.O. PR802

⁸³ For instance Widow Raby's son in 1807/8. L.R.O. PR798.

⁸⁴ For instance Sarah Glover in 1810/11. L.R.O. PR798.

⁸⁵ L.R.O. PR810.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

⁸⁹ *Ibid.* The use of different terms – tenting, nursing, waiting and washing – suggest varying levels of "care" but there is no indication of exactly what services were covered by each.

were helped in a range of tasks, from housework and laundry to skilled nursing and assistance at childbirth, and were nursed, either back to health or in their final days, by parish carers and nurses” although she suggests that, in poor law records, the terms were employed with a degree of freedom.⁹⁰ The extent to which such services were provided varied from one place to the next but Williams suggests that in the parishes which she studied they presented a regular method of relief provision and that they were occasionally provided by men as well as women with other paupers being called upon to help.⁹¹ This was apparently not generally the case in Kirkham for there are only twelve recorded examples of “personal services” from 1804 to 1816. Of these, four were specifically for “nursing.”⁹² A further seven were for “caring” and one might have been either for personal care or domestic cleaning.⁹³ Amongst those paupers who provided such services was Margaret Swann who received 10s for attendance upon the Lund family in 1814. She appeared in the relief lists in every year from 1804/05 to 1815/16.⁹⁴ Another was the wife of Thomas Ball who attended Thomas Marsh in 1813 at a cost of 2s 6d a week for an unspecified period, She received relief from 1810 to 1816⁹⁵ The balance of £55 was paid to the doctors by way of fees.

The most noticeable feature is the manner in which the number of patients and the expenditure incurred on their behalf mirrors, with the exception of a “blip” in 1806/07, the trend of overall expenditure as shown in Figure 3.2 and this clear

⁹⁰ WILLIAMS, Samantha. ‘Caring for the Sick Poor: Poor Law nurses in Bedfordshire, c1770-1834.’ In LANE, Penelope, RAVEN, Neil & SNELL, K. D.M. Eds. Women, Work and Wages in England, 1600-1850. Woodbridge, Boydell Press. 2004. P.141.

⁹¹ *Ibid.* P.152.

⁹² For example, in 1808/09, C. Proctor’s wife was paid for a period of ten months for “attending” and “waiting-on” Nanny Charnock. Nanny was also “attended” by Thomas Parkinson’s wife for a few weeks prior to her death in March 1811.

⁹³ For example, in 1813, Mary Nixon applied for “something for taking care of Agnes Ball.” She was allowed 5s. L.R.O. PR810. In 1813/14, George Pegram’s wife was sick. He was allowed 1s for soap, 9s for washing and cleaning and 2s for “Agnes Carter for attending on her.” L.R.O. PR806. Pegram himself provides an example of the employment of a pauper on “community service.” In December 1807 he was paid 1s 6½d for “cleaning Square” and was provided with besoms at a cost of 3d each. L.R.O. PR798.

⁹⁴ L.R.O. PR802, PR798 & PR806.

⁹⁵ L.R.O. PR798, PR806. Parish nurses and pauper nurses feature largely in the literature where they are seen as providing maternity services, acting as ‘wet-nurses’, caring for the dying, laying out the dead and offering domestic services such as washing and cleaning. See WILLIAMS. *Op.cit.*

Year	Patients & Recipients	Doctors' Fees	Sick Pay	Total
1804/05	2 + 21	1 00 06	16 14 02	17 14 08
1805/06	2 + 14	0 11 06	09 01 05	09 16 11
1806/07	12 + 14	2 15 00	14 17 06	17 12 06
1807/08	5 + 11	2 08 03	07 19 00	10 07 03
1808/09	5 + 8	0 19 09	04 13 00	05 12 09
1809/10	10+ 5	2 13 04	04 08 09	07 02 01
1810/11	0 + 19	0	17 00 06	17 00 06
1811/12	26 + 19	15 03 06	18 13 08	33 17 02
1812/13	24+ 22	9 15 01	17 14 09	27 09 10
1813/14	27 + 11	9 08 06	10 18 00	20 06 06
1814/15	16 + 6	4 17 02	04 05 00	09 02 02
1815/16	12 + 6	5 05 05	06 14 00	11 19 00
Total	141 + 156	54 18 00	132 19 09	187 17 09

Table 4b
Numbers of Doctors' Patients, Amounts of Doctors' Fees
Sick Pay and Numbers of Recipients -
1804 to 1816
[Overseer's Account PR798, 802 & 806]

The first figure in the 'Patients' Column is the number receiving attention from the doctors. The second is the number who received sick pay. The figures are not mutually exclusive as some paupers received relief under both headings.

relationship calls for comment. The increase in medical costs in the years 1811/12, 1812/13 and 1812/14 is probably symptomatic of other influences which contributed to the general increase and Dave Wragg has shown that diseases such as scarletina, scarlet fever, influenza, measles, typhus and smallpox were prevalent in early

nineteenth century Lancashire. ⁹⁶ He notes the visitations in 1811 of measles, typhus and smallpox and of measles and smallpox in the following year and these outbreaks, particularly when present together, although not specifically referred to in the overseer's accounts, created upward pressure on demand and therefore additional expenditure. It is also noticeable that the provision of personal services such as washing is only to be found from 1808/09 onwards.

Medical services were provided by four doctors ⁹⁷ and, although Kirkham's doctors do not appear to have had formal contracts ⁹⁸ the overseers seem to have been in a position to require medical attendance when they thought it necessary as in June 1806 they ordered that "Mr. Parkinson the apothecary *must* ⁹⁹ attend Peggy Margerison during her sickness when necessary" and in February 1812 they issued the same instructions for a visit to Richard Aspindale and his family. ¹⁰⁰ Fees paid to the doctors also varied considerably. Agnes Ball cost the authorities 3d in 1806/07 ¹⁰¹ whilst, at the other end of the scale Ishmail Salisbury's family received treatment costing £2 8s 8d in 1811/12. ¹⁰² On occasion the overseers made exceptional payments. "Betty Bennett, the wife of John Bennett, formerly Hodkinson, had a son before marriage, now 14, who is a weaver. The boy has lately had a bad finger and went Over-Wyre to have it cured. She requests something to pay for his cure. Allowed £1 1s 0d." ¹⁰³

The accounts give little indication of what treatment was provided although they note that James Allanson was prescribed two shillings' worth of "physic" in the September of

⁹⁶ List of Famines & Pestilences in England – Lancashire. Internet. [www.http.dave-wragg.staff.shef.ac.uk/LOCHIST/epidems.htm](http://www.dave-wragg.staff.shef.ac.uk/LOCHIST/epidems.htm). Accessed June 2006.

⁹⁷ For the doctors' perspective, see DIGBY, Anne. Making a Medical Living; Doctors and Patients in the English Market for Medicine, 1720-1911. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press. 1994 particularly Chapter 8 and KING, Steven Andrew A Fylde Country Practice: Medicine and Society in Lancashire, circa 1760-1840. Lancaster, Lancaster University Centre for North-West Regional Studies. 2001.

⁹⁸ But see KING. *Op.cit.* Fylde. P.66. He suggests that Dr. Parkinson possibly had a contract and certainly he attended the Kirkham paupers from 1806 to 1816.

⁹⁹ L.R.O. PR802. Writer's italics. Parkinson is usually referred to as "Dr. Parkinson" but at other times as "Apothecary Parkinson" or "Mr. Parkinson," an inconsistency which possibly reflected on his qualifications.

¹⁰⁰ L.R.O. PR810.

¹⁰¹ L.R.O. PR802.

¹⁰² L.R.O. PR806.

¹⁰³ L.R.O. PR798.

1806, Ellen Smith was granted a half-bottle of wine at 2/3d each on two occasions in 1807 and William Walton was allowed “salve for his legs” in October 1808.¹⁰⁴ An account presented to the overseers by Dr. Parkinson for 1809¹⁰⁵ lists two specific items namely 1/6d worth of panegoric, a pain-killer, prescribed for Agnes Ball and aloes, a laxative, to the value of 10d, provided for a lengthy period for Alice Clarkson. Apart from these, draughts, pills, mixtures, emetics, ointments and powders also feature in the list as treatments for unspecified ills. Equally, the reason for the allowance of “a quart of ale weekly at two different times during the winter” for four male paupers, Matthew Dickerson, Richard Gradwell, Thomas Ogden and Thomas Whittaker, is also unclear. However, apart from the occasional provision of wine and ale, purchases more likely to have been prompted by medical need rather than consideration for the pauper’s comfort, there is no indication of the level of provision noted by Tomkins which included “brandy, gin and wine . . . biscuits, apples and tarts.”¹⁰⁶ Kirkham does not appear to have encouraged extravagance in its pauper community.

The overall picture is that the sick were cared for in their own homes although on occasion they were taken into the Workhouse.¹⁰⁷ John Clarkson and his wife applied for relief when he and his wife were both sick in 1807. They were given the choice either of going into the House or of waiting for a decision until the next meeting of the relief committee.¹⁰⁸ On rare occasions the overseer paid for the sick to be boarded with other townspeople.¹⁰⁹ Larger towns had the benefit of hospitals.¹¹⁰ However, Kirkham lacked such provision although the overseer appears to have had access to some such institution as there is a note in August 1815 concerning Robert Taylor on

¹⁰⁴ L.R.O. PR802. L.R.O. PR810.

¹⁰⁵ L.R.O. PR834/14.

¹⁰⁶ TOMKINS. *Op.cit.* Experience. P.125.

¹⁰⁷ WILLIAMS. *Op.cit.* P.143 supports this assertion. “Most care was given on a relatively informal basis by other members of the sick person’s family including servants.”

¹⁰⁸ L.R.O. PR810.

¹⁰⁹ 1804. William Greenall’s son 2 weeks in 1804 and 3 weeks in 1805. L.R.O. PR802. Grace Taylor was given money for “2 weeks lodging” in November 1804 immediately prior to her death. L.R.O. PR802. Thomas Houghton in 1811 was allowed “his board when sick.” L.R.O. PR798.

¹¹⁰ See the work of TOMKINS and of WILLIAMS. *Op.cit.* for a discussion on hospital and infirmary provision.

whose behalf it was decided “to apply to Mr. W. Hornby to get him into the hospital and to come into the Poor House for the present.”¹¹¹

It was not only cases of sickness which required the attention of the medical profession and assistance from the Town. Pregnancy also called for both. However, Tomkins has observed that “Relatively little is known about what paupers in different places could expect in the way of maternity provision once their parish had accepted responsibility” but there were probably locally accepted standards beyond which provision would not normally be extended.¹¹² She went on to say that in some areas the Town might make contributions to the expenses not only of the birth but also of the Christening although “the latter was presumably not technically or medically necessary but nonetheless customary and desirable.”¹¹³ She refers to the provision of “cash doles, cloth and most frequently food and drink” in connection with the birth and with food and “payments for caudle ingredients and christening hospitality.” Whilst she was writing of an earlier period, such provision possibly continued into the period with which this study is concerned. What is clear is that at Kirkham, whatever expectations the pregnant paupers had in this respect were likely to be disappointed. As far as the official record was concerned, churching of the mother, baptism of the newborn and contributions towards the cost of the attendant celebrations were never mentioned however much the poor might have desired them. Applications for relief in connection with births there certainly were but again they were not always accepted. Of the fifteen requests noted in the Overseer’s Payment Book, eleven were accepted with at least one of these appearing to have been granted only after appeal to a magistrate and four being refused.¹¹⁴ Other rejected applications include that of William Dickson’s wife who, in June 1806 was “going to be confined and wants the

¹¹¹ L.R.O. PR810. Possibly private provision. None of the nearby larger towns such as Preston and Blackpool appear to have had either a publicly or charitably funded institution at this time. The nearest was Lancaster, some thirty miles distant.

¹¹² TOMKINS. *Op.cit.* Experience. P.126.

¹¹³ *Ibid.* P.128.

¹¹⁴ L.R.O., PR810. 23rd January 1807. Susannah Clarkson, wife of Ben of Chorley applies for something towards paying their rent and during her lying-in. Allowed one guinea by Mr. W. Langton.

Town to pay for the doctor. Not allowed.”¹¹⁵ By contrast, Richard Fleetwood’s wife fared rather better. She became pregnant three times during the period under review, receiving 10s 6d on the first occasion, the services of a nurse on the second when she had twins, and 15s on the third. Edward Kirby’s wife received 10s for her first pregnancy in 1810 and £1 for her second in 1814.

These “lying-in” allowances were the most common form of relief provided in connection with childbirth and, like sick pay, were intended either to supplement the family income whilst the mother was temporarily unable to work or to meet the additional expenditure which the arrival of a baby required. Thirty-eight pregnancies attracted a total of over £49 and the details are set out in Table 4b. At an average allowance of some £1 6s 0d per pauper, these payments might seem to be generous particularly when it is considered that they were several times the amount of the weekly pension received by the majority of paupers but the numbers suggest that, as always, the overseers had their eye on keeping expenditure at a low level as far as possible. What is of interest is that whilst thirty-eight allowances were paid over the period, the bulk of them were paid in the later years at a time when poor relief in the town was generally on the increase. The overseers’ records attribute payments either to the wife of a named male pauper or to a named woman and the presumption has to be that the latter were single women. Seventeen married women accounted for twenty-three of the births indicating that multiple pregnancies did not preclude the families from subsequent lying-in relief nor, for that matter, from other relief as the cases of Edward Kirby, whose wife gave birth in 1810, 1812 and 1814, and Richard Fleetwood whose wife became pregnant in 1810, 1812 and 1815, amply demonstrate.¹¹⁶

Fifteen women, whose husbands were not listed, also received financial assistance with the birth of their children, none of them appearing in the lists more than once.¹¹⁷

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁶ The wives of Richard Fleetwood and Edward Kirkby received lying-in allowances on two occasions and those of Matthew Bagshaw, Thomas Ball and Ishmail Salisbury on three.

¹¹⁷ TOMKINS. *Op.cit.* Experience. P.127. She too has observed that relief of this kind was restricted neither to married nor single women.

Only one widow, the relict of William Cowburn, received assistance, being granted £1 10s 0d in addition to a weekly allowance and clothing. The implication of the fact that she is described as “William Cowburn’s widow” is that William died between conception and birth.

As the overseer’s record was apparently at pains to note births to, for instance, the *wives* of George and James Raby, emphasising the marital relationship, and to note the widowed state of Mrs. Cowburn, it may be presumed that when no man is

Year	Amount	Recipients	Names			
1804/05	7 10 00	4	William Gregson's Wife. Fanny Hamblet.			
			Sally Johnson. Martha Mason.			
1805/06	2 10 02	2	Grace Allanson. Ishmail Salisbury's wife.			
1806/07	2 00 06	2	James Benson's wife. Margaret Snape.			
1807/08	2 11 00	1	Mary Taylor.			
1808/09	0	0				
1809/10	0 03 03	1	Rachel Taylor.			
1810/11	4 15 00	4	Richard Fleetwood's wife. Betty Hutchinson.			
			Edward Kirby's wife. Ellen Smith.			
1811/12	1 17 06	2	William Cowbrand's widow.			
			Ishmail Salisbury's wife.			
1812/13	7 16 00	7	Richard Fleetwood's wife. James Higginson's wife.			
			Edward Kirby's wife. Jane Lund. George Raby's wife.			
			Peggy, wife of James Raby. Jane Taylor.			
1813/14	7 01 00	6	Matthew Bagshaw's wife. Thomas Ball's wife.			
			Paul Fleetwood's wife. William Greenall's wife.			
			Mary Liver. Ellen Porter.			
1814/15	2 00 00	2	Edward Kirby's wife. James Kirby's wife.			
1815/16	9 05 06	6	Matthew Bagshaw's wife. Thomas Ball's wife.			
			Richard Fleetwood's wife. Ellen Foster.			
			Richard Smith's wife. Jane Wilding.			
Total	48 09 11	37				

Table 4c
Kirkham - Lying-in Allowances – Amounts Paid and to Whom
1804 to 1816
[Overseer’s Account PR798, 802 & 806]

mentioned, the new mothers were single women and their offspring were bastards. This presumption is in fact confirmed elsewhere in the sources in thirteen of the fifteen cases and it is probable that the remaining two were also illegitimate births.¹¹⁸ These fifteen women were those who were granted lying-in relief. However, combining these names with the list of those women who were assisted by the overseers to “filiate” it would appear that some forty women gave birth to bastards from 1804 to 1816 and in two cases, those of Betty Hesketh and Mary Tyrer, it is possible that the women produced a second illegitimate child. This figure represents about 10% of all the women who were relieved in some way but only eight received assistance with filiating and other relief as well as with their lying-in. A further four were given a lying-in allowance and assistance with filiating whilst fourteen were helped with filiating and otherwise relieved. The balance of fourteen either only had their children paid for by the Town or were given help with filiating their infants. How far this situation constituted a bastardy-prone sub-society amongst the pauper class as described by King is open to question.¹¹⁹ On one hand, a figure of 10% of pauper women being the mothers of bastards might seem high. On the other, the figure represents an average of only three a year. Again, whilst, as noted above, it seems possible that two women had a second bastard, it is unlikely that Kirkham, at least amongst its pauper class, had anybody to compare with King’s example of Charlotte Eastwood of Billington, Lancashire, who gave birth to six bastards by four different fathers over a period of 15 years.¹²⁰ Indeed, it is more probable that the relationships which produced these illegitimate births were by way of what John Black, in his work on London, described as being “of an everyday and non-deviant nature”¹²¹ and possibly even to men and women who anticipated a marriage which, in the event, never took place or just an aspect of the physical manifestation of the “demonstrable, dramatic lowering of the

¹¹⁸ This section again derives from L.R.O. PR798, PR802, PR806 and PR810. See particularly PR810 for October 8th 1806, October 7th 180 and November 3rd 1810.

¹¹⁹ KING, Steven Andrew. ‘The Bastardy Prone Sub-Society again: Bastards and their Fathers and Mothers in Lancashire, Wiltshire and Somerset, 1800-1840.’ In LEVENE, Alys, NUTT, Thomas and WILLIAMS, Samantha. Eds. Illegitimacy in Britain 1700-1920. Basingstoke, Palgrave MacMillan. 2005.

¹²⁰ KING. *Op.cit.* ‘Bastardy.’

¹²¹ BLACK, John. ‘Who were the Putative Fathers of Illegitimate Children in London, 1740-1810?’ In LEVENE, NUTT and WILLIAMS. *Op.cit.*

franchise to heterosexual intercourse, a sort of sexual democratisation which made it easier to couple” to which Thomas Laqueur has drawn attention.¹²²

The birth of a bastard created difficulties of a legal, ecclesiastical, moral and social nature. These might have had an immediate effect upon the mother, possibly upon the father and upon the child itself in later life. ¹²³ However, whilst the overseers must have been aware of the problems of single mothers and their bastards, and would have been influenced by the attitude of the community towards such cases, their principal concern was with the level of expenditure and, in the case of bastards, to do their best to make sure the father made some contribution to the upkeep of the child and its mother. Their efforts, unless a mutually satisfactory agreement between mother and father could be arrived at, involved the procedure of filiating which required an appearance by the mother in front of a magistrate who would examine her to establish the identity of the father, make an order for payment and, if necessary, issue a warrant for his apprehension. ¹²⁴ These extracts from the overseer’s records show the extent to which he was prepared to go.

1804/05	Edward Smith & Daughter. Paid for a warrant 4s. Paid for a Man to take the man 2s 6d. To meet Smith & daughter to get a warrant 6s. Betty Pickering & Daughter. Going to get daughter’s child fathered. 6s. Paid for a warrant 4s. Paid for a man going to Leyland to seek the child’s father 2s. Fanny Hamblet. Going with Fanny to father child 6s.
1805/06	Meeting Betty Ray to father child 6s.
1806/07	Going with Alice Allanson to father child 6s. Going with Betty Hetherington to filiate 6s. [John Barnes is noted as paying for him in October 1807] ¹²⁵ Going with Mary Snape to father 4s 6d. Going with Jane Bradshaw to father her child 6s. Going with Betty Bamber to father her child 6s.

¹²² LAQUEUR, Thomas. ‘Sex and Desire in the Industrial Revolution.’ In O’BRIEN, Patrick and QUINAULT, Roland. The Industrial Revolution and British Society. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press. 1993.

¹²³ These are discussed by MacFARLANE, Alan. ‘Illegitimacy and Illegitimates in English History.’ In LASLETT, Peter, OOSTERVEEN, Karla & SMITH, Richard M. Eds. Bastardy and its Comparative History: Studies in the History of Illegitimacy and Marital Nonconformism in Britain, France, Germany, Sweden, North America, Jamaica and Japan. London, Edward Arnold (Publishers) Ltd. 1980.

¹²⁴ No bastardy certificates for Kirkham appear to have survived for the period under discussion and there are only five for the preceding years. One of these, L.R.O. PR831/1, was issued against Christopher Waddington who appeared in the Introduction.

¹²⁵ L.R.O. PR810

1807/08	Going to Preston with Mary Allanson to father her child 6s – twice.
1808/09	Going with Mary Tyrer to father her child 6s.
1809/00	Going with R. Taylor to father her child 6s and paid for her filiation order 8s. Going with Jane Bamber to father her child 6s. Paid for her examination 4s.
1810/11	Going with Jane Bamber to father her child 6s James Hall is noted a paying in November 1810] Going with Sarah Benson to filiate. Her filiation order 6s. Going ith Betty Hutchinson to father her child 6s. Paid for her examination and a warrant 4s.
1811/12	Going with Nanny Alanson to father 6s, warrant for above 4s and affiliation order 6s. Going with N. Parkinson to filiate 6s. Going with M. Tyrer to father her child 6s.
1812/13	Going with Betty Smith to filiate 6s Going with Jane Taylor to filiate 6s. Going with Betty Whiteside to father 6s. Going with Betty Hesketh to father her child 6s.
1813/4	Going with Betty Hesketh to filiate 15s. Going with Mary Liver to father child 6s. Going with Ellen Smith to filiate 6s.
1814/15	Going with Betty Taylor to father her child 6s. Gave Betty Taylor to filiate 10s Going with Mary Fairclough to father her child 6s Going with Betty Cowbrand to father her child and a warrant for the father 14s.
1815/16	Going with Betty Hesketh to filitate 10s. Pd for Grace Allanson fathering her child and two warrants 8s Going with Jane Wilding to filiate. Spent on her twice £1 7s 0d

The total amount immediately expended was minimal but failure in filiating had implied consequences for future relief levels. The outcome of these proceedings was not always evident but in October 1807 the Vestry made a list of the “Ages of Children chargeable to the Township of Kirkham.”¹²⁶ This noted seventeen children of thirteen mothers. Heading the list was Alice Walton who had four children aged from four to twelve years although her marital status is not mentioned. Seven of the remaining children were described as bastards, their mothers being Betty Hetherington, Ann Higginson, Ellen Miller, Martha Moss, Phillis Ogden, Peggy Simpson and Lydia Walton. Of these, the overseer’s attempts to have the father contribute to his child’s maintenance were successful in the case of Betty, Phillis, Lydea, Martha and Peggy

¹²⁶ L.R.O.PR810.

but in only one case, that of Betty, is the father named. In the case of Ann Higginson's child "the father ran away" whilst in that of Ellen Miller's five year old "the father not found."

They carried out a similar exercise in November 1810 when they were paying for twenty-one children again of thirteen mothers although these were not exactly the same as in 1807. ¹²⁷ Fourteen children were being paid for by the Town of whom at least six were bastards. Alice Walton was still on the list and so was Betty Hetherington whose child, now aged four years, was still being supported by Mr. Barnes. Rachael Taylor's infant was being paid for by George Cook and James Hall was supporting Jane Bamber's child. It is clear therefore that where possible the fathers were compelled to contribute to the maintenance of their offspring and absconding fathers of legitimate children were also pursued. Some married fathers, possibly seeing an unscheduled departure as a solution to their problems, were sought out by the authorities. John Snape ran away leaving his children with another James Snape, possibly his father or brother and James Higginson and Thomas Taylor also took flight, leaving their wives and families in the workhouse. Warrants for their apprehension were issued and, in the case of John Fisher, information as to his whereabouts was sought: April 1809: "Gave a man to enquire after John Fisher" ¹²⁸ and the Blackburn overseers were warned, in October 1808, that one of their charges, a John Smith, would have a warrant taken out against him if he did not contribute to the maintenance of his wife and child who were sojourning in the Kirkham Poor House. ¹²⁹ Men were not alone in their urge to abscond: William Hall junior was granted 2s 6d in December 1811 when his wife ran way. ¹³⁰

The fact that a woman had given birth to a bastard child was clearly no barrier to relief ¹³¹ and, although as Frank Crompton has noted "under [an] act passed in 1810,

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*

¹²⁸ L.R.O. PR798.

¹²⁹ L.R.O. PR810.

¹³⁰ L.R.O. PR798.

¹³¹ This assertion is confirmed in HANLY, Margaret. 'The Economy of Makeshifts and the Role of the Poor Law: a Game of Chance?' *In* KING and TOMKINS. *Op.cit.* Poor.

mothers of illegitimate children were to be sent to the house of correction, with the offspring left to be cared for in the workhouse,” the Kirkham overseers do not appear to have exercised this right.¹³² On the contrary, relief was frequently granted. Grace Allanson, for example, having received lying-in allowance in April 1805, was relieved in 1806, 1807 and in every year from 1810 to 1815. Her benefits included weekly pay, funeral expenses for her child, clothing and small amounts of cash at need. Rachel Taylor, having been granted a lying-in allowance in 1809, was given weekly pay for 26 weeks in the same year and for the whole of the subsequent year. Similarly, Mary Liver, who “lay-in” in 1813, received weekly pay at the rate of 2s for the remainder of that year and for the two subsequent years.

Turning now to life’s final crisis, death, and the experience of pauper families, Peter Jupp observed that –

All societies perpetuate their social boundaries after death. Social distinctions, by gender, age, class or ethnicity, have always been identifiable in the degree of investment in the disposal of the dead . . . Whilst complex funerary arrangements follow the death of a king, perfunctory ceremonies will often indicate the social unimportance of the dead.¹³³

Julie Rugg has similarly demonstrated that, for those who could afford it, funerals were occasions for “conspicuous consumption” in a manner reflecting the status of the departed. However, pauper funerals, particularly those funded by the Town, were more basic although she suggests that –

In some areas, these [pauper] funerals – even up to the early nineteenth century – bore some resemblance to the rituals attending other members of the community. Thus, for example, the death of a poor, unknown deaf-mute in custody in Oxford in 1775 met with the civic response of a burial in the churchyard, with the coffin carried by bearer, refreshment for those involved and a peal of bells.¹³⁴

Thomas Laqueur went farther than this, noting the change in attitude to pauper funerals between 1750 and 1850 and commenting that –

no special meaning seems to have been attached to these burials [of the poor] until the middle of the eighteenth century. Then, however, the

¹³² CROMPTON, Frank. *Workhouse Children*. Stroud, Sutton Publishing. 1997. P.10.

¹³³ JUPP, Peter C. & Howarth, Glenys. *Eds. The Changing Face of Death*. Basingstoke, MacMillan Press Limited. 1997. P.3

¹³⁴ RUGG, Julie. ‘From Reason to Regulation: 1760-1850.’ In JUPP, Peter C. and GITTINGS, Clare. *Death in England: an Illustrated History*. Manchester, Manchester University Press. 1999. P.224.

funerals of the poor became pauper funerals and pauper funerals became occasions both terrifying to contemplate oneself and profoundly degrading to one's survivors . . . Funerals thus became the ritual occasions for definitively marking social place . . . For the rich and successful . . . the funeral could be anticipated with equanimity. Not so for the poor and friendless; it haunted them as the specter of failure. ¹³⁵

The attitude of Kirkham's citizens, particularly the paupers, to the possibility of being buried "on the parish" is unrecorded, but provision was basic. During the period under discussion the town funded a total of sixty-one funerals at a cost of £65. These paupers came from fifty families and Table 4c shows the amounts which the town paid out and for whom. ¹³⁶ The average cost of a pauper funeral was in the order of £1 3s 8d. This included seventeen shillings for the coffin, although coffins for babies and children were cheaper. The sum of two shillings and eight pence was generally paid for church dues, probably including fees to the vicar and gravediggers, with the balance being used to pay for bread and ale for the mourners. These are the only three items for which the Town paid in connection with funerals and the brief list forms a contrast of the deaths were those of children, sometimes of siblings and Ishmail Salisbury, for example, buried two of his family in 1810/11. On occasion the mother and child followed closely. Thomas McCounsell, described as "an Irishman", buried his wife in December 1810 and a child in the following January whilst in May 1813 John Lingart buried his wife and then a few months later interred his child. At least one entry suggests a still-born infant as Mary Taylor received money for lying-in with the same entry in the overseer's book noting the provision of a funeral. The cost of funerals was sometimes met by the town's friendly societies, membership of which conferred

¹³⁵ LAQUEUR, Thomas. 'Bodies, Death and Pauper Funerals.' Representations. 1983. Vol.1. The changing level of provision in pauper funerals which these writers discuss is symptomatic of the changing attitudes to pauperdom in general noticed in Chapter Two.

¹³⁶ Whilst other surnames appear more than once, there is no evidence of any family connection.

Year	No.	Cost	Paid at	Total	Names
			Death		
1804/05	4	4 13 00	00 07 06	05 00 06	Jenny Backshaw. James Higginson's Son. Jenny Simpson's daughter. Grace Taylor.
1805/06	5	4 00 08	00 10 06	04 11 02	Rachel Cooper Nanny Davis. Betty Foster's child. Grace Taylor's child. James Willacy.
1806/07	4	4 13 00	0	04 13 00	Agnes Ball's daughter. James Benson. John Hey's wife. Jenny Pitt.
1807/08	8	18 19 02	0	18 19 02	Thomas Fleetwod's child. John Johnson's wife. James Marginson. Peggy Porter. Jenny Simpson. Alice Taylor. Mary Taylor's baby. Ann Vickery.
1808/09	4	2 16 04	0	02 16 04	Grace Allanson's child. Margaret Carter. John Clarkson. John Hatch's child.
1809/10	4	4 14 00	0	04 14 00	James Allanson's wife. Thomas Foster. Thomas Quick. Thomas Taylor's child.
1810/11	8	5 19 01	01 10 06	07 09 07	Nanny Charnock. William Dickson's son. Thomas McCounsell's wife and child. Two children of Ishmail Salisbury. John Snape's son Thomas Taylor's wife.
1811/12	5	4 08 07	0	04 08 07	Thomas Lingart's child. John Lund. Thomas Marsh's wife. James Raby. John Taylor's wife.
1812/13	7	4 15 00	0	04 05 00	Ann Davis. John Lingart's wife and child. Jane Lund John Monks. John Taylor. Thomas Taylor's child.
1813/14	9	7 07 06	0	07 07 06	Roger Dickson. James Matthews. Ellen Parkinson. George Pegram's wife. Richard Raby. Thomas Sanderson's son. Edward Smith's wife. Thomas Taylor's child. Isabella Whalley.
1814/15	2	0 17 06	2	00 17 06	Robert Clarkson's child. Richard Smith's child.
1815/16	1	1 06 06	0	01 06 06	Abe Parkinson.
Total	61	64 10 04	02 08 06	66 18 10	

Table 4d
Kirkham - Funeral and Death Payments - 1804 to 1816
[Overseer's Account PR798, 802 & 806]

entitlement to a contribution towards burial costs and there are instances of the overseers' paying subscriptions to such organisations.¹³⁷ Whilst the medical, maternity and funeral provision made by the Town have been discussed as separate entities, there were paupers who received assistance under all three heads in addition to other forms of relief. The Bagshaw family, headed by Matthew, provide a good example. In the years from 1806 to 1815 he received relief on a number of accounts, including additional cash "being sick," "lying-in" money and the services of a nurse for his wife and the family was also granted clothing and footwear, potatoes, fuel and instruction in weaving for the younger members. Similar provision was made for Thomas Ball and his wife Jenny and for the family of Thomas Marsh. However, the overseer appears to have been reactive rather than pro-active. When assistance was requested, they provided it – to a greater or lesser extent – but there was never any indication of a package for pauper mothers of the kind to which Tomkins refers¹³⁸ nor does there appear to have been a programme of inoculation or vaccination against smallpox, procedures which were being increasingly common at this period.¹³⁹ The medical, maternity and funerary needs of the poor were probably better catered for in other places.

5 - Rents

Occasional and life-cycle crises in the life of Kirkham paupers accounted for the greater part of the town's expenditure in the form of cash at need. The bulk of the balance, as Figure 4.8 has shown, was devoted to payment of rents for pauper dwellings, with twenty men and an equal number of women benefiting. The bulk of rental expenditure, 92%, was incurred in the first three years of the period, suggesting a review of policy in the spring of 1807 and only £15 was paid in rents during the

¹³⁷ Friendly Societies took a variety of forms. See GORSKY, Martin. 'The Growth and Distribution of English Friendly Societies in the Early Nineteenth Century.' Economic History Review. Vol.51. 1998 P.489 and KIDD, Alan. State, Society and the Poor in Nineteenth Century England. Basingstoke, MacMillan Press Limited. 1999. P.111 *et seq.* At their most basic, they were burial societies, paying out on the death of the member and, sometimes, of members of his family. Occasionally, with a view to avoiding future expense, the overseers would pay the Friendly Society subscriptions. Paupers who benefited in this respect include Edward Smith, 14s in 1811 and another 14s in 1813; William Hall, 5s 7d in 1812 and Richard Smith, the son of Edward, 4s in 1814. L.R.O. PR798 & PR806.

¹³⁸ TOMKINS. *Op.cit.* Experience. P.128.

¹³⁹ HARRIS, Bernard. The Origins of the British Welfare State: Social Welfare in England and Wales 1800-1945. Basingstoke, Palgrave MacMillan. 2004. P.114.

remaining nine years.¹⁴⁰ This was in direct contrast to, for example, the adjacent township of Lund where King shows that “by the 1820s, rent payments might absorb up to 50% of the total poor law resources in some years.”¹⁴¹ His calculations reveal that rentals in the period 1800 to 1820 regularly accounted for some 20% of the total annual outlay whilst in Kirkham, the figure was never more than 1.5%.¹⁴² Rents at Kirkham varied with annual amounts in the region of £2 10s 0d being the general rule. In 1804/05 such payments were made for 28 families, the highest amount paid being £5 5s 0d on behalf of James Wood.¹⁴³ The owners and location of all of these properties is not known although the town’s leading families were amongst the landlords with payments to John Birley, William Langton, Dr. Parkinson and Thomas Whiteside being particularly mentioned. The money was paid directly to the landlords thus avoiding its being spent on other items with the likelihood of fresh applications. Looking at the later part of the period, £2 was paid out in 1807, none was made in 1808 to 1811 and only £13 spent in the last four years. But one pauper, Nanny Houghton, received rent in each of these years: she was paid a total of £8 8s 6d. The small balance was shared between Thomas Fleetwood, Bernard Hughes and Ishmail Salisbury.

If the reason for this sudden suspension of rental payments is sought, it has to be found in what has been considered as the general intention of the Kirkham overseers to control expenditure. When reduction in outgoings was required withdrawal of rental payments which absorbed large sums was a fast and effective method of achieving this. Entries from May 1806 support this contention.¹⁴⁴

Alice Whiteside. Rent withdrawn.
Grace Allanson. Rent withdrawn.
Ishmail Salisbury. Rent withdrawn.
John Gregson. Rent withdrawn.

¹⁴⁰ An entry in the Overseer’s Payment Book for October 23rd 1810 adds weight to this assertion. “Thomas Marsh applied for his rent to be paid. Not allowed. *Contrary to the rule of the House*. We must put him to work and allow him something in the winter.” L.R.O. PR810. It seems that the Town owned at least one property rented to paupers.

¹⁴¹ KING. *Op.cit.* Poverty. P.199. He notes that some of the unspecified payments might have been for rents but even if this were the case in Kirkham, the figure is unlikely to have reached the level of 10% to 20% which he asserts was then common in the north.

¹⁴² *Ibid.* Figure 7.4. P.199.

¹⁴³ L.R.O. PR802.

¹⁴⁴ L.R.O. PR810

John Heys. House rent withdrawn.
John Smith. Rent withdrawn.
Matthew Dickinson to be summoned to the Poor House.
Nanny Charnock. House rent withdrawn.
Nanny Taylor. Rent withdrawn.
Peggy Porter. House rent withdrawn.
Thomas Lingard. Rent withdrawn.
Thomas Ogden. Rent discontinued and pay withdrawn.
Thomas Quick. Rent discontinued.
Thomas Taylor. Rent withdrawn.
Thomas Whiteside. Rent withdrawn.
William Houghton to be summoned to the Poor House.

The majority of these, the exceptions being Thomas Lingard, Thomas Ogden, Thomas Taylor, John Smith and Nanny Charnock, had received rent for the first three years of the period and Ishmail Salisbury received partial payment of his rent in the fourth year. This apparently deliberate change of policy would have had a devastating effect upon the paupers concerned and rental payments at this level were never to be made again from the Kirkham overseer's purse. In connection with rent reduction Oxley observed that –

The cessation of rent payments was often specified in vestry minutes as an essential in economy drives or included in the curtailment of outdoor relief in favour of the workhouse. Parish officers disliked paying rents, not only because they objected to enriching property owners at parish expense but because they were not free to distinguish between deserving and undeserving.¹⁴⁵

Dryburgh, however, drew attention to the conflict which might arise when owners of rental property were also amongst the major ratepayers or involved with the administration of the poor law.¹⁴⁶ On the one hand owners would benefit from having their rentals guaranteed by the public purse. On the other, any major payment of rents from the poor rate would increase the assessment. The vestry had a fine balancing act to perform.

6 – Apprenticeship and Schooling

Oxley observed that “Dealing with poor children was one of the most important tasks of the poor relief authorities”¹⁴⁷ and as Katrina Honeyman noticed it brought together a number of strands in the relief of poverty.¹⁴⁸ Firstly, there was an obligation under

¹⁴⁵ OXLEY. *Op.cit.* P.107.

¹⁴⁶ DRYBURGH. *Op.cit.* P.22.

¹⁴⁷ OXLEY. *Op.cit.* P.77.

¹⁴⁸ HONEYMAN, Katrina. Child Workers in England 1780-1820: Parish Apprentices and the Making of the Early Industrial Labour Force. Aldershot, Ashgate Publishing Limited. 2007.

the 1601 Act to provide training for children. Secondly, it was considered that instruction in a trade would increase the likelihood of the child's being able to support itself in adulthood and so ease the burden on the poor rate. Thirdly, "the propriety of children's work was well established" or mischief would be found for the idle hands.¹⁴⁹ Fourthly, and most importantly from the parochial viewpoint, if a child pauper were formally apprenticed outside the parish boundaries, he – or she, for girls were apprenticed as well as boys – gained a settlement in the parish of indenture thus relieving the parish of birth of any future responsibility.¹⁵⁰ Finally, the early years of the 1800s saw the population increase and a shift in its age distribution and "this generated a relatively high dependency rate, which by its nature increased the likelihood of family poverty."¹⁵¹ This was partially compensated for by the industrialisation of the northern counties where there was a demand for additional workers with some employment being particularly appropriate for youngsters whose small hands were suited to the intricate work of machine tenting. However, Snell noted that by the end of the eighteenth century formal apprenticeship in general was in decline and the abolition of certain legal provisions in 1814 probably hastened the process although the Poor Law Amendment Act of 1834 still recognised the serving of a legal apprenticeship as one of the grounds for acquiring a settlement.¹⁵² Despite the general decline, overseers seem still to have regarded it as a valuable part of their overall strategy and the 1834 Poor Law Report particularly noted that "in some towns in Lancashire . . . the practice pursued systematically is to bind the parish apprentices into out townships in order to shift the settlement so that the binding parish may be rid of them."¹⁵³

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.* P.15.

¹⁵⁰ HONEYMAN. *Op.cit.* P.23. She raises an important point about exactly when in an apprenticeship settlement was transferred.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.* P.18.

¹⁵² SNELL. *Op.cit. Annals.* P.228 *et.seq.* Later research suggests that in some areas apprenticeship continued well into the era of the New Poor Law. See PARROTT, Kay. 'The Apprenticeship of Parish Children from Kirkdale Industrial Schools, Liverpool 1840-1870.' *In The Local Historian.* Vol. 39. No.2. 2009. P.122.

¹⁵³ GREAT BRITAIN. *The Poor Law Report of 1834.* Edited by CHECKLAND, S. G. & E. O.A. Harmondsworth, Penguin Books. 1974. P.250.

At this time most Kirkham children were apprenticed at the charge of the Town Bailiffs or Barker's charity which had been set up specifically for that purpose and such apprenticeships were not necessarily those of children from pauper families. ¹⁵⁴ Shaw has listed the 306 indentures made between 1728 to 1826 of which 290 were funded by Barker's Trustees and the balance by the Town. ¹⁵⁵ Only twelve appear between the years 1803 and 1825 when the sequence ends and it is not made clear who funded the majority of these later transactions. Of the twelve, eight were apprenticed to the Birleys as flax dressers and of these two of the boys came from the parish of St. Giles-in-the-Fields, London, one came from Preston with the consent of the local overseers and the remainder were from Kirkham. Of these one, John Welch of Kirkham, was apprenticed to John Bickerstaffe of Kirkham as a tailor, with his fee of £12 being paid for by the Baines Charity of the nearby town of Thornton. The other three, two girls and a boy, were apprenticed as weavers and spinners. One went to a cotton manufacturer in Royton, John Morris was apprenticed to James Whalley of Kirkham and seven-year old Nancy Taylor was bound to Alice Hornby and Agnes Gregson of Kirkham. Of these the only one who can clearly be tied to the relief records is Nancy although Charles Fleetwood, whose family were not only prolific but also regularly benefitted from the poor rate, is another possibility. However, it seems that little cost fell directly upon the poor rate. One instance in which Town paid was when, in 1804, young Thomas Gradwell's apprentice fee of £5 8s 0d, including the cost of his indentures was paid. ¹⁵⁶ Another example is provided by seven year old Nancy Taylor, already noted, who, in 1814, was apprenticed for nine years to Alice Hornby and Agnes Gregson to be "well taught and instructed in the trade or business of weaving." ¹⁵⁷ At times employers offered to take apprentices if the Town would pay the premium and, as in the case of eight year old Mary Lingart, some additional money "as if she

¹⁵⁴ See SHAW, Roland Cunliffe. Kirkham in Amounderness: the Story of a Lancashire Community. Preston, R. Seed and Sons. 1949. P.491 *et seq.* for a discussion of Barker's Charity.

¹⁵⁵ SHAW. *Op.cit.* lists P.418 *et seq.* the 306 Kirkham indentures which are held in the L.R.O. at PR827.

¹⁵⁶ L.R.O. PR802.

¹⁵⁷ L.R.O. PR810. Nancy was an inmate of the Workhouse. The Town paid her indenture fee of £3 and gave her some clothing.

stops with him he wants her to be dressed in decent clothing.”¹⁵⁸ Thomas Townsend, occupation unknown, wished to take Richard Robinson apprentice if the Town paid a premium of £5 and another £5 at the end of seven years. His request was refused, possibly because the Town did not wish to pay the money or because they thought him unsuitable as an apprentice master.¹⁵⁹

Apprenticeship was a legal matter with duties and responsibilities on both sides. However, the Kirkham overseers used their influence with the Birley enterprise and other employers in the town to find work other than by formal apprenticeship not only for children of the town but also for adult paupers. Where appropriate the overseers would approach the Birleys or Hornbys to see if there were suitable vacancies. They sought work for Ishmail Salisbury in December 1807 when “Mr. Jackson [was ordered] to enquire if employment cannot be found for him”¹⁶⁰ and in February 1811 the overseers discussed the case of unemployed James Lund and decided that “Messrs. Birley to be seen about this.”¹⁶¹ In this connection, as King observed “The role of the poor law in this sense was to act as a facilitator rather than as a central provider of welfare.”¹⁶²

Informal training as distinct from formal education and apprenticeship also played an important part in the relief strategy for adults as well as for children.¹⁶³ This was mostly in connection with textiles and the poor were given instruction in weaving either in their own homes, sometimes with looms supplied and paid for by the overseers, or in the Workhouse itself. For example in February 1809 it was “ordered that Ishmail Salisbury’s family come into the poor house and that he be set at work to weave sailcloth” Later that year money was provided for John Fairclough “who applies

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁹ L.R.O. PR810.

¹⁶⁰ L.R.O. PR810.

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.* 2nd February 1811. “James Lund states himself to be out of health and that only one of his children has work. Messrs. Birleys to be seen about this and if they can’t employ the other who did work for them, some relief to be allowed.”

¹⁶² KING. *Op.cit.* Poverty. P.185.

¹⁶³ See as examples, December 1st, 1807: Ishmail Salisbury. “Mr. Jackson to enquire if employment cannot be found for him.” February 2nd, 1808. Paul Fleetwood and son. “Messrs. Hornbys will employ them for a month.”

for the Town to purchase him a pair of bellows as he can have work”¹⁶⁴ Widow Clarkson’s daughter was allowed three shillings when in June 1812 her mother applied for “something towards teaching her daughter to weave.”¹⁶⁵ Here King further suggests that this expenditure was made with a view to helping the poor to help themselves thus reducing the need for later additional calls on the relief fund.¹⁶⁶

Where formal schooling was concerned, the overseer’s records at this time make no mention of it although educational opportunities were not lacking in the Kirkham. The town benefitted from the Free Grammar School and the Langton Girls Charity School, set up by the family of that name in 1760. The second decade of the century saw also the establishment of a school attached to the Parish Church whose curriculum, unlike that of the Free School, was more appropriate to the poorer classes and this was followed a few years later by a similar institution under the ægis of the Roman Catholic Church. Such pauper children of the town who were fortunate enough to attend any of these establishments were apparently educated at charitable expense rather than at the cost of the Town.¹⁶⁷

7 – Out-Relief in Kind – Clothing, Footwear and Minor Items

This survey commenced by noting that the total expenditure on poor relief for the period was in the order of £4,300. Of this weekly pay was seen to account for approximately 60%, with cash at need including extra payments in cash, medical and boarding costs, maternity and funeral expenses, rents and apprenticing charges absorbing a further 20%. The balance of a little over 14% of the total, was disbursed on relief in kind including clothing and footwear, bedding, food, fuel, house repairs and tools. The distribution of these sums is set out in Figure 4.17.

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.* The bellows were subsequently purchased from Thomas Parker at a cost of £1 7s 6d. L.R.O. PR798.

¹⁶⁵ L.R.O. PR810.

¹⁶⁶ KING. *Op.cit.* P.185.

¹⁶⁷ For a discussion of school provision in the town, see SHAW. *Op.cit.* particularly Chapter VI.

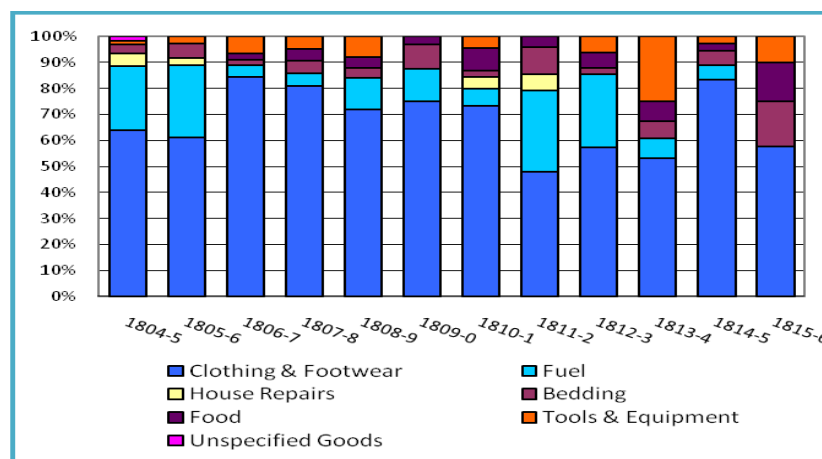


Figure 4.17
Kirkham – Division of Relief in Kind - 1804 to 1816 – %
[Overseer’s Account PR798, 802 & 806]

Oxley noted that, generally speaking, clothing, fuel, property repairs and tools of trade made up the bulk of relief in kind. He noted that -

“In the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries when poor relief was new they were unusual, but the need for such occasional and casual grants soon became apparent and a century later they not only became firmly established parts of the relief system but the most rapidly expanding sector.”¹⁶⁸

The total figure is rather lower than is revealed in King’s findings¹⁶⁹ which suggest a figure of some 30% on relief in kind. However, both at Kirkham and in the areas studied by King the most noticeable feature is the predominance of the purchase of clothing and footwear which consumed a considerable, although variable, proportion of the outlay throughout the period. King shows that on average clothing accounted for about 40% of the total relief in kind, a percentage which was fairly constant between 1800 and 1820 but in Kirkham the figure was in excess of 60% in 1804/05, was never less than 40% of the total and, in 1814 reached as high as 80%.¹⁷⁰ Fuel was always important, particularly so in 1811 and 1812, years which appear to have taken on the aspect of crisis years. However, house repairs, the provision of food, tools and equipment and various unspecified goods, whilst they must have been important to the paupers who received them, played only a minor part in the relief strategy of the Kirkham overseer.

¹⁶⁸ OXLEY. *Op.cit*, P.64.

¹⁶⁹ KING. *Op. cit. Poverty*. Figure 7.3. P.199.

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid.* P200. Figure 7.5.

Purchases of clothing fell into three broad groups namely specified items such as brats and clogs, unspecified “clothes” and unspecified purchases from local suppliers. Items apparently supplied to a man might well have been for his wife or children but it is evident that children received clothing and footwear on their own account. Indeed this is so in almost a third of the cases even when other members of the family also received clothes. ¹⁷¹ For example in May 1804 Jenny Backshaw, as well as being given money for a pair of stockings and for making shirts and shifts, received 16s 6d specifically for clothes for her children. ¹⁷² In December 1811 Alice Walton was given 6s for shoes for her daughter as well as £2 13s 5d for other unspecified clothing ¹⁷³ whilst in October 1813 Thomas Lingart received 2s 8d for two bonnets for his children, the only allowance he received in that year. ¹⁷⁴ Single women accounted for a similar number of cases with the remainder of grants going to men although some of the relief might have been to un-named members of their families. In some cases the clothing itself was supplied: “September 1810: Betty Cowbrand: Pd for petticoat 4s 9d.” ¹⁷⁵ In others the cloth was supplied and somebody was paid for making it up: “August 1809: Thomas Quick: Pd for cloth for shirts 9s 4½d” ¹⁷⁶ and “August 1812: Matthew Bagshaw : Pd for children’s clothes making 12s 6d.” ¹⁷⁷ The kind of material supplied here is not mentioned but cotton, flannel, fustian, linen, shirting and worsted all make an appearance from time to time together with thread and tape. Not only were material and complete items purchased: money was also spent for the repair of clothes: “December 1805: William Walton: repairing a coat 1s 2d.” ¹⁷⁸ On occasion money was given to the paupers to go and buy their own clothes: “January 1815: Jenny Robinson; gave to buy clothes 10s” ¹⁷⁹ and “July 1815: Edward Smith : gave [twice] to buy clothes £1 10s 0d.” ¹⁸⁰

¹⁷¹ The distribution is Children – 30%; Women – 30%; Men – 40%.

¹⁷² L.R.O. PR802.

¹⁷³ L.R.O. PR798.

¹⁷⁴ L.R.O. PR806.

¹⁷⁵ L.R.O. PR798.

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁷ L.R.O. PR806.

¹⁷⁸ L.R.O. PR802.

¹⁷⁹ L.R.O. PR806.

¹⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

There was some variety in the kind of clothing provided and this is shown in Table 4d.

Type	Quantity
Bedgown	7
Bonnets, Caps, Hats	13
Brats	5
Breeches	10
Capes, Coats	7
Clogs, Galoshes, Shoes	152
Dresses	1
Handkerchieves	6
Petticoats, Shifts	28
Shirts	45
Stays	2
Stockings	30
Suits	8
Waistcoats	7
Total	321

Table 4e
Kirkham - Types of Clothing Provided
[Overseer's Account PR798, 802 & 806]

The importance of footwear and its repair is noticeable with almost half the grants being taken up by this provision. Clogs and shoes appear regularly in the accounts and money was laid out for their mending. This was probably because, whilst clothing could be made and mended by the paupers themselves, the making and repair of footwear would demand skills not possessed by the paupers themselves. The question might be asked as to why clothing was provided at all rather than just more cash at need. There are several possibilities. Firstly, given that a request for clothing was justifiable, to give money to the pauper to purchase his own left him open to temptation to spend it on other pressing needs and then go back to the overseer for more money. ¹⁸¹ Secondly, the overseer might have negotiated a discount with local suppliers or a contract to clothe the paupers at the direction of the overseer. Either

¹⁸¹ Clothing could be pawned and the Town requested to redeem it. For instance, July 8th 1806. Ordered that Thomas Kirkby begin a weekly payment to the Town of at least 2s towards redeeming his goods” and “3rd November 1807. John Molyneaux requests a new coat to be redeemed from the pawnbroker at Warrington 7s 6d. Ordered the overseer to redeem it from the Pawnbroker. L.R.O. PR810. In this connection King makes the point that the poor must have had more than one set of clothes to enable them to pawn some garments. See KING, Steven Andrew. ‘Reclothing the English Poor, 1750 – 1840.’ *Textile History*. 2002. Vol.33. No.1. 2002. P.37.

could have presented possibilities for a bribe or of a premium on the price for the supplier and Dryburgh's comment that "the precise form of local relief provision was determined primarily by the interests of those who administered the system rather than the needs of the paupers" is apposite here.¹⁸² Indeed, he goes farther and comments that –

If relief was given as cash then the pauper would be free to spend it with any supplier of his or her choice. However, if relief was given in a specific form, for example food or clothing, then the poor law authorities could determine who would benefit from the ratepayers' money by their choice of official suppliers . . . local overseers tended to select businesses operated by their friends or relations to provide the goods distributed as relief.¹⁸³

There is no clear evidence that this was the practice in Kirkham but the purchase of goods from Messrs. Birley and Marsden in 1804/05 has the whiff of such patronage. Another possible reason for the overseer's providing clothing directly might be found in a desire for social control in that he could influence the appearance and quality of the items provided thus possibly both keeping the paupers in their proper station whilst letting it be known that the Town cared for its poor.¹⁸⁴ Clothing belonging to a deceased pauper was reallocated. In June 1807 it was "Ordered [that] Ellen Smith [have] two flannel waistcoats and two shifts from Peggy Porter's stock." and "Ordered Mary Silcock and Alice Clarkson part of Peggy Porter's clothes, the rest to the Poor House." Peggy had died the previous month and been buried at the expense of the Vestry. Whilst this is the only such instance of second-hand clothing being given to a pauper and the only reference to a stock of clothing in the workhouse, it is hard to credit that this was the only occasion on which surplus items were used in such a way and it provides additional confirmation of the parsimonious frame of mind of the authorities.¹⁸⁵

¹⁸² DRYBURGH. *Op.cit.* P.4.

¹⁸³ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁴ John Styles in his discussion on pauper clothing refers not only to the variety of clothing purchased but also to variations in the standard of provision between one authority and another. See STYLES, John. The Dress of the People: Everyday Fashion in Eighteenth-Century England. London, Yale University Press. 2007.

¹⁸⁵ Beverly Lemire describes a considerable trade in second-hand clothing at this time. See LEMIRE, Beverley. 'Peddling Fashion: Salesmen, Pawnbrokers, Tailors and Thieves and the Second-hand Clothes Trade in England, c1700-1800.' Textile History,. Vol.22. No.1. 1991. P.67.

What standards did the Kirkham overseers seek to maintain in clothing their poor?

Dorothy Marshall observed that -

by the early nineteenth century the very best pauper wardrobe would have consisted of men and boys 1 hat, 2 woollen caps, 1 coat, 2 waistcoats, 1 round frock, 1 pair of breeches, 2 pair stockings, 1 pair shoes, 3 shirts. For women and girls 1 hat, 4 linen caps, 2 handkerchiefs, 2 gowns, 3 petty coats, 2 linen aprons, 2 scuffling aprons, 1 pair stockings, 1 pair shoes, 1 pair stays or bodices, 3 shifts.

¹⁸⁶

D. Pam saw that in Enfield, London, “the clothes provided were adequate though not elegant.”

The men and boys were given a coat, a waistcoat, a pair of leather breeches, 2 shirts, a pair of shoes, two pairs of stockings and a felt hat. The women and girls had a hat, two caps, a gown, a pair of stays, 2 petticoats, 2 shifts, a pair of shoes, 2 pairs of stockings, 2 neck handkerchiefs and two aprons. The cost for was 30s; children 5-12, 13s 6d; and children less than 5, 7s 6d. ¹⁸⁷

On the other hand, Peter Jones, ¹⁸⁸ noting the work of Beverley Lemire, agreed with the view which she expressed that “the worthy poor were never provided with more than the minimum of clothing, so as to discourage sloth and reliance on the parish.” However, Kirkham paupers, between them, received all these items which Pam listed and 117 of them were clothed or shod during the period. Some, such as Thomas Dickinson whose son was given shoes to the value of 5s 6d in 1813, ¹⁸⁹ and Betty Hodgkinson who received shoes also to the value of 4s in 1804, ¹⁹⁰ appeared but once. The greatest number of appearance in the lists was made by Betty Cowbrand who received clothing in ten of the twelve years. ¹⁹¹ Her total allocation, which gives some indication of the general standard, was -

- | | |
|------|--|
| 1804 | New shoes 8s, yarn for stockings 1s 7d, and stays recovered 3s 6d together with items to the value of £1 from Birley & Marsden. Total £1 13s 1d. |
| 1805 | Brat and handkerchief 3s 2d, new shoes 8s and worsted for stocking 9d, together with other items to the value of 10s 5d. Total £1 2s 4d. |
| 1806 | Shoes were mended 3s and shifts, 6s, purchased together with 12s 7d worth of other items from W. Brash. Total £1 1s 7d |
| 1808 | New shoes at 8s 6d and other small items 4s 8d. Total 13s 2d. |
| 1809 | New shoes at 9s. |

¹⁸⁶ Quoted in KING. *Op.cit.* ‘Reclothing.’

¹⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁸ JONES, Peter. ‘Clothing the Poor in Early-Nineteenth-Century England.’ Textile History. Vol. 37. No.1. 2006.

¹⁸⁹ L.R.O. PR806.

¹⁹⁰ L.R.O. PR802.

¹⁹¹ L.R.O. PR802, PR798 & PR806.

- 1810 Petticoat 4s 9d. W. Brash 2s. Total 6s 9d.
- 1811 Shoes soles 3s and 2s worth of cotton. Total 5s.
- 1812 Stays repaired 4s 6d. New shoes 8s 6d. Other items from Brash and Co. 16s 7½d. Total £1 9s 7½d
- 1813 New shoes 8s 10d and 4s 11d worth of other items from Brash and Co. Total 13s 9d.
- 1814 New shoes 9s. ¹⁹²

Here again, footwear predominates but at an average cost of under £1 per annum, this was hardly extravagant. If the cost of footwear is taken out, Betty's clothes cost the overseer less than 9s a year. These figures are well below those which King suggested were spent in other areas. ¹⁹³

Amongst the men who regularly appeared were Thomas Dagger ¹⁹⁴ and John Davis. ¹⁹⁵

Dagger's allocation was -

- 1804 Shirts making 1s 6d. Birley & Marsden 9s 3d. Total 10s 9d.
- 1805 Making suit of clothes 7s 6d. New shoes 10s 6d. Total 18s.
- 1806 Nothing.
- 1807 Clothes and making-up £2 7s 4d.
- 1808 Nothing.
- 1809 New shoes 10s 9d.
- 1810 Breeches, shirts and clothes making 14s 2d. Clothes £1 11s 11d. Shoes and clogs and mending them 10s 6d. Brash's bill 3s 10d. Total £3 0s 5d.
- 1811 Shoes and clogs and mending them £1 1s 8d. Shirts, thread and stockings 11s 7d. Total £1 13s 3d.
- 1812 Fustian and making-up 15s 1d. Brash & Co. £1 4s 2d. Total £1 19s 3d.
- 1813 Shoes and clogs and mending them 16s 5d. Shirts making 2s. Yarn for stockings and knitting them 4s. Brash's bills 9s 2d. Total £1 11s 7d.
- 1814 Nothing.
- 1815 Shoes 16s. Stockings 6s 6d. Shirts, cloth and making-up 12s 2d. Total £1 14s 8d.

The elderly Dagger was born about 1745. His clothing grants over the period amounted to no more than £16 5s 3d, an average of £1 7s 0d a year with no grant at all in two years. Again, this was hardly munificent although when, in 1810, he had requested only breeches and stockings, the overseers provided extra garments. However, they withdrew his 3s weekly pay and it is possible that this total grant might have been the outcome of negotiation. ¹⁹⁶ There is a note in the June 1814 Payments

¹⁹² An interesting point here is the increase in the price of shoes which cost 8s in 1804, 8s 6d in 1808 and 9s in 1814.

¹⁹³ KING *Op.cit.* 'Reclothing.'

¹⁹⁴ L.R.O. PR802, PR796 & PR806.

¹⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁶ Another example of a possible negotiation appears in September 7th 1813: "Ellen Gregson applies for a little clothing for her children and she will repay the Town by leaving her family pay in the overseers' hands. Agreed." The use of the word "agreed" rather than the usual "allowed" carries a hint of negotiation.

Book that “Thomas Dagger applies for a pair of shoes, a pair of stockings, 2 shirts and a neck handkerchief and a brat. To be left to Mr. Jackson.”¹⁹⁷ The record suggests that these items were subsequently purchased. Over time Davis received -

- 1807 3 yards flannel and thread. 5s 1d.
- 1808 Clothes and making-up £1 8s 6d. New shoes 10s 6d. Total £1 19s 0d.
- 1809 Stockings and handkerchief 7s 7d. Shoes mending 3s 9d. Total 11s 4d.
- 1810 Shirt 3s 11d. Shoes 10s 9d. Total 14s 8d.
- 1811 Flannel and cloth 8s 1d. Shoes soling 3s 9d. Total 11s 1d.
- 1812 New shoes and mending them 13s 3d. Waring’s bill – probably 2 shirts, 2 flannel waistcoats, a coat and stockings. £1 9s 3d. Total £2 2s 6d.
- 1813 Calico 8s 9d. Yarn for stockings 2s 6d. Shoes soling and clogs 8s 6d. Total 19s 9d.
- 1814 Shoes, clogs and clogging 12s 1d. Other items, possibly a shirt, breeches and stockings 12s. Total £1 4s 1d.
- 1815 Clothes £1 0s 5d.

Davis was born about 1744. His request in 1808 was for only a coat, breeches and shoes but he appears to have been allowed a waistcoat as well. His 1811 request was for singlets and the subsequent purchases suggest that he had to make them himself.

The probability, considering their ages and the internal evidence, is that Cowbrand, Dagger and Davis were single person households. Nowhere is there any indication of the existence of spouses or children in their households. However parents and children do appear in the clothing lists, doubtless on occasion within a general grant to the family or on their own account. Ellen Swarbrick was allowed a total of £1 7s 3d in 1805 including specifically “stockings for son.”¹⁹⁸ In the same year John Foster was given a hat, shoes and stockings for his son¹⁹⁹ and in 1811 the overseers purchased clothing from Mr. Udall specifically for John Snapes’s two youngest children.²⁰⁰

Ishmail Salisbury, the father of six children by the end of 1810, frequently applied for clothing and although his requests were not always acceded to, his family were visited by Overseer Jackson “to see about what is wanted and allow some clothing.”²⁰¹ When clothing to the value of almost £4 was given in 1807 for example, shoes were

¹⁹⁷ L.R.O. PR810.

¹⁹⁸ L.R.O. PR802

¹⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰⁰ L.R.O. PR798.

²⁰¹ L.R.O. PR810.

specifically provided for one of his daughters. ²⁰² Footwear was also provided for the young Salisburys in 1808 ²⁰³ and again in 1810. ²⁰⁴ Demands by paupers were by not met without question. Not only, as already noticed, was the overseer directed to “see what is needed” but requests were rejected. In January 1814 Margaret, the wife of Paul Fleetwood, was pregnant with their fifth child and she applied for a coat for Jenny, the eldest, and clogs, stockings, shifts and shirts for the youngest as well as items for herself. These were not allowed. The children were awarded some clogs in the following month but the family’s five subsequent applications during that year, three of which were specifically for clothing, all met with a refusal and “Nothing allowed.” ²⁰⁵

Whilst the overseers could sometimes approach liberality in their clothing of the paupers or even be concerned for their appearance, there is no suggestion that the poor were given any choice in the matter of selection of their clothing. ²⁰⁶ The carefulness in provision observed elsewhere is also noticeable under this heading and no instance has been found of complete outfits being purchased for either men, women or children. New clothes and footwear were certainly provided but the making-up of material by the paupers themselves, sometimes from a stock of material held in the workhouse, the repair of clothes and shoes already in the paupers’ possession and the re-allocation of clothing previously owned by deceased paupers all point towards a concern for the Town purse rather than the Town paupers. ²⁰⁷ The general impression given by this provision is that, whilst Kirkham’s paupers might be decently dressed even those who regularly received clothing and footwear, such as Davis and Dagger, were not as well dressed as Dorothy Marshall and Pam have suggested was more often

²⁰² L.R.O. PR798.

²⁰³ *Ibid.*

²⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁰⁵ L.R.O. PR810

²⁰⁶ August 3rd 1813: Get Peggy Hatch a bonnet and some more decent clothing to go to the Sunday School.” *Ibid.*

²⁰⁷ Whilst this is the only example observed in the study of a deceased pauper’s effects being used for the benefit of others, it was common practice. FIDELER, Paul A. Social Welfare in Pre-Industrial England: the Old Poor Law Tradition. Basingstoke, Palgrave MacMillan. 2006, noted, P.148, that “. . . pensioners typically surrendered to the parish the ownership, although not the use, of their real and household property. Upon the pensioner’s death the goods were sold or distributed to other parish poor.”

the case and it seems unlikely that they cut any figure of sartorial elegance on the streets of the town.

As Figure 4.17 showed, clothing and footwear formed the greater part of the relief provided in kind. The provision of tools and equipment enabled the pauper to earn something for himself thus reducing his demands on the poor rate. Expenditure here, as with the provision of bedding, house repairs and food, the latter either for the purchase of meal or in the form of cash in connection with the paupers' potato grounds, together with expenditure on unspecified items, was at such a low level as to suggest that it was not part of the overseer's usual relief strategy and it is sufficient here just to note that such items were occasionally provided. ²⁰⁸

What conclusions might be drawn about relief practice in Kirkham in this period? Firstly, weekly payments predominated and they appear to have been modest. Women outnumbered the men but their allowances tended to be smaller. The provision of additional cash to meet specific needs came second in the distribution of the poor rate and again it was noted that, whilst the Town could occasionally allow generous provision for medical needs, allowances in connection with births and funerals did not extend to the comparative generosity noticed in other areas. However, although maternity provision was minimal it does not seem to have been conditioned either by frequency or legitimacy. The payment of rents suddenly ceased, giving the impression that cost-cutting was the order of the day. Relief in kind absorbed a small amount with the supply of clothing being the most important. Fuel was seldom paid for and where food or tools of trade were provided it was to enable paupers to help themselves and so relieve the poor rate. The overall impression given is that the paupers, men and women, were given regular weekly allowances and expected, for the most part, to make shift. Only in particular circumstances were they likely to be given additional relief

²⁰⁸ For allotments and potato grounds, see BURCHARDT, Jeremy and COOPER, Jacqueline. *Eds. Breaking New Ground: Nineteenth Century Allotments from Local Sources*. Milton Keynes, Family and Community Historical Research Society. 2010.

and then modestly. If they were not content with what was offered, there was always the simple choice – take it, leave it or enter the House.

8 – Out-Paupers

As well as providing for the resident poor, the overseers were responsible for supporting those who, whilst settled in Kirkham, were resident elsewhere and, although at this period they were not a large item in the overseer's balance sheet, costing only some £200 in twelve years, mention should be made of them. King suggested that payments to out-pensioners were a common feature of the relief scene, quoting northern parishes where the proportion of such recipients of relief ranged between a third and a half of all those on the relief lists, and another, in Staffordshire, which had dealings with over sixty out-parishes.²⁰⁹ Kirkham paupers, on the other hand, appear largely to have stayed at home with only thirty-eight paupers out of a total of 305 on the lists for the period being given relief elsewhere, a figure well below King's average.²¹⁰ Of these, two thirds were men and one third were women, presumably spinsters or widows. They were scattered over eighteen parishes, some as near as the neighbouring townships of Ribby-with-Wrea and Freckleton and others as far away as Liverpool and Manchester although none appear to have lived outside the county boundaries. The level of relief for these people was at the discretion of the parish of settlement and this often presented difficulties as it was not possible for the home parish to know the circumstances of their people and what relief was appropriate. There are no extant letters from the Kirkham overseer to his colleagues in other parishes but it seems likely that he adopted the same attitude to the problem as that taken by the Lancaster overseer, Thomas Darwen, when he wrote to Kirkham overseer Mr. Jackson in April 1817 concerning the case of Thomas Bradley, who was settled in Lancaster but living in Kirkham, saying that "We wish you to act in this case as if he belonged to you seeing that we are a such a distance we know nothing but

²⁰⁹ KING. *Op.cit.* Poverty. P.186. See also KING, Steven Andrew. 'It is Impossible for our Vestry to judge his case into perfection from here: managing the distance dimension of Poor Relief, 1800-40.' Rural History. Vol.16. P.161. 2005. This reviews the problems presented by out-paupers.

²¹⁰ An alternate e interpretation is that Kirkham ignored its out-paupers wherever possible.

what is represented to us.”²¹¹ Mr. Darwen adopted the same strategy a year later when he wrote “I wish you to act as if they were your own poor, being on the spot you can know what is most proper for them, it is an un-necessary journey for Mr.Greenall at least that is my opinion.”²¹² On occasion, however, the Kirkham overseer might, if the distance were not too far, make a trip to see the situation for himself as in 1805 he went to Catforth, four miles away, to see the sick wife of James Allanson.²¹³

The other major problem which the overseers faced was how to get the money to the out-paupers or, by way of re-imbusement, to the township or parish of residence. King confirms that this was indeed the case noting that “The . . . most pressing spatial problem presented by the operation of an extensive out-parish relief system was the remittance of money due to paupers and other parishes that had paid pauper allowances on behalf of the place of settlement.”²¹⁴ It is possible that Overseer Jackson went himself to the nearer townships to pay Kirkham paupers and King notes that some places made use of the services of agents where there were several out-paupers in one place.²¹⁵ The only other common alternative was the use of the mail and the number of letters on which Kirkham paid the postage suggests that this may well have been the case. The problems were not all on the side of officialdom. The fragile and often informal nature of the money transmission system often kept paupers waiting for their money requiring them to “make shift” to a greater extent than usual thus adding a further dimension to the experience of being poor.

²¹¹ Letter from Thomas Darwen, Overseer of Lancaster to J.Jackson, Overseer of Kirkham. April 25th, 1817. Lancaster Letter Book. L.R.O. PR866.

²¹² *Ibid.* Just how much the Bradleys were paid is not apparent. This *modus operandi* raises the question of the relative generosity of the “owning” and “hosting” parishes with, in some cases, the paupers being better off as out-paupers than if they were living at home. The converse is equally possible. Additionally, King has observed that “The parish of settlement . . . could sometimes pay its out-parish poor at a lower rate than those who were physically in the parish.” See KING. *Op.cit.* ‘Impossible.’ P.164.

²¹³ L.R.O. PR802. The Kirkham overseer made frequent trips to various parts of the parish and to the magistrate at Preston, charging 6s on each occasion no matter what the distance.

²¹⁴ KING. *Op.cit.* ‘Impossible.’

²¹⁵ KING. *Op.cit.* Poverty. P.186.

Kirkham paupers living elsewhere accounted for some £200 of total expenditure during the period being here considered.²¹⁶ This is not quite 5% of the town's total out-relief expenditure and contrasts markedly with King's findings of some 30%.²¹⁷ Amounts given in relief varied. Grace Allanson received relief regularly throughout the period, mostly in the form of "weekly pay" and the Liverpool overseer sent regular bills to Kirkham for relief provided for Thomas and Elizabeth Benson. John Davis, living a mile or so away in Ribby, had one payment of 17s 8d partly "when sick" and partly to pay for his loom.²¹⁸ Whilst relief given to out-paupers was mostly in the form of "pay" there were occasions on which clothes were purchased,²¹⁹ funeral expenses paid²²⁰ and contributions made towards rent.²²¹ Small payments were also made to the workhouse at Brindle which, as previously observed, accepted difficult members of the pauper host and there was correspondence with officials there.²²² Money was sometimes sent either on account of specific paupers or as an overall sum. Betty Pickering had a daughter there in 1804²²³ and the fact that she had recently given birth to a daughter whose father had absconded to Leyland might be significant. In two consecutive years an account for £1 3s 0d in respect of John Helm²²⁴ was paid and small payments of this nature appear until July 1810 when "Brindle Poor House Rent" of £1 17s 0d was paid.²²⁵ After that Brindle vanishes from the Kirkham record possibly as a strategy to keep the Town's costs under control in a period when total relief expenditure was rising.

²¹⁶ The bulk of this figure is derived from the general relief lists of expenditure on paupers identified as likely to have been out-paupers plus additional amounts paid to other parishes listed at the end of the quarterly lists. L.R.O. PR798 and L.R.O. PR802.

²¹⁷ KING. *Op.cit.* 'Impossible.' The Kirkham figure does not include relief given by Kirkham to paupers in the town who had settlement elsewhere. These were recorded separately and appear in L.R.O. PR811.

²¹⁸ This amount included 6s which the overseer paid himself for "my journey [to Preston] being summoned." It seems likely that Davis was not satisfied with the 3s which the overseer had allowed him as he was subsequently give 7s 6s and had the cost of repairing his looms, 1s 2d, paid. L.R.O. PR802.

²¹⁹ October 25th 1815. To John Allanson. L.R.O. PR806

²²⁰ July 1st 1808. To Grace Allanson for child's funeral. L.R.O. PR798.

²²¹ May 12th 1804. To John Heys. L.R.O. PR802.

²²² No letters appear to have survived between Kirkham and Brindle but there are notes in the overseer's records of postage costs being paid. "June 17th 1606. Paid for a letter from Brindle 1d." L.R.O. PR802.

²²³ *Ibid.*

²²⁴ *Ibid.*

²²⁵ L.R.O.PR798. Brindle connections are more fully discussed below in connection with for Newton-with-Scales.

Out-paupers probably absorbed a disproportionate amount of the overseer's time and effort. Even when settlement was clearly established, sometimes itself a problem, the logistics of deciding what relief was appropriate and transmitting the cash must have been considerable. Thus it is not to be wondered at that overseers were regularly requested to "treat him as if he were your own." Equally, collecting the cash owed by parishes for the relief of their out-paupers resident locally cannot always have been a simple matter. However, Brindle Workhouse appears to have developed a regular system, billing parishes regularly for the keep of out-paupers and requiring overseers to attend at Brindle to pay what was owing – "Your are requested to attend at the workhouse here to discharge what will then be due for rent, victualling, etc., for your township." ²²⁶ As there appears to be no references to 'overdue payments' they must have had considerable success.

9 - Settlement and Removal

The matter of 'parish and belonging' and the demarcation of boundaries between one place and the next had, as Keith Snell showed, a considerable importance. ²²⁷ It had its effect, he noted, upon the militia, duties of constables, liability to the payment of tithes, the repair of roads and, most importantly from the point of view of the poor, on the matter of settlement and removal. ²²⁸ "Certainly," he continued, "to the labouring poor the parish boundaries mattered." ²²⁹ The business of settlement was important not only to the parish officials who saw it as a key part of their relief strategy, particularly when it came to refusing assistance and keeping costs down. It was equally important to the pauper for whom it was essential if an application for relief were to be granted without objection and therefore possession of an acknowledged right of settlement was part of the economy of makeshifts of the poorer members of the community. These people, as Snell demonstrated, were often as familiar with the complexities of the settlement laws as were the parish authorities themselves and capable of being economical with the truth in their examinations to obtain a

²²⁶ Taken from Newton examples in L.R.O. DDNw9/12. The Brindle authorities used a pre-printed form with dates and amounts written in.

²²⁷ See SNELL, Keith D. M. 'The Culture of Local Xenophobia' Social History. Vol.28. No.1. 2003. P.1.

²²⁸ *Ibid.*

²²⁹ *Ibid.*

settlement in a parish which best served their interests.²³⁰ Settlement not only helped to provide the psychologically desirable ‘sense of belonging,’ it also provided a form of insurance against hard times and the need to “go on the parish.” As Snell again wrote “To settled inhabitants rural parishes were indeed ‘miniature welfare states’ at least until the later years of the eighteenth century and it was to the parish and its Poor Law overseers to which the poor turned when they stood at the top of the slope which led from poverty into pauperdom.”²³¹ The various laws governing the process, their effect on mobility of labour and upon individual families together with the removals to which unsettled poor were subjected, have been detailed elsewhere.²³² However, although they loomed large in the work of parish officials generally, such questions do not appear to have greatly troubled the Kirkham overseers at this time. Shaw quoted a case from the 1760s which provides an example of just how complicated questions of settlement might arise²³³ but if the number of references in their records can be taken as an indication of the workload, later overseers seem to have been largely spared such difficulties.²³⁴ Expenditure under this heading was low with the overseers doing whatever was appropriate to avoid expense: November 1806: “Enquire how Thomas Shaw’s widow belongs to the Town. Enquire into her situation and no future allowance until her settlement is ascertained.”²³⁵ Richard Morris and his wife and six children were twice returned to their parish of settlement, Warrington, and after the second occasion, the Warrington overseers were told that the Morrises would be treated as vagrants if they troubled Kirkham again unless they had a certificate that they should not be chargeable to the Town. The overseers were undoubtedly firm when circumstances required although they did not always have such matters entirely their

²³⁰ SNELL, Keith D. M. Parish and Belonging: Community, Identity and Welfare in England and Wales 1700 – 1950. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press. 2006. P.92.

²³¹ SNELL, Keith D. M. Annals of the Labouring Poor: social and agrarian England 1600-1900. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press. 1985. P.107.

²³² Most recently in SNELL. *Op.cit.* Parish and also in HINDLE, Steve. On the Parish? – the Micro-Politics of Poor Relief in Rural England c.1550-1750. Oxford, Clarendon Press. 2004.

²³³ SHAW. *Op.cit.* P.409. He discusses the case of John Singleton who variously resided in Newton, Kirkham and Little-Eccleston-with-Larbreck. Legal opinion was divided on the resolution of the matter.

²³⁴ The earliest removal order in the period is dated 1807 and there are only fifteen in total..

²³⁵ L.R.O. PR810.

own way. On one occasion they ordered the removal of Alice Alston, the wife of a soldier, and her daughter to be removed to Scotforth near Lancaster. Alice appealed to the magistrates who, it was noted on the reverse of the order, “do hereby suspend the order of removal until it shall be made appear to us that the same may be executed without danger.” Scotforth subsequently agreed to accept liability for the Alstons.²³⁶

Comment has previously been made about the general desire of overseers to rid themselves of pregnant women wherever possible, particularly the single ones, and of the fifteen removal orders which they obtained between 1802 and 1818, seven were in respect either of single mothers such as Margaret Collins who, with her child, was removed to Manchester, or like Jenny Waring in 1807 “who is now with child which is likely to be born a Bastard” and who was removed over the town boundary into the adjacent township of Clifton-with-Salwick.²³⁷

10 – Relief in Newton-with-Scales

How does practice in Kirkham compare with the work of the overseers in Newton-with-Scales where all the assistance was in the form of out-relief.²³⁸ Throughout the period 1804/05 to 1815/16, 73 townfolk were relieved. Of these, 46% were men and 54% were women. Only one of the women was specifically noted as being a widow and on four occasions relief was given to the son or daughter of a pauper.

Figure 4.18 shows how the township allocated its relief. In total, Of the total resources of just over £1300 72% went on regular weekly pay, 21% on cash at need and 7% on relief in kind. This compares with proportions of 60%, 20% and 14% at Kirkham which adds weight to the suggestion made at the conclusion of Chapter Three that the smaller township was the more generous and that the overseers preferred to give

²³⁶ L.R.O. PR829.

²³⁷ A “Ginny Waring” appears in Clifton’s relief lists in 1819 when the overseer allowed her 6s for clothes for her son.

²³⁸ Newton data are extracted from the series of “Poor’s Books” held in the Lancashire Record Office at DDNw9/7. Where workhouse provision was needed, this appears to have been hired from Brindle which specialised in ‘difficult’ cases.

higher amounts of regular weekly pay, supplementing these in cases of need or where major items of expenditure were required.²³⁹

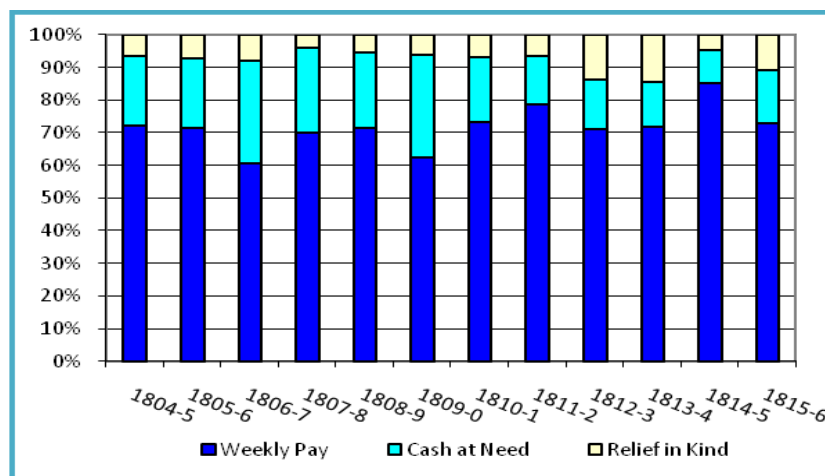


Figure 4.18
Newton - Distribution of Out-Relief - 1804 to 1816 - %
[Newton Poors' Books DDNw9/7]

However, as was the case at Kirkham, applications for relief were not automatically approved. In 1807/08, for example, Betty Cook, Ann Darlington, Jenny Porter and Catherine Simpson all applied for additional assistance and whilst, the applications made by Betty, Jenny and Catherine were approved, Ann's was "not granted." Similarly in 1814/15, ten paupers applied for further help but only four had their requests acceded to including the Thomas Lingard who "petitions for town to find him necessary articles. Granted." The numbers of men and women receiving weekly pay is shown in percentage terms in Figure 4.19.

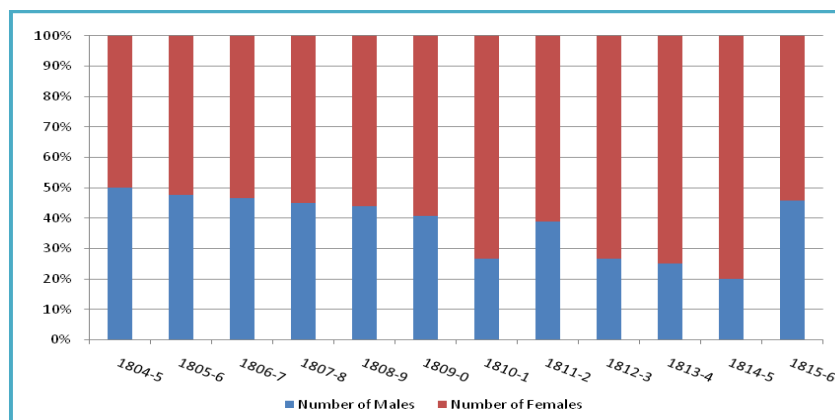


Figure 4.19
Newton - Numbers of Males and Females Relieved - 1804 to 1816 - %
[Newton Poors' Books DDNw9/7]

²³⁹ The balance of 6% at Kirkham was spent on out-paupers and administrative costs.

The percentage of the total cash they received appears in Figure 4.20. In general terms male paupers were given 40% of the relief whilst in 1810/11 and 1812/13 the reverse was the case with, in both years, women constituting over 60% of recipients

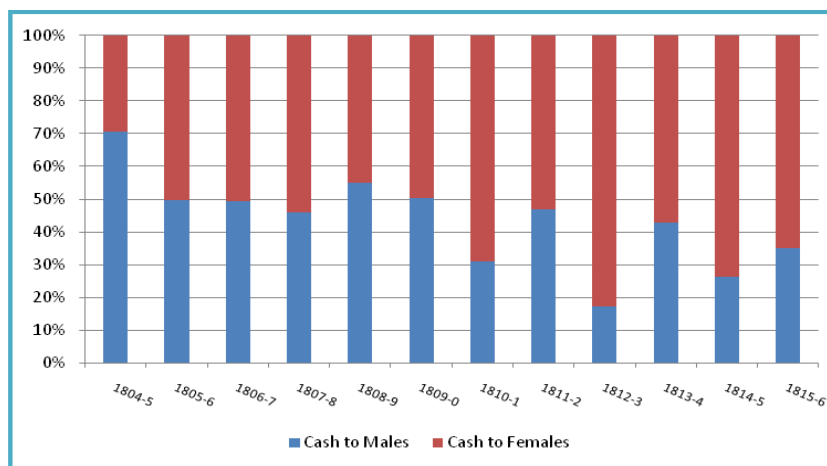


Figure 4.20
Newton – Cash to Males and Females - %
[Newton Poores’ Books DDNw9/7]

and receiving over 70% of the allowances.²⁴⁰ The average total yearly relief bill for all paupers was £5 12s 0d: for men it was £6 13s 0d and £5 1s 0d for women. This compares with Kirkham’s sums of £4 14s 0d, £4 16s 0d and £4 3s 0d where, as Chapter Three revealed, men accounted for 55% of recipients and received 43% of the cash. Figure 4.21 shows the distribution of the amounts of weekly pay.

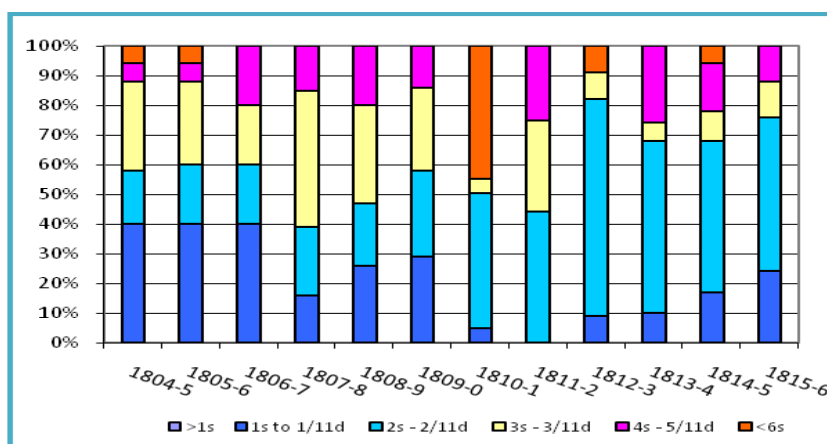


Figure 4.21
Newton – Weekly Pay Rates – 1804 to 1816 - %
[Newton Poores’ Books DDNw9/7]

²⁴⁰ The relatively small numbers of paupers require that these figures be viewed with caution as an unusually large payment to one pauper or a collection of small payments to a number of paupers can skew the results.

It is hazardous to make too much of this data as the numbers of recipients were always small and never more than 27 in a single year. However, nobody received less than 1s a week and it is safe to say that the majority of allowances were in the middling range, from 2s to 3s 11d a week and this accounted for some 62% of the total compared with 54% at Kirkham. On the whole, women were given smaller amounts than the men although the overseers paid higher rates when they thought it necessary. Betty Clark for instance received a total of £8 10s 0d in amounts varying from 5s 6d to 7s in the 35 weeks before her death in addition to “licquer” and two quarts of rum to the value of 14s. One particularly noticeable feature of the allowances is the rising tendency of women’s allowances towards the end of the period. In the first year of the series, only one woman out of eight appeared in the “2s to 2s 11d” bracket. All the rest were granted no more than 2s 11d. By 1810, the numbers were equal with one woman receiving pay in the “3s to 3s 11d” bracket. In the final year, recipients in the lower bracket were the exception with those in the next bracket numbering eight and three more receiving more than 3s a week.

The provision of cash at need at Newton, which absorbed 21% of the expenditure, is set out in Figure 4.22.

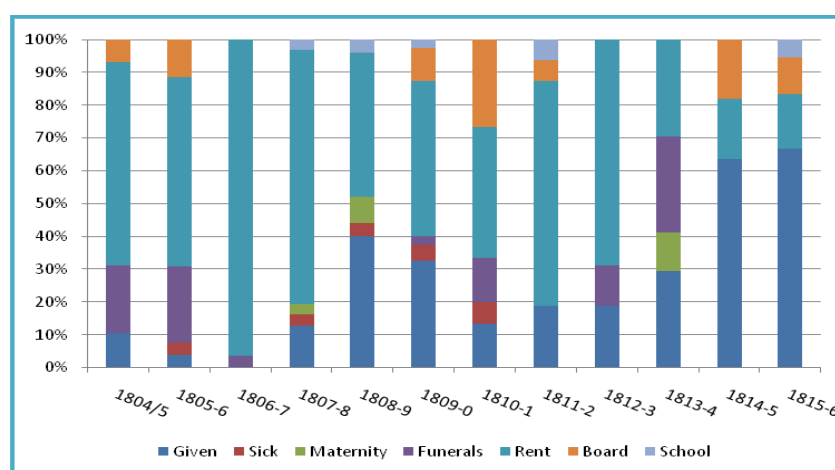


Figure 4.22
Newton - Distribution of Cash at Need - 1804 to 1816 - %
[Newton Poors’ Books DDNw9/7]

Additional cash sums for unspecified purposes looked large but payments in connection with sickness and childbirth were negligible at only £13 in the whole of the

twelve years. This again suggests that the Newton overseers allowed higher weekly pay, requiring the paupers to make their own shift with whatever they were granted except in exceptional circumstances. Payment for medical attendance, medicine or appliances was rare although Thomas Lingart was allowed a crutch at a cost of 9d in 1805 and 1s 2d for “a bottle for the itch” in 1814; Mr. Nixon was paid 3s 6d for his attendance of Catherine Simpson in 1808; Ginny Birch cost the town a whole guinea, the amount paid to “Dr. Knipe when took her thumb off”; John Titterington was granted a pint of rum at a cost of 2s 7d whilst Betty Clark was even more favoured with three pints for 13s 6d. The low level of expenditure under this head, probably largely due to the suggested policy of the overseers in making relatively high weekly payments, might also have been, when compared with Kirkham, due to the healthier rural environment.

Only two women were given maternity benefit. Margaret Titterington was allowed £1 10s 0d in 1807 and, five years later, another grant of £2 was made. This mother provides one of the few local instances of the overseer’s taking action against a putative father although his name is not mentioned. The other woman was Betty Catterall, who received £2 lying-in money in 1808/09 and an affiliation order although against whom is not stated. Both first appeared in the lists in the year they first received lying-in money and thereafter they were both received relief for the rest of the series. Betty received regular weekly pay of 2s which was increased for a year to 3s before being reduced to the earlier amount.

Funeral costs were allowed to eight families for eleven funerals during the period. As at Kirkham payments covered the cost of the coffin, fees to the church, and bread and ale for the mourners. The usual cost was about £1 6s 0d. However, there were exceptions. The most expensive here was that of Edmund Porter whose funeral in 1804 cost the town the sum of £4 15s 3d. These funeral expenses were at the high end of the range and included the customary £1 12s 0d for the coffin, church fees and drink. In addition the overseers paid £2 19s 3d to Margaret Moss for “attendance and laying him out and three nights’ waking.” This payment was unusual not only in the

size of the amount but also that it was paid at all. ²⁴¹ Another large payment was made when Betty Backhouse was granted £3 4s 1d plus 13s 11d for “bread and ale for funeral” for her husband’s funeral, a figure which might well have included payments similar to those made to the Porter family. A third funeral where the overseers paid more than was usual was that of Betty Hayson in 1811. The inference from the overseers’ “poor book” is that Betty was either a spinster or widowed as Isabel Porter was paid for providing meals for her for ten days and for “house room and attendance” at a total cost of 11s. The overseers also charged 3s for “ordering the funeral” which also suggests that she had no family. The Porter family, in the person of Ellen, likewise received funeral expenses to the tune of £1 in the following year and another family who were similarly assisted on two occasions, both apparently in 1814, was that of Cuthbert Birchall for whom the provision of a hearse was specifically noted. Taken together, these cases do suggest a degree of care for their charges on the part of the township authorities.

It was the payment of rents which absorbed the greatest part of cash at need but, contrary to the practice at Kirkham, these costs appeared throughout the period although they were slightly lower in later years. Individual amounts varied although an annual figure in the order of £3 appears not untypical. Thomas Allanson’s rent for three years cost £9 in 1806 and Jenny Porter’s for 1811 was, at £2 12s 0d, a similar amount. As well as paying rents, the overseers owned or rented on behalf of the town, a number of houses on which repairs were carried out and taxes paid. ²⁴² In October 1808 they gave notice “to quit the town’s cottages” to Mary Backhouse, James Baxendale, Cuthbert Birch and James Titterington. Of these, only Baxendale seems to have received no other relief as his name does not appear in the lists but the other three or their families were regularly relieved throughout the period. The town also owned open land as one Edmund Spencer received 11s 6d for “a gate for the Town’s garden” in 1813. Logic suggests that this was in the nature of an allotment.

²⁴¹ Whilst small payments for “attendance” occur from time to time in cases of sickness, this is the only example of payment for “laying-out and waking” noted in the years which are covered by this study.

²⁴² This policy was not popular but it recurs throughout the period. See OXLEY *Op.cit.* P.64. Efforts to discover their location have been unsuccessful.

Of the remaining expenditure under this heading, board cost the township £18 and schooling a further £5. One who was regularly boarded out was Thomas Lingard who appears to have to have moved between Brindle Workhouse and homes of others in the township and in the adjacent township of Freckelton. In 1811/12 he was boarded out for two weeks and then spent time in Brindle Workhouse whose Governor was paid 19s 8d for his services. Amongst the others were William Hall who had his houseroom paid to Margaret Morley for two years and the daughter of Cuthbert Birch who was boarded out for two years possibly after the death of her father in 1814.

There is only one example of the payment of educational costs. This is the payment of school fees and the purchase of books for Alice Smethurst in four separate years. Alice received a total of over £35 in relief over seven years in two periods. The first of these, of three years duration, absorbed the greater part of the total and her annual relief averaged £10. She received nothing for the two subsequent years and then in the subsequent four years a total of £5. The records provide no other information except that the money laid out by the overseers also included the cost of books. These payments on behalf of Alice are unique in the three townships studied in the period and seem strange in view of the fact that Newton had an endowed Blue School providing, where necessary, free board and education for poor children in the township and it can only be take as an instance of the overseer's flexibility.

Turning now to relief provided in kind, the Newton overseers disbursed only 7% of their funds under this heading to pay for fuel, clothing and footwear, food, house repairs, bedding, tools and equipment, unspecified goods, all in very small amounts totalling just over £100 and the distribution is show in Figure 4.23. Fuel was usually coal which was supplied by Robert Mayor of Freckelton who also delivered to the Kirkham poor. The purchase of food and drink whilst also relatively rare and costing less than £7 for the whole of the period, is of interest because of the nature of the goods supplied.

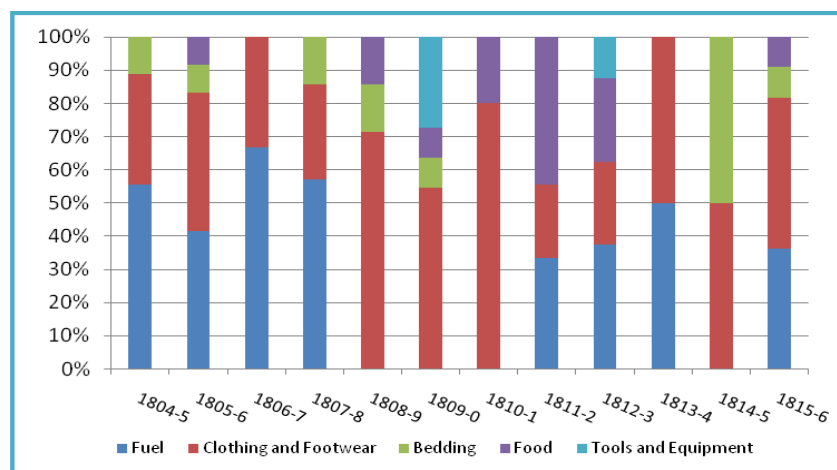


Figure 4.23
Newton – Distribution of Relief in Kind – 1804 to 1816 - %
[Newton Poores' Books DDNw9/7]

Immins Smethurst received cheese to the value of 6d, Catherine Sowerbutts was allowed 2s worth of bread, Catherine Smithson had 5s worth of “licquor etc.” Margaret Titterington enjoyed beef which cost 10s 6d and John Titterington was treated on different occasions to rum and ale which together cost the overseers 4s 7d. Jane Johnson also enjoyed 7lbs of beef whilst 30lbs of meal at 10s, was provided for Mary Backhouse, 2 windles of potatoes and 90lbs of meal, at a total of £2 7s 9d, for Cuthbert Birchall and “meat and drink”, 16s, for John Marsden, all in 1811/12. In the following year Cuthbert Birchall was supplied with potatoes, 12/6d, and Betty Clark with 2 quarts of rum, 5s. Shortly afterwards both Cuthbert and Betty were buried, their funerals being paid for by the Town. In the final year of the series “vitles” to the tune of 1s were provided for Richard Benson and for John Mercer who received 6s 6d worth, whilst Thomas Lingart was allowed “mete” worth 8s. Although the grants under this heading were small both in number and in money terms, the items provided – cheese, beef, meal and potatoes and ale – give some insight into the diet which the poor enjoyed although the rum, as already noted above, was possibly for medicinal purposes rather than for sustenance. In contrast with Kirkham, whose paupers appear largely to have subsisted upon potatoes and oats, Newton paupers had a more varied diet but, unlike Kirkham, no payments were made for allotments which were probably not necessary in a farming area where the population was thinly spread and land freely available.

The provision of clothing and footwear absorbed rather more of the Town's budget than did food and drink, a total of over £35. Whilst 17 paupers, 7 men and 10 women, shared in this distribution the bulk, over £19 was shared between Thomas Lingart who received all but £15 and Alice Smethurst who received nearly £5. Both of these have been previously noticed as receiving relief. The payment books reveal that, as at Kirkham, a variety of clothing was provided including bedgowns, belts, brats, britches, coats, handkerchieves, hats, petticoats, shirts, stays, suits and waistcoats together with cloth and thread for the paupers to make up their own garments. Footwear, both new clogs, new shoes their repair was provided and as was noted at Kirkham they were the predominant item under this heading.

Provision varied considerably. Margaret Morely, for example, appeared but once in the clothing list when she was allowed cloth to the value of 6s. Catherine Simpson, however, appeared regularly and was granted amounts of cloth together with handkerchieves, stockings, petticoats, and a bedgown at a cost of £2. There is no indication of the use of second-hand clothing as was noticed at Kirkham but a couple of instances suggest that whilst the Newton overseers were more generous than their Kirkham peers, they nevertheless exercised a degree of cost consciousness and required clothing to be repaired: Gilbert Benson was allowed 2/8d for "2 cote sleeves" and 1/6d for "stockings footing", both in the same year and both suggesting repairs to garments which he already owned.

A few items of bedding were provided to James Lingart who received a bedcover and 9 yards of bedding and to Betty Backhouse was allowed 8s 8d for blankets and a pan, this being the only example here of the provision of specified household equipment although other paupers received unspecified goods which possibly included domestic items and there are also a couple of instances of minor repairs being provided. Only one example appears of tools and equipment being repaired when Thomas Lingart had his looms repaired and carted to Freckleton in 1809. John Danson was paid 12s 6d for "learning to weave" in 1815. Other items of miscellaneous outlay include loans of a guinea to Ann Darlington in 1807, £1 10 0d to John Booth "for a little time" in 1809

and 6s to Ann Allanson in 1815. Peggy Lingart, who had been boarded with Richard Parkinson and John Titterington, was allowed 5s “setting off for servitude.” Presumably she had found work, the only indication of a search for employment at this time.

Newton being but a small township, as was noted in Chapter Two, its poor relief costs were also low and those absorbing the greatest part of the poor rate and having the greatest effect upon the poor of the district have been discussed above. However, some other items regularly appearing in the Poors’ Books should be mentioned. Apart from the regular purchases of ale and gin at the meetings of the townspeople responsible for relief, two other costs stand out. The first is the payments to “passenger” or itinerants who were usually given small amounts ranging from 2d to 6d although in April 1805 one was given 5s 6d “for loss of a vessel” and the giving of 15s in 1813 to “3 local which wood [sic] not pass” suggests a degree of desperation and bribery. The second, which appears in every year is a payment to Brindle Workhouse. The amount paid was, with only two exceptions, a regular £1 7s 0d. In one year the amount was £1 10s 3d and in the following year £2 10 7d was paid. These amounts were in addition to payments made for particular paupers and suggest that the Town was paying annual subscription for the right to send its paupers there when necessary. There was also a certain element of legal costs of the order of £20 for the period attendant upon questions of settlement, removal and filiation together with travelling expenses. 1809/10 appears to have been a particularly busy year in this respect although the circumstances behind such entries as “Journey to Preston on Peggy Lingart’s examination 3s;” “Journey to Staining on Peggy Lingart’s account 3s; expenses on same 1s 6d;” “removal order for Peggy Lingart 4s;” “Robert Wilson to Staining fetching Margaret [Peggy] Lingart to Sessions 2s” can only be guessed at particularly as money was subsequently paid out “to her and other expenses attending Sessions 2 days 14s 3d” and “gave her for trouble attending trial, etc.. 10s 6d.” Other single items include £3 lent to Thomas Etherington, a man who makes no appearance in the relief lists, and £2 2s 0d paid to Mr. Loxham for “house rents.” The only other item of any consequence is the payment of the overseer’s salary although payments appear to

have been irregular. He was paid £5 12s 6d for three quarters of a year in 1805, there is a further reference to payment of £5 18 0d in 1811 and that is all. There were apparently only two payments made to other parishes for Newton poor maintained elsewhere: in 1812 the Hutton overseers were paid 17s on Betty Smithers' account and in 1814 Treales was paid £1 on account of Jenny Parkinson.

In summary whilst Newton assisted its poor with the whole range of provision which was observed at Kirkham, it allowed weekly pay at a higher level than did its neighbour. However, the smaller place made extra payments in fewer cases and then largely for major items such as rents or for life crisis events such as births and deaths but when these were made, they tended, as the examples of death payments have suggested, to be at a more generous level than those at Kirkham. Further, whilst Kirkham coped with its own difficult cases through the medium of its Workhouse, Newton preferred to pay not Kirkham but Brindle for this need despite the fact that this place was at a distance of some twenty miles and involved regular costs even if the facilities were not used. Margaret Hanley has suggested that Brindle Workhouse had a reputation as being a suitable place for difficult cases and the explanation, which possibly suggests a slightly more generous attitude than that shown by the Kirkham overseers, may lie here.²⁴³ Whilst these conclusions have to be tentative because the record is incomplete, what is clear is that the variety of practice in the administration of relief, which has been a theme of this work, was apparent even between adjacent townships which were a part of the same parish and whose poor law officers must have been known to each other. The following chapter, which looks at Kirkham and Clifton-with-Salwick, Newton's partner in the Chapelry of Lund, during the 1820s will examine the extent to which a similar situation prevailed there. However, consideration must first be given to Kirkham Town in the later years of the second decade of the century.

11 – Kirkham – Relief 1816/7 to 1819/20

Thus far the analysis has considered the period from 1803 to the spring of 1816 and the reasons for these chronological parameters were discussed in the Introduction.

²⁴³ Personal Communication.

Chapter Six takes the discussion on from 1820 but consideration must first be given to the intervening period which was important as these were the years of the Sturges Bournes Acts and of discussion in the wider community about the place of the poor laws and the administration of relief. At Kirkham comparison both of the physical form of the documents and of the nature of relief provided suggests that during these years the Poor Law Authorities in the town examined their relief policies and opted for change.

Expenditure, as far as it can be calculated, is set out in Table 4e. The total amount spent on the Town's poor during these four years was just over £1600. In the first year costs were at a figure slightly in excess of that in 1815/16 but fell to well below the average for the previous fifteen years. Of the total amount the greater part, £1037 representing 64%, was paid to the Governor of the Workhouse with the balance being paid to the paupers in the form of out-relief. Payments here were fairly consistent over the four years but the average proportion devoted to the Workhouse is almost the reverse of that in the years up to 1815/16 suggesting not only that authority was maintaining its customary tight grip on expenditure but also that greater use was being made of the Workhouse in the Town's relief strategy and that this was the result of a deliberate change in policy. Again on the figures presented, expenditure on out-relief was declining at a considerable rate with the total in the fourth year of the series being almost exactly a quarter of the first. During the period 240 poor people were relieved of whom 63% were male and they received 43% of the money. This is in slight contrast with the previous period when 55% of the recipients were male. The total out-relief bill for the four years was just under £600 The bulk of the out-relief was still paid in the form of weekly allowances which accounted for a over 40% of the money spent directly on the Town's poor although this amount was considerably below the previous level of some 68%. However, whilst cash at need accounted for 22% in the early years, the figure here was also some 40%, the bulk of which went on cash for unspecified purposes rather than on sick pay, maternity benefit, funeral expenses, rents and board and it seems that

Year/Costs - £s	1816/7	1817/8	1818/9	1819/0	Total	Total
						%
Weekly Pay	128	47	65	10	250	43
Cash at Need	117	32	11	14	174	30
Medical and Sick	10	6	7	4	27	13
Funeral Expenses	4	6	3	3	16	
Maternity Expenses	2	1	1	1	5	
Rents	10	6	1		17	
Board	10				10	
Fuel	2	2			4	8
Clothing and Footwear	4	4	9		17	
House Repairs		1			1	
Bedding	1				1	
Food	11	3	1		15	
Tools and Equipment	2	2	1	1	6	
Administration	18	10	8	4	40	6
Sub-Total	319	120	107	37	583	100
Paid to other Parishes	25	41	34	50	150	19
Total Out-Relief	344	161	141	87	733	
Paid to Governor	270	248	286	233	1037	
Total Expenditure	614	409	427	320	1770	

Table 4f
Kirkham – Poor Relief Expenditure 1816 to 1820
[Overseer’s Account PR805]

the overseer was increasingly adopting this method of relief rather than agreeing to a regular weekly payment, a strategy which, as previously observed, gave him greater freedom in the distribution of relief. Rents, which had disappeared from the lists now reappeared although only minimally. Forty three paupers received relief during both

periods but only five of these, Matthew Bagshaw, Robert Clarkson, Francis, Paul and Richard Fleetwood, were relieved in all the four years.

Relief in kind accounted for only 8% of outlay with the bulk, £17 from a calculated total of £44, going on clothing and footwear although expenditure on food was significant at a calculated £15. The year of greatest expenditure was 1816/17 and the reappearance of rental payments in this year is noticeable as is the relatively high amounts for medical expenses, the provision of food, boarding costs and the expense of settlement and removal. The individual payments suggest that times might have been unusually hard for Kirkham's poor. Twenty families were given money in connection with sickness and seven of these were noted as "child sick" with two of them "in fever." The number of occasions when money was given "being out of work" is also unusually high as is that on which the overseer allowed money in for "towards potato ground." James Buller, who was a regular recipient of relief, was given money both when "short of work" and "out of work" ²⁴⁴ as were Peggy Lewis and her sister and John Singleton who was given 5s, an unusually large amount. Edward Kirby was given 10s "to loose potatoes" and a further £1 7s 0d was paid for rent for his potato ground. Two other members of the Kirby family, James and Joseph, received similar allowances as did George Raby, whose potato ground rent of 14s 9½d was paid directly to William Segar. Other expenses, very much in the nature of *ad hoc* payments, included £3 which was lent to Edward Taylor "to loose his wife in prison" and 12s 3d to Edward Smith for "loosing his clothes", presumably from the pawnbroker.

The final year of the series shows similar expenditure with money being allowed to the unemployed and, occasionally, to those who wanted to seek work elsewhere as, for example, Samuel Fleetwood who was given 5s to go to Bentham and another 5s "to go and find work." Another pauper, James Wheatley, was given 6s "to go to Bentham" as well as 5s "gave at twice." Amongst others who left the town, although for different reasons, were Thomas Holmes and Thomas Singleton whose wives were each relieved

²⁴⁴ L.R.O. PR805.

because “he run away.” The general impression presented by the data is largely one of “business as usual” with the vestry and the overseer keeping increasingly tight control of expenditure and being re-active rather than pro-active and, although the overall trend of relief was downwards, the various headings under which assistance was granted were similar to those observed between 1804 and 1816. Total recorded expenditure on direct out-relief was certainly falling. However, whether this was due to the incompleteness of the record or whether the authorities were deliberately reducing expenditure whilst they considered the whole matter of relief and imposed the even stricter controls which become apparent after 1820 is open to question.

12 - Conclusion

The previous chapter observed that, as far as Kirkham was concerned, the Workhouse was an important part of its relief strategy but not the dominant part and Newton and Clifton appeared to have made little use of any such accommodation either at Kirkham or elsewhere. Out-relief, for reasons discussed, was the method of relief of choice and has been the focus of this chapter. The assertion has been made that the poor could not always expect their applications for relief to be granted even in part and this was certainly the case at Kirkham.

Looking in more detail at provision throughout the period 1804 to 1816, it appears that in both Kirkham and Newton the preferred method of out-relief was by weekly pay although as Figures 4.1 and 4.10 showed, it was more important in Newton than in Kirkham. The proportions spent on cash at need were almost identical but the amounts distributed in the form of relief in kind at Kirkham were half those at Newton. Rates of weekly pay, whilst they varied from year to year, were largely higher in Newton where 43% received more than 2s a week compared to Kirkham where only 25% were so favoured. However, these figures were nowhere near what an employee in the flax mills of Kirkham could expect to make. Looking at Cash at Need payments, even a brief glance at Figures 4.8 and 4.14 highlights the difference in approach between the two townships. Newton consistently paid pauper rents although the amounts fell off towards the end of the period. Kirkham on the other hand, with very minor exceptions abandoned them after 1807, evidence, it has been suggested, of a

desire to reduce expenditure. To some extent, expenditure on medical care, maternity expenses and funeral costs must have been dictated to by the needs of the moment but an interesting item which appears in the Newton accounts in the last year of the series is the payment of school fees. What is evident, when maternity and funeral expenses are considered, is that provision was minimal with none of the extras which were found in other authorities. The provision of relief in kind also contrasts with that at Kirkham where fuel was infrequently supplied and provision for food was largely in connection with the paupers' potato ground. Newton, on the other hand, whilst it spent little, was prepared to provide actual food in the way of cheese, meat and ale as well as potatoes. The contrasts noted between the two places in the overall provision of relief were clearly continued into more detailed assistance.

The final section of the Chapter looked at Kirkham from 1817 to 1820, the separate consideration being indicated by the surviving record. Conclusions are difficult to draw but the Workhouse was still important in the relief strategy and the emphasis on cash in the form of weekly pay or additional cash in hand is noticeable. As the following chapter will describe, these years were ones of debate and change which were reflected in the administration of relief and it seems likely that the thinking which conditioned the granting of relief from 1820 onwards were already active in Kirkham at this time. The period thus forms a link between diversity of relief and the almost complete abolition of any form of relief but cash.

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**Chapter Five**  
**The State of the Poor in Kirkham and Lund**  
**1820 to 1834**

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1 – Preliminary

Chapters Three and Four discussed the state of the poor in Kirkham and Lund from 1803 to 1820. The later years of this period had seen the conclusion of the French wars and the end of hostilities inevitably had consequences on the domestic front. Firstly, the government, whilst it had not entirely neglected domestic matters during the war, was now able to give more attention to affairs at home. Secondly, the county and rural élites who had been prepared, even if grudgingly, to accept the necessity of funding the poor laws for fear of an outbreak of civil unrest similar to that which they observed across the English Channel, were reassured by the restoration of the French monarchy and becoming restless at the rising cost of relief. Furthermore, the numbers of those requesting relief were swelled not only by demobilised sailors and soldiers but also by workmen who, previously employed in manufacturing, agriculture and other work in support of the wars, were now laid off and by an increasing birth-rate which, possibly owing something to demobilisation and redundancy, had peaked in 1816. ¹ “The mood,” Anthony Brundage noted “was unsettled and tense.” ²

The background to the period has been covered not only by Brundage but also by Alan Kidd, Steven King and Lynn Hollen Lees. They have shown that society’s attitude towards the operation of the poor laws was changing under the influence of the Evangelicals and the economic results of industrial and agricultural developments. ³ As the numbers of the pauper host increased from the late 1700s the relative generosity of the middle years of the eighteenth century was replaced by a period characterised by Lees as one in which the poor progressively lost their legitimacy and acceptance within the community. She wrote that -

¹ For the general background to this period see BERG, Maxine. The Age of Manufactures 1700-1820: Industry, Innovation and Work in Britain. London, Routledge. 1994 and MORGAN, Kenneth. The Birth of Industrial Britain: Social Change, 1750-1850. Harlow, Pearson Education Limited. 2004.

² BRUNDAGE, Anthony. The English Poor Laws 1700-1930. Basingstoke. Palgrave. 2002. P.44.

³ KIDD, Alan. State, Society and the Poor in Nineteenth Century England. Basingstoke, MacMillan Press Limited. 1999. KING, Steven Andrew. Poverty and Welfare in England 1700-1850: a Regional Perspective. Manchester, Manchester University Press. 2000. LEES, Lynn Hollen. The Solidarities of Strangers: the English Poor Laws and the People, 1700-1948. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press. 1998.

By 1820, major assaults on the poor laws had been mounted both locally and nationally in an effort to delegitimize public support for the poor despite long-term growth in national wealth. As the country got richer and widened its political system to include the middle classes, it also narrowed public commitment to the workers. ⁴

The poor were forced from the centre of the community to the edges where they became members of a new and rejected underclass. As Lees again remarked –

Over time, mass poverty triggered a general revulsion against outdoor relief and against the needy who were slowly pushed to the margins of their communities and were told that to eat they had to labor. ⁵

The question of the poor laws, their operation and their beneficiaries became the subject of considerable debate stimulated by Thomas Malthus and his “Essay on Population” which, in its several editions and reprints, “set the intellectual tone for debate on the poor laws well into the 1840s.” ⁶ Lees again observed that –

Over time, his attitude towards the poor laws hardened [although] not everyone accepted the policies Malthus recommended, his view of the futility of poor relief had to be confronted . . . Such ideas became staple arguments amongst would-be reformers in the period between 1800 and 1830. ⁷

Thus “The period 1815 to 1834 was one of experimentation, when many parishes restricted grants and worked to redefine the terms of local welfare bargains.” ⁸ Not only was it a period of experimentation, it was also a period of uncertainty. For sure, the poor and how they were to be relieved was a problem and increasingly seen to be so but the question was what to do about it. Opinions varied. Some favoured a modification of the existing system along the lines of the Scottish method of relief. ⁹ Others favoured progressive abolition of relief whilst yet others recommended its immediate cessation. The outcome was the Select Vestries Acts of 1818 and 1819. These two acts, furthering Lees’ processes of restriction and redefinition, effectively gave Parliamentary sanction to the branding of the dependent poor “as a separate, inferior, group.” ¹⁰ In Brundage’s words –

Such rigor was facilitated by provisions for paid overseers, better kept accounts, and the building or enlargement of workhouses. Thus in

⁴ LEES. *Op.cit.* P.20.

⁵ *Ibid.* P.111.

⁶ *Ibid.* P.91.

⁷ *Ibid.* P.91.

⁸ *Ibid.*P.15. See BRUNDAGE, *op.cit.*, P.51 *et seq* for the action of some areas.

⁹ BRUNDAGE.*Op.cit.* P.46.

¹⁰ LEES. *Op.cit.* P.41. For a discussion on the select vestries, see BRUNDAGE. *Op.cit* P.50 *et seq.* and KING, *op.cit.* Poverty. P.26.

those parishes which chose to adopt the Select Vestries Act, power was shifted away from the small farmers and shopkeepers whose ignorance, laziness and jobbing ways, it was claimed, were a major cause of spiralling poor rates and pauper insubordination.¹¹

Taken together, these measures, as King has observed, had “potentially fundamental consequences for the experience of being poor.”¹²

In the parishes and the townships invigorated vestries and overseers continued to provide relief but the Select Vestries Acts did not put an end to the debate. Something had needed to be done, something had indeed been done, but was it enough and if not, what more was required. The discussion rumbled on and was not to be converted into action for a number of years. Indeed, this is reflected in the literature which deals in detail with the years between the defeat of Napoleon and the immediate aftermath of the Select Vestries Acts and then largely draws a veil over the intervening years until the widening of the franchise and the appointment of the Royal Commission to enquire into the poor laws in 1832.¹³

It was not only on the national scene that there was debate and discussion. Kirkham’s relief authorities also appear to have done some hard thinking at this time. To what extent it formally took advantage of the Select Vestries Acts, which were adoptive rather than mandatory, is unclear as membership of the parish vestry was already selective as it consisted of only two men from each of the fifteen constituent townships.¹⁴ However, at this period the overseer’s accounts regularly note the existence of such a body and two of the acts’ provisions, those for the better keeping of accounts and for the appointment of a paid overseer, are reflected in the records.¹⁵

¹¹ BRUNDAGE, Anthony. The Making of the New Poor Law 1832-39. London, Hutchinson and Co. 1978. P.10

¹² KING. *Op.cit.* P.26.

¹³ This gap is reflected *inter alia* in King’s work on the period 1700 to 1850 where his penultimate chapter, dealing with the period 1821 to 1850, concentrates largely on the period of the New Poor Law. See KING. *Op.cit.* Poverty. P.227 *et seq.*

¹⁴ The existence of large parishes covering several townships was, as demonstrated elsewhere in this work was common in Lancashire. In addition to those mentioned Leyland and Preston provide other examples.

¹⁵ See, for example, an entry in the overseer’s records for May 29th 1822: “Paid for publishing Select Vestry Meeting 6d.” L.R.O. PR805. BRUNDAGE, *op.cit.*, English, states that “Lancashire and Yorkshire were notable for their adoption of select vestries, and this is one reason that leaders in those counties later asserted that they

The cost of relief in Kirkham, which had risen in the middle years of the second decade of the century, fell in the years immediately prior to 1820 and this trend continued for a time as is shown in Figure 5.1. ¹⁶ Nationally, as Steven King showed, expenditure on relief, which peaked in 1818, fell steadily until 1823 before rising to another but lesser peak in 1827 with a further peak in 1834 after which outlay progressively reduced and by 1839 it was below the 1819 figure. ¹⁷ Kirkham followed this general trend and as, Figure 5.1 also shows, the experience was reflected in other comparable Lancashire towns from 1820 to 1834.

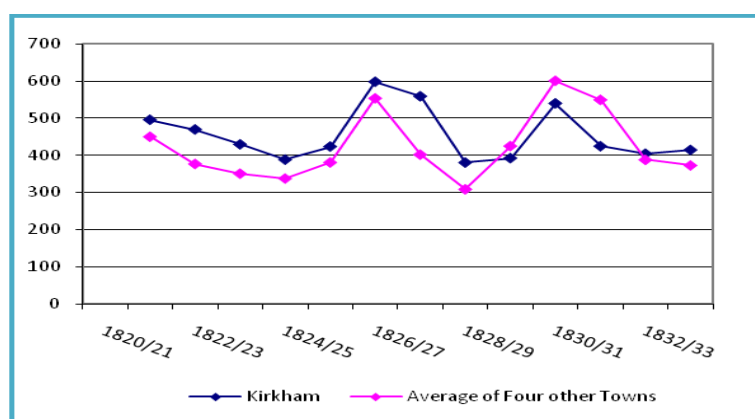


Figure 5.1
Annual Expenditure on Poor Relief - £s
Kirkham and average of Four Lancashire Market Towns
1820 to 1833
[Poor Rate Returns] ¹⁸

Whilst in the early period, Kirkham was exercising tighter control over relief than were its neighbours, by the third decade they were all reflecting the general trend which Lees observed. Lancashire's experience was, of course, part of a national trend and the county was not alone in its reduced expenditure in the years following the Select Vestries Acts although its already parsimonious attitude to relief meant that the savings were unlikely to have been as great as those recorded by Brundage which

had no need of the New Poor Law. See MIDWINTER. MIDWINTER, Eric. Social Administration in Lancashire. Manchester, Manchester University Press. 1961.

¹⁶ The four towns are Garstang, Leyland, Ormskirk and Poulton-le-Fylde. Like Kirkham they were all ancient market towns and ecclesiastical centres.

¹⁷ KING. *Op.cit.* P.81. Figure 4.1

¹⁸ Parliamentary Papers. Reports from the Select Committee on Poor Rate Returns. 1822 (556); 1825(334); 1830 (83) 1835 (444)

showed by way of example a reduction in two Berkshire parishes of some 40% in the early 1820s. ¹⁹,

Figure 5.2 shows how this movement followed that of the prices of staple goods and, although the correspondence here is not as close as that observed in the early period there is still a degree of similarity in the general trend.

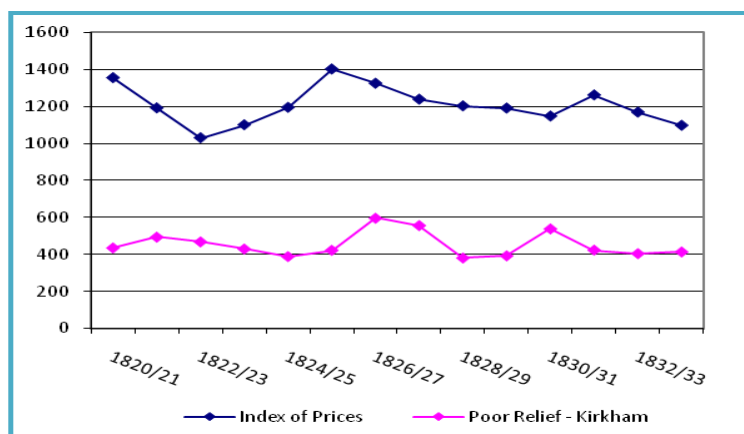


Figure 5.2
Kirkham - Movement of Prices and Poor Relief – 1820 to 1834
 [Poor Relief: Overseer’s Accounts PR807 & PR808. Prices: Burnett – Cost of Living ²⁰]

Why should Kirkham appear to come into line in the later years? The answer is not that Kirkham adopted a more generous attitude to its poor but rather that, in response to the trends and sentiments discussed and the powers provided by the Select Vestries Acts other parishes found that, as Brundage noted, they were able to tighten the screws on the rack of their relief machinery. Preston, for example, took advantage of the Acts and set about reducing its costs although “The Vestry are not aware of having refused relief to any applicants legally entitled thereto.” ²¹ Garstang also appointed a Select Vestry which held its first meeting in 1821 and of which it was observed that its institution had been the saving of the town’s finances. ²² Indeed, Eric Midwinter summarised this general carefulness in Lancashire when he

¹⁹ BRUNDISH. *Op.cit. English*. P.51.

²⁰ BURNETT, John. *A History of the Cost of Living*. Harmondsworth, Penguin Books Ltd. 1969. P.200.

²¹ Preston. *First Half-Yearly Report on the Affairs of the Poor*. L.R.O. DDP140/3.

²² Garstang. *Select Vestry Minutes*. 19th June 1821. L.R.O. DDX386/3.

noted that “The Old Poor Law in [the county] was neither ramshackle nor disorganised. It was reasonably successful.”²³

2 – Relief in Kirkham

Turning now to a detailed examination of relief in Kirkham, Figure 5.3 shows the total actually spent on relief for the fourteen year period as distinct from the total collected which included money for other purposes. Total expenditure was some £7300. This represents an average of £520 a year compared with a figure of £600 for the previous period and Figure 5.3 shows the trend of this expenditure in cash terms.

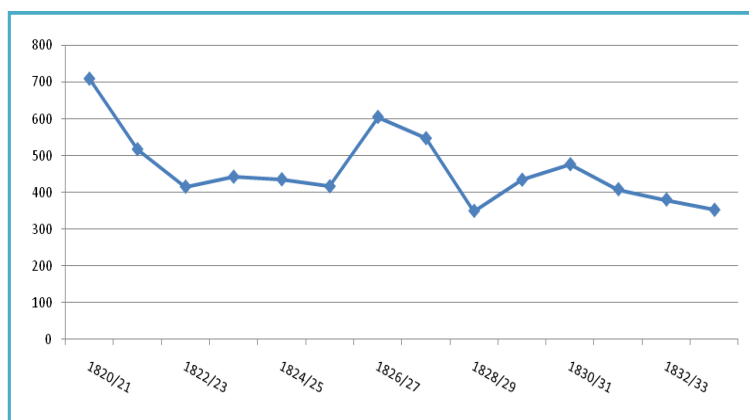


Figure 5.3
Kirkham – Trend of Expenditure on Poor Relief - 1820 to 1834 - £s
[PR807 & PR808]

Figure 5.4 shows how this expenditure was divided between workhouse expenditure and out-relief. Of the total, 30% went to the Workhouse whilst the balance of 70% was spent on out-relief. The proportion of the total expenditure devoted to the House and its inmates varied from a little under 20% in 1821/22 and 1822/23 to as much as 40% in 1826/27. This shows little change from the early period in which the figures were 33% and 67% and 1827/28 and there is some slight correspondence here with the movement of total expenditure as when total costs rose, the proportion spent on the House also increased.

²³ MIDWINTER. *Op.cit.* P.14.



Figure 5.4
Kirkham – Workhouse and Out-Relief Expenditure - 1820 to 1834 - %
[PR805, PR807, PR808]

These proportions reflect the received wisdom, well known to poor law authorities, that maintaining a pauper in the workhouse was more expensive than giving him out-relief particularly when wife and children had also to be relieved. The national figures quoted by Brundage of £12 to keep a pauper in the House for a year as against an average of £3 spent on out-relief reinforce the point. ²⁴

Little is known of the operation of the House at this time. However, as the edifice itself was almost a hundred years old in 1820 and as the newly elected Fylde Poor Law Guardians decided on the erection of a new building when they assumed office in December 1838, it may be presumed that the structure was not in the best of order. ²⁵ Any comment about the conditions under which the inmates lived has to be speculative but if the regime in the new Fylde Union Workhouse, as discussed in the following chapter, reflects conditions in the old House, it was not over-full and the inmates, who were largely the young, the sick or the old, probably had a standard of care acceptable to contemporaries. ²⁶ There existed something in the nature of a Workhouse Visiting Committee and those inmates who were capable of doing so were required to work at the looms whilst children were given instruction in their use. The paternal interest of the Birley family, noted in the earlier period, important because of its primacy in the

²⁴ BRUNDAGE. *Op.cit. English*. P.40. These figures are from the early nineteenth century but the argument is still valid for this period.

²⁵ *Preston Chronicle*. September 3rd, 1843.

²⁶ Parish workhouses are discussed by TAYLOR, James S. 'The Unreformed Workhouse 1776-1834.' In MARTIN, Ernest Walter. *Ed. Comparative Development in Social Welfare*. London, George Allen & Unwin. 1972 and GREY, Peter. 'Parish Workhouses and Poorhouses.' *Local Historian*. Vol.10. No.2. 1971. P.70.

town, appears to have been maintained. ²⁷ The Vestry continued to pay the Governor his yearly salary of £26 and kept the buildings insured. ²⁸

3 – Out-Relief ²⁹

Out-relief, as has been shown, was the method of relief of choice wherever possible. However, as noted, the Kirkham Vestry did some serious thinking in the years immediately prior to 1820 and hardened its attitude to relief. That this was the case is apparent from even a cursory examination of the payment books. These reveal that for the whole fourteen years of the series out-relief was almost entirely in the form of cash and Lees’ assertion quoted in Chapter Four, that cash was the preferred form of relief as far as the overseers were concerned, is even more apposite here. Total expenditure on out-relief for the whole of the fourteen years was just over £5,200 of which over £4300, £300 a year, was spent on paupers living locally with the balance going to the town’s out-paupers and on administration charges. The distribution of out-relief on weekly pay, cash at need and relief in kind is shown in Figure 5.5. ³⁰

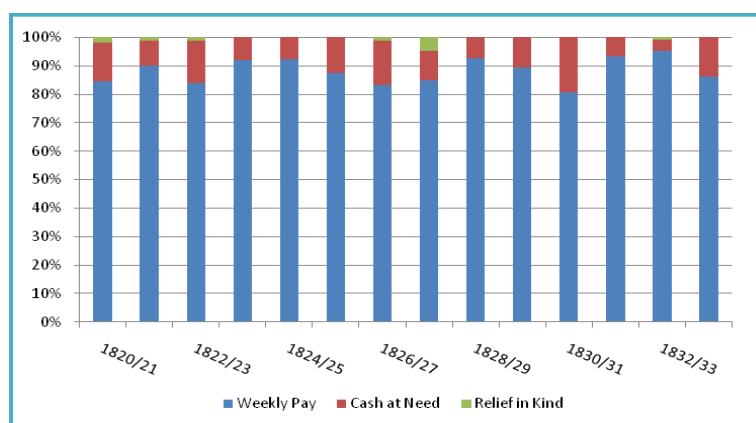


Figure 5.5
Kirkham – Weekly Pay, Cash at Need & Relief in Kind 1820 – 1834 - %
[PR805, PR807, PR808]

Regular weekly pay accounted for some 87% of the total whilst cash at need which covered medical costs, sick pay and maternity allowances together with funeral

²⁷ See SINGLETON, Francis Joseph. Kirkham – a Short History. Kirkham and District Local History Society. 1980. P.44 *et seq.*

²⁸ Some of the Overseer’s accounts are signed by members of the family. Thomas put his signature to the 1821 Accounts and William to those of 1834. L.R.O. PR805.

²⁹ Unless specifically stated otherwise, the discussion in the chapter is drawn entirely from the Overseer’s payment books at L.R.O. PR805, PR807 and PR808.

³⁰ As the payment book does not always clearly distinguish between “weekly pay” and “cash at unspecified need” the two sums have been added together for the purposes of this graph.

expenses and board costs absorbed 12%. Relief in kind absorbed but 1% with minimal sums being expended on fuel, clothing and footwear, tools and equipment and it is here that the change of policy becomes apparent as the comparative figure for 1804 to 1816 was £3954, £330 a year, but the proportions were 60% for weekly pay, 20% for cash at need and 14% for relief in kind with the balance being devoted to administrative charges.

There are several possible reasons for this change of approach. Firstly, if it were desired to keep a tight rein on expenditure, straightforward weekly pay and cash grants were more controllable. The pauper was given a sum of money and expected to “make shift.” The practice of allowing the overseer to “visit and provide what was necessary” with its open-ended possibilities for expenditure, was eliminated. Secondly, the possibility of grants for clothing or rents being side-tracked to other expenditure, even of a non-essential kind, with the likelihood of further applications to the vestry, was also avoided. Thirdly, when goods such as clothing and bedding were provided, these were capable of being converted to cash either by being pawned or sold on again with the possibility of re-application.³¹ If none were provided, this could not be done. It also avoided the possibility of the town’s being over-charged by suppliers to the detriment of the funds and the further possibility of payment of bribes by the supplier to the overseer, a charge which could be reflected in the cost of the goods supplied. There is no evidence that this was the case in Kirkham although by definition the practice would be covert. Finally, such a concentration on cash payments did away with the need to arrange purchases, record expenditure and pay accounts, all of which added to the workload of the overseer who was increasingly being given additional responsibilities in connection with the militia and law enforcement. In this connection Robert Dryburg observed that “the precise form of poor relief was determined at least

³¹ The place of pawnbroking in the economy of makeshifts is discussed in TOMKINS, Alannah. ‘Pawnbroking and the survival strategies of the Urban Poor in 1770s York.’ *In* KING, Steven Andrew & TOMKINS, Alannah. ‘KING, Steven Andrew & TOMKINS, Alannah. *Eds. The Poor in England 1700-1850: an Economy of Makeshifts.* Manchester, Manchester University Press. 2003.

partially by the interests of those operating the system” and that its operation was “not for the protection of the poor but for the protection of the rich.” ³²

Who were the poor whose relief was thus determined? An analysis of the Payment Books reveals that a total of 421 paupers and their families were relieved during the period. The annual average was thus 30 people compared with the corresponding figure of 85 for the years 1804 to 1816. Figure 5.6 shows the gender divide and Figure 5.7 shows the way in which the money was divided between the sexes.

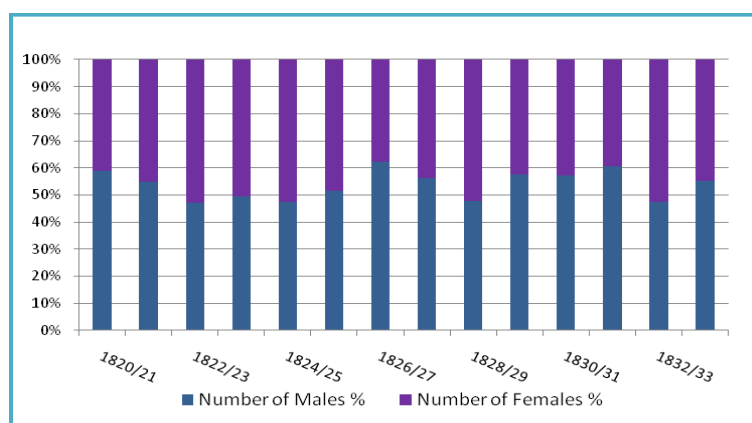


Figure 5.6
Kirkham – Gender of Paupers receiving Out-Relief -1820 to 1834 - %
[PR805, PR807, PT808]

Whilst there were clearly annual variations, men on average accounted for 53% of those relieved and received 42% of the cash. As in the early period, the balance between males and females and the money they received as a group was not too disparate with no marked favour being shown to either sex. The variation in levels of relief and the periods over which it was paid which were noted in the early period are again seen here. Casual poor, Mary Hall, for example, received four shilling in 1827/28 and Jane Edge was allowed a single shilling in 1830/31, the only occasions on which either of them appeared in the lists. At the other end of the scale, Nanny Allanson received a total of £57 7s 9d from 1822 to 1834 whilst another woman of the same name, possibly the first Nanny’s daughter, came onto the books in 1830 and received £22 7s 6d over five years whilst her children received a total of £5 10s 6d on their own account in 1831/32 and 1832/33.

³² DRYBURGH, Robert. ‘Individual, Illegal, and Unjust Purposes: overseers, incentives, and the Old Poor Law in Bolton, 1820-1837.’ University of Oxford Discussion Papers in Economic and Social History. Number 50. March 2003. P.5.

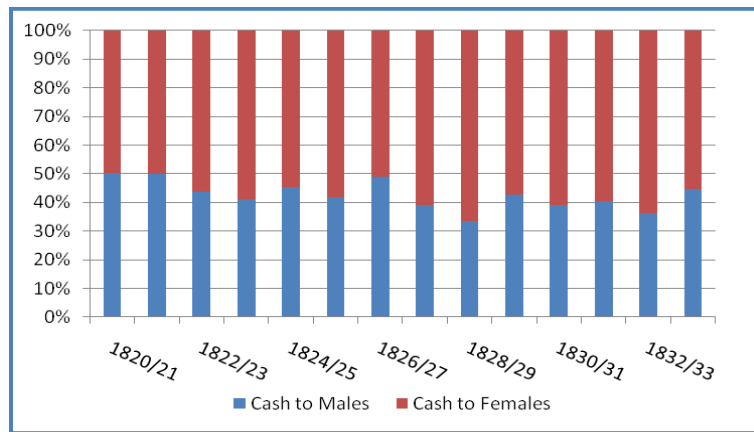


Figure 5.7
Kirkham - Cash to Males and Females 1820 to 1834 - %
[PR805, PR807, PR808]

It seems likely that these two women were the same pair who appeared in the early period, providing an example both of the transgenerational poverty and of relief over extended periods which Barry Stapleton found in his study of Odiham where he observed that two-thirds of the families he studied were “in poverty” for two or more generations.³³ Another pauper who benefited from extended relief was Peggy Marginson who, receiving intermittent assistance in the early period to the tune of £5, survived to be paid a total of £88, an average of £5, in every year from 1820 too 1838. Even though her annual income was reduced to £4 for four years in the middle of the period this amount was still in excess of the average £3 9s 0d paid to women over the fourteen years. Paupers such as Peggy was accounted for 70% of those relieved over the period and they absorbed over 80% of the poor relief budget spent locally. In between these two extremes, the very casual and the very regular, there were also people who might be described as “poor” rather than “paupers”, a class who received small amounts intermittently over a period of years. Such was John Wilcock who was given 15s in 1820 and 1821, 18s 6d in 1826, 5s in 1828, 6s 6d in 1830, 11s 8d in 1831 and 9s in the following year. The overseer clearly reacted to proven need but the existence of any established policy other than economy is questionable. Average annual payments varied considerably. Those made to males ranged from a high figure of £3 1s 0d in 1820/21 to a low figure of £1 5s 0d in 1833/34. The women were better treated as in no year did they receive an average of less than the £2 17s 0d which they were granted

³³ STAPLETON, Barry. ‘Inherited Poverty and life-cycle Poverty: Odiham, Hampshire, 1650-1850.’ *Social History*. Vol.18. No.3. P.339. 1993.

in 1837/38 and in only one other year, 1833/34, did the average fall below the £3 level. Widows, experiencing the last life-cycle crisis, appear to have been treated with even greater consideration. Five shared £29 in 1826/27 and over £40 was distributed amongst seven in the following year. Some were women who had experienced pauperdom during the lives of their husbands whilst others, sometimes along with their children, were forced into pauperdom by the death of their spouse. Typical of the former were Thomas Clarkson and his wife. They received casual relief amounting to 8s in 1822/23 and regular amounts in 1824/25 and 1825/26. Thomas must have died in the latter year as the payment books record that his widow received a pension in each of the following four years. The total for the final year was only £1 6s 0d and the presumption is that she died in that year as their children were allowed £3 18s 0d in the same year and regular amounts in the four subsequent years.

Another such was John Gregson and his wife. John was casually relieved in the early period and in 1820/21 and 1821/22. He appears to have died in the latter year as his wife was given a funeral grant of fifteen shillings and was then relieved on her own account for every one of the next twelve years although at a rate lower than that allowed to Widow Clarkson. John Deighton's widow provides another example. Deighton never appears in the lists in his own right but from 1822/23 to 1831/32 his widow received a total of £57 18s 6d and their children were granted £1 18s 0d in the following year. Two other widows who appeared to have had pauperdom thrust upon them were the relicts of Esau Carter and Mrs. Hartcliffe who both made but a single appearance in the lists, presumably in the year their husbands died with the money being allowed to assist them in their new widowhood.

Some of the recipients of relief, both male and female, were probably single and some of the women might have had children. Identifying these from the existing records is hazardous particularly in the case of men as relief granted to them might have been also for the benefit of their families. However, there are several women in the lists whose surnames have no male attached to them and the possibility has to be that they were single. They include Jane Anderton, relieved for seven years, Sarah Benson who

received relief for a single year and whose children appear in the out-paupers list at Preesall, and Betty Hesketh who was relieved at Claughton in the early period and subsequently at Kirkham.³⁴

Two families of children shared £18 in 1821/22 although payments to families appear to have fallen off towards the later 1830s with two families, those of Thomas Fleetwood and Thomas Lewis, sharing £5 in 1836/37 and £4 11s 0d in the next year. It seems unlikely that even the most generous of these allowances would have been sufficient to maintain a couple, never mind a family. Evidence of the level of wages in the town is minimal but if the examples of Ben Clarkson, Edward Smith and Thomas Taylor, all from 1811/12, were typical, it is clear that payments by the overseers were never intended to be more than in the nature of supplements to wages. Clarkson was earning 12s a week, the equivalent of a little over £30 a year, and was allowed 1s 6d a week. Smith, whose earnings were given as “about 15s a week”, £39 a year, and who had three young children living at home, had his request for clothing rejected whilst the recently widowed Taylor who earned about 14s a week, £36 *per annum*, on which to support himself and his three young children had his request for a weekly allowance similarly declined.³⁵

Just as the paupers varied, so did money allowed to them. Relief ranged from a single grant of a few shillings to several pounds a year although none, even the widows, appear to have received anything like enough to exist on if the examples of Clarkson, Smith and Taylor provide evidence of what was a reasonable income for persons in their station. Weekly pay ranged from 1s a week, £2 12s 0d annually, to as much as 4s, £10 8s 0d annually, and Figure 5.8 shows the distribution of rates for all those paupers who received weekly pay for whole years. Immediately obvious is the fact the majority of

³⁴ For a discussion of spinsters under the poor law, see HILL, Bridget. Women Alone: Spinsters in England 1660-1850. United States, Yale University Press. 2001, particularly Chapter Eight. As has been shown, taking the lists as a whole, women did not predominate in Kirkham’s relief lists and of the 168 women there are only 27 who did not share a surname with that of at least one male in the lists. However, if only those who received regular “weekly pay” are taken into account, Kirkham did indeed follow the pattern which Hill discerns.

³⁵ L.R.O. PR810. Edward Smith appears to have had an adult married son, Richard, living in Preston, who had two children and whose request for clothing was similarly refused. *Ibid.* This provides another instance of transgenerational pauperdom.

the pensioners received less than 2s a week and very few of them were in the relatively fortunate position of having more than three shillings.

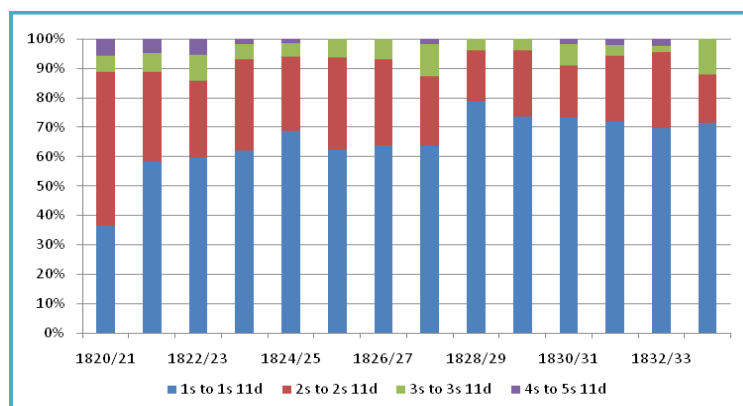


Figure 5.8
Kirkham – Rates of Weekly Pay - 1820 to 1834 - %
[PR805, PR807, PR808]

In 1821, the first year of the series, some 89% of Kirkham’s pensioners received less than three shilling with only 11% being allowed between 3s and 5s 11d. When these are compared with the fourteen parishes which King studied, where, in the same year, 80% of the paupers received over 3s with some 40% receiving more than 5s 11d, it is clear that if you were poor there were better places than Kirkham in which to be settled. ³⁶ However, there were others where the poor fared little better than their Kirkham peers, one of which was the Lancashire cotton town of Bolton whose paupers, according to Dryburgh, were treated as parsimoniously as those in Kirkham. ³⁷ He shows that in Bolton from 1820 to 1825 the most frequent weekly allowance was between 2s and 2s 6d with some 80% receiving less than 3s – a figure identical with that shown at Kirkham. However, King notes that in the same town, from 1828 onwards, weekly pensions of less than 4s had become the minority with almost 80% of pensioners receiving more than this amount. ³⁸ Figure 5.9 shows in percentage terms the numbers of men and of women receiving weekly pay.

³⁶ KING. *Op.cit. Poverty*. P.194. Figure 7.2.

³⁷ DRYBURGH. *Op.cit.* P.11. Figure 1.

³⁸ KING. *Op.cit. Poverty*. P.243. Figure 8.2.

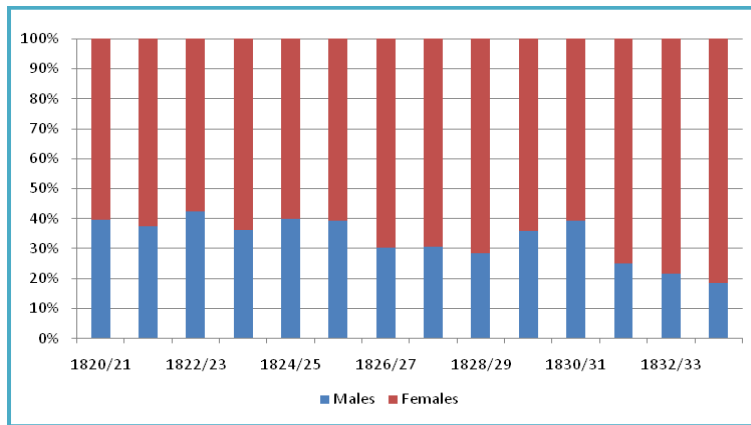


Figure 5.9
Kirkham –Males and Females receiving Weekly Pay
1820 to 1834 - %
[PR805, PR807, PR808]

In total, women including widows predominate by a factor of over 2:1 and in no year did they represent less than some 42% of the pensioners. Figures 5.10 and 5.11 show the distribution of the amounts of weekly pay for men and for women.

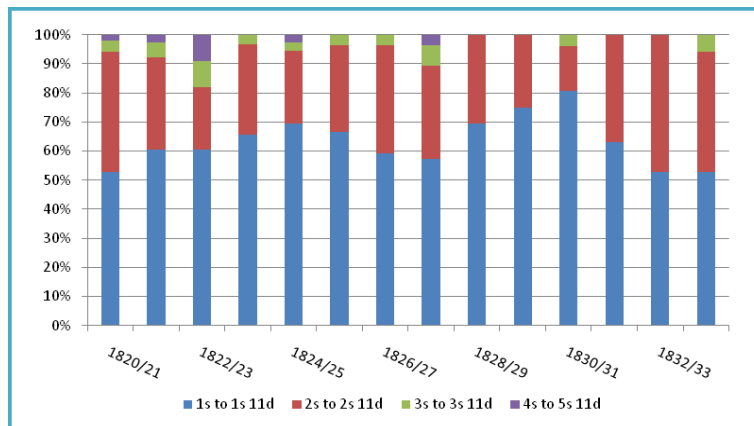


Figure 5.10
Kirkham - Weekly Pay Rates – Males 1820 to 1834 - %
[PR805, PR807, PR808]

Two rate bands predominate, namely the 1s to 1s 11d and the 2s to 2s 11d, and within these it appears that men tended to receive higher rates than the women, presumably on the grounds that they would have had families to support.

Weekly pay was clearly subject to review, to amendment in either direction, or even to complete withdrawal. William Charnock had his weekly allowance increased from 2s a

week to 3s a week from November 1822 only to have it reduced to 1s 6d in June the following year. ³⁹

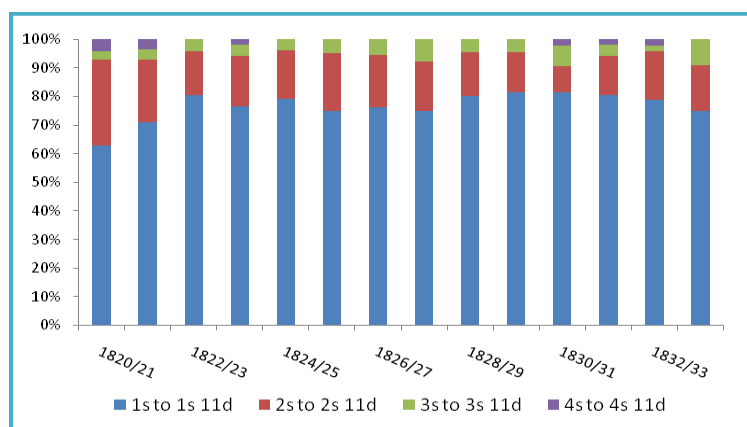


Figure 5.11
Kirkham - Weekly Pay Rates – Females - 1820 to 1834 - %
[PR805, PR807, PR808]

Thomas Parkinson’s allowance was also reduced, from 4s to 1s, in January 1826. ⁴⁰ John Allanson had his pay of 2s a week “stopt” in June 1821 ⁴¹ and a similar fate befell Edward Raby in the spring of 1833. ⁴² These reductions represented a considerable proportion of the paupers’ income and their imposition must have had a considerable effect upon their “economy of makeshifts” whilst complete cessation of pay would have had an even more serious effect on struggling families. However, the circumstances under which pay was ‘stopt’ are never stated and the possibility of an improvement in the pauper’s circumstances such as a return to work or additional family earnings should not be overlooked. Neither, of course, should the stoppage of pay be ignored as a deliberate strategy on the part of the overseer to encourage the pauper to make shift for himself. However, allowances were sometimes increased. Both Betty Lingart and William Silcock for example received relatively substantial increases. Betty had her pay increased from 1s to 1s 6d, statistically a 50% rise, and Silcock’s allowance was increased from 1s 6d to 2s, both in 1828. ⁴³

³⁹ L.R.O. PR807.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

⁴² L.R.O. PR808.

⁴³ *Ibid.*

Occasionally the overseer would grant a lump sum and recoup the outlay by a reduction in the subsequent weekly allowances. Richard Bamber was allowed 10s in March 1832 and then had his weekly pay reduced to 1s.⁴⁴ Payments were not always made at weekly intervals. James Warbreck provides an example of a pauper whose income, whilst reasonable in terms of what was paid to his peers, a total of £2 15s 0d in the first quarter of 1824/25, was paid in two amounts of ten shillings and then three of five shillings followed by a final payment of ten shillings, all at intervals of two weeks. What effect this had on the Bamber family's budgeting can only be guessed at, as can the reasons for the overseer's adopting this method of payment. The answer is probably to be found in Dryburgh's observation that the system operated according to the convenience of the officials rather than the benefit of the paupers.

4 – Cash at Need and Relief in Kind

The contention about the convenience of the overseer is supported by the small sums paid out for cash at need and relief in kind, disbursements which totalled just over £500 over the period. The distribution of cash at need is set out in Table 5a. Apart from cash "given", almost a third of the expenditure was in the payment for pauper funerals, a payment which the overseer might have found difficulty in avoiding. However, in the early period, the overseer usually paid for coffin, church dues and bread and ale for the mourners after the funerals, payments at this time were mostly no more than a contribution to the total bill and whilst in 1824/25, James Buller and John Davies received £1 9s 3d and £1 6s 6d respectively, amounts which compare favourably with earlier payments. Thomas Whiteside was given only 3s 2d for the church dues and John Wilcocks 2s 8d for dues and 4s 6d for bread, both in 1831/32. Pauper funerals were clearly stark affairs without the feathers and other adornments available to the more affluent.⁴⁵ Secondly, there is a complete absence of the payment of house rents which were a major feature of the early years.⁴⁶ Thirdly, the amount of £140 shown as "sick" included £109 paid to the doctors who

⁴⁴ L.R.O. PR808.

⁴⁵ For discussion on funerals, see LAQUEUR, Thomas. 'Bodies, Death and Pauper Funerals.' Representations. Vol.1. P109. 1983.

⁴⁶ KING, *op. cit.*, Poverty, P.199, draws attention to the importance of rental payments. It was suggested in Chapter Four of this work that cessation of rental payments was a quick and effective way of reducing expenditure.

attended on the poor and some of this was probably for attendance upon inmates of the Workhouse. ⁴⁷

Year	Given	Sick	Maternity	Funerals	Board	Total
1820/21	20	38	3	2	2	65
1821/22	22	7	1	2	0	32
1822/23	32	10	1	5	0	48
1823/24	11	8	0	5	0	24
1824/25	15	0	0	9	0	24
1825/25	24	7	0	3	0	34
1826/27	36	9	0	1	8	54
1827/28	21	11	0	0	0	32
1828/29	9	5	0	4	0	18
1829/30	21	4	0	4	0	29
1830/31	34	15	0	7	0	56
1831/32	10	5	0	3	0	18
1832/33	3	3	0	4	0	10
1833/34	13	18	0	2	0	33
Total	271	140	5	51	10	477

Table 5a
Kirkham - Distribution of Cash at Need - 1820 to 1834 - £s
[PR805, PR807, PR808]

The large amount of sick pay in the first year suggests an outbreak of disease such as typhoid. A total of 21 paupers received this supplement to their income with allowances ranging from the 2s paid to Thomas Whalley to the £1 10s 0d which was paid to Thomas Ball. Occasionally nursing costs were paid. Isabell Bawbell was allowed a nurse at a cost of 3s and 4s was paid to the doctor for his attendance on John Bradshaw. One woman, Nancy Barker, was possibly regularly employed in this capacity. A sick vagrant was lodged with her for two weeks in July 1830, for which she was paid 2s 6d and in 1833 she was paid 18s for attending upon John Norton. ⁴⁸ Such expenditure was unusual and family, friends and neighbours were normally expected to provide whatever assistance might be necessary for nursing as a

⁴⁷ The literature on medical provision and the growing importance of the medical profession is considerable. See, for example, DIGBY, Anne. Making a Medical Living: Doctors and Patients in the English Market for Medicine, 1720-1911. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press. 1994 and FESSLER, Alfred. 'The Official Attitude towards the Sick Poor in the Seventeenth Century.' Transactions of the Historic Society of Lancashire and Cheshire. Vol.102. 1950. P.85.

⁴⁸ L.R.O. PR805. Nancy herself appears never to have accepted assistance from the Town and no other Bampers appear in the relief lists in this period.

profession still awaited the coming of Miss Nightingale and the Poor Law Medical Service.⁴⁹

The expenses paid in connection with childbirth were equally frugal and the level of provision was in contrast to that discussed by Alannah Tomkins who noted that overseers paid for various items not only in connection with the birth itself but also with the Christening.⁵⁰ Allowances of as much as £2 were noticed in the earlier period but in these later years, shillings rather than pounds were the order of the day. The wife of William Smith, for example, received only 4s in November 1820/21 and William himself was given 3s a few days later “His wife being very sick.” Marginally better treated was Mrs. Edward Heaps for whom the services of a midwife were provided at a cost of 11s. It is often in connection with maternity provision that there appears a hint of tragedy or discord. In May 1820, the wife of John Wilcock was given 2s, being confined. Six weeks later she was given a further 2s “He ran away.” He was still away the following month when she was given a further 2s but she does not appear to have had anything further. At about the same time Robert Wood’s wife was also confined and was allowed 4s. The Woods family, again, received no further assistance until March the following year when they were given 3s “to bury a child.” The final expense shown in the Table 5.1 encompassed the payment of board charges the bulk of which went to Ann Lingard for George Taylor’s child with the balance being paid on behalf of Widow Hudson and her family. The inference here has to be that young Taylor and the Hudsons were unable to care for themselves but rather than have them in the Workhouse, the overseer opted for the cheaper course of boarding them out.

Provision of relief in kind is set out in Table 5b. Help with food costs were minimal.

James Buller was given 6s “to get up potatoes” in November 1820 and a couple of

⁴⁹ See for instance CROWTHER, Margaret Ann. The Workhouse System 1834-1929. London, Methuen & Co. 1983. P.156 *et seq.* and NEGRINE, Angela. ‘Medicine and Poverty: a Study of the Poor Law Medical Services of the Leicester Union, 1867-1914.’ Ph.D. Thesis. University of Leicester. 2008. Both, however, concentrate on the era of the New Poor Law.

⁵⁰ TOMKINS, Alannah. The Experience of Urban Poverty, 1723-82: Parish, Charity and Credit. Manchester, Manchester University Press. 2006. P.126.

years later, Samuel Fleetwood's declining days were eased by the provision of "victuals" prior to his being buried at the expense of the Town. Fuel was occasionally provided. James Bagshaw was allowed coals in 1820/21. So were Ellen Smith and Grace Salisbury in 1822/23. Grace was also allowed fuel in the four subsequent years, the only pauper to be granted such assistance at that time. She died in the Spring of 1825 and her funeral was paid for by the Town.

Year	Food	Coals	Clothes	Tools	Goods	Total
1820/21	1	1	2	2	2	8
1821/22	0	2	1	0	1	4
1822/23	1	2	1	0	0	4
1823/24	0	0	0	0	0	0
1824/25	0	0	0	0	0	0
1825/25	0	0	0	0	0	0
1826/27	0	1	0	1	2	4
1827/28	0	1	0	1	13	15
1828/29	0	0	0	0	0	0
1829/30	0	0	0	0	0	0
1830/31	0	0	0	0	0	0
1831/32	0	0	0	0	0	0
1832/33	0	0	1	1	0	2
1833/34	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	2	7	5	5	18	37

Table 5b
Kirkham - Distribution of Relief in Kind - 1820 to 1834 - £s
[PR805, PR807, PR808]

Clothing and footwear, a major expense in the early years, was still a large part of the outlay but at a much lower level, even in the first year which saw provision for seven paupers including clogs for Betty Knowles and William Hall to the value of 6s 10d, and shoes to the total value of 12s 1d for John Davie, Mary Leaver and Margaret Swann.

The predominance of the provision of footwear, an item which the poor could not generally make for themselves, and noticed earlier, is again apparent here.⁵¹ Three paupers, William Dixon, Ellen Gregson, and Matthew Bagshaw had shuttles provided

⁵¹ See JONES, Peter. 'Clothing the Poor in Early Nineteenth-Century England.' *Textile History*. Vol. 37. No.1. P.17. 2006.

for them in 1820/21 and Humphrey Oldnall was similarly accommodated twelve years later.

This level of outlay when compared with the expenditure under the same headings in the early period reinforces the contention that from the early 1820s the Kirkham poor law authorities were intent on cost reduction and the simplification of procedures. The former was largely a matter of reducing cash grants or withdrawing the provision of relief in kind. Another strategy which overseers used was in connection with the employment of paupers for, as Snell has observed, "The Poor Law was a system of employment as well as relief [including] farming the poor to local employers."⁵² Kirkham certainly employed some of its paupers at looms in the workhouse and in furtherance of this object they were quite willing to make grants to their paupers to enable them to go and see work elsewhere, particularly in Bentham where, in 1814, Hornby Roughsedge, who was associated with the Kirkham flax merchants, had gone to become manager of a similar enterprise.⁵³ Robert Dixon was given 5s in August 1820 "to go to Bentham" whilst in October 1826 James Nickson was allowed 4s "To go to Yorkshire to seek work."

5 – Settlement and Removal

Historiographical discussions on settlement and removal have given much space to the activities of overseers who saw these related concepts as part of their strategy of cost control and stories are related of women in labour being dragged across parish boundaries so that their bastards might be chargeable to the parish of birth. This was one viewpoint. The other was that of the poor themselves who saw possession of an assured settlement as an asset and part of their economy of makeshifts.⁵⁴

Given that the Kirkham was keen to keep expenditure under control, it might have been expected that there would be evidence of activity in connection with settlement, removal and "filiating." This is not particularly the case although there is sufficient evidence to confirm that the paupers were not having it all their own way. Indeed, on

⁵² SNELL, Keith D. M. Annals of the Labouring Poor: Social and Agrarian England 1600-1900. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press. 1985. P.106.

⁵³ SINGLETON. *Op.cit.* P.56.

⁵⁴ For a discussion on this point see SNELL, *op.cit.*, Annals.

occasion the Kirkham overseer appears to have gone to considerable lengths to have his charges settled elsewhere. James Fishwick, his wife Betty and their four children provide an example from the 1820s. Fishwick himself makes his first appearance in the lists in 1826 when he was allowed £1 9s 0d casual relief which included 9s in October “to go to Cockerham”⁵⁵ which appeared to have been their place of settlement.⁵⁶ A removal order in December 1826 was then obtained⁵⁷ and they were taken to Bentham in January 1827. This was possibly in agreement with Cockerham but matters were evidently not straightforward as the overseer attended Quarter Sessions for two days in July 1827 “on Fishwick’s affair” at a cost of 15s 6d and in October Kirkham paid “Cockerham bill for James Fishwick £12 10d 0d.”⁵⁸ and, as far as the Town was concerned, the matter was concluded although, in the same month, a further removal order was issued requiring the family’s removal to Bolton.⁵⁹ The argument has been advanced that in some cases, it would have been cheaper to grant a little relief rather than go to the expense which the settlement procedure involved, but this was obviously not one of them.

Another example is provided by one Mary Worthington, who, whilst she does not appear in the relief lists, clearly occupied the attention of the overseer to an unusual extent. Miss Worthington, a single woman, made her first appearance on September 11th 1833 when, at the Preston Quarter Sessions, a removal order was obtained for her at a cost of 8s.⁶⁰ The order specified her removal to Hollywell in Wales. What happened to her in the next six months is not clear but it might have been that she appealed against the order as on March 15th 1834 the overseer debited his accounts with 7s 6d for “Going to Preston about Mary Worthington.” The appeal seems to have been denied⁶¹ as four days later he debited £3 18s 0d for “Taking Mary Worthington to Wales.” Within a month the overseer was “Going to Sessions about Mary Worthington” and on July 2nd he paid 7s for “Confirming Mary Worthington’s order” so it would

⁵⁵ L.R.O. PR805.

⁵⁶ L.R.O. QSP/2875/23.

⁵⁷ L.R.O. QSP/2875/48.

⁵⁸ L.R.O. PR805.

⁵⁹ L.R.O. QSP/2891/72.

⁶⁰ L.R.O. QSP/2999/19. L.R.O. PR805.

⁶¹ L.R.O. QSP/2999/7.

appear that the Town was indeed rid of her. Kirkham continued to pursue putative parents although the evidence is less substantial than was noted in the early period. However, there are occasional references. In July 1827, for example the overseer went with Nanny Allanson “to filitate” and obtained “filiation orders” against Harry Woods, John Bagshaw and James Aspinall and in favour of Elizabeth Allanson. ⁶²

5 – The Bailiffs’ Charity

From the foregoing it is evident that Kirkham’s poor law authorities, following the national trends observed by Brundage, King and Lees, were maintaining their practice of keeping a firm rein on their expenditure and even tightening the purse strings. However, such relief as was granted was, as Chapter Four noted, supplemented at Christmas by payments from the Town’s only substantial charity, that administered by the Bailiffs and it was shown that, whilst there were many of the town’s poor who benefited from the Charity but did not receive poor relief, there was also a hard core of townspeople who received both. Figure 5.12 shows the numbers of paupers relieved together with the number of recipients of the Bailiffs’ Charity.

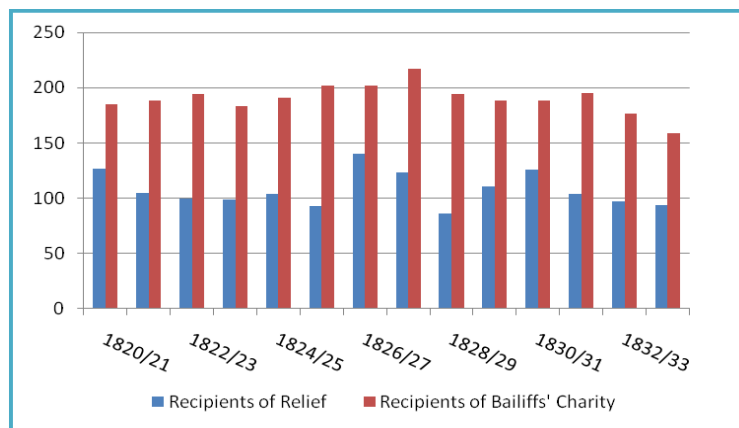


Figure 5.12
Kirkham – Numbers of Recipients of Poor Relief and Bailiffs’ Charity
1820 to 1835
[Kirkham Bailiffs’ Book]

Figure 5.13 shows the gender distribution of recipients of the Charity whilst Figure 5.14 shows the numbers who received both out-relief from the Town and a payment

⁶² L.R.O. PR805.

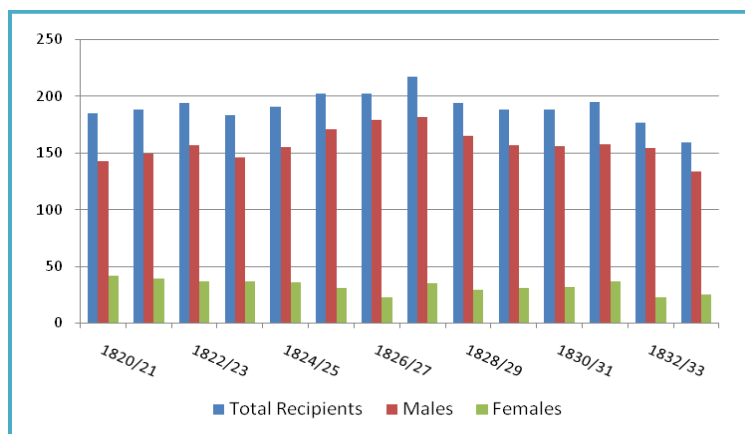


Figure 5.13
Kirkham - Gender and Numbers of Recipients of Bailiffs' Charity
1820 to 1834
[Kirkham Bailiffs' Book]

from the charity. The significant figure drawn from this data is that, taking the period as a whole, 46% of those who received relief at any level also received the annual “flesh money.” This figure is slightly lower than the corresponding figure from the earlier period which stood at 50% but it does confirm the assertion made in Chapter Four that the Town had a substantial hard core of paupers the size of which was fairly constant over a period.

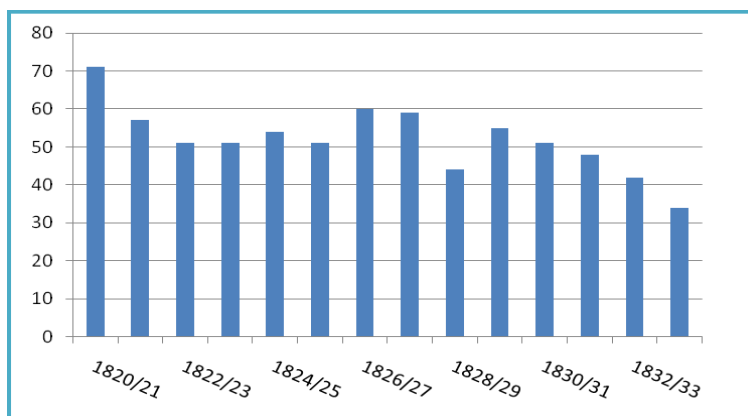


Figure 5.14
Kirkham – Numbers of Paupers receiving both
Relief and Bailiffs' Charity
[PR807 and PR808. Kirkham Bailiffs' Book]

Where the distribution differed was in the gender split between males and females. Throughout the period, in terms of recipients of official out-relief, the numbers of males and females were fairly equally balanced but those responsible for the distribution of the flesh money clearly favoured men who accounted for over 80% of the beneficiaries. The amounts given, which ranged from 6d to 3s, with intermediate amounts being

more general, were nowhere near the substantial sums which were received by some of the poor noted by Alannah Tomkins, sums which in many cases were considerably in excess of £1 over a period. ⁶³

As was observed in Chapter Four, the trustees of the Bailiffs' Charity were not under the same pressure as were the Poor Law authorities to keep costs down for they derived their income from rentals rather than from rates. However, the amounts which they were able to collect did vary and these fluctuations were reflected in the sums distributed. It is difficult to draw any hard and fast conclusions from an analysis of the amounts paid and the number of recipients but, if the average distribution year by year is considered, it appears that the Bailiffs' Charity followed a policy of spreading the money available as widely as possible during this period and the average sums paid during the early period, which were as high as 2s 6d a head in 1812 and 1814 were never again reached. In only one year in this period, 1820, was the sum as high as 1s 9d and for the majority of the years a distribution of only 1s was frequent. What is noticeable, although it might be no more than coincidence, is that in the years after the passing of the Poor Law Amendment Act the total distribution and the numbers of poor who benefited fell considerably with the fund managers apparently paying slightly more on average to a considerably smaller number of the town's citizens. Whatever the case, the poor and the paupers must have been grateful for even these small additions to their income at the festive season bearing in mind that for many of them it could amount to almost a week's pay from the overseer. ⁶⁴

6 -Out-Paupers

The question of the out-paupers and the problems which they presented to the authorities were discussed in Chapter Three and little further comment is required here. ⁶⁵ The town continued to contribute to the maintenance of out-paupers, 90 in

⁶³ TOMKINS. *Op.cit.* Experience. P.254.

⁶⁴ For a discussion concerning charitable provision, particularly its place in the economy of makeshifts, see KIDD, *op. cit.*, DAUNTON, Martin James. Charity, Self-Interest and Welfare in the English Past. London, University College Press, 1996, and McCORD, Norman. 'The Poor Law and Philanthropy.' *In* FRASER, Derek. The New Poor Law in the Nineteenth Century. London, MacMillan Press. 1976.

⁶⁵ See KING, Steven Andrew. 'It is Impossible for our Vestry to Judge his Case into Perfection from Here' - Managing the Distance Dimensions of Poor Relief 1800-40.'

number, who lived as near as the adjacent hamlet of Westby and as far away as Liverpool. The greatest number lived in Lancaster although all appeared to have remained in Lancashire. What is noticeable is the consistent decline in the cost during the period, from £109 paid out on behalf of 35 paupers to the £50 paid to 17 people in 1834. As with the “home” paupers, length and amounts of relief and the nature of additional payments varied. One of the Lancaster residents was Ann Forrest who received an annual £5 4s 0d. Another long-term recipient was Nanny Barker who, living at Walton-on-the Hill near Liverpool was relieved throughout the period with annual amounts ranging from £10 in 1821/22 to £3 18s 0d in 1833/34. By comparison, James Allanson of Hutton was given a single grant of 6s. As at home, additional allowances were granted from time to time such as the 1s 6d allowed to John Leather at Ashton-in-Makerfield “to go home” and 2s given to Mary Clarkson in Brindle to pay a doctor’s bill. The management of such people, it appears, could give the home overseer considerable trouble and his account book is full of items relating to postage paid for letters from the places where his out-paupers were resident.

7 – Clifton-with-Salwick

Although poor relief at this time was nationally delegated to ecclesiastical parishes, in the north of England parishes frequently consisted of several separate townships and the relief of poverty was delegated to these smaller areas who were entirely at liberty to decide the level of provision for their own poor regardless of practice in the mother township. In this connection differences have already been observed when comparing Kirkham Town with the township of Newton-with-Scales. This latter township was part of the chapelry of Lund, the other part being the township of Clifton-with-Salwick and it is to this latter area that attention will now be turned. Clifton is of particular interest not only because it was completely different terms of its topography and occupational and social structures from Kirkham township but also because its single extant record is the overseers’ payment book.⁶⁶ This covers the period 1816 to 1827 and so coincides with the period during which considerable changes in the pattern of relief were being made at Kirkham. It thus facilitates comparisons about the nature of out-relief at this

Rural History. Vol.16. 2005. P.161, which deal with the problems of relieving this section of paupers.

⁶⁶ Unless otherwise specifically stated all the data discussed here are extracted from the Clifton Overseers’ Payment Book which is in private ownership.

important period. Figure 5.15 shows, the trend of expenditure in Lancashire and Clifton in the years covered by the payment book.

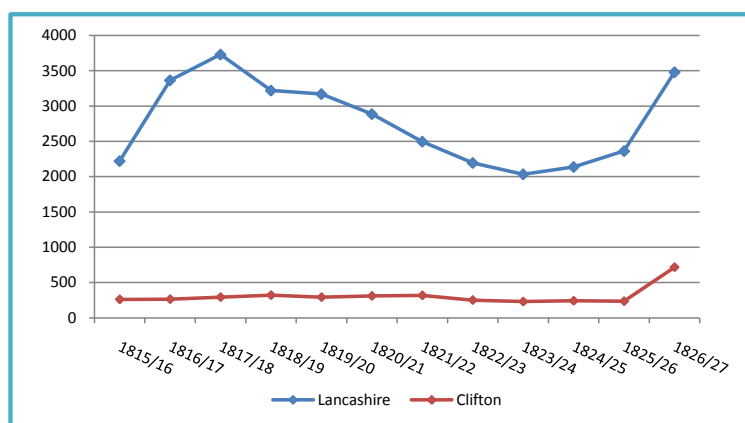


Figure 5.15
Clifton and Lancashire – Movement of Poor Relief – 1815 to 1827
[Poor Rate Returns ⁶⁷]

This suggests that Clifton was not particularly at variance with the wider trend. However, it is clear when the totals disbursed on relief according to the Parliamentary Returns are compared with the amounts calculated from the overseers’ payment book that the latter show only a part of the total expenditure in the township. This is shown in Figure 5.16. The discrepancy is accounted for, as at Kirkham, by the fact that the poor rate funded other expenditure such as that detailed in the Parliamentary Returns and including

“Expenditure for any other purposes, Church Rate, County Rate, Highways, etc.” ⁶⁸ Whilst the overall trend was downward there were clearly years of exceptional expenditure. Figure 5.17 shows the allocation of expenditure under the principal headings of pay, cash at need and relief in kind. The problems sometimes presented by the source material which were discussed in the Introduction raise their heads here. In some years no sums appear to be recorded as weekly pay or pensions although as such items appear in other years, it is more than likely that there were some.

⁶⁷ Parliamentary Papers 1822 [556] and 1830-31 [52]

⁶⁸ For example, in 1815, according to the annual Abstract of Returns, Clifton collected £608 Poor’s Rate but spend only £373 on business connected with the relief of the poor. See Appendix Five. However, according to the published lists of expenditure, the figure was only some £260. Clearly there appear to have been difficulties in interpretation and transcription.

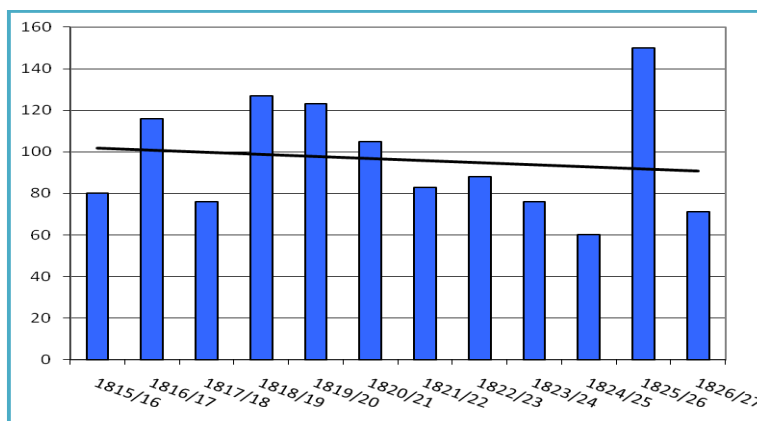


Figure 5.16
Clifton - Poor Relief Expenditure - 1815 to 1827 - £s
[Clifton Overseer's Payment Book]

These sums have, therefore, been added together and shown as “Weekly Pay and Given.” These sums represent 32% of the total expenditure.

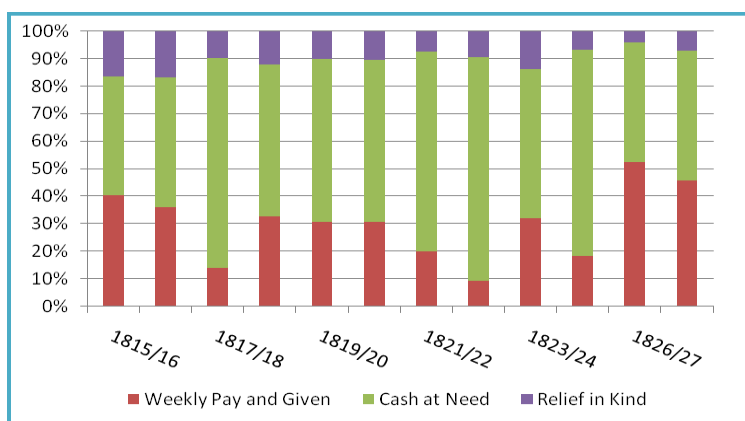


Figure 5.17
Clifton - Distribution of Poor Law Expenditure - 1815 to 1827 - %
[Clifton Overseer's Payment Book]

“Cash at Need” covers, as at Kirkham, money paid on account of sickness, childbirth, funerals, rents and the occasional payments for board and apprenticing. Relief in Kind includes items such as clothing, footwear and food.

Most striking here, when compared to Kirkham, is the importance of payments for cash at need, payments which represented 58% of the total, and the relatively large proportion when compared to Kirkham which was devoted to the provision of relief in kind. Their distribution is shown in Figures 5.18 and 5.19.

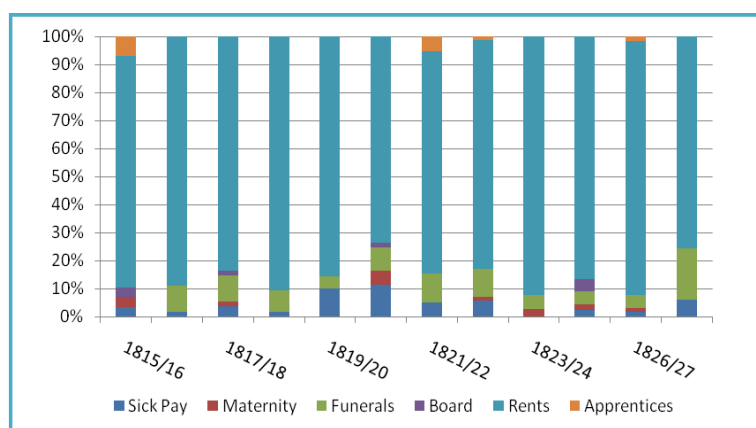


Figure 5.18
Clifton – Allocation of Cash at Need – 1825 to 1827 - %
[Clifton Overseer’s Payment Book]

Apart from the importance of “cash in hand” the most striking aspect of the distribution is the dominance of rental payments unlike Kirkham where such payments virtually ceased in 1807 although they continued to form part of the relief strategy in Newton. The reason for their predominance has possibly to be found in the nature of land ownership. The township of Clifton was co-terminous with the Manor of Clifton whose manorial lords, the Clifton family of Lytham were still the principal “owners of the soil” and, although they no longer lived in the manor, they employed assiduous agents to look after their interests. Thus, whilst their possessions would attract a large assessment to the poor rate, they were in a position to make sure that they recovered what was due to them. However, the payment book never mentions the family specifically but notes payments to other landlords amongst whom were Henry Adamson, George Cowburn and John Hankinson. Set alongside the two major elements of cash in hand and rentals, the remaining disbursements were small and accounted for slightly over £100 of which £29 was paid “when sick” and £51 was spent on funeral costs. Board £6, Apprenticeship £7 and maternity benefit £9 covered the remainder. Payments “when sick” were given both on account of the head of the household and of his children. Thomas Bonney, whose extended family were regular beneficiaries of the poor law, was allowed 10s and George Bonney was given 2s 6d when his child was ill. Funeral payments were apparently basic and did not allow for the finer trappings which Chapter Three observed were payable elsewhere. James Thompson’s obsequies cost the Town £2 7s 0d in 1826 but this was unusual and payments in the order of £1 12s 6d,

with lesser amounts for children on account of the size of the coffin were the order of the day. Similarly with lying-in grants. William Parkinson's wife was granted only 10s in 1821 and Henry Moon's wife, "in child-bed" in 1823, received only 6s 6d, amounts which were low even when compared to the experience of mothers in Kirkham. Payments to medical men appear even less frequently and again the amounts were small. An unspecified doctor was paid 6s for attendance upon Dolly Lewty in 1820 and Dr. Taylor was paid 9s "for drugs" in 1821. However, like Newton, Clifton appeared to subscribe to Brindle Workhouse at the standard charge of £1 7s 6d a year and made use of the facilities there for the benefit of, amongst others, Mary Eaves and Thomas Moon. As to Relief in Kind, Figure 5.19 shows the amounts spent on relief in kind. These amounts took account of fuel, goods, and tools and equipment, were also small and added up to only £104 over the whole period. The payment book records the

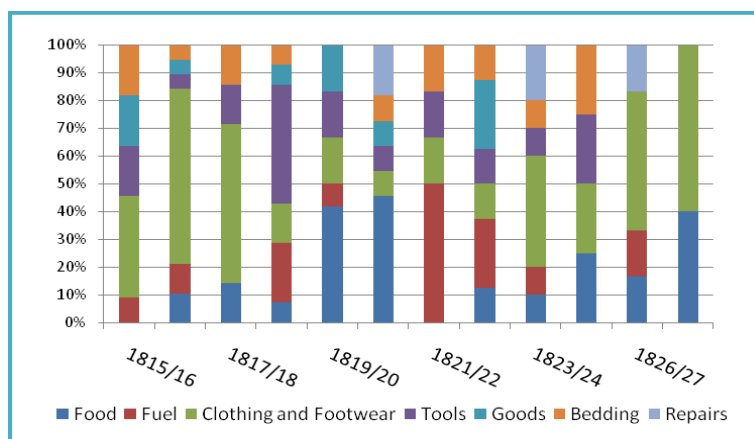


Figure 5.19
Clifton - Relief in Kind - 1825 to 1827 - %
[Clifton Overseer's Payment Book]

names of 205 paupers who received relief at some time during the period. Of these 123, 60% were men and 82, 40%, were women. Only one woman is specifically identified as a widow and only three appear to be children, one girl and two whose sex is not given. The sex distribution of all paupers in each year throughout the period is set out in Figure 5.20.

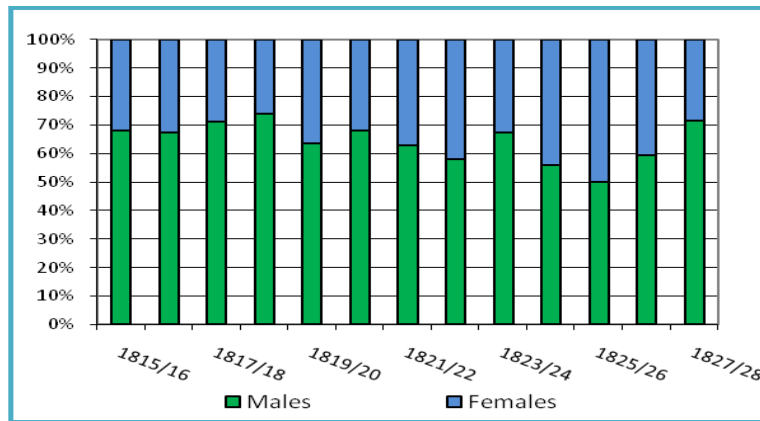


Figure 5.20
Clifton – Gender of Paupers - 1815 to 1827- %
[Clifton Overseer’s Payment Book]

This confirms that in most years men far exceeded women in the relief lists and in only one year, 1825/26, was there anything like parity between the sexes. The total amounts received by men and by women appear in Figure 5.21 and it appears that by far the greater amount was allocated to men in proportions not dissimilar to the gender distribution of the recipients themselves.

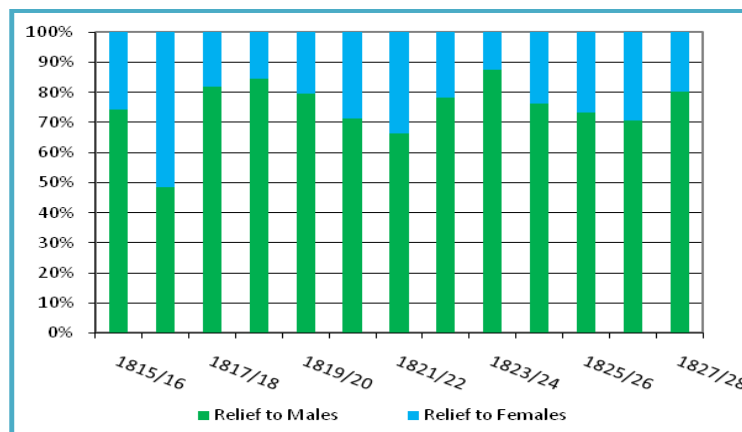


Figure 5.21
Clifton – Distribution of Cash to Males and Females - 1825 to 1827- %
[Clifton Overseer’s Payment Book]

In only 2 years did the men receive less than payments to two women. 70% of the total outlay and in one of these, 1816/17, the figures are skewed by exceptional In only 2 years did the men receive less than payments to two women. 70% of the total outlay and in one of these, 1816/17, the figures are skewed by exceptional payments to two women. Payments varied greatly. Ben Armistead had 7s 6d in 1819 when he was sick, Edward Frith 6s in 1823 and Charles MacIntyre 4s in 1825. These were the only occasions on which these men appeared in the payment book. Others received payments in separate years. Edward Malley, for example, was relieved in 1816, 1819,

1826 and 1827 with annual amounts varying from 10s 6d to £5 3s 6d. In every year relief was largely in the form of cash. Mary Rawcliffe was assisted in 1817, 1821, 1824 and 1826 with sums ranging from 10s to £1 9s 0d. These folk were amongst those who were in passing poverty and who needed only occasional relief from the parish purse. At the other end of the scale were those who were relieved year after year and who were provided with assistance in a variety of forms and in some cases there were extended families who appear to have been entirely dependent upon “the parish” to make ends meet. Amongst the former was William Swarbrick, a regular recipient of relief from 1815 to 1820. His first year’s ‘benefit’ of £4 17s 0d included 10s in cash with the rest being the payment of his rent. In the following year he was allowed rent, fuel and food as well as cash. 1817 saw cash payments only whilst in addition to small cash allowances his rent was either fully or partially funded in both the following two years. John Battersby had an even longer history of relief – from 1815 to 1824. The amounts varied from as little as £1 19s 0d to £7 17s 6d in 1819 and were almost entirely devoted to the payment of his rent, the balance being occasional cash sums. John appears to have died in 1819 as “Widow Battersby” was relieved, again with rental payments, in the following two years.

What is particularly striking in the Clifton returns is the frequency with which certain surnames regularly in each year. There were seven Bonneys, three of whom were regularly relieved year in year out. There were also six Moons with as many as four being relieved in one year, and the Parkinsons, nine in all, including a widow and children, who in 1823, had seven of their number in the relief lists.⁶⁹ Precise relationships are difficult to confirm but it seems probable that in a township the size of Clifton, there was some degree of kinship.

The cases of these paupers demonstrate the variety of relief provided to Clifton’s needy inhabitants and in general terms they do not differ markedly from that which

⁶⁹ The Moons were a substantial family in the area and their various branches are discussed in SHAW, Roland Cunliffe. ‘Yeomen, Craftsmen, Merchants: the Moons of Amounderness and Leylandshire.’ Reprinted from the Transactions of the Cumberland and Westmorland Antiquarian and Archæological Society, New Series. Vol.25. 1925, by W.Watson & Co., Ltd. Preston. 1963. However, the Clifton branch which are mentioned here is not referred to in Shaw’s work.

the poor of the mother township, Kirkham, received. However, the difference is in the detail. Whilst after 1820 Kirkham's poor relief was almost entirely in the form of weekly pay, Clifton was continuing to provide household equipment, tools of trade, fuel, milk and, most noticeably, rents and this continued diversity of relief is demonstrated by the Bonney family who in this period received a total amount of £78 80% of which was in the form either of in cash at need or relief In kind.

8 – Conclusion: the Final Years of the Old Poor Law

Chapters Four and Five considered the operation of the Old Poor Law in three townships of the Lancashire Parish of Kirkham in the early decades of the nineteenth century. A detailed examination of the primary source material revealed that, when compared with similar towns, the poor were not treated in an over-generous fashion and although the paupers in Clifton and Newton probably noticed little variation in their treatment over time, their peers in Kirkham Township certainly did. It was also revealed by way of the literature, notably the work of Lynn Hollen Lees, that whilst society's élites had been prepared, albeit with growing reluctance, to shoulder the burden of relieving the poor in the years of the French Wars for fear that revolutionary sentiments might cross the English Channel, once Napoleon had been finally banished and the threat of revolution dissipated, there was a marked reaction against the poor. Whilst heretofore they had been accepted as full members of society whose needs should be met at least to some extent, they were now increasingly pushed to the edges of the community where they were now expected to take full responsibility for themselves and their families and appreciate that if they wanted to eat, they had to work.⁷⁰

This increasingly harsh sentiment and the public debate and discussion which it engendered found practical expression in the Select Vestries Act of 1819 which went some way towards alleviating the general discontent and increasing the control of the ratepayers over their poor by . However, the Act did not appear to be the final answer to the problem and the matter remained in the public domain although simmering away on the back burner rather than bubbling on the front hob. The impression is

⁷⁰ LEES. *Op.cit.*

that although something needed to be done in the matter of the relief of the poor and the cost of providing for them and indeed something had been done, it might not have been sufficient. If this were the case, what more was required? Some favoured amendment whilst others favoured complete abolition but more than a decade was to pass before any further action was taken in the form of the appointment of a Royal Commission in 1832 and the outcome of its deliberations, the Poor Law Amendment Act of 1834.⁷¹

In the meantime, the poor continued to seek relief. As has been shown, their pleas met with varying degrees of success and the roads and streams which separated Kirkham Town from its satellite townships of Newton and Clifton also marked a variation in approach to the nature of relief to be provided and whilst Eric Midwinter observed that the Old Poor Law in Lancashire was in its parsimoniousness “a vivid advertisement” of what was to come in the later 1830s, the degree of uniformity which this suggests was the case was clearly not so as in the case of the three townships considered here reveals.⁷²

So what were the circumstances of the poor in Kirkham, Newton and Clifton in the final years of the Old Poor Law? Gilbert Henderson, the Assistant Poor Law Commissioner charged with investigating how matters stood in relation to the management of the poor in Lancashire, chose to concentrate his efforts on the major centres of population and it appears that he never came into the Fylde.⁷³ However, one of the nineteen “Rural Questions” questionnaires seeking additional information which the Commission despatched to Lancashire locations arrived on the desk of the Reverend Richard Moore, the Minister of Lund Chapelry and his replies help to provide

⁷¹ For a detailed discussion of the Commission, the Act and its implementation, see BRUNDAGE, Anthony. The Making of the New Poor Law 1832-39. London, Hutchinson and Co. 1978.

⁷² MIDWINTER, Eric. Social Administration in Lancashire. Manchester. Manchester University Press. 1961. P.14.

⁷³ *Ibid.* P.10.

an overall picture of how the poor were relieved in the places with which this study is concerned.⁷⁴

Just how matters of poor relief were managed in the parish is unclear. Mr. Moore specifically refers, in his answers to Questions 32 to 35, to the existence of a 'select vestry' noting that "There are select vestries in these townships" but whether he was referring to the two townships of the chapelry or to the parish as a whole is uncertain. However, there appears to be no evidence that the chapelry had anything in the nature of a sub-vestry controlling ecclesiastical and related affairs such as the care of the poor in its own area.⁷⁵ The vestry had always been 'select' although not in the terms of the 1818 and 1819 Acts, in that its membership consisted of two representatives from each of the fifteen townships which together made up the parish of Kirkham. Whether or not they were elected by residents of the township and, if so, what the franchise was, is not known. Henry Fishwick hints that they were elected but R.C.Shaw states that once elected they served for life or until they resigned and "On a vacancy occurring in their number the remainder selected the new member."⁷⁶ However, there are also references in the later overseer's records to a 'select vestry' and the record of payments to the poor, both in its format and the data which it records, suggests that the screw of the town's relief policy had been given a twist following the passing of the Acts.⁷⁷ The Questions, particularly Number 35, also make it clear that each township of the parish had its own overseer of the poor who acted in conjunction with the Vestry in affairs relating to the poor and that each had "an equal voice in these matters." Mr. Moore considered that this arrangement worked to the advantage of the poor as, if the decisions on relief and poor rates were left entirely to the Vestry, this would be "A great evil: the poor would be then entirely at the mercy of

⁷⁴ Great Britain: Poor Law Commission. Response to Rural Queries: Lund. PP1834/XXX/282-292. Microcard copy available at L.R.O. For a brief discussion of the Queries, see MIDWINTER. *Op.cit.* P.11.

⁷⁵ Henry Fishwick notes that the Chapelry was not constituted as a separate parish until 1840. See FISHWICK, Henry. The History of the Parish of Kirkham in the County of Lancaster. Manchester, The Chetham Society. 1874. P.57.

⁷⁶ SHAW, Roland Cunliffe. Kirkham in Amounderness: the Story of a Lancashire Community. Preston, R.Seed and Sons. 1949. P.138.

⁷⁷ See for example Kirkham. Overseer's Accounts. March 30th 1822. "Publishing notice of Select Vestry 6d." L.R.O. PR805. See also L.R.O. PR807 for format and payment data.

the ratepayers” who were concerned largely with costs rather than the comfort of their poor. ⁷⁸

Given that each township had its own overseer and its own pair of vestrymen, or Thirtymen, it appears that each township relieved its own poor according to its individual circumstances and that decisions were made locally. Thus, for example, the Newton Thirtymen and their overseer would decide on the treatment of their township’s poor with no reference to colleagues on the opposite bank of the River Dow which formed the boundary between the two places. The magistracy also, of course, had a role to play but here it appears to have been largely reactive rather than proactive. When requested by the overseer, magistrates would make orders for the apprehension of errant fathers or issue certificates of settlement but, although the poor had a right of appeal to them against unfavourable decisions of the overseer, there is little evidence of their playing too active a role here apart from a very occasional note in the payment book as for example, when William Langton who was certainly a Thirtyman and possibly a magistrate appended his initials to the note that John Fairclough, who applied for relief for his daughter in September 1809 and was “Allowed some clothing. W.L.” ⁷⁹ Indeed, a note in the Overseer’s payment book, December 1st 1807, to the effect that “The Magistrates have no power to put in force the rules of Kirkham Poor House” might be taken to suggest that their involvement was not welcomed ⁸⁰ and, apart from the example noted above there is only one other entry in the eight years for which the payment book is extant which can possibly be attributed directly to magisterial interference. ⁸¹

The contention that each township followed its own course in the matter of assistance to the poor is reinforced by a comparison of the structure of relief in each separate place. At Kirkham, the use and threat of the Workhouse was an important feature of

⁷⁸ Rural Queries. Question 44.

⁷⁹ L.R.O. PR810. Peter King notes that from the late eighteenth century the importance of role of the magistracy declined in relation to the poor law. See KING, Peter. Crime and Law in England 1750-1840: remaking Justice from the Margins. Cambridge. Cambridge University Press. 2006. P.65.

⁸⁰ L.R.O. PR810.

⁸¹ July 9th 1809. “Thomas Lingard’s wife applies for relief. Allowed one guinea by Thomas Hornby.” L.R.O. PR810.

the total relief strategy and consumed approximately a third of the revenue. In answer to Question 22 the Minister replied that Lund chapelry did not have a workhouse. This was strictly true: there was no workhouse building and relief was almost entirely given in the form of out-relief although the services of Brindle Workhouse were used when need arose. Whilst, in very general terms, the range of relief was not dissimilar and included essential such as clothing and funeral expenses, but excluded such relative luxuries as spectacles and the cost of christening celebrations which Geoffrey Oxley and Alannah Tomkins found to be the case in other settlements, there were noticeable differences in emphasis to which the discussion has referred.⁸² As an example, Kirkham and Newton favoured weekly pay as the method of relief whilst Clifton preferred to respond to requests for 'cash at need' and the response to Question 23 indicates that "No relief is granted as a regular annual payment." On the other hand, rents were a major part of provision in Clifton where they absorbed some 80% of the total relief bill, possibly because of manorial influence, whilst at Kirkham they constituted only 20% of the total out-relief and played almost no part in the relief strategy after 1806.

Finally, much is made in the literature of the fact that whatever the law said should be done, towns and parishes relieved their poor as they saw fit and this chapter began by noting the general change in attitude towards the poor following the end of the French wars. To what extent would the local poor have felt the effect of the increasing severity in attitude towards them? Here again, it is suggested, there was variation which is a recurring theme in this discussion. Kirkham's poor undoubtedly noticed change in the years after the Select Vestries Act when relief in kind was virtually abolished and allowances kept at a low level. The poor in Newton and Clifton probably noticed little difference and the level of the poor rate changed little over the years. This echoes the question raised by Steven King when he asked "Did England have several poor law

⁸² OXLEY, Geoffrey W. Poor relief in England and Wales 1601 to 1834. Newton Abbot, David & Charles. 1974. P.62 *et seq.* TOMKINS, Alannah. The Experience of Urban Poverty, 1723-82: Parish, Charity and Credit. Manchester, Manchester University Press. 2006. P.128.

systems and not one?”⁸³ At the local level it might be asked did “Did Kirkham Parish have one poor law system or more?” Clearly it had more than one and it was this diversity which the 1834 Act was intended to eliminate. The following chapter will examine to what extent this object was achieved.

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<sup>83</sup> KING. *Op.cit.* Poverty. P.259.

**Chapter Six**  
**The Era of the Guardians – 1845 to 1865**

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1 – Preliminary
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As Chapter One discussed, the historiography of poor relief highlighted the fact that under the Old Poor Law relief was the responsibility of over fifteen thousand separate parishes and townships, that the law which formed the basis of their activities, principally the Act of 1601, was very loosely drawn and that control and supervision of the local vestries and overseers who collected and distributed the poor rate was minimal. The result was considerable diversity of practice not only between parishes but also between constituent townships of the same parish. The granting of relief, even in larger townships such as Kirkham was on a face-to-face basis by officials who, knowing their town and their poor, would tailor relief to need within the ethos of their community and the sentiments of the ratepayers. <sup>1</sup>

This diversity was demonstrated by the cases of Kirkham, Newton and Clifton between 1804 and 1834 which were detailed in Chapters Three, Four and Five. Here the discussion focussed on the treatment of the poor rather than on legislative and administrative considerations. Kirkham was the principal focus and Newton and Clifton provided comparative foils. It was clear that Kirkham, never generous in its attitude to the poor, became increasingly strict in the years following the passing of the Select Vestries Acts, preferring to give its paupers minimal cash allowances and, for the most part, expecting them to make shift with them. Newton chose to pay higher levels of weekly pay and supplemented these when necessary mostly by paying the rents of pauper's houses. Clifton, on the other hand, appeared to operate a regime which paid weekly pensions and responded to the various needs of its poor as they arose. Clearly there was no over-arching parish policy on how the poor were to be relieved. Furthermore, as the case of Kirkham demonstrated, community attitudes could change over time and the comparative generosity of the early years of the

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<sup>1</sup> See KIDD, Alan. State, Society and the Poor in Nineteenth Century England. Manchester, Manchester University Press. 1999. P.13.

century was replaced by a harsher regime in the years after the Select Vestries Acts and as David Englander remarked “The screw could always stand another turn.”<sup>2</sup>

The movement for reform of the Poor Laws which had been occupying society since the early years of the nineteenth century came to a head in 1832 with the appointment of a Royal Commission charged to enquire into the whole question of the relief of the poor. The Commission presented its report in the spring of 1834 and its outcome was the Poor Law Amendment Act which received the Royal Assent in August of the same year. The background to the Commission, its methods, the Act itself and its consequences have all been discussed in detail by historians including Anthony Brundage, Lynn Hollen Lees and S. G. and E. O. Checkland whilst M. A. Crowther, Simon Fowler and Peter Wood focussed upon the workhouse, the institution which was central to the intentions of the new law whilst Eric Midwinter and Rhodes Boyson have provided a Lancashire perspective.<sup>3</sup> In essence the Act was intended to rectify what was perceived as the evil liberality of the old system, a liberality which only encouraged pauperism, and to introduce in its stead a degree of uniformity of practice throughout the country, practice which, unlike that of the Old Poor Law, would be subject to central control and supervision. This uniformity was to be based upon the principle of less eligibility, the notion that the standard of living of paupers within the workhouse should not exceed that enjoyed by the poor who struggled to avoid its demeaning hospitality or the queue at the overseers’ distribution, and that, as far as the able-bodied were concerned, out-relief would be prohibited and assistance

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<sup>2</sup> ENGLANDER, David. Poverty and Poor Law Reform in 19<sup>th</sup> Britain, 1834-1915. Harlow, Pearson Education. 1998. P.19.

<sup>3</sup> BRUNDAGE, Anthony. The Making of the New Poor Law 1832-39. London, Hutchinson & Co. 1978. LEES, Lynn Hollen. The Solidarities of Strangers: the English Poor Laws and the People, 1700-1948. Cambridge Cambridge University Press. 1998. CHECKLAND, S. G. & CHECKLAND, E. O. A. *Eds.* The Poor Law Report of 1834. Harmondsworth, Penguin Books. 1974. CROWTHER, Margaret Ann. The Workhouse System 1834-1929. London, Methuen & Co. 1983. FOWLER, Simon. Workhouse-the People, the Places, the Life behind Doors. Richmond, National Archives. 2007. LONGMATE, Norman. The Workhouse. London, Temple Smith. 1974. WOOD, Peter. Poverty and the Workhouse in Victorian Britain. Far Thrupp. Alan Sutton Publishing Ltd. 1991. MIDWINTER, Eric. Social Administration in Lancashire. Manchester, Manchester University Press. 1961. BOYSON, Rhodes. ‘The New Poor Law in North-East Lancashire, 1834-71.’ Transactions of the Lancashire and Cheshire Antiquarian Society. Vol.70. 1960.

provided only within the Workhouse walls. However, like its Elizabethan forerunner, its terms were widely drawn and the details were left to be worked out by the Poor Law Commissioners and implemented in the localities by their Assistants and Boards of Guardians. Thus there was still scope for diversity.

The entire question of reform received considerable attention in the press both nationally and locally. The Preston Chronicle for example published a lengthy article on the subject in its issue of March 1<sup>st</sup>, 1834 and the Christmas Eve 1836 edition, with ironical timing, reported that –

Mr. Power, a young barrister, one of the Assistant Commissioners who are appointed to carry into effect that precious piece of legislation called the Poor Law Amendment Act arrived in this town at the beginning of the week. <sup>4</sup>

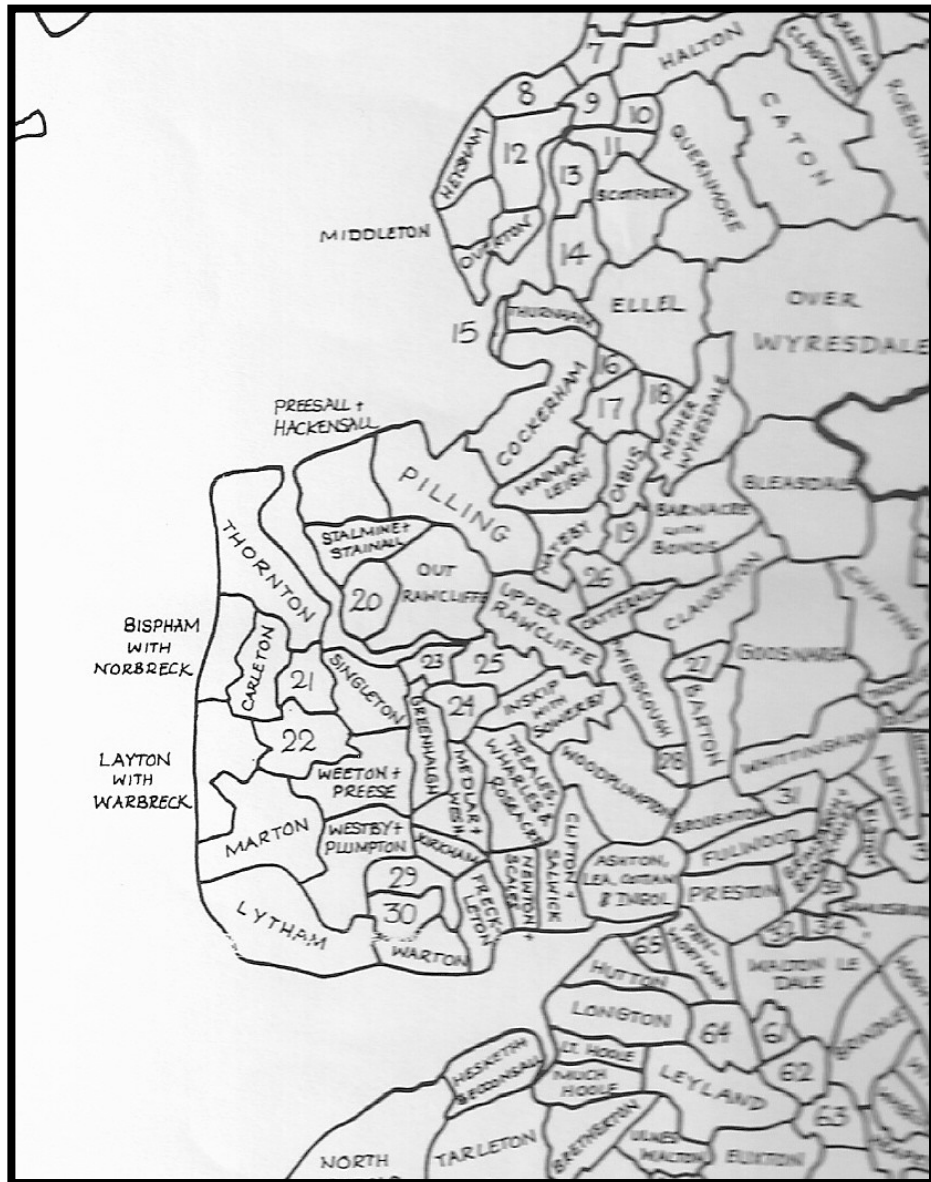
Power, disregarding the Vestry, went straight to the Preston Workhouse and the Preston Chronicle reported that “he appeared dissatisfied with the rule which has always been followed in this place of allowing the people as much food as they choose to take at mealtimes” and that he was equally critical of the practice of allowing married couples to remain together. <sup>5</sup> In these terms the Chronicle’s report gave some hint of the new experience of being poor.

Having combined Preston and the surrounding townships into the Preston Union, Power turned his attention westwards to the Fylde. As Chapter Two showed, the Fylde extended from the River Ribble in the south and the Irish Sea and Morcambe Bay in the west and north whilst the Savick Brook, the Lancaster Canal and the River Wyre collectively marked the eastern boundary. Map 6.1 shows this area within which there were four ancient ecclesiastical parishes encompassing twenty-three townships. These were Bispham with two townships, Kirkham with fifteen townships in the Fylde, Lytham where the parish and township were co-extensive and Poulton which had five

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<sup>4</sup> Preston Chronicle, March 1<sup>st</sup> 1834. Preston Chronicle December 24<sup>th</sup> 1836. Preston Chronicle articles accessed via Lancashire County Library-British Library Website.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*



**Map 6.1**  
**Showing the Extent of the Fylde Poor Law Union**  
**Boundary of Union shown thus**  
**With Acknowledgements to Dr. Alan Crosby**  
**and the Friends of Lancashire Archives.**

townships. These ranged from small agricultural villages such as Little Eccleston-with-Larbreck, 1841 population 199, by way of the two market towns of Kirkham and Poulton, 2903 and 1128 population respectively, to the recently founded port and seaside watering-place of Fleetwood which by then had almost 3000 inhabitants.

Power's task in the Fylde was a simple one and, with no problems of land ownership or manorial interest, it was no more than a question of whether there should be two

Unions, based on Kirkham and on Poulton or a single Union based on one or the other. <sup>6</sup> Certainly Poulton hoped for preferment and actively canvassed its cause. <sup>7</sup> In the event Power decided upon a single Union centred on Kirkham and adopted that town's 1726 parish workhouse as the Workhouse of the new Union. <sup>8</sup> The total population of the new Union at just over 16,000 in 1831 made it the smallest in Lancashire unions with the exception of Garstang and Lunesdale. <sup>9</sup> It was formally constituted in the winter of 1836/37 and the first election to the Board of Guardians advertised in the Preston Chronicle on March 11<sup>th</sup> 1837. Under the 1834 Act Boards of Guardians were subject to annual election by open ballot. In other elections this might have presented opportunities for malfeasance but, as Michael Rose pointed out, the office of Guardian was not so widely sought after as to make likely the adoption of underhand strategems. <sup>10</sup> Twenty-five Guardians were to be elected, one for each of the twenty-three townships plus an additional member for Kirkham and for Poulton.

There appears to have been some delay in the Guardians' formally entering upon their duties and another election was advertised in the Chronicle in March the following year. <sup>11</sup> This was standard procedure as laid down by the Commission and shortly afterwards Assistant Commissioner Power noted in a report to the Commission dated April 28<sup>th</sup>, 1838 that -

Everything is in favour of proceeding with this Union forthwith. Some of the Guardians are hostile, and many are far from sanguine although disposed to give the law a fair trial, but I do not expect any factious proceedings and the magistrates are, generally speaking, well inclined. <sup>12</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> See CROWTHER. *Op.cit.* P.36 for the implications of land ownership.

<sup>7</sup> A letter from Thomas Wilson, possibly a Poulton overseer but certainly resident in that place, to James Fair, agent to the Clifton Estate, Lytham, dated December 31<sup>st</sup> 1836 states that "It has been commonly reported that this place will form the centre of a Poor Law Union." L.R.O. DDC1-1183/22.

<sup>8</sup> The reason for his choice was possibly that in the late 1830s Kirkham was nearer than was Poulton to growing rail network which by that time had reached Preston. He must have ignored the fact that construction of a line which was to pass through both Kirkham and Poulton was even then under construction.

<sup>9</sup> MIDWINTER. *Op.cit.* P.19.

<sup>10</sup> ROSE, Michael Edward. The English Poor Law 1789-1919. Newton Abbot, David & Charles. 1971. P.136.

<sup>11</sup> Preston Chronicle. March 10<sup>th</sup> 1838. Boyson, *op.cit.*, P.36, draws attention to the fact that initially some Unions were formed to implement the provisions of the 1837 Act for the Registration of Births, Marriages and Deaths, a responsibility imposed upon the Poor Law Unions.

<sup>12</sup> Report of Assistant Commissioner Alfred Power to Poor Law Commission. April 28<sup>th</sup>, 1838. T.N.A. MH32.

By the autumn of 1838 the Guardians were at work. Their clerk, a Mr. Fisher. had taken up his post and on October 27<sup>th</sup> 1838 they advertised for an auditor and two relieving officers. <sup>13</sup> This was followed by a Notice on December 1<sup>st</sup> 1838 inviting tenders for the supply to the workhouse of provisions, clogs and household goods. <sup>14</sup> Similar advertisements for staff, medical officers and provisions appeared in subsequent editions and on September 9<sup>th</sup> 1843 there appeared a small notice to the effect that “The Board of Guardians of the Fylde Union have decided on the erection of a new Workhouse at Kirkham.” <sup>15</sup>

The early years of the New Poor Law were inevitably years of transition and the process was not without its difficulties as King has observed –

The Commission itself was in a parlous state after its initial five-year mandate had expired in 1839. It had to survive on one-year extensions of its role until 1842 when, in the face of political opposition, a further five-year term was granted. <sup>16</sup>

He goes on to make the point that there were often delays between the formal vesting of unions and the Guardians’ actually taking control of relief in their areas and with regard to the working of the law and the Commission he writes that -

In conception and legal reality the new poor law was an unsteady compromise addressing an inappropriately defined problem with inadequately designed solutions. It was staffed in its central component by an odd collection of idealists and administrators with little grasp of local traditions, cultures and experiences. In a practical sense its enduring feature was the continuance of local diversity, traditional personnel, often the traditional built fabric and, before too long, traditional policies. <sup>17</sup>

However, by the early 1840s, King continues, “the Commission was at a stage where it could set about its central task - curtailing outdoor relief and trying to impose standard responses to unstable poverty and welfare conditions at local level.” <sup>18</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Preston Chronicle. October 28<sup>th</sup> 1838.

<sup>14</sup> Preston Chronicle. December 1<sup>st</sup> 1838.

<sup>15</sup> Preston Chronicle. September 3<sup>rd</sup> 1843.

<sup>16</sup> KING, Steven Andrew. Poverty and Welfare in England 1700-1850. Manchester, Manchester University Press. 2000. P.228.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.* P.230.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.* P.228.



He further observed that “the very rapidity of the process of unionisation often means that late old poor law and early new poor law records are sparse.”<sup>19</sup> This, as the Introduction noted, is the case in the Fylde. However, from the point of view of this work, the lack is more apparent than real not only on account of the early problems mentioned but also because by the time the Poor Law Commission had finally settled down the Fylde Union’s new Workhouse, having been “planned to carry out most fully the classification of the paupers and the other arrangements of the Poor Law Commissioners” was ready for occupation.<sup>20</sup> The new building was a general mixed workhouse for the Poor Law Commission had abandoned its original predilection for separate workhouses for different categories of pauper and actively supported the construction of single buildings.<sup>21</sup>

The opening of the record coincides with the Fylde Poor Law Guardians’ first meeting in their new Workhouse by which time both the Poor Law Commission and the Board of the Fylde Poor Law Union had fully grasped the practicalities of the new legislation and from this point forward it is possible to construct an impression of the workings of poor relief in the Fylde under the New Poor Law which may finally be compared with provision under the Old Poor Law. This chapter, therefore, seeks to set the operation of the Fylde Union in the context of the New Poor Law, commenting upon its management and the manner in which it catered for its poor both in the Workhouse and through the provision of out-relief and to attempt to assess the degree of change between the Old and the New Poor Laws and answer the question which Ursula Henriques and David Roberts posed on the degree of cruelty inherent in the new regime.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> KING. *Op.cit.* P.230. WOOD, *op.cit.*, P.98, makes a similar point noting that “Official records are unfortunately stronger on administration than relief [and] they give more attention to the inmates of the workhouse than to those on domiciliary or out-relief.”

<sup>20</sup> Preston Chronicle. September 3<sup>rd</sup> 1843.

<sup>21</sup> See CROWTHER. *Op.cit.* P.39 *et seq.*

<sup>22</sup> HENRIQUES, Ursula Ruth Quixano. ‘How cruel was the Victorian Poor Law?’ Historical Journal. Vol.11. No.2. 1968. P.365. ROBERTS, David. “How Cruel was the Victorian Poor Law?’ Historical Journal. Vol.6. P.97. 1963.

## 2 – Guardians and Officers <sup>23</sup>

The annual election in March 1845, the year in which this study takes up the discussion, produced a Board which naturally reflected the social and economic structure of the area. Of the twenty-five Guardians fifteen were farmers with some owning their land and others being tenants. Two were described as lodging house keepers, probably as they represented coastal areas, proprietors of company houses rather than of the common lodging houses frequented by tramps. The others included a veterinary surgeon, sailcloth merchant, a coal dealer and a gentleman whilst the occupations of the remaining four were not stated. Throughout the period the agricultural interest dominated the Board and the 1859 Board, for example, consisted of seventeen farmers, two gentlemen, a miller a wine merchant, a saddler and two whose occupations were not given. These men appeared to be of some substance and a cut above those of lowly status who had been seen to be responsible for the alleged evils of the Old Poor Law. <sup>24</sup> Elections in the townships were not always contested and Anne Digby suggests that this was due to the “onerous and unpopular nature of poor-law administration.” <sup>25</sup> Certainly in some years and in some townships there was only a single nomination or even none at all. This was the case in 1845 when four of the townships produced no candidates for the election and the existing Guardians were permitted, or persuaded, to continue to serve for a further year. As Midwinter has pointed out, this was not uncommon. <sup>26</sup> Once elected Guardians often served for considerable periods and farmers Richard Cookson from Marton and Richard Bilsborrow from Medlar-with-Wesham served for all the years of this survey. <sup>27</sup> Also, as Peter Wood has observed, long-serving Guardians often achieved their record of service without the need to fight an election. <sup>28</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> For discussion on the Workhouse and Union staff see CROWTHER, FOWLER, LONGMATE, and WOOD. *Op.cit.*

<sup>24</sup> See BRUNDAGE, Anthony. The Making of the New Poor Law: the Policies of Inquiry, Enactment and Implementation, 1832-39. London, Hutchinson and Co. 1978. P.10.

<sup>25</sup> DIGBY, Anne. The Poor Law in Nineteenth Century England. London, Historical Association. 1982. P.19.

<sup>26</sup> L.R.O. PUF1/3 and PUF1/4. MIDWINTER. *Op.cit.*, P.31. See also WOOD. *Op.cit.* P.85.

<sup>27</sup> L.R.O. PUF1/3 to PUF1.6.

<sup>28</sup> WOOD. *Op.cit.* P.85.

The elected Guardians were supplemented on the Board by the magistrates for the area, members by virtue of their office. One such was sailcloth merchant William Birley who served as Chairman of the Board for a number of years in the early days of the Union. On his death in 1850 the Board chose his son Charles, an elected Guardian for Kirkham, to succeed him as their Chairman. Other magistrates who served included the Reverend Richard Moore, Vicar of Lund and father of the Board's solicitor Richard Moore junior, the Reverend George Ludovic Parsons, Vicar of Kirkham, and, later in the period, Frederick Kemp, agent to Sir Peter Hesketh-Fleetwood, founder of the town which carried his name. Wood suggests that "in the early years the *ex officio* magistrates often played an active role but the long-term trend was for the majority to attend infrequently."<sup>29</sup> This was likely to have been the case here although Vicar Moore and Thomas Langton Birley, son of William, older brother of Charles and subsequently Lord of the Manor of Kirkham, were regular attenders.

Just how seriously the individual elected Guardians took their responsibilities is open to question. Rarely was there a full attendance at Board Meetings. Numbers at the fourteen meetings held in the first six months of 1850 produced an average attendance of only 52%. This, although better than the 6% which Midwinter quotes for Haslingden Union, was typical and supports his contention that "in many Unions the Guardians were all but nominal in their authority."<sup>30</sup> This, of course, had potential consequences for the poor generally and for the workhouse inmates in particular as the case of Andover clearly demonstrated.<sup>31</sup> Highest attendances were generally at the first meeting after the annual election when the Chairman of the Board was chosen and membership of Committees decided or when major items of expenditure such as the appointment of staff were on the agenda for, as Wood observed "Attempts to increase

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<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>30</sup> MIDWINTER. *Op.cit.* P.35.

<sup>31</sup> See ANSTRUTHER, Ian. The Scandal of the Andover Workhouse. London, Geoffrey Bles. 1973.

expenditure were carefully scrutinized.”<sup>32</sup> Even such high attendance was often only when the Clerk had written individually to each Guardian particularly asking for their attendance. His requests were not always as successful as he would have wished.

Increasingly the Board delegated much of its work to substantive or *ad hoc* committees. From its inception it followed what is thought to have been practice under the Old Poor Law and annually appointed a Workhouse Visiting Committee.<sup>33</sup> In October 1848 the Board elected a Nuisances Committee under the Removal of Nuisances Act of that year and for the some time the Minutes record reports of occurrences in various parts of the Union, often brought to notice by Superintendent Crean of the Lancashire Constabulary.<sup>34</sup> Two years later they began to appoint a Labour Committee “to give directions about all matters connected with the cultivation and produce of the land belonging to and occupied by the Union” land which the Board progressively extended by rent or purchase.<sup>35</sup> This was followed by a Finance Committee of four and a Farm Committee of six, both in 1860, and an Assessment Committee of twelve in 1863.<sup>36</sup> To what extent this was a reflection of an increasing work-load or of what Midwinter has described as a tendency on the part of Boards to “degenerate into dull rubber stamping money-checking mechanisms” is again open to question but the Minutes give the impression, particularly towards the end of this study, that Midwinter’s comment has validity as attendances at Board meetings were generally only half the full membership.<sup>37</sup> *Ad hoc* committees appear less frequently. One was appointed in September 1859 to dispose of the Board’s potato crop after it had failed to realise a fair price at auction. The committee was authorised to dispose of the crop “in such manner as they think advisable.” Their efforts were of no avail, the committee was disbanded and the crop was “sold at auction without reserve for £1.”<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> WOOD. *Op.cit.* P.85.

<sup>33</sup> See L.R.O. PR810. September 10<sup>th</sup> 1810.

<sup>34</sup> L.R.O. PUF1/4. This responsibility was subsequently transferred to bodies such as the Kirkham Local Board of Health and the Fleetwood Improvement Commission.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>36</sup> L.R.O. PUF1/6.

<sup>37</sup> MIDWINTER. *Op.cit.* P.36.

<sup>38</sup> L.R.O. PUF1/6.

To implement their decisions Boards had the services of paid officers who varied both in number and in quality. <sup>39</sup> In the early days of the New Poor Law, as Crowther observes, “amateurism was inevitable” <sup>40</sup> but over time staff achieved an increasing degree of professionalism and the administration of the poor law became a profession in its own right. <sup>41</sup> This, however, did not remove the possibilities for favouritism and the nepotism which Digby suggests “operated in the appointment of salaried officers.” <sup>42</sup> Appointments to the Union staff were made after advertisement of vacancies in the press. <sup>43</sup> Depending on the number of applications received some or all of the candidates would be interviewed and references taken up. A candidate who attended for interview without references was unlikely to be heard. <sup>44</sup> After interviewing the candidates and examining references, the Board voted and an appointment was made. Successful candidates were also required to provide two sureties of their good conduct who would compensate the Board in the event of misconduct of the member of staff concerned and the Guardians did not hesitate to use their rights under this provision when occasion arose. <sup>45</sup>

The Board’s principal functionary was the Clerk. As its chief administrative officer he was responsible for attending all meetings, taking minutes, collecting and submitting returns, acting as the Board’s link with the Poor Law Commission and its successors, its officers and other agencies. Whenever information or action was required, it was the Clerk who was ordered to provide it. Despite his large work-load, he usually had to work alone or with the help of a suitable inmate despite the Poor Law Board’s disapproval of this practice and only in the larger houses was he allowed a paid

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<sup>39</sup> For a discussion of workhouse officers, see CROWTHER, *op.cit.* P113 *et seq.*

<sup>40</sup> CROWTHER. *Op.cit.* P.113.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>42</sup> DIGBY. *Op.cit.* P.19. The only apparent instance of nepotism in the Fylde at this time, revealed by the 1851 Census, was that of 52 year old Robert Thompson, Clerk to the Union in 1851 and 31 year old Robert Thompson, Collector of Rates for the Township of Elswick in the same year.

<sup>43</sup> For example, Preston Chronicle. November 6<sup>th</sup>, 1841. Appointment of Assistant Overseer.

<sup>44</sup> L.R.O. PUF1/6. The case of Miss Saville who applied for the position of schoolmistress in 1861 demonstrates the point. When the Board decided to appoint to this position in the summer of 1861, she was initially the only applicant but as she did not submit the references required, she was not appointed and the Board reiterated the need for testimonials.

<sup>45</sup> See the case of John Hull in 1846. L.R.O. PUF1/3,

assistant.<sup>46</sup> Financial matters were in the hands of the Union Treasurer. In practice he was not an employee of the Board but usually the manager of one of the local banks who was remunerated by commission on turnover.<sup>47</sup> Collection of the poor rate, the source of the Union's funds, was in the hands of two Assistant Overseers. Theirs was clearly a difficult task as on occasion the Poor Law Board was obliged to write to the local Board reminding them of their duty to ensure that the Treasurer always had sufficient funds at his disposal to meet the expenses of the Union and the cheques which he had issued.<sup>48</sup> Keeping a watching brief on the Union's financial affairs was the Auditor whose task was to make sure that expenditure was legal.<sup>49</sup> If he felt unlawful payments had been made, he surcharged the Guardians or officers who had authorised the outlay. Naturally, this produced correspondence and arguments in which the local Board usually carried the matter.<sup>50</sup>

Turning now to the Workhouse, the officers varied both in number and in quality. Manchester Workhouse, for example, boasted a full-time staff of eight including a lunatic keeper.<sup>51</sup> The smaller unions such as the Fylde in its earlier days employed only a Master and Matron. Quality and ability varied. Fowler quotes the case of John Wyld, the Master of a Durham workhouse whose attitude towards his charges seemed to resemble that of a stern but caring parent.<sup>52</sup> At the other end of the scale were men of the stamp of George Catch of Lambeth, abuser of female paupers, and Colin McDougal of Andover, described by Fowler as a drunkard and a bully.<sup>53</sup> The publicity which the activities of such men received must have done much to give the workhouse as an institution the reputation for harshness and cruelty which it certainly acquired and which has provided a topic for debate amongst historians.<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> CROWTHER. *Op.cit.* P.118 & 124.

<sup>47</sup> L.R.O. PUF1/6.

<sup>48</sup> L.R.O. PUF1/4.

<sup>49</sup> See WOOD. *Op.cit.* P.84.

<sup>50</sup> See for example PUF1/6.

<sup>51</sup> CROWTHER. *Op.cit.* P.115.

<sup>52</sup> FOWLER. *Op.cit.* P.67. The example is of a later date but the point is a valid one.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.* P.8.

<sup>54</sup> For a discussion on this point see HENRIQUES and ROBERTS, *op.cit.*

In the smallest institutions as in the largest, workhouse officers found themselves working in an hierarchical and confined environment where the status of each individual was reflected not just in the position they held and the salary they were paid but also in the rations which they were allowed with inferior officers being permitted smaller amounts of, say, bread and butter than their superiors, and in the accommodation they enjoyed. <sup>55</sup> Even their eating utensils might be graded according to status. <sup>56</sup> The key appointments were those of Master and Matron, usually a married couple free of ‘encumbrances’ as children were referred to, for these office holders were required to devote all their energies to the duties of their posts: progeny were seen as a distraction and a possible charge on the rations and accommodation accounts. <sup>57</sup> Taking charge of an institution which Crowther has described as “hospital, school and reformatory” these positions wielded considerable power over both the inmates and staff. This authority was exercised not only directly in their daily control of the establishment but also indirectly as they were in a position to influence Board decisions which in turn impinged on staff and staff paupers alike. <sup>58</sup> They were required to have high standards of personal probity and to possess a variety of skills as their charges included the young and helpless, the fit and occasionally aggressive and the old and physically incapable as well as the feeble-minded and the idiotic. Furthermore, they had to be disciplinarians, accountants, keepers of numerous records and ledgers, catering managers as theirs was the responsibility of feeding the inmates according to the detailed dietary specified by the Board, and even at times workshop foremen. Finally, they were not permitted to leave the premises without permission of the Board. <sup>59</sup> To these paragons the Fylde Guardians paid a joint salary of £40 annually “plus rations and accommodation” a sum which compared unfavourably with other workhouses such as that at Wrexham, a House of similar inmate capacity to Fylde, where joint remuneration was £100. <sup>60</sup> In view of the very modest salaries, the low social status attached to the post and the

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<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.* P.131. See FOWLER, *op.cit.*, P.79 for examples of differentiation in ration allowances.

<sup>56</sup> FOWLER. *Op.cit.* P.81.

<sup>57</sup> WOOD. *Op.cit.* P.91. CROWTHER. *Op.cit.* P.117.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.* P.114.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.* P.44 & P.118 *et.seq.*

<sup>60</sup> FOWLER. *Op.cit.*P.71.

restrictions placed upon their freedom, it was not to be wondered at that Unions experienced problems with their Masters and other staff. In this the Fylde was not alone although the problems were not as severe as those experienced at Andover for example. <sup>61</sup> The low salary encouraged peculation and the lack of status, considered by Crowther to be “at best comparable to a modest tradesman’s [and] at worst to a skilled artisan’s,” prospects which did nothing to attract the ambitious and hardworking. <sup>62</sup>

One problem affecting the Fylde, reported in the Preston Chronicle of June 1855, recorded “a systematic and extensive course of robbery from the Fylde Union Workhouse extending over a long period” in which “the Master of the Workhouse was the principal delinquent.” <sup>63</sup> Another case of misbehaviour was that of a later Master, observed by one of the Guardians in April 1863 “to be in a state of intoxication.” Whilst the Board Member commented that “having heard his explanation [he] thought it satisfactory, the Board was not so tolerant and referred the matter to the Workhouse Visiting Committee. <sup>64</sup> Whatever punishment they imposed had little effect. In May the following year it was recorded that “he absented himself for two days and returned in a bruised state.” The Board allowed him to resign. <sup>65</sup> He was replaced by William Mullins, Master of the Workhouse at Ashton-under-Lyne, who resisted temptation until the summer of 1865 when his conduct, not stated but probably falsifying accounts, was “so serious that the Board considered he should be asked to resign immediately or face enquiry by the Poor Law Board. The Master was called before the Board and offered the choice. He resigned. However, Longmate observed that “Often. Guardians covered up their own mistakes by allowing offenders

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<sup>61</sup> See ANSTRUTHER, Ian. The Scandal of the Andover Workhouse. London, Geoffrey Bles. 1973.

<sup>62</sup> CROWTHER *Op.cit.* P.125. However, FOWLER, *op.cit.*, P.80, suggests that their status was “firmly within the respectable lower middle classes.” The latter, at least in Fylde is possibly nearer the mark as his name was listed in Mannex 1851 directory alongside that of the Clerk to the Union.

<sup>63</sup> Preston Chronicle, June 30<sup>th</sup> 1853. The article does not say what he was robbing and the Minutes for that period are lost.

<sup>64</sup> L.R.O. PUF1/7.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*



to resign.”<sup>66</sup> Whether this was the case here is open to question, although one might suggest that there was a lack of supervision, but it seems likely that the Board would not want the Poor Law Board’s Inspector to come amongst them and make too close an enquiry into the facts of the case.

Evidently, the duties of the Master and Matron were many and various including the need “to exercise a gentle sway and controlling influence in harmonising any differences that may arise between the other indoor officers.”<sup>67</sup> More practically, the work involved the supervision of the domestic work of the House including the care of the sick and insane paupers, work carried out as far as was possible by inmates. This depended upon the availability of paupers both physically and mentally fitted for the work which was clearly not always the case as in the summer of 1850 the Board decided to engage a female servant “to assist the Matron of the Workhouse, there not being at present able-bodied paupers in the Workhouse sufficient to do the work properly.”<sup>68</sup> The situation had improved by 1861 as the census of that year listed, in addition to the workhouse servant, inmates working as cleaner, baker, pig feeder, errand goer, coal carrier, washers, gardeners, barber, cook, cook’s help, manglers, knitter and two nurses, one male and one female. Fowler comments that these positions were much sought after partly because they enhanced the pauper’s status amongst his peers and partly because of their possibilities of fringe benefits in the shape of payment in cash or gin or, in the case of kitchen orderlies, opportunities for more food and graft by way of stealing food and selling it to fellow inmates or even outside the House.<sup>69</sup> Wood further notes that such tasks were sometimes given to out-paupers “as a measure of economy.”<sup>70</sup> There is no record of such graft in the Fylde minutes although in view of the surreptitious nature of the activity this omission might be expected.

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<sup>66</sup> LONGMATE. *Op.cit.* P.99.

<sup>67</sup> FOWLER. *Op.cit.* P.67.

<sup>68</sup> L.R.O. PUF1/6.

<sup>69</sup> FOWLER. *Op.cit.* P.110.

<sup>70</sup> WOOD. *Op.cit.* P.91.

Crowther suggests that at the highest level workhouses would be staffed by, in addition to a Master and Matron, a chaplain, medical officer, teachers, nurses, a porter and even such specialist posts as the Manchester Union's lunatic keeper.<sup>71</sup> In the Fylde, at least in its early days, there were neither nurses, schoolteachers nor porters. The duties of Chaplain were performed by visiting clergy, probably the curate of Kirkham's Anglican Church and the Medical Officer's functions were performed by a doctor who was responsible also for the care of the paupers in a district of the Union as well as of patients in his own private practice.

Gradually the Fylde Board increased its paid staff by the addition of a Labour Master, a Schoolmistress and a Nurse. The appointment of the first was made without discussion or opposition. His wage was 15s a week, later reduced to 12s. He was expected to supervise the paupers at work in the Board's fields and to wield a spade himself when necessary and he could be, and was, laid off and rehired according to the seasons and as the work demanded.<sup>72</sup> However, neither the schoolmistress nor the nurse was appointed without discussion and delay. As early as 1849 the Inspector of Schools, Mr. T. Brown, had recommended the appointment of a teacher but the Board refused on the grounds that there were sufficient schools in the area to which the children could be sent. This was even though the teacher's salary would be paid from central funds. Inspector Brown came again in February 1851 and February 1852 but despite the fact that he "reported unfavourably" on the knowledge of the pauper children, the Board refused to act and maintained their refusal until 1861 when they finally appointed a Miss Lydia Cook at an annual salary of £30 plus rations. Holders of teachers' appointments found that their duties were not confined to the pedagogical and involved the supervision of the children after school hours and the performance of "additional duties [as] ordered by the master."<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>71</sup> CROWTHER. *Op.cit.* P.127.

<sup>72</sup> L.R.O. PUF1/3.

<sup>73</sup> WOOD. *Op.cit.* P.105.

“The existence of nurses was not recognised in 1834”<sup>74</sup> but they were to become “the most numerous class of workhouse officer.”<sup>75</sup> However, more than twenty years were to elapse before the Fylde considered such an appointment and until then the practice was generally as hinted at by the 1861 census and noted by Longmate who recorded that -

In an immensely large proportion of the houses the sick are attended by male and female paupers who are placed in such an office without having even the smallest instruction or experience and who often have the reverse of friendly feelings towards their helpless patients.<sup>76</sup>

Although paid only the same salary as the workhouse servants and allowed no more rations, they were often rewarded by special favours and Samantha Williams notes that despite the practice’s being forbidden by the Commission, “pauper nurses were given a glass of gin for laying out the dead and other specially repulsive duties.”<sup>77</sup> The question of appointing a professional nurse in the Fylde Union was first raised by a Dr. Nairne at a Board Meeting in September 1864.<sup>78</sup> The proposal was referred to the Workhouse Visiting Committee and in November the appointment was offered to Mrs. Cookson of Kirkham on a trial period of three months at £15 a year, a salary half that of the schoolmistress. At the end of the trial period, February 1865, the Board renewed her appointment for a further term but they were relieved from further consideration of the matter by her death from typhus in the May.<sup>79</sup>

The records contain no mention of that humblest of post-holders, the porter and the duties of this position were likely to have been performed by an inmate. Indeed, even as late as February 1861 the Board refused to erect a porter’s lodge at the main gate which they instructed was to be kept locked.<sup>80</sup> This reluctance to make additional appointments and the fact that two, the labour master and the nurse, were not permanent suggests that the Board was maintaining the practice of carefulness which

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<sup>74</sup> CROWTHER. *Op.cit.* P.156.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>76</sup> LONGMATE. *Op.cit.* P.201.

<sup>77</sup> WILLIAMS, Samantha. ‘Caring for the Sick Poor: Poor Law Nurses in Bedfordshire, c.1770-1834. in LANE, Penelope, RAVEN, Keith and SNELL, Keith D.M. *Eds. Women, Work and Wages in England, 1600-1850.* Woodbridge, Boydell Press. 2004.

<sup>78</sup> L.R.O. PUF1/7. No other information appears about Dr. Nairne but he might have been one of the Commissioners in Lunacy who occasionally visited the Fylde..

<sup>79</sup> L.R.O. PUF1/7.

<sup>80</sup> L.R.O. PUF1/6.

had been practice in Kirkham under the Old Poor Law. Their eventual appointment might, however, reflect not so much a softening of the Board's attitude but rather the growing importance and recognition in society generally of the professions of nurse and teacher.

All these appointments were related to the management of the Union and with the custody of the inmates of the Workhouse. Other posts were concerned largely with the paupers on out-relief in the townships of the Union which for this purpose was divided into two Districts based on Kirkham and on Poulton. Each had its own Relieving Officer who dispensed relief and, as previously noted, an Assistant Overseer who collected the rates. Much was expected of the Relieving Officers in return for their annual salaries of fifty-four pounds. They were the first point of contact for the poor when they were forced into pauperdom. This, of course, raises the question of the relative levels of poverty in the localities and King notes that "differences in the definition of what was 'poor' between areas was a perennial problem for the Poor Law Commission" as, indeed, it must have been for individual Boards.<sup>81</sup> The initial assessment of the Relieving Officer was of consequence for the pauper as he decided the level of any immediate relief. He was under instructions to visit the pauper so that a proper case might be presented to the Board. Once the level of relief had been fixed his was the responsibility of handing over the money to the paupers who, after July 1849 were ordered "where possible to attend in person to receive their relief . . . and that the officers be required to bear this in mind in order that a proper check may be had on out-relief."<sup>82</sup>

Relieving Officers also acted as the Board's enquiry agents, investigating on its behalf matters concerning apprenticeship, settlement and the welfare of the Union's mentally disturbed. For example, in January 1862 the Board was considering apprenticeship of William Bickerstaffe. "The Relieving Officer found the proposed place suitable."<sup>83</sup> February 1850 saw the Relieving Officer visiting pauper Thomas Breakall in Lancaster

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<sup>81</sup> KING. *Op.cit.* P.97.

<sup>82</sup> L.R.O. PUF1/3.

<sup>83</sup> L.R.O. PUF1/6.

Asylum to assess his condition with a view to his discharge. The officer subsequently reported that Breakall “was considered to be sufficiently restored to a sound state of mind.”<sup>84</sup> Finally, in February 1852 the Board had before it the case of the settlement of Thomas Moon who lived in Preston and claimed to belong to Clifton. The Officer was instructed to make enquiry concerning his settlement and report.<sup>85</sup>

For medical purposes the two relief districts, Kirkham and Poulton, were subdivided into three with each having its own Medical Officer with Kirkham Number One District having responsibility for the inmates of the Workhouse.<sup>86</sup> Often in private practice, they regarded their Union salaries as additional income. Until 1854 they were employed on annual contracts which the Board was under no obligation to renew although when the posts were advertised existing holders of the office were likewise under no obligation to reapply. However, there was rarely competition for the appointments and those who were eventually appointed did not always hold the minimum qualifications which had been required by the Poor Law Board since 1842. Once in post they carried out their duties much as they saw fit and according to their own standard of professional ethics. Thus, conflict between the individual Medical Officers and the Board was not uncommon. Not only did they have knowledge and expertise which the Guardians did not possess, the medical profession itself was gathering increased strength, professionalism and an awareness of its social standing which was often superior to that of the Guardians who employed and paid them and to whom they were responsible. Another source of tension was the manner of their remuneration. They were paid a basic salary which varied from twenty-five to forty pounds a year according to their area. From this they were required to pay for any medicines they prescribed although the Board was prepared to consider requests for

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<sup>84</sup> L.R.O. PUF1/4.

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>86</sup> For a discussion of the medical profession, see CROWTHER, *op.cit.*, P.156 *et seq.*, and WOOD, *op.cit.*, P.92. There is a considerable literature on doctors, nurses and hospitals in the form of theses as well as monographs and journal articles. In addition to those mentioned here, recent theses include NEGRINE, Angela. ‘Medicine and Poverty: A Study of the Poor Law Medical Services of the Leicester Union, 1867-1914.’ Ph.D. Thesis. University of Leicester. 2008 and RITCH, Alistair Edward Sutherland. ‘Sick, Aged and Inform – Adults in the New Birmingham Workhouse, 1851-1912.’ M.Phil. Dissertation. University of Birmingham. 2009.

extra payments covering their attendance and additional medicines in specific cases. These sums could make a substantial addition to their salary. In July 1850, for example, four doctors shared additional allowances of £18 for work done in the previous quarter. In addition they sometimes held their appointments in tandem with that of Vaccinator to the Union, an office for which Dr. Howden, the Medical Officer for Fleetwood, was paid £1 5s 0d in the spring of 1850.<sup>87</sup> Claims for additional fees were not always accepted without question. In April 1846 Dr. Elletson was required to appear before the Board to justify his expenditure of £4 7s 10d on “spirituous liquors” for Betty Sandham. Elletson had had the foresight to consult his colleagues on the case and they “agreed that the treatment was absolutely necessary.” The account was paid as were two similar accounts in later weeks.<sup>88</sup> Less fortunate was Dr. Whitgreave, Medical Officer for Blackpool, who asked for extra payment for attendance on Patrick MacManus who had been badly scalded. His claim was “not allowed.”<sup>89</sup> Payments in connection with lying-in were also made although whether these were to a doctor, a midwife or to a good woman of the township is never stated.

Despite their increasing status, complaint was occasionally made against the Union’s medical men. When these did arise the Board made serious attempts to discover what had happened and took appropriate action. One such case concerned Dr. Niddri, the Medical Officer for Lytham. It was alleged that he failed to call on a sick pauper two weeks after he had been told of the need and the Relieving Officer was deputed to make enquiries. The doctor appeared before the Board, explained the circumstances and produced a letter from the patient stating that he had not suffered from the delay. A “mild reprimand” was handed out and the Minutes noted that “it is desirable for Medical Officers to visit all paupers as early as practicable.”<sup>90</sup> Medical Officers were required regularly to submit returns of their treatments to the Board and almost as regularly the Clerk found it necessary to write to them to ask them to do so. Dr.

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<sup>87</sup> L.R.O. PUF1/4.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>89</sup> L.R.O. PUF1/7.

<sup>90</sup> L.R.O. PUF1/3. Vaccination against smallpox was compulsory by an Act of 1853 but Michael Drake says that “there were no Vaccination Officers to police it.” See DRAKE, Michael. “The Vaccination Registers: what they are and what we can learn from them.’ Local Population Studies. Vol.74. 2005. P.37.

Nelson of Lytham was a particular offender in this respect and he refused in 1850 to reapply for his position as he objected to being required to make regular appearance at Board meetings. However, there were no other applicants for the post. He was persuaded to reapply on the same terms and was appointed.

There were, of course, three bodies involved in the provision of relief to the fourth group, the paupers themselves. These were, firstly the Poor Law Commission, later the Poor Law Board, and its officers. Secondly, there were the local Boards who controlled the Unions. Finally, there were the officers of these local Boards who implemented and sometimes influenced their decisions. They were all concerned to relieve the poor in their need but their perspectives were not necessarily the same. A prime concern of the central authority was the imposition of uniformity of practice combined with economy in expenditure. The Boards of the local unions were concerned to relieve their poor but at what they individually considered a proper cost. Here again there is diversity of practice and King has commented that Relieving Officers in Hampshire were under instructions to go looking for cases to relieve whilst their Lancashire peers “expected workers to try every available means to avoid relief applications.”<sup>91</sup> On the ground the Relieving Officers came face-to-face with the poor and had to balance the instructions of their Board with the needs of their applicants and even of their humanitarian impulses. The possibilities for disagreement were evident but of the three, the local Boards had the clear advantage over even the central authority for they controlled the expenditure. As Derek Fraser noted “The central Poor Law Commission had very limited powers when faced with a Union which refused to co-operate.”<sup>92</sup> Crowther made the same point noting that “Since the Commissioners could not coerce, they had to cajole.”<sup>93</sup> The Board controlled the purse-strings and if they refused to spend money, there was little that the Commission could do about it as the case of the Fylde Board’s appointment of the schoolmistress, which they avoided for years despite the urging of the Schools Inspector, amply demonstrates. Relationships

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<sup>91</sup> KING. *Op.cit.* P.97.

<sup>92</sup> FRASER, Derek. The Evolution of the British Welfare State: A History of Policy since the Industrial Revolution. London, MacMillan Press Limited. 1973. P.48.

<sup>93</sup> CROWTHER. *Op.cit.* P.36.

between the Board and its staff appear to have been reasonable and the treatment of the widow of a Master who died in office confirms this as she was allowed to remain in post after her husband's death and was later pensioned off. Other Masters whose conduct failed to meet the required standard were allowed to resign rather than face a public enquiry or dismissal although the reason might have been not so much a consideration for the individual but rather that the Board did not want the trouble which dismissal and official enquiry might have involved. Again, Dryburgh's remarks concerning convenience seem apposite. However, the case of Thomas Breakall reveals the Board in a more compassionate attitude to its staff. He was one of the Board's Relieving Officers and appears to have suffered a mental breakdown in the middle 1840s. He was accommodated in Lancaster Asylum at the expense of the Union until his discharge to the Workhouse in 1850. The Clerk was later instructed to "make provision for his leaving the Workhouse and going to Freckleton with his children who have been absent from him since he was taken to the Asylum." The provision included the purchase of clothing to the value of £4 9s 1d and, when the Freckleton overseers requested work on the valuation of their township, the Board gave the work to Breakall and paid him for it.<sup>94</sup>

Requests for salary increases and allowances were a different matter. These applications, usually made on account of an increased work-load, were often met with either procrastination or outright refusal. The former was the case with Relieving Officer John Davies. In November 1860 he was given the additional appointment of Inspector of Nuisances "for that part of his collecting district of which the Board of Guardians is constituted the Local Authority." It was decided that "fixing of his remuneration to be deferred to a future meeting but in the meantime he to be paid such remuneration as may be fair and reasonable."<sup>95</sup> Who was to decide what was fair and reasonable is not stated. The Board passed a similar motion three months later and deferred the decision again and no further mention of the matter was made. As far

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<sup>94</sup> L.R.O. PUF1/4. WOOD, *op.cit.*, P.87, observes that "Rating lists [valuations] were not updated and the need for revaluation frequently ignored. Until the Union Chargeability Act in 1865, rating and valuation was the responsibility of the township and the Fylde Guardians often responded favourably to request for revaluation.

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.* See WOOD, *op.cit.*, P.90 for plurality of office-holding.



as relations between the Board and its officers were concerned, the word of the former was law. However, when it came to the provision of relief to the poor, the officers were caught between the Scylla of provision and the Charybdis of economy particularly when the care of the young and old, who needed care rather than confinement, was concerned and it is to the treatment of the recipients of relief rather than its providers that attention must now be turned. In providing relief, the Guardians had a choice either of offering an order for The House or of providing out-relief. The intention of the 1834 Act had been that the former, particularly in the case of able-bodied males, should be the method of choice. However, Guardians quickly came to the realisation, as the vestries had previously done, that out-relief was much the cheaper option particularly in the case of families and in this connection Rose noted that in 1854 Lancashire's indoor paupers cost on average £5 10s 5d annually whilst an out-pauper cost 40% less at £3 11s 5d <sup>96</sup>

### **3 – Relief - In the Workhouse <sup>97</sup>**

The Fylde Union Workhouse, opened in 1845 to replace the old Kirkham parish building, is shown in Illustration 6.1. <sup>98</sup> The architect was a local man, Mr. Tuach, and the cost was in the order of £6,000. As the illustration shows, it was a two-storey building with a central pediment and 3-light bays on each side and designed to accommodate the Commission's classification of paupers. <sup>99</sup> Extensions were carried out in 1864 and the 1893 Ordnance Survey map shows the buildings to have a footprint in the form of a capital letter aitch.

Anne Digby has stated that “By the 1840s it became apparent that central supervision of local boards was ineffectual [and] left substantial room for manoeuvre in the

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<sup>96</sup> ROSE, Michael Edward. ‘The Allowance System under the New Poor Law.’ Economic History Review. 1966. Vol.19. P.613.

<sup>97</sup> For a discussion of “The Life behind Doors” see CROWTHER, FOWLER, LONGMATE. And WOOD. *Op.cit.*

<sup>98</sup> A reading of WOOD, *op.cit.*, P.93 *et seq.*, suggests that the Fylde Union might have been unusual in building a new workhouse in the relatively early days of the New Poor Law. Certainly amongst Lancashire Unions, Bolton delayed building a new workhouse until 1858, Blackburn until 1861, Rochdale until 1863, Haslingden and Preston until 1868 and Garstang until 1876 although the availability of more than one parish workhouse in some of these Unions was possibly a factor in the delay.

<sup>99</sup> See WOOD. *Op.cit.* P.93 for accommodation in a ‘model’ workhouse.

localities.”<sup>100</sup> Furthermore, Crowther commented that “Any attempt to reconstruct workhouse life must be a patchwork.”<sup>101</sup>



**Illustration 6.1**  
**The Fylde Union Workhouse about 1910**  
**[Photograph in the writer's Possession]**

[This 1845 building was replaced in 1907 – hence the description ‘old’]

Steven King referred to the varied tapestry or approaches to poor relief; Crowther speaks of a patchwork. Continuing the textile metaphor, this section will tease out, from the Guardians’ Minutes, an impression of the life of Fylde paupers within the Workhouse gates.

As to the residents, “It is remarkable” Nigel Goose remarks “how little we know about the inmates it [the workhouse] accommodated” but the decennial censuses give a snap-shot of the numbers of workhouse inmates and these are set out in Table 6a below.<sup>102</sup> The 1841 Census recorded an inmate population of fifty living in the old Kirkham parish workhouse.

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<sup>100</sup> DIGBY. *Op.cit.* P.19.

<sup>101</sup> CROWTHER. *Op.cit.* P.193.

<sup>102</sup> GOOSE, Nigel. ‘Workhouse Populations in the Mid-Nineteenth Century – the Case of Hertfordshire.’ Local Population Studies. Vol. 62. P.52. 1999. For similar discussion, see JACKSON, David G. ‘Kent Workhouse Populations in 1881: a Study based on the Census Enumerators’ Books.’ Local Population Studies. Vol.69. 2002. P.51 and PERKYNS, Audrey. ‘The Admission of Children to the Milton Union Workhouse, Kent, 1835-1885.’ Local Population Studies. Vol. 80. 2008. P.59.

| Age/Year     | 1841      | 1841      | 1851      | 1851      | 1861      | 1861      |
|--------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
|              | M         | F         | M         | F         | M         | F         |
| 00 - 14      | 16        | 6         | 7         | 5         | 23        | 22        |
| 15 - 59      | 9         | 7         | 7         | 11        | 9         | 18        |
| 60 +         | 9         | 3         | 6         | 2         | 22        | 14        |
|              |           |           |           |           |           |           |
| <b>Total</b> | <b>34</b> | <b>16</b> | <b>20</b> | <b>18</b> | <b>54</b> | <b>54</b> |
|              |           |           |           |           |           |           |
|              | 68%       | 32%       | 52%       | 48%       | 50%       | 50%       |

**Table 6a**  
**Fylde Union - Workhouse Populations 1841, 1851, 1861**  
**[Census Enumerators' Schedules 1841, 1851, 1861]**

Of these, 68% were male and 32% female. The age distribution was 46% from birth to fifteen years; 34% from to fifty-nine years and 20% were over sixty. Ten years later, the new Workhouse, which was officially recorded as having accommodation for two hundred according to a report made to the Poor Law Commission, housed but 38 paupers.<sup>103</sup> Of these 54% were males and the age distribution was 31%, 38% and 31%. These figures correspond approximately to those in the Goose study but, as he has noted, workhouse populations were influenced by the local variations that could arise from differing economic conditions or social policies.”<sup>104</sup> In the final census of the period, 1861, the House was accommodating one hundred and eight inmates. The balance between the sexes was exactly equal with 52% being under sixteen, 26% from sixteen to fifty-nine and 22% over sixty. The small numbers involved tend to distort the figures and the census presents a snapshot rather than a moving picture but they suggest that by 1861 the Board was increasingly restricting rights of residence to the young and the elderly and, marginally, to females rather than males.

Long-term residence does not appear to have been encouraged. Of the pauper inmates noted in 1841, only Margaret Johnson, aged eleven in 1841, one year old William Salthouse and forty year old John Porter appeared in 1851.<sup>105</sup> To what extent these three, particularly Porter, formed part of the body of the “ins-and-outs” who entered

<sup>103</sup> L.R.O. PUF1/3.

<sup>104</sup> GOOSE. *Op.cit.* P.53.

<sup>105</sup> Comparison with the 1861 figures is not possible as the paupers in that year were identified on the census documentation by initials only and the writing is unclear.

the Workhouse in hard times, left when circumstances improved only to re-enter following another blow of fate, is not recorded but such people formed a proportion of workhouse residents. Ins-and-outs, like the bulk of the pauper host, came in infinite variety, a circumstance encouraged by the fact that it was generally accepted that a pauper could leave the House on giving three hours' notice and that the Master could not legally refuse his re-entry even on the same day.<sup>106</sup> Amongst the regular "ins-and-outs" was Elias Huff who, according to the Guardians' Minutes was discharged from the Workhouse in February 1846, December 1847, June 1848 and June 1849. On each occasion he was allowed a small sum of money as he had work to go to.<sup>107</sup>

Whole families were entirely absent. This was likely to have been because, as Andrew Hinde and Fiona Turnbull have suggested, admitting able-bodied males, who had to be accompanied by wives and children, "involved a potentially large financial commitment" as maintaining inmates was generally costlier than paying out-relief.<sup>108</sup> However, there were instances of single parents with children. Most noticeable were the Bisbrowns consisting of forty-two year old James and his four children, Richard 11 years; Jane, 9; Margaret 7 and James 4. James the father absconded leaving his children in the House and chargeable to their settled township of Poulton. He was apprehended and confined in the Workhouse but later released on condition that he gave the Master three shillings a week from his wages to support his children. Whether he stuck to his agreement is not known as there is no further mention of either him or his family.<sup>109</sup>

Young mothers were represented by twenty-four year old Georgina Hartley who was an inmate in 1851 with Jane, her daughter of eight months. The Board gave her permission to leave the House in April 1851 along with her child.<sup>110</sup> Whether she had been in the house for the whole of the intervening ten years or whether she was one of

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<sup>106</sup> On the "ins-and-outs" See FOWLER. *Op.cit.* P.113. On the effect on the education of the children see Training and Education *infra*.

<sup>107</sup> L.R.O. PUF1/3.

<sup>108</sup> HINDE, Andrew & TURNBULL, Fiona. 'The Populations of two Hampshire Workhouses.' Local Population Studies. 1998. Vol. 61. P.39.

<sup>109</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>110</sup> L.R.O. PUF1/4.

the “ins-and-outs” is not apparent but the Board allowed her five shillings and she was not heard of again. Another such was twenty-three year old Mary Ann Poulton who was dismissed from the House in April 1851 along with her three-year old daughter Elizabeth and her son of seven months, James. She was allowed two shillings weekly relief and “some casual clothing.”<sup>111</sup> It was unusual for a pauper to be compelled to leave the house. As a general rule they went at their own request and the reason for Mary’s discharge can only be surmised. To what extent the Board enforced the order of the Poor Law Commission that families should be split up is unclear and the minutes are unhelpful on the matter. However, Rhodes Boyson noted that in the Turton workhouse “no attempt was made to split up families upon entry” and there is no reason to suppose that Turton was the only House which followed this more liberal practice.<sup>112</sup> There were also instances of siblings, either orphans or the offspring of “families overburdened with children.” George and Thomas Winders, aged six and ten years were there as were the Hayes children, Thomas fourteen, Sarah eleven, and Jane six. None of the three appear elsewhere but James Dewhurst, an inmate in 1841 along with his brother Lawrence, was apprenticed in 1849 to a Lytham farmer, the Board paying his apprenticeship premium of £5.

The work ethic was important both from the point of view of the performance of tasks essential to the running of the establishment, its use as a deterrent to the idle and its connection with the granting of relief to the able-bodied. As to the first, as the 1861 census confirmed, inmates were employed on domestic tasks when they were physically capable of the work. Other able-bodied residents were employed to work the land which the Guardians had under their control and to take care of the pigs which lived in sties erected shortly after the new Workhouse itself had been opened and which, as Fowler suggests, earned their keep by recycling the food that the paupers refused to eat.<sup>113</sup> Initially gardening was confined to the workhouse grounds and an adjacent plot of land but by the winter of 1847 the Board had rented for a period of seven years two fields which lay away from the Workhouse. The Labour Master worked

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<sup>111</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>112</sup> BOYSON. *Op.cit.* P.49.

<sup>113</sup> FOWLER. *Op.cit.* P54.

alongside his charges growing a variety of crops which included cabbages, oats, potatoes, turnips, rye grass and clover. The produce was regularly auctioned and the proceeds paid to the Union's Treasurer. It seems likely that some of the produce found its way into the workhouse kitchens as there is no specific mention of the purchase of vegetables in the tenders for provisions which were regularly discussed at Board Meetings. Fowler, however, notes the case of Richmond Union where it appears "the inmates' efforts [on the Workhouse farm] did not result in their ever having fresh vegetables."<sup>114</sup> Whilst the vegetables might all have been sold, the pigs certainly found their way to the workhouse dining room. There are no references to the animals' being sold but when bought they were stated to be "for the use of the Workhouse" and replacements were periodically purchased. Further, no references to bacon, pork or even pigs trotters appear in the lists of items purchased by the Guardians.

Concerning work for the able-bodied, a matter which had been central to the intentions of the 1834 Act, it was not until 1841 that the Poor Law Commission issued its first general directive on the matter and followed this up by the Outdoor Relief Prohibitory Order of 1844.<sup>115</sup> The Commission's successor, the Poor Law Board, issued a further directive in 1852, the Outdoor Relief Regulation Order.<sup>116</sup> The intention of these was to prohibit the granting of out-relief to the able-bodied poor who were to be relieved solely within the Workhouse. However, the exceptions permitted in the Orders combined with the ready perception of the Guardians that out-relief was generally less costly than providing workhouse accommodation particularly where families were concerned and the vagueness of the term "able-bodied" meant that the practice was continued throughout the period of this study. However, under Article 6 of the 1844 Order, Guardians were required to notify the Commission of the granting of such relief and they appear regularly to have done so as notes of the receipts of permission to relieve appear in the minutes. In the spring of 1864 the central Board, whilst sanctioning the latest applications, refused to continue permission as they felt

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<sup>114</sup> FOWLER. *Op.cit.* P.110.

<sup>115</sup> ROSE. *Op.cit.* P.140. The 1841 Outdoor Labour Test Order, which was applied separately to individual Unions does not appear to have included Fylde. See [www.workhouses.org.uk](http://www.workhouses.org.uk) accessed October 4<sup>th</sup> 2010.

<sup>116</sup> ROSE. *Op.cit.* P.141.

that all the able-bodied should work in return for relief. The Fylde Board argued its case and was successful.<sup>117</sup> The Guardians, however, were by no means oblivious to the need to occupy their charges where possible. In February 1864 the Master was ordered to purchase a supply of leather and related articles “for setting to work such persons in the Workhouse as may be able to mend shoes or repair clogs.”<sup>118</sup>

The Fylde Guardians took cognizance of the 1852 Order at their meeting on September 21<sup>st</sup> and resolved “very reluctantly to carry out the provisions of the Order as well and as near to the spirit thereof as was practicable.”<sup>119</sup> Article 6 of the Order required that able-bodied male persons “if relieved out of the workhouse shall be set to work by the Guardians.”<sup>120</sup> Just how far the Guardians took any notice of this is open to question. They appear to have continued to be granted permission by the Poor Law Board to pay out-relief to the able-bodied possibly without any requirement for labour in return although in March 1858 they received a letter from the Board “requesting that the Guardians in future comply with the provisions of the General Relief Order by setting to work the able-bodied paupers at stone-breaking or oakum picking or some other suitable employment.”<sup>121</sup> They opted for stone-breaking agreeing that the payment for this work should be at the rate of “two thirds of the price usually paid to other persons for stone breaking.” They also agreed to take action to find work in road-mending for their able-bodied through the local Surveyors of Highways.<sup>122</sup> Market forces appear to have intervened in this activity as in March 1864, the Board was obliged to reduce the price from 4s 6d a ton of broken stone to 4s.<sup>123</sup> Oakum picking appears also to have been introduced at a later stage as a minute of January 27<sup>th</sup> 1863 instructs the Labour Master “to keep account of work performed by oakum pickers and report same to the Board.”<sup>124</sup> There is no indication that such a report was ever presented and the Labour Master resigned a few weeks later.

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<sup>117</sup> L.R.O. PUF1/7.

<sup>118</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>119</sup> L.R.O. PUF1/4.

<sup>120</sup> ROSE. *Op.cit.* P.147.

<sup>121</sup> L.R.O. PUF1/6.

<sup>122</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>123</sup> L.R.O. PUF1/7.

<sup>124</sup> L.R.O. PUF1.7.

It seems likely that the home-produced pork and vegetables formed part of the regular workhouse diet for inmates and staff alike. Other items were purchased from local sources and the Board regularly invited tenders for the supply of milk, oatmeal, beef, mutton and groceries, advertising throughout the area. Only rarely was more than one tender received and the same suppliers were often favoured with the Board's orders for several years. The Whartons for supplied milk in September 1847 and were still doing so eleven years later. John Ward provided brushes in 1849 and was still receiving the Board's orders in 1860.

From 1858 the Board's minutes record the value of the "provisions" and "necessities" received by the Workhouse Master from week to week and the variety of these can be judged from an account submitted by Drewery and Company in March 1860 which listed sugar, tea, coffee, treacle, tobacco, snuff, salt, two qualities of soap and *best* Irish butter. <sup>125</sup> Quality was of concern as well as price and when more than one tender was submitted it was not always the lowest which was accepted although it was rare for two tenders to be submitted. The reason for this lack of interest in tendering has to be queried as the Board's purchasing power was considerable. The answer might be found in the quantities required which might have been outside the scope of local suppliers. Whether there was any question of bribery or other malpractice is impossible to say but Crowther observes that "[The Master's] greatest temptation [was] his relations with local tradesmen. He had much discretion in day-to-day purchases and an unfavourable report from him could end a lucrative contract for food or clothing" and it is clear, as has been shown, that the Fylde Union's masters were not always models of probity and uprightness. <sup>126</sup>

The Board appears to have been concerned to provide a varied diet as specified by the Poor Law Board from goods of reasonable quality. What happened to the food when it reached the Workhouse kitchen was another matter as the cooking was usually done by inmates untrained in culinary skills. Furthermore, whilst nutritional value was

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<sup>125</sup> L.R.O. PUF1/6. The italics are the author's.

<sup>126</sup> CROWTHER. *Op.cit.* P.118.



important, taste was not and “the authorities relied on the monotony of the diet rather than its quantity as a deterrent”<sup>127</sup> as the Commissioners “removed from the diet everything which might have made it more palatable.”<sup>128</sup> They gave instructions that, in arranging the dietary, local Boards were to pay attention to the usual diet of the poor in the locality but that “on no account must the dietary of the Workhouse be superior or equal to the ordinary mode of subsistence of the labouring class of the neighbourhood.”<sup>129</sup> The doctrine of less eligibility thus manifested itself on Workhouse dining tables although Crowther suggests that in the workhouse the women and children might have fed better than in poor households outside where the needs of the breadwinner were provided for at the expense of the children and wives.<sup>130</sup> The stipulation that workhouse diets should approximate to those of the labourer’s household possibly explains the complete absence of fish from the record as Wood states that fish was a major absentee from working class diets. This is strange in view of the fact that much of the Fylde Union’s area was coastal or riparian with Lytham and Fleetwood in particular having a strong fishing interest.<sup>131</sup>

The Board also they kept a watch on levels of consumption. For a period the Master was required to report to the Board the value of the provisions which he had received. In the summer of 1858 he was “required to suggest to the Guardians any alterations in the existing dietary which he considers may be advantageously adopted.”<sup>132</sup> At the next meeting he reported that “He had strictly adhered to the amounts prescribed in the printed dietary. He was satisfied that these were sufficient without the additional allowance of bread permitted by the Guardians.” They in their turn ordered that “the dietary be strictly observed and that the Master and Matron use the utmost economy in carrying out the same.”<sup>133</sup> The Master took his instructions to heart. Eighteen months later the Board raised the question of the amount of beef and mutton being eaten by the inmates which was increasing. The Clerk was ordered to provide

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<sup>127</sup> *Ibid.* P.214.

<sup>128</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>129</sup> POOR LAW COMMISSION. Second Annual Report. Appendix A. No.7. P.63.

<sup>130</sup> CROWTHER. *Op.cit.* P.215.

<sup>131</sup> WOOD. *Op.cit.* P.22.

<sup>132</sup> L.R.O. PUF1/6.

<sup>133</sup> *Ibid.*

information concerning the amount currently being consumed in comparison with the amount for the preceding twelve months. The outcome of these enquiries was that the Master could not account for the increase but the Clerk reported that “the quantity of meat consumed during the last twelve months was less than the consumption allowed by the dietary.”<sup>134</sup> There is no mention in the minute books of any order to increase the amount of meat offered to the level prescribed by the dietary but the Board had previously taken note of a letter from the Poor Law Board which directed that “The Workhouse Medical Officer continue to give such directions to the Master respecting the dietary as he may deem best for the health of the inmates.”<sup>135</sup>

It was practice that on entering the workhouse a pauper was stripped of his own clothes and dressed in the standard uniform of the House although in the Fylde Union elderly paupers entering the Workhouse “who are likely to remain there shall wear out their own clothing previous to that provided by the Union.”<sup>136</sup> Whether this was an indulgence to the old people or another manifestation of carefulness is open to question although it might be thought that the wording suggests the latter. Apart from this concession, there is no reason to suppose that the usual custom was not followed and paupers were clad in the standard uniform. The deterrent effect of a tasteless and monotonous diet has been mentioned and the requirement to wear a standard uniform, even if it were of good quality material and well made, was another method by which the Poor Law took away the individuality of the new pauper and initiated him into the world of pauperdom. Such distinctive dress also clearly identified the pauper as such on his permitted excursions outside the Workhouse walls as when going to Divine Service on Sundays or even when he left without permission when it would be abandoned as soon as possible.<sup>137</sup> Purchases of cloth, clothing and footwear were, as with food and other provisions, subject to annual tender. They included linsey, cotton check, blue linen, flannel, handkerchieves and barracan in addition to a contract for shoes and clogs. The Guardians also bought ready-made clothing. The minute

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<sup>134</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>135</sup> L.R.O. PUF1/4.

<sup>136</sup> L.R.O. PUF1/3. FOWLER, *op.cit.*, P.107, quotes the Bedford Union which extended this concession to all new arrivals.

<sup>137</sup> CROWTHER. *Op.cit.* P.195.

specifically mentions that it was to be for out-paupers and that it was “to be kept in store for such paupers as the Board may deem requisite to be relieved during the current half-year.”<sup>138</sup> No specific items of clothing were mentioned and, as John Styles has said, “the range of clothing worn by paupers remains elusive.”<sup>139</sup> The Kirkham parish overseers under the Old Poor Law provided a wide range of clothing to their out-paupers as Chapter Four showed and similar standards might well have applied during the 1840s and after but at the other end of the scale was the case quoted by Fowler where a newly admitted female inmate was given firstly the customary wash and then “two petticoats, a gown, and an apron – a pair of stocking legs without feet – a pair of carpet shoes down at heel and one old shift.”<sup>140</sup>

Although the Board was certainly careful where the cost of feeding the inmates was concerned and probably equally concerned about the expense of clothing the inmates, they were not entirely indifferent to the comfort and well-being of their charges. Spiritual provision was also of concern. A clergyman visited the Workhouse and was provided with a pulpit whilst the inmates were required to attend Divine Service on Sundays.<sup>141</sup> When an inmate became dangerously ill, the Master was under instructions to inform the appropriate clergyman and acquaint him with “the nature of the pauper’s sickness and any other particulars that may be thought requisite.”<sup>142</sup> Leisure time was limited although not ignored and “suitable books” were provided “for the use of the inmates’ reading and instruction” as well as prayer books and stationery for the children.<sup>143</sup> These were later supplemented by a gift of 140 volumes by the Reverend William Law Hussey, the then Vicar of Kirkham. Further comforts included “a number of armed chairs . . . for the aged and infirm paupers to enable them to sit more easy and comfortable.”<sup>144</sup> At Christmas, the inmates were allowed a Christmas

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<sup>138</sup> FOWLER. *Op.cit.* P.107.

<sup>139</sup> STYLES, John. The Dress of the People: Everyday Fashion in Eighteenth-Century England. New Haven and London, Yale University Press. 2007. P.259.

<sup>140</sup> FOWLER. *Op.cit.* P.105.

<sup>141</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>142</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>143</sup> *Ibid.* The books were chosen by the Reverend Richard Moore, Vicar of Lund, a magistrate and *ex officio* Guardian.

<sup>144</sup> *Ibid.*

Dinner of roast beef and Christmas pudding.<sup>145</sup> On special occasions there were other treats such as that provided for the children on the marriage of the future King Edward VII. Consideration extended even after death as it was decided to purchase “a pall for the use of funerals of paupers that may happen to die in the Workhouse.”

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Conditions in the Workhouse were the concern of the Workhouse Visiting Committee. Fowler quotes a comment by a Medical Officer of the Poor Law Board to the effect that these committees “visited too infrequently and in too great a hurry and they are too much disinclined to recommend change.”<sup>147</sup> Such a stricture did not apply to the Fylde. At the Board’s annual meeting on April 25<sup>th</sup> 1850 the newly elected Visiting Committee was requested to meet at least monthly but from the early 1860s it was meeting weekly although visits were generally made by a only small minority of the members and the minutes rarely go beyond stating the fact that they “found things generally in good order.”<sup>148</sup> However, as the visits were made regularly and the Master would know when to expect them, this was not surprising. When the Committee made recommendations to the Board for improvements in the building these were invariably approved even if expenditure were involved. In January 1848, for example, at the suggestion of the Medical Officer, the Committee proposed alterations to the sleeping wards for the sick paupers, the Board gave approval without comment.<sup>149</sup> Later, in January 1856, following the establishment of the Fylde Water Board, the Committee, on the instructions of the Board, superintended the installation of piped water to the Workhouse.<sup>150</sup> Further, Fowler noted that “until 1893 Guardians could only enter the Workhouse with the position of the Master”<sup>151</sup> but the Fylde Guardians in 1862 specifically ordered that any member of the Workhouse Visiting Committee was entitled to visit at any time, a direction which countermanded the authority of the

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<sup>145</sup> L.R.O. PUF1/4 and PUF1/6.

<sup>146</sup> L.R.O. PUF1/3. The Guardians also provided coffins which, in accordance with the usual procedure, were supplied following tender.

<sup>147</sup> FOWLER *Op.cit.* P.74. See also CROWTHER. *Op.cit.* P.118.

<sup>148</sup> L.R.O. PUF1/7.

<sup>149</sup> L.R.O. PUF4 and PUF1/3.

<sup>150</sup> L.R.O. PUF4.

<sup>151</sup> FOWLER. *Op.cit.* P.74.

Master. However, there is no evidence that any of them ever did make unscheduled visits although these, if made, were likely to have been of a less formal nature. <sup>152</sup>

In addition to the calls of the Workhouse Visiting Committee, the House was visited from time to time by the Poor Law Board's Inspector, accompanied by the Board's Medical Officer. Again, whenever suggestions were made for improvements they were usually accepted by the Board and put into effect even if expenditure were involved. Separate accommodation was provided for "confining temporarily insane inmates" pending their transfer to an asylum. <sup>153</sup> Male and female sick paupers as well as fever patients were to have their own wards, each with its own water closet and, from the autumn of 1860, following a visit from the Poor Law Board Inspector, separate sleeping accommodation was arranged for inmates over the age of sixty years. <sup>154</sup>

Although, if the decennial censuses can be relied upon, the Workhouse was never even nearly full to capacity, it seems likely that increasing demands for the accommodation of different types of pauper such as the male and female sick and the mentally disturbed were behind the decision to extend the accommodation in 1864. Apart from references to accommodation for sick paupers there is no reference in the Minutes to anything in the nature of an "infirmery" but the appointment of a nurse in 1864, the same year as the building of the extensions, suggests that something of the nature was provided. The lack of any other publicly available facilities in the Fylde together with the fact that from 1866, if not earlier, pregnant women from the townships of the Union, mostly but not exclusively married, were coming into the House to give birth to their offspring indicates the existence of hospital and maternity facilities. <sup>155</sup> Finally, efforts were made, albeit unsuccessfully, to house the tramps and casuals away from the House itself. They appear originally to have been accommodated in the workhouse itself but in June 1847 the Board decided to take

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<sup>152</sup> L.R.O. PUF1/6.

<sup>153</sup> L.R.O. PUF1/3.

<sup>154</sup> L.R.O. PUF1/4 and P.U.F. 1/6.

<sup>155</sup> Lytham Hospital dates from 1871, Blackpool Victoria Hospital from 1894 and Fleetwood Cottage Hospital from 1895. The Lancashire Record Office is believed to have the original of the Register of Births in the Workhouse from September 27<sup>th</sup> 1866 to March 8<sup>th</sup> 1914. Reference unknown. Photocopy in writer's possession.

over an old windmill adjacent to the House for this purpose. The proposal was abandoned as the owner of the windmill received objections from the neighbours and vagrants were subsequently accommodated either in the Workhouse or in lodging houses in Kirkham. <sup>156</sup>

#### **4 – Training, Education and Employment** <sup>157</sup>

Children had always been of concern to the poor law authorities and one matter which exercised them considerably was their training and education as it was held that if the young were brought up to a trade they would be able to earn a living and thus avoid becoming a future burden on the poor rate. The central pillar of this policy had been apprenticeship which, according to Frank Crompton, had “clear advantages for the parish and usually some benefits for the child.” <sup>158</sup> This was discouraged under the New Poor Law on the grounds that to apprentice a child, with the attendant costs of a large premium and the customary suit of clothes, contravened the important principle of less eligibility. However, old customs died hard and the Poor Law Commission, having prevaricated for some years, produced a set of apprenticeship regulations in 1845 thus allowing the practice to continue. <sup>159</sup> Alongside apprenticeships formal schooling was becoming increasingly important and officialdom sometimes acted in the role of employment exchange in finding work not only in the form of apprenticeships for the youngsters of both sexes but also unindentured positions for other children as well as occasionally for adults. In this connection March 1864 saw an order to the effect that “all children in the Workhouse as are fit for working in the mills be sent thereto as far as practicable. <sup>160</sup> In view of the fact that by this time the Board was employing a schoolteacher, the presumption has to be that these were the older children.

The care taken by the authorities in making these arrangements was not always of the best and the practice of binding children to a master in another parish where they

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<sup>156</sup> L.R.O. PUF1/3

<sup>157</sup> For the schooling of pauper children, see CROMPTON, Frank. *Workhouse Children*. Stroud, Sutton Publishing. 1997. P.146 *et seq.* For apprenticeship, see *Ibid.* P.196 *et seq.*

<sup>158</sup> *Ibid.* P.197.

<sup>159</sup> CROWTHER. *Op.cit.* P.202.

<sup>160</sup> L.R.O. PUF1/7.

would gain right of settlement by virtue of their apprenticeship found some favour. <sup>161</sup>However, it is clear that the Fylde Guardians exercised some duty of care when apprenticing their young charges and a score of boys, not necessarily paupers but certainly from the poorer classes, was indentured by the Board during this period despite the existence of charitable arrangements for the purpose, particularly in the Parish of Kirkham. Apprenticeships were usually within the boundaries of the Union and were to trades such as blacksmith, joiner and tailor.

When an apprenticeship was proposed the Relieving Officer visited the intended master and prepared a report for the Board. If this were favourable, the Clerk prepared the legal indenture and all parties - master, apprentice and his father - attended a Board Meeting when the indentures were signed. The Board usually paid the premium and sent the boy off with a new suit of clothes. The premium was sometimes paid in two parts, the first on signing and the second at the end of a year subject to a satisfactory report by the Relieving Officer. James Seed, for example, had been apprenticed to wheelwright James Eccles of Inskip in the summer of 1851. In September the following year he attended a Board Meeting saying that he liked his situation and that "the master behaved well to him." Payment of the "second moiety" of the premium was then authorised. <sup>162</sup> Most apprenticeships proceeded smoothly as far as the official record is concerned but there were occasional difficulties. In August 1851 the proposed indenture of William Greaves to joiner W. H. Bell of Lytham was abandoned as it was found that Bell "was not in business on his own account." <sup>163</sup> The following month Ambrose Gardner's apprenticeship had also to be deferred as it was found that he could not write his own name. <sup>164</sup> Difficulties with parents were not unknown. The young Edmund Taylor had been apprenticed to George Gregson of Warton and his mother subsequently complained of the master's treatment of her son. All parties were summoned to the next meeting of the Board when it was found that "both sides and parties were a little to blame" and that the mother's interference had

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<sup>161</sup> CROMPTON. *Op.cit.* P.197.

<sup>162</sup> L.R.O. PUF1/4.

<sup>163</sup> *Ibid.* Legislation of 1845 required that a pauper should be able to read his indenture and sign his own name. FOWLER. *Op.cit.* P.135.

<sup>164</sup> L.R.O. PUF1/4.

been a factor. “Case adjourned.”<sup>165</sup> Complaints by the Master were not unknown but when John Cookson wrote complaining about his apprentice William Davis the Board decided it was a case for the magistrates and refused to have anything to do with the problem.<sup>166</sup> Whilst the record occasionally asks questions and omits the answers, it does at least show that the Guardians took seriously their responsibilities to their young charges particularly after passing of the 1851 Servants and Apprentices Act which required the keeping of more detailed records and twice-yearly visits by the Relieving Officers to see that the apprentices were being properly treated.<sup>167</sup>

All recorded formal apprenticeships were of boys but some lads, Harry Clarkson amongst them, were found unindentured employment. In 1850 Harry was “supplied with suitable clothing and sent to John Ward’s service at Fleetwood who has agreed to take him on trial.”<sup>168</sup> Nothing further was heard of either Harry or Mr. Ward so it is presumed that the trial was satisfactory. Girls received their training in domestic arts in the Workhouse itself and some were found employment as “nurse” or domestic servant, often going just for meat and board. Mary Bond went from the Workhouse for a month to a Liverpool man “as servant on liking” and did not return.<sup>169</sup> July 1849 saw Mary Gardner allowed “to leave the Workhouse and go into the service of Charles Ince, innkeeper, as nurse for meat and clothes for a time.”<sup>170</sup> As with boys and their apprenticeships such placements were usually trouble-free although Jane Norman proved an exception. She left the Workhouse in the winter of 1851 to go into John Davies’s house at Preston at the request of his daughter, being treated as one of the family. It was agreed that the Relieving Officer should visit her from time to time to make sure that all was well. Clearly it wasn’t. Within a month she was back in the

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<sup>165</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>166</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>167</sup> For paupers as servants, see BEVAN, Elaine Margaret. ‘It was our Place to Bow and be at their Bidding: Servants and Servant Keepers in Nineteenth Century Lancashire.’ Ph.D. Thesis. Oxford Brookes University. 2008. The Guardians’ Minutes record, August 21<sup>st</sup>, 1858, that “In future a book to be kept for recording particulars of all young persons taken from the Workhouse as apprentice and all particulars to be entered therein.” L.R.O. PUF1/6,

<sup>168</sup> L.R.O. PUF1/4.

<sup>169</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>170</sup> *Ibid.*



Workhouse and later sent to a Blackburn man in a similar capacity. Nothing further was heard of her. <sup>171</sup>

Whilst apprenticeship had been a feature of the Old Poor Law, as far as Kirkham and Lund were concerned there was only one recorded instance, and that at Newton, of a child's being sent to school. <sup>172</sup> A lack of suitable establishments, particularly in the early years, was likely to have been the reason. However, by the time the Guardians were in office, Kirkham had, in addition to the Free Grammar School whose curriculum, being largely classical, was thought unsuitable for pauper children, and the Langton Girls Charity School which largely prepared girls for going into service, two recently founded schools, one allied to the Church of England and one to the Roman Catholic Church. The pauper children were sent to one or the other rather than being taught in the Workhouse. This was despite the recommendation of the Inspector of Workhouse Schools who, as noted previously, had reported unfavourably on the knowledge of the young inmates and repeatedly urged the appointment of a Schoolmistress. At a meeting in August 1852 the matter was again discussed and a motion to appoint was tabled. This was defeated and the Board decided that the schools which the children attended should be visited to "inquire whether justice has been done to such children by the teachers as compared with other scholars of their respective schools." <sup>173</sup> On making the visits it was found that the pauper children were treated no differently than other pupils but that "

The teachers at the schools . . . stated that the Workhouse children are generally found on admission . . . extremely ignorant and their attendance at school is generally of so short a duration that it is impossible for them to make any progress in learning. <sup>174</sup>

The Board appeared to accept the situation and the question was not raised again until 1861 this time not by the Inspector of Schools but by the Workhouse Master himself. The Board heeded his request and appointed a Miss Lydia Cooke at a salary

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<sup>171</sup> *Ibid.* FOWLER, *op.cit.*, P.142, observes that because of the limited opportunities for girls "it is hardly surprising that about a quarter of girls ended up back at the workhouse either through misconduct [in other words prostitution] or other causes [generally pregnancy]

<sup>172</sup> L.R.O. DDNw9.

<sup>173</sup> L.R.O. PUF1/4.

<sup>174</sup> L.R.O. PUF1/4.

of £30 “plus furnished apartments and rations.”<sup>175</sup> No indication of the reason for this change of heart appears in the Minutes but Table 6a above gives a clue: the Workhouse had 22 children under fifteen in 1841 and only 12 in 1851. By the next census the figure had risen to 45 and it seems likely that the Master thought that an extra pair of hands to help look after the children after school hours would be of advantage.

### **5 – Medical Care & Lunatics**<sup>176</sup>

The arrangements for the provision of medical care have been outlined and, having appointed the Medical Officers and agreed their conditions of employment, the Board interfered little in the professional exercise of their duties unless the patients made a complaint against them or they were slow in sending in the returns which the system regularly required of them. Thus the Fylde’s paupers could expect not only medical attendance in sickness but also in cases of childbirth and in the provision of vaccinations.<sup>177</sup> Most of the calls on their time escaped official notice in the Minutes but difficult or unusual cases were discussed. One such was that of Mary Brown whose case arose in November 1846 when the Board decided that she should have “additional medical relief granted . . . in her present case of extreme dropsy” and that, most unusually, she should be allowed to “select what medical gentleman she may think fit to attend upon her.”<sup>178</sup> There is no further reference to her until January 1848 by which time her condition appears to have worsened and it was further ordered by the Board that “so much of the expense of sending Mary, the wife of Henry Brown of Kirkham, to Manchester to undergo an operation as shall not be paid by subscription shall be paid by the township of Kirkham.”<sup>179</sup> Mary went to Manchester and the later minute records that the cost of her operation had been £24 and that “her

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<sup>175</sup> L.R.O. PUF1/6.

<sup>176</sup> The Workhouse Medical Service is discussed in CROWTHER, *op.cit.*, P.156 *et seq.* A Lancashire perspective is provided by KING, Steven Andrew and Weaver, Alan. ‘Lives in Many Hands: the Medical Landscape in Lancashire, 1700-1820.’ Medical History. Vol. 45. 2000.. The “insane poor” are mentioned in WOOD, *op.cit.*, P.112-113.

<sup>177</sup> No specific doctors or paupers are mentioned but the Board’s Minutes for June 13<sup>th</sup> 1847, amongst others, record the approval of payments of £11 16s 00d for midwifery services and £18 18s 0d for vaccinations.

<sup>178</sup> L.R.O. PUF1/3.

<sup>179</sup> *Ibid.*

friends” had subscribed £11. The Board paid the balance of £13 and charged it to Kirkham township. <sup>180</sup>

Amongst the inmates there was the occasional “idiot” or “lunatic” or “insane” whose care had always been a problem. Wood states that the “merely feeble-minded were left in the care of relatives on out-door relief” but that “a growing number needed institutional treatment.” <sup>181</sup> Precisely what these expressions meant in poor law terms was never stated but there were certainly those whom the authorities considered to be of unsound mind and even a danger to themselves or other inmates. The 1841 census does not identify these unfortunates but the 1851 schedules lists three described as “idiot.” These were Nancy Barnes, Alice Cragg and Isabella Salisbury. Nancy had been receiving treatment at Lancaster Asylum but was discharged in January 1851 and accommodated in the Workhouse. <sup>182</sup> Alice first appears in the record in November 1847 when the Clerk was instructed to enquire “if there is any likelihood of an amendment in her condition.” The answer must have been positive as she too was discharged and accommodated in the House. Isabella first appears to have become a problem in the middle 1840s as in March 1847 it was decided by the Guardians that she should be “sent to Lancaster as soon as it can be ascertained there is room for her.” She was still at Kirkham three months later when one of the Commissioners in Lunacy visited the Union and ordered that “she be sent to Lancaster with all convenient speed.” She was finally despatched six weeks later and appears to have remained there. The cases of Nancy and Betty demonstrate the continuing financial carefulness of the Board. Whilst they were content to send the mentally discharged to an asylum, even to the privately owned Haydock Lodge, and to pay the fees they took care that their pauper lunatics should be either transferred from the Lodge to Lancaster or returned home to the less costly environment of the Workhouse as soon as possible. Clearly, as the case of Isabella Salisbury demonstrates, there were some of these in the Fylde Union but it appears that it was not until the summer of 1860, at the instigation of the Master, that the Board gave consideration to separate

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<sup>180</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>181</sup> WOOD. *Op.cit.* P.112.

<sup>182</sup> L.R.O. PUF1/4.

accommodation for the idiotic inmates. It referred the matter to the Workhouse Visiting Committee which firstly wrote to other Unions enquiring about their practice and then visited Lancaster Asylum. Events appear to have been overtaken by the visitor of a Commissioner in Lunacy for a letter from the Commission was received in January 1861 enquiring if “the alterations recommended at a recent visit had been carried out.” They had. <sup>183</sup>

It was not unknown for these institutions to counsel against removal or even to refuse it. Haydock refused in 1860 to discharge Catherine Simpson unless she were transferred to Lancaster whilst, in the same month, Lancaster advised against the removal of John Bradshaw and Sarah Gregson. <sup>184</sup> The record suggests that the accommodation was well used and care for their balance sheets might have been as important as care for patients.

#### **6 – Out-Relief and the Question of Allowances <sup>185</sup>**

Michael Rose records that whatever efforts the central authority made to compel the able-bodied to receive relief only in its “well-regulated workhouses” and to abolish the giving of allowances were doomed to failure. <sup>186</sup> Despite the issue of orders and regulations devoted to the matter, these, in common with much poor law legislation, were so loosely drawn as to enable the Guardians, in Rose’s phrase, to drive a coach-and-four through them. Coupled with this was the fact that Boards appreciated the fact that, whilst there were some categories of the poor, particularly the very young and the sick, for whom accommodation had to be provided, it was still much cheaper and, indeed, more humane, to keep pauper families together in their own homes, give them a small allowance and leave them to their individual economy of makeshifts. Furthermore, in cases of trade difficulties such as the Lancashire Cotton Famine of the early 1860s, workhouse buildings simply were just not big enough to cope with those who needed relief and cash allowances, sometimes supplemented by relief in kind, had to be the answer.

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<sup>183</sup> L.R.O. PUF1/6.

<sup>184</sup> L.R.O. PUF1/6.

<sup>185</sup> For a discussion of the payment of allowances, see ROSE. *Op.cit.* ‘Allowance’

<sup>186</sup> *Ibid.*

The Fylde Minute Books record the discharge from the Workhouse of seventy-three paupers between 1845 and 1865. All these discharges were “at his own request” and the inmates were sometime accompanied by wives and children.<sup>187</sup> Neither Discharge Book nor Relief Lists survive so the presumption has to be that these paupers were those who requested some form of relief on their discharge and that there were others who were discharged or left on their own account without requesting relief. Given this, the relief granted on their departure from the House serves to provide a picture of the level of out-relief a Fylde pauper might expect to have been granted.

Of the seventy-three paupers noted in the Minutes as being discharged, 69% were male. All received some form of relief on their discharge but only thirty-eight, twenty-three men and fifteen women, were granted regular weekly pay. Of the thirty-eight, nineteen received 1s 6d weekly, eight were granted a weekly pension of 2s, four received 2s 6d and the remaining seven, three men and four women, were given amounts ranging from 3s .to 5s a week each. The level of these allowances was, therefore, similar to those given to Kirkham paupers under the Old Poor Law which, as Chapter Four suggested, were mostly under three shillings weekly. The figures are also in line with those which Lees quotes from Karel Williams to the effect that 1s and 1s 6d a week were by far the commonest levels and the very small amounts make it clear that they were intended to be no more than supplements to other income rather than a total family wage.<sup>188</sup> This point found reinforcement in the Fylde during the Cotton Famine in the autumn of 1862 a Public Relief Fund Committee was set up and the Guardians agreed to co-operate with the Committee with an amount of “generally about 1s 6d per head in addition to an allowance for rent and fire and the Relief Committee would supplement the relief in such cases as they considered expedient.”<sup>189</sup> Such allowances for fire and rent were, at least in the Fylde, virtually unheard of at this period, emphasising the depth of the general distress.

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<sup>187</sup> Or ‘her own request.’

<sup>188</sup> LEES. *Op.cit.* P.186. WILLIAMS, Karel. From Pauperism to Poverty. London, Routledge & Keegan Paul. 1981. P.169-172.

<sup>189</sup> L.R.O. PUF1/6.

Amounts of casual relief varied. John Lingard received only a shilling but Joseph Spencer, his wife and family were granted 30s to pay for “provisions and clothing.” Such allowances were often given specifically to enable the recipient “to go to find work.” Relief in kind appears to have been limited to bedding, clothing and footwear as the provision of fuel and tools of trade and the payment of house rents, all of which featured under the Old Poor Law, were prohibited under the new regulations.<sup>190</sup> The items granted as relief in kind were either provided by an additional cash allowance or supplied by local suppliers who had submitted successful tenders. However, in February 1847 the Board agreed to purchase “A sufficient supply of calico, linsey, flannel and other articles of clothing with which to relieve out-door paupers during the winter instead of money to purchase such articles.”<sup>191</sup>

The Relieving Officers were usually the first and the regular point of contact for the paupers and the lists of those whom they relieved were regularly reviewed at Board Meetings. The Board, however, maintained a supervisory watch on them, requiring that “where practicable all applications for relief shall in future be taken by the Relieving Officer at least three days before the meeting of the Board in order that the Relieving Officer may have an opportunity of visiting the cases and correctly reporting the same to the Guardians.”<sup>192</sup> The paupers were also instructed “where possible to attend in person to receive their relief . . . and that the officers be required to bear this in mind in order that a proper check may be had on out-door relief.”<sup>193</sup>

Local dignitaries from time to time intervened on behalf of the poor. In August 1858 a Blackpool clergyman wrote soliciting an increased weekly allowance for pauper Richard Miller.<sup>194</sup> His request was refused. More fortunate was John Edge who “appeared to be destitute” and on whose behalf Edmund Birley, of Lytham and cousin

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<sup>190</sup> Outdoor Relief Prohibitory Order. December 1844, Article 5. By Article 3 of the Outdoor Relief Regulation Order of December 1852 this section was extended to include tools of trade or their redemption from pawn. See ROSE, *op.cit.*, English. P.147 *et seq.*

<sup>191</sup> L.R.O. PUF1/3. Shirts, coats, trousers and shoes are particularly mentioned. The arguments for this method of provision were discussed in Chapter Four.

<sup>192</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>193</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>194</sup> L.R.O. PUF1/6.

of Board Member Charles Birley, wrote to the Board in September 1851. The Relieving Officer was instructed “to attend to the case forthwith.”<sup>195</sup>

These paupers presented the variety noted in the earlier periods. There were those such as Evan Cottam who left the Workhouse with a grant of 2s in January 1847 never to appear in the records again. The ins-and-outs were represented by Frederick Crawley. He was first discharged with his son shortly before Christmas in 1847 with ten shillings casual relief for clothing.<sup>196</sup> In March 1849 he was again discharged this time with “20s casual relief for clothing.”<sup>197</sup> After a third period in residence he was discharged in March 1851 in the company of his wife and child and 7s 6d casual relief.<sup>198</sup> These two paupers accepted their relief and appear to have been no trouble to the Guardians. Such was not the case with Mary Nixon who occupied the attention of the Board from January 1849 to June 1851 and was initially accommodated in the Workhouse whilst her settlement was determined. It was finally fixed at Bryning-with-Kellermargh, one of the townships of the Union. She was then given permission to leave the Workhouse with 4s weekly pay but was “requested to remain a little longer in hopes that some tidings may be had of her absconding husband after whom the police are enquiring.” The enquiries met with some success. Husband Steven was apprehended and sent to the House of Correction at Preston for two months in June 1849. By the middle of September he was again the object of official enquiry being ordered that he “be sought and punished for neglecting her.” No further mention is made of him but Mary must have returned to the Workhouse as in June 1851 she was discharged, along with her five children and 10s casual relief “to go to Lancaster to look after household furniture.”<sup>199</sup>

What became after the paupers when they disappeared from the official record has to be a matter for conjecture but the 1851 census enumerators’ schedules may be used

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<sup>195</sup> L.R.O. PUF1/4.

<sup>196</sup> L.R.O. PUF1/3.

<sup>197</sup> L.R.O. PUF1/4.

<sup>198</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>199</sup> *Ibid.*

to form an impression of the core of paupers on out-relief in the Union.<sup>200</sup> The number of households whose inhabitants included a person described as “pauper” was 140. Whilst they formed only a small proportion of the total households in the Union, some 3.5%, they may be divided into three broad groups. These are, firstly, those where the head of the household was described as a pauper and these were in the majority representing 72% of pauper households. They range from single occupancy households such as that of seventy-four year old spinster Agnes Whalley of Kirkham to the Moon Family of Weeton-with-Preese. Here the head was named as widowed forty-six year old Isabel Moon whose two older single pauper sisters and her three children were all living with her. Only the oldest of these, sixteen year old Hugh, was shown as being employed: he was working as an agricultural labourer. The other two, Jane, 9 years and Isabel, seven years, were described as paupers. A contrast with Agnes’s family is provided by the Wilkinsons of Elswick. Here, too, the head was a widow, forty-four year old Ann, but she was the only resident shown as a pauper. She had five children whose ages ranged from five to fourteen with the oldest, Richard, contributing to the family income again as an agricultural labourer. The other member of the household was a sixty-eight year old lodger, described as a seamstress and possibly contributing to the household income.

Secondly, there were households in which the head was gainfully employed but who had a relative described as a pauper living with him or her. These formed 16% of the total but again with variations. The Danson household of Greenhalgh consisted of widowed Ann, aged seventy-two and her spinster daughter Catherine, thirty-two years, described as a cattle-looker. In Kirkham the household of spinning master John Whittle, aged twenty-five, included his wife Ann, a reeler, with their three young children, one a babe-in-arms, and John’s eighty-year old father. The balance of the households, 12%, included those where the named pauper was either a visitor or lodger. The Swan family of Lytham, whose household numbered twelve, included three

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<sup>200</sup> The area of the Union is covered by HO107/2269 Folios 1 to 731. Microfilm copies are available through the Lancashire Library. All except Folios 608 to 731 have been transcribed and printed by the Lancashire Family History and Heraldry Society. It is assumed for the purposes of the discussion that the description “pauper” implies that the person was receiving relief from the Union.



single lodgers and a married couple together with the only named pauper, lodger Betsy Bamber, aged sixty-six years, whilst the Phillips house in Kirkham provided a home for six lodgers including pauper joiner seventy-seven year old Thomas Brown.

Households including paupers were thus infinitely variable as was their topographical distribution. Kirkham had the highest number of households with resident paupers, but it had the greatest number of all households and the highest population. Blackpool, by 1851 a town in its own right, had no paupers probably because the growing holiday trade provided plenty of employment opportunities even if of a seasonal nature. Fleetwood, on the other hand, was experiencing a down-turn in its fortunes after its early promise thus producing a relatively high incidence of paupers.

Of particular interest is the number of people described as widows, spinsters, or children. Of the 179 people listed as "pauper" in the 140 households, 112, or 63%, fell into one or another of these three categories. Of the 112, 67 of them were widows, usually elderly as in the case of Betty Gardner, seventy-nine years of Fleetwood and Jane Atkinson of the same age and living in Lytham. The exception in the ranks of the widows was Ann Curwen of Fleetwood who had been widowed with five children all less than ten years of age. There were spinsters of all ages, thirty-six of them, including Mary Swarbrick of Treales and Nanny Cookson of Wrea Green. Another widowed mother was Betty Cross who was living with her children Jane and James and her widowed mother-in-law in the Market Square at Kirkham.

Of the remaining 37%, 15% consisted of widowers, 15% of elderly couples and the balance of 7% by what appeared to be elderly bachelors. These figures suggest that the Board were paying regard to the principles of the 1834 Act and concentrating their relief resources on the old, the young and the widows. Able-bodied males appear but fleetingly in the record and references to them are usually when the Poor Law Board gave permission to pay relief to named individuals or recommended that it be

discontinued.<sup>201</sup> The 1834 Act had forbidden all out-relief to this group other than in cases of accident or sudden emergency but, as has been noted, the efforts of the Poor Law Commission and its successor the Poor Law Board, were largely unavailing.<sup>202</sup> In the Fylde working on the Union's fields was possibly a condition of the granting of out-relief to the able-bodied. In March 1858 the Board tried to have the Fylde Union conform as, in giving authority for such payments, it wrote "requesting that the Guardians in future endeavour to comply with the provisions of the General Relief Order by setting to work the able-bodied paupers at stone breaking or oakum picking or other suitable employment."<sup>203</sup> As was its custom, the Board deferred the matter until its next meeting and then "resolved unanimously that when out-relief is granted to able-bodied male paupers, such paupers shall be required to work at stone breaking . . . and the Guardian of each township is requested to co-operate with the Surveyor of Highways for the purpose of finding employment for each able-bodied pauper."<sup>204</sup> Again, the matter found no further reference.

### **7 – Settlement, Removal and Abscondments**<sup>205</sup>

Problems of settlement and removal were a perpetual feature of poor law activity not just between unions between but also between constituent townships of the same union. Such cases often led to considerable discussion between the townships involved in order to decide who 'owned' a claimant and, probably, much expense which might have been avoided. The Fylde was no exception. In the meanwhile, the pauper awaited a decision on his fate and the possibility of removal to his 'home.' Indeed, it was one aspect of the Board's work where the township interest most manifested itself although in the period under review changes were made which went some way to alleviating the difficulty. First of these was an Act of 1846 which, whilst it did not change the basic settlement law, prevented removal of a 'new' pauper to his

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<sup>201</sup> L.R.O. PUF1/7.

<sup>202</sup> See MURRAY, Peter. Poverty and Welfare 1830-1914. London, Hodder and Stoughton. 1999. P.35 *et seq.*

<sup>203</sup> L.R.O. PUF1/6.

<sup>204</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>205</sup> For discussion of settlement and removal see SNELL, Keith D. M. 'Pauper Settlement and the Right to Poor Relief in England and Wales.' Continuity and Change. Vol. 6. No. 3. 1991. P375 and the same author's Parish and Belonging: Community, Identity and Welfare in England and Wales 1700 – 1950. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press. 2006.

home parish if he had been in his parish of residence for five years. As was typical of poor law legislation, this act was loosely drawn and prompted further debate and complaint from the industrial areas who found themselves having to pay relief to paupers who previously were classed as out-paupers and therefore funded by the parish of settlement.<sup>206</sup> The five year period was later reduced to three years and then to one year and the position further alleviated by an 1847 Act which made the irremovable poor a charge on the whole Union rather than on the parish or township of settlement.<sup>207</sup> Finally, the Act with which this study ends, the 1865 Union Chargeability Act, made the union rather than the parish or township the place, and thus the cost-centre, of settlement.<sup>208</sup>

Experience varied. Some removed paupers were accepted without question. One of these was Widow Jane Brewer and her four children, who came from Leeds to Kirkham in March 1846 with a removal order and who were accepted.<sup>209</sup> Similarly the removal of James Lincoln and his wife from Walton-le-Dale to Kirkham was “submitted to” without question. They were living in the Workhouse for a period and were discharged in February 1850 “with 2s casual relief and some clothing, a situation having fallen out for him.”<sup>210</sup> John Margerison, on the other hand, was living in Lytham and it came to light that his settlement was in Westby to which township the Guardians ordered that all relief should be charged.<sup>211</sup> This was an intra-union matter and was settled amicably. Such amity might also exist between unions as the case of widow Ruth Singleton revealed.<sup>212</sup> It was agreed that her legal settlement and those of her four children was in Liverpool and the authorities there accepted the fact and agreed either to receive them without a removal order or to refund any relief given by Fylde. More complex was the case of Richard Stirzacker who, in September 1847, was issued with a removal order to go from Preston to Elswick, a constituent township of Fylde. The following month he was removed and Elswick, as was its right, appealed

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<sup>206</sup> ROSE. *English*. P.192.

<sup>207</sup> BRUNDAGE. *Op.cit.* *English*. P.103.

<sup>208</sup> *Ibid.* P.193.

<sup>209</sup> L.R.O. PUF1/3.

<sup>210</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>211</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>212</sup> *Ibid.*

against the order to the magistrates who squashed it and Stirzacker returned to Preston, which in its turn, appealed. Just what passed between the two Unions is not recorded but there must have been some communication as the Guardians eventually advised Elswick to “submit and re-take the pauper.”<sup>213</sup> Mary Nixon and her family presented an example not only of the complexities of settlement and removal but also of the other difficulties which pauper caused the Board from time to time. She was first observed in January 1849 when the Board received a removal order for her from Manchester to Bryning-with-Warton. After enquiry, the Board submitted and allowed them to enter the Workhouse. They stayed for a few months and then in April when she asked for permission to leave, this was granted along with 4s weekly pay. However, she was “requested to remain a little longer in hopes that some tidings made be had of her absconding husband after whom the police are enquiring.” Tidings came. Stephen was arrested and sent to the House of Correction for a couple of months. On his release he absconded again and Mary was given permission to “go as far as Lancaster to look after household furniture.” She and her family were finally discharged in June 1851 with her five children and 10s casual relief.<sup>214</sup>

Nixon was by no means the only absconding father. Lytham pauper Lawrence Simpson was another although his efforts to avoid apprehension were more successful than Nixon’s as it seems he was never caught. Richard Rainford, having completed his militia service, also ran away leaving his family in the Workhouse. A warrant was taken out for his capture and the assistance of the Kirkham police sought. In November 1859 he was indeed caught but by January the following year the police were again searching for him.<sup>215</sup> These paupers merely deserted their families. John Lingard “abused and neglected” his throughout the late 1840s and not even a twenty-one month spell in prison convinced him of the error of his ways. He had been imprisoned in April 1846 but by October 1848 he was again “to be summoned before the justices and punished or lectured at their discretion.” He was being sought again

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<sup>213</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>214</sup> L.R.O. PUF1/4.

<sup>215</sup> L.R.O. PUF1/6.

within the year and must have been eventually confined to the Workhouse as he was released at his own request with a shilling casual relief. <sup>216</sup>

Abscondment was one of the principal offences with which the Guardians had to contend but at least the identity of the parents was known. This was not always the case and the Board regularly took out summonses in bastardy through their solicitors in Kirkham and Poulton who presented their lists to the Board every quarter. <sup>217</sup> In 1846, for example, twenty-four such orders were listed amongst whom was Richard Rainford, just noticed as a run-away. Second appearances in the lists were not unknown – on both sides of the equation. Christopher Charnock was served with orders in respect of Jane Topping in September 1845 and Margaret Rawsthorne the following March. <sup>218</sup> Thomas Whiteside was similarly served in respect of Martha Hall in March 1846 and Martha Sanderson two years later. <sup>219</sup> Women whose names appear more than once include Dorothy Fox, March 1846 and March 1848; Alice Topping March 1846 and January 1851 and Ellen Gardner in March 1846, January 1847 and March 1848. <sup>220</sup> In no cases were the mothers or fathers the same. The Board, as under the Old Poor Law, was prepared to support illegitimate children but apparently not unconditionally as in November 1845, it withdrew allowances from twelve such paupers with no reason given. Equally, it was prepared to pursue backsliding fathers, summoning five of them on November 1845 and a further eight in the following November. Fowler has recorded that on occasion the problem of bastardy was to be dealt with by marriage with the Union paying the costs of the wedding with a view to limiting future expense. <sup>221</sup> The ceremony did not, however, prevent the

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<sup>216</sup> L.R.O. PUF1/3, 1/4 and 1/6.

<sup>217</sup> For a discussion of fallen women see FOWLER, *op.cit.*, P.94 *et seq.*

<sup>218</sup> L.R.O. PUF1/3.

<sup>219</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>220</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>221</sup> Ursula Henriques has discussed bastardy and Faramerz Dabhoiwala has written on sexual relations. See HENRIQUES, Ursula Ruth Quixano. 'Bastardy and the New Poor Law.' Past and Present. Vol.37.P.103. 1997. DABHOIWALA, Faramerz. 'Sex, Social Relations and the Law in Seventeenth and Eighteenth Century London.' *In* BRADDICK, Michael J. and WALTER, John. Negotiating Power in Early Modern Society: Order, Hierarchy and Subordination in Britain and Ireland. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press. 2001.

newly married father from running away and the Board found itself additionally out of pocket to the tune of the cost of the nuptials whilst still having to relieve the mother and child. However, there appear to have been no instances of such marriages in the Fylde.

It was not only in cases of bastardy where the Board tried to limit its outlay. It was equally willing to take advantage of whatever opportunities presented themselves to obtain reimbursement of outlay or otherwise to ease the load on the poor rate. They were more than willing to accept the “small annuity” to which John Cardwell of Warton became entitled and to pass it over to the Relieving Officer to spend on Cardwell’s behalf as he saw fit. <sup>222</sup> The two sons of William Greenall were pursued throughout the summer of 1848 with a view to persuading them to contribute a shilling each towards the maintenance of their father. One eventually agreed but in the case of the other, enquiries were made into his circumstances and it was decided that “an application for a maintenance order would be refused by the magistrates.” The matter was dropped. <sup>223</sup> When John Hankinson, John Tomlinson and William Threlfall, all of Freckleton, applied for relief as their Friendly Society had reduced their allowances “below the sum shown in the rules” the Guardians took immediate action and threatened to sue the Society’s officers. Again, matters must have been settled amicably for the threat was dropped. <sup>224</sup> On the death of the mother of Ellen Houghton, also of Freckleton, died, she left a will and the executor agreed “to allow her 5s a week for the support of her nephew now living with her and [he] was also willing to make any allowance of money to her which he could safely make.” <sup>225</sup> Such generosity was not shown in the case of Alice Hull “an idiotic inmate of the Workhouse.” Her brother died in the spring of 1846, he left a will and £50 to his sister but, apparently, nothing to his wife. The Clerk wrote to the deceased’s sister who replied that she “refused her sister-in-law Alice any portion.” The Board sought the

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<sup>222</sup> L.R.O. PUF1/3.

<sup>223</sup> L.R.O. PUF1/6.

<sup>224</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>225</sup> L.R.O. PUF1/3.

advice of the Poor Law Board which gave it as its opinion that it “had no power to intervene in the case.”<sup>226</sup>

Such was the span of the Board’s activities which were largely a matter of day-to-day routine. However, there was the occasional incident to relieve the routine and the tedium and provide something of interest for the Board, its officers, the inmates and, probably, the local people also. Such an event took place on November 14<sup>th</sup> 1845 when an aged inmate of the Workhouse “attempted to destroy himself by cutting his throat. The Medical Officer was immediately in attendance, dressed the wound and is at present of the opinion that he will get better.” The doctor considered that “he was not at all insane but that his attempt at suicide arose from his depraved disposition he being well known as a desperate bad character for a long time.”<sup>227</sup> There must have been more gossip when in the following summer sixty-seven year old Agnes Benson, described by the master as “of bad disposition” escaped by scaling the Workhouse wall. Her disappearance was reported to the police but when she had not been found after a couple of days “she was supposed to be supporting herself by begging” which was her old trade.<sup>228</sup> Last amongst the malefactors there came Alice Wilkin “late an inmate of the Workhouse who had taken a ball of yarn from the House . . . and disposed of it to a person in Kirkham.” The local police were informed but a month later the Superintendent reported that “the police have hitherto been unable to procure sufficient evidence upon which to take the matter before the magistrates.”<sup>229</sup>

## **7 – Conclusion**

The Old Poor Law was characterised by diversity of practice: even within a single parish there could be, and was, diversity as the cases of Kirkham, Newton and Clifton demonstrated. The New Poor Law was intended to rectify this situation and the informal nature of the Old Poor Law was to be replaced by a new regularity of which centralisation, uniformity and ‘less eligibility’ were the guiding principles. This was the theory: what was the practice?

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<sup>226</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>227</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>228</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>229</sup> L.R.O. PUF1/4.

Whilst centralisation was certainly effected under the New Poor Law with memoranda and instructions being despatched from Somerset House by the Poor Law Commissioners, their Secretary and their Assistant Commissioners, it is arguable, even without the benefit of hindsight, that the germs of a continuing diversity were built into the new system *ab initio* and if the Commission had expected, as indeed it must have done, an orderly and uniform operation of the new arrangements, they were to be disappointed. Firstly, the 1834 Act had not been passed with unanimous approval on all sides and the conflicting views did not disappear with the King's signature on the official parchment. Secondly, the process of creating the unions had itself produced diversity which must inevitably have found reflection in their operations. In Lancashire, for example, the twenty-three unions created from 1836 to 1840 included Prescott, assembled from two parishes and Burnley from twenty-six. Populations ranged from under 12,000 in the Garstang Union to 83,000 at Bolton.<sup>230</sup> Furthermore, they ranged in type from the almost entirely rural such as Garstang itself to unions such as Preston which, whilst they included including rural areas, were dominated by large and growing manufacturing towns. Thirdly, the principle of less eligibility required the standard of living in the Workhouse to be lower than that enjoyed by the poorest working man and his family. How the Poor Law Commission hoped to give effect to this when these families had a perpetual struggle to make ends meet with their own economy of makeshifts is open to question and these elements were further complicated by the Act's making the old parish or township rather than the new unions the basis of settlement.

This chapter has presented a picture of poor relief in the Fylde in the twenty years from 1845, when the Union opened its new Workhouse to the year of the Union Chargeability Act of 1865 which presaged further changes in administration. The chapter opened by recording that by the early 1840s both the Poor Law Commission and the Fylde Poor Law Union had overcome the uncertainties and opposition which characterised the years immediately after the passing of the 1834 Poor Law

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<sup>230</sup> MIDWINTER. *Op.cit.* P.19. The remaining seven unions in the county were created between 1840 and 1869.



Amendment Act and had settled down to the business of relieving the poor in accordance with the provisions of the Act.

The core of the new system was that relief, particularly to the able-bodied males, would be largely provided within the well-regulated workhouse where conditions were to be less eligible than those of the poorest families outside the walls but, at the risk of repetition, it was inevitable that diversity should be found here. At one end of the scale was to be found the notorious Andover Workhouse, oft quoted as an example of the working of the New Poor Law at its worst and where the regime was instrumental in the demise of the Poor Law Commission. However, although a league table of workhouse standards has yet to be compiled, it is evident that inmates of the Fylde Workhouse were far better treated than their Hampshire peers.<sup>231</sup>

All, of course, depended on the Guardians and on their staff and Fylde's Guardians certainly shared the common propensity, which Midwinter noted, to absent themselves from Board Meetings unless items of expenditure were on the agenda. They also seem to have been quite ready as a body to delegate responsibilities, particularly management of the Workhouse, to committees and even the committee meetings did not always attract full attendance. Thus much of the responsibility for the operation of the House fell to the staff. Fylde's officers were probably not as bad others who have been noticed and, whilst there were instances of wrong-doing, there is no mention at this time of the sexual misbehaviour which occurred in other houses. What was noticed, however, was that, compared to the larger houses, staffing levels were low and the Board appears to have been reluctant to make appointments which they did not consider necessary despite the urging of the central body.

As far as living conditions were concerned, the Guardians' Minutes support an impression that the inmates of their Workhouse were not badly treated. True, they had to work either in the Union's fields or at domestic duties in the House but then, so

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<sup>231</sup> By, for example, ROSE, FOWLER and WOOD, *op.cit.*

had the poor outside. Further, they appear to have been better fed and housed than their peers on the other side of the wall. The children were schooled or apprenticed and the older ones and their parents found work. Both the sick and the mentally troubled were cared for in times of illness, and attention was paid to their spiritual welfare. If this appears to suggest that there were roses round the Workhouse door, it needs to be remembered that there was the reverse side. Entering the Workhouse involved the complete surrender of identity and independence and, certainly in the Fylde, this, rather than the nature of the regime of itself, was the deterrent: it was psychological rather than material. Even if your life were easier physically you ceased to be Joe Smith and became Pauper Smith with all that that implied.

As to out-relief, the Old Poor Law as it functioned in Kirkham township saw a progression from a system providing a mixture of out-relief in the form of weekly pay, cash at need and relief in kind in significant proportions in the period up to 1816. This was followed by a period in which weekly pay was by far the preferred form of relief with paupers being expected for the greater part to make shift with what they were allowed. As far as can be determined from the evidence available, this form of relief continued in what has here been called the era of the guardians. Furthermore, if the 1851 census can be relied upon, relief out-relief was largely confined to the young, sick and elderly although there are instances of able-bodied men being so relieved. However, it seems clear that weekly allowances were no greater than they had been decades previously.

The bulk of this work has, therefore, effectively presented a picture of the experience of being poor under both the Old Poor Law and the New. Contrasts have been drawn between the three townships discussed and Changes over time noted. These threads must now be draw together.

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Chapter Seven Conclusion

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The review of the historiography of the relief of the poor with which this work began traced its progress from the wide-ranging work of F. M. Eden in the eighteenth century to the closely focussed concentration on aspects of pauperdom of the twenty-first which are exemplified by such work as Steve Hindle's article on badging the poor and Elizabeth Hurren's on their burial.<sup>1</sup> Two themes came to the fore. The first was the fact that there was great diversity in the interpretation and administration of the poor laws throughout their history. The second was the need, expressed by Dorothy Marshall, John Brown, Geoffrey Oxley and Steven King, for more work at the local level. Marshall, Brown and Oxley, however, did little more than draw attention to the need and the reason for it namely the need to come to a more detailed understanding of the operation of the poor laws in practice when compared with the theory. King, however, went further and pointed the way forward. In his work on the regionality of poor relief he highlighted the division which he perceived to exist between the north and west and the south and east of England in the way they provided relief to their poor.<sup>2</sup> He then asked -

Is the "English Poor Law" a red herring? Rather than having a standard safety net is it not the case that some regions offered a relatively comprehensive regional state of welfare while others, like the northwest, had a welfare system which never did, and never set out to, fulfil the function of a safety net? Did England have several poor law systems and not one?<sup>3</sup>

As far as the legislation itself was concerned, there was of course but one law on the statute book, that based on the Great Elizabethan Poor Law of 1601 as varied by the Poor Law Amendment Act of 1834 and other legislation such as that introduced to

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<sup>1</sup> EDEN, Frederick Morton. The State of the Poor. 3 Vols. London, J.Davis. 1977. Reprinted London, Frank Cass. 1976. HINDLE, Steve. 'Dependency, Shame and Belonging: Badging the Deserving Poor, c1550-1750.' Cultural and Social History. Vol.1. 2004. HURREN, Elizabeth and KING, Steven Andrew. 'Begging for a Burial: Form, Function and Conflict in Nineteenth-century Pauper Burial.' Social History. Vol.30. No.3. 2005.

<sup>2</sup> KING, Steven Andrew. Poverty and Welfare in England 1700t-1850: a Regional Perspective. Manchester, Manchester University Press. 2000.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* P.259.

Parliament by Knatchbull in 1723, Gilbert in 1782 and Sturges-Bourne in 1818.<sup>4</sup> What the legislators seemed to have failed to take account of, particularly under the Old Poor Law, was the fact that, possibly apart from the Caroline period, supervision to ensure that what Parliament said should happen actually did take place was minimal and confined to broad magisterial oversight. Even under the centralised New Poor Law codified and controlled as its predecessor never had been by a central agency with active officers whose task was to ensure that the bidding of their masters was carried out in the unions there was still scope for diversity and, as the extracts from Alan Kidd's work, quoted in Chapter One, pointed out -

What became known after 1834 as the Old Poor Law was highly decentralised, based as it was, upon the parish as the basic unit of organisation, tempered by the eye of the supervisory county magistracy and only ultimately responsible to Parliament. In terms of practice its chief hallmark was its "face-to-face" character. Overseers of the poor generally knew those they relieved, especially in the small village communities that generally made up the 15000 mostly rural parishes.<sup>5</sup>

But -

Despite the intention of reformers, subsequent official policy was the result of compromises between central and local interests which varied between regions and, as had been the case before 1834, also varied within regions . . . Amongst the consequences of resistance . . . was a system which, whilst centrally organised in principle retained great potential for local autonomy in practice.<sup>6</sup>

King asserts that whilst there is a case for the unity of "broad macro-regions in practice there are always exceptions to the rule" and also that "parish types looked different from each other in socio-economic and maybe also in poor law terms."<sup>7</sup> He also notes that "In a sense this book is a starting rather than a finishing point, these are issues that should be taken up by others."<sup>8</sup> This thesis has attempted to do just that.

From the comments of Kidd and King it is evident that the single poor law on the statute book was variously interpreted throughout the country. Given that this is so,

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<sup>4</sup> For the provisions of these Acts, see SLACK, Paul. The English Poor Law 1531-1782. London, MacMillan. 1990 and BRUNDAGE, Anthony. The English Poor Laws 1700-1930. Basingstoke, Palgrave MacMillan. 2002.

<sup>5</sup> KIDD, Alan. State, Society and the Poor in Nineteenth Century England. Basingstoke, MacMillan Press Limited. 1999. P.13.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.* P.30

<sup>7</sup> KING. *Op.cit.* P259.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*

the question then has to be asked as to how far down the chain the variety of approaches to the administration of the law went. Were there just two poor laws, for the north and west and the south and east? Did diversity go down to the regional boundaries which King suggested or, in the case of Lancashire for example, to the eight sub-regions into which he divided the county for medical purposes.<sup>9</sup> Whatever the case, the borders were often shadowy as the instance of Lancashire itself, referred to in Chapter Two, made clear? But were the units even smaller and at the county or parish level or, under the Old Poor Law, at the level of township and, after 1834 at the level of the Union. Taking the discussion a stage further, did the ethos of administration in the townships and unions vary over time as well as over space and, if so, what was the unit of variation?

King drew attention to the possibility of variation between parishes in both socio-economic and, possibly, in poor law terms. In Lancashire there existed a tradition of large parishes encompassing several townships and in the Fylde the four parishes of Bispham, Kirkham, Lytham and Poulton-le-Fylde spread over twenty-three townships. This thesis has looked at three townships of Kirkham parish and takes the view that diversity went beyond even parish level, that there was no over-arching parish policy on poor relief despite the importance of the parish and its church and that even the smallest townships such as Newton or Clifton with populations in the low hundreds relieved their poor according to their own circumstances.

The discussion in Chapter Two drew attention to the demographic and socio-economic differences between Kirkham as an ancient market town and ecclesiastical centre with an industrial base, and between Newton and Clifton which were almost entirely agricultural with limited possibilities of alternative employment even as domestic servants. Chapters Three, Four and Five drew attention not only to points of difference in the granting of relief in the three townships but also to wider divergence of practice

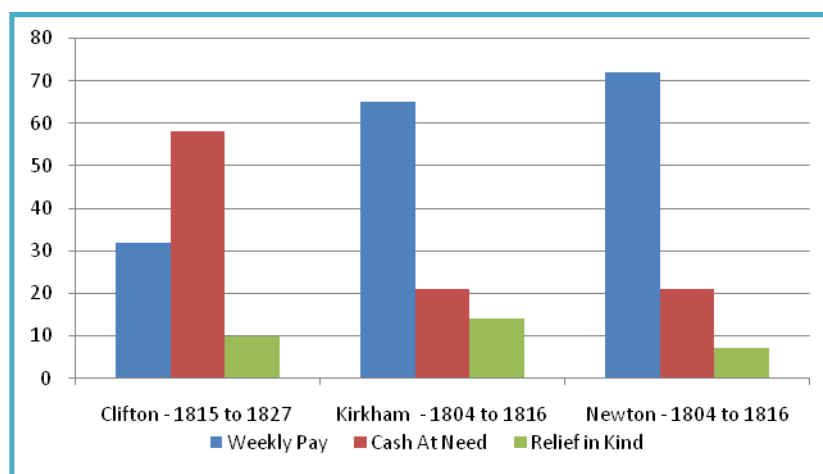
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<sup>9</sup> KING. *Op,cit.* P.262. Map.9.2. and KING, Steven Andrew. *A Fylde Country Practice: Medicine and Society in Lancashire c1760-1840.* Lancaster, Lancaster University Centre for North-West Regional Studies. 2001. P.72. Figure 4.4.

as revealed in the historiography. The major points of difference between the townships are now again made here to reinforce the point.

Firstly, throughout the period of the Old Poor Law Kirkham made considerable use of its Workhouse as part of its relief strategy, devoting around a third of its poor law expenditure to the building and its inmates. Newton and Clifton, however, appear to have made little use of workhouse facilities and when they did, it was to Brindle Workhouse they turned and then it seems likely that this was only for the care of their sick poor.

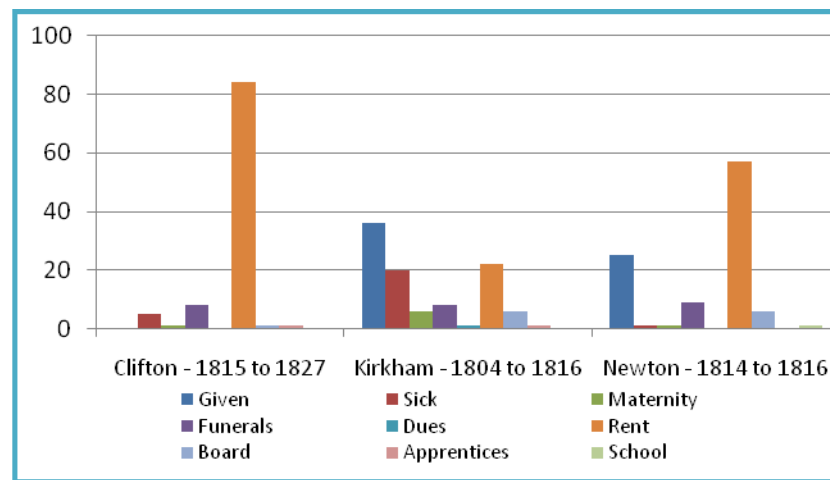
Secondly, looking at Out-Relief, there was divergence in the three principal forms of provision namely weekly pay, cash at need and relief in kind. The differences in percentage terms are set out in Figure 7.1 and this figure, along with those which follow, cumulate data previously introduced in this work and the derivation is given to permit ease of reference.



**Figure 7.1**  
**Clifton, Kirkham & Newton – Principal Divisions of Out-Relief - %**  
[Clifton – Figure 5.17 P.196. Kirkham – Figure 4.1 P.104. Newton - Figure 4.10 P.153]

These figures speak for themselves. Kirkham and Newton were not too dissimilar at this level but Clifton clearly did not follow the same pattern. Weekly pay was most important in Newton and only slightly less so in Kirkham whilst in Clifton its importance was overshadowed by relief given in specific circumstances. Figure 7.2 takes these figures a stage further and shows how the Cash at Need was disbursed in

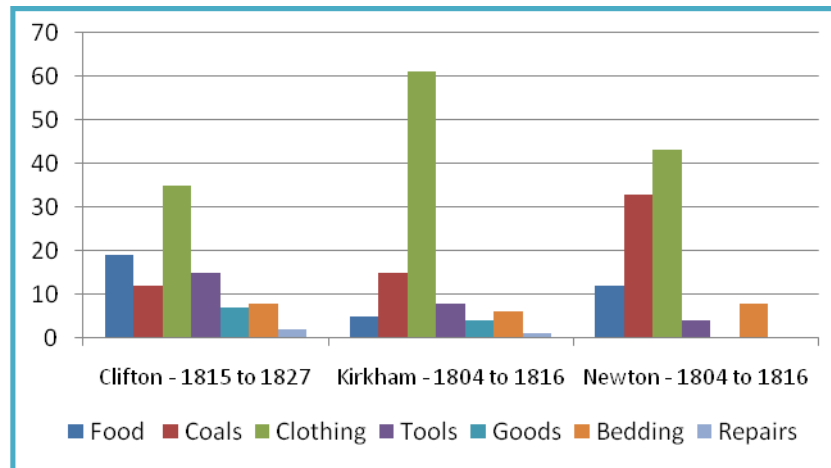
each place. The clear difference here focuses on the payment of house rents for the paupers. Kirkham, as a result of what was probably a positive policy decision, almost totally abandoned rental payments after 1807. Newton and Clifton continued them throughout the period and at Clifton they were always the dominant method of relief where, it has been suggested, the pattern of land ownership was influential. Most of the headings of expense were common to all three townships although for none of them was the provision in connection with childbirth and funerals as lavish as Chapter Four noted might have been the case elsewhere.



**Figure 7.2**  
**Clifton, Kirkham & Newton – Divisions of Cash at Need - %**  
 [Clifton – Figure 5.18 P.197. Kirkham – Figure 4.8 P.111. Newton - Figure 4.14 P.154]

An unusual, indeed unique, item at this period, was the payment of school expenses for a single child, at Newton, and apprentice fees which, as again noted in Chapter Four, were largely paid for by charitable trusts. Figure 7.3 sets out the expenditure on relief in kind. Here, as in Figure 7.2, the spread of types of relief was similar over the three locations.

Clothing and footwear constituted the major expenditure in all three townships although of lesser importance in the rural areas than in Kirkham. It needs, however, to be remembered that whatever the poor asked for and the overseer provided, which was not necessarily the same, it was conditioned not only by the custom and standards of the township but also by the actual needs of the poor themselves as they arose.



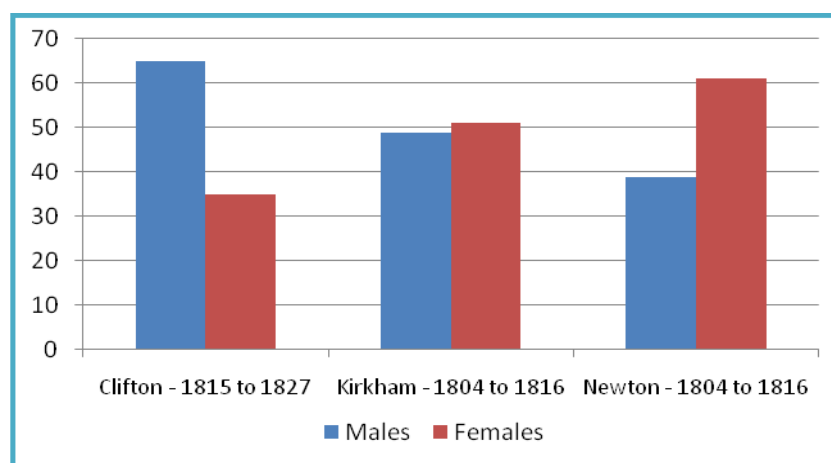
**Figure 7.3**  
**Clifton, Kirkham and Newton – Distribution of Relief in Kind - %**  
 [Clifton – Figure 5.19 P.198. Kirkham – Figure 4.9 P.138. Newton Figure 4.15 - P.159]

Cold winters, for example, might produce increased requests for clothing and fuel whilst the incidence of typhoid probably might have led to an increase in funeral provision. What is noticeable, although marginally, is the absence of items such as spectacles and tobacco which Oxley noted as being on the list of out-relief provision. On the other hand, ‘food’ in Kirkham was mostly connected with the paupers’ potato crops whilst in Newton cheese, beef and meal were provided, probably from the farms of the hamlets.

These charts make the case for asserting that differences in the nature of relief provided went down as far as township level. This, of course, is one side of the coin, the other being the nature of the pauper host, the principle consideration being the split between men and women and the numbers of widows, single people and children amongst them. Apart from the fact that there were certainly single people on the relief lists, both male and female, that these were single either by choice, being bachelors or spinsters, or widows and widowers by fate and that children were relieved both as part of the family group and in their own right, hard statistical conclusions cannot safely be drawn from the imprecise data. However, it has been possible to calculate the numbers of males and females relieved in each of the three townships and these are set out in Figure 7.4. Again, there are differences between the three townships. Clifton clearly favoured men in its distribution. Newton preferred to relieve women and at

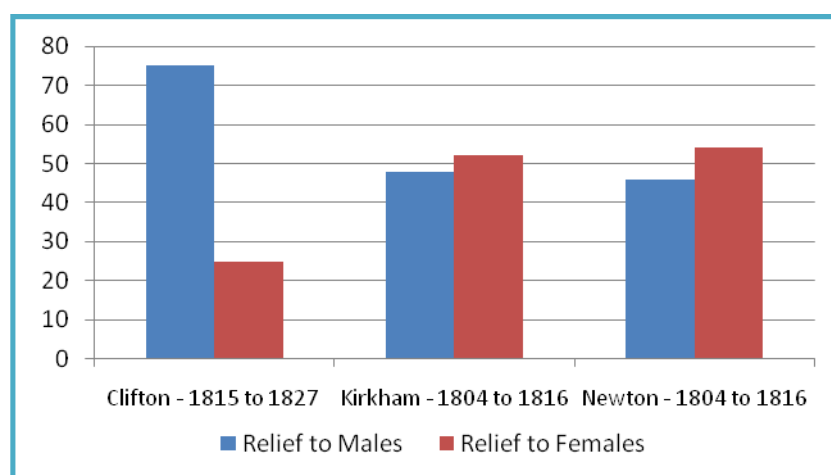


Kirkham the split between men and women was almost equal. Finally, Figure 7.5 reveals the way in which the total expenditure on relief in the townships was divided between the sexes. Here the variations are not as marked. At Clifton, where men outnumbered women on the relief lists by a considerable margin, they also attracted the greater part of the expenditure. At Newton, women were the greater part of the paupers relieved and received the greater part of the outlay.



**Figure 7.4**  
**Clifton, Kirkham and Newton – Males & Females Relieved - %**  
 [Clifton – Figure 5.20 P.199. Kirkham Figure 3.10 – P.90. Newton - Figure 4.11 P.154]

Similarly, the distribution of relief in cash terms at Kirkham broadly followed the split between the sexes at almost half and half. However, the proportions vary and Clifton's favouring of men was more noticeable than Newton's favouring of women.



**Figure 7.5**  
**Clifton, Kirkham and Newton – Relief to Males and Females - %**  
 [Clifton – Figure 5.21 P.199. Kirkham – Figure 3.9 P.89. Newton - Figure 3.11 P.91]

The discussion of their geography and socio-economic in Chapter Two together with Figures 7.1 to 7.5 provides clear evidence that Clifton, Kirkham and Newton, despite the fact that they were constituent townships of the same parish and geographically adjacent, relieved their poor as they saw fit during first decades of the century. It seems that this continued in the years after 1820 for, as Chapter Five showed, Kirkham virtually abolished all relief apart from weekly pensions and additional cash for unspecified needs from this time onward, recording almost 88% disbursed on weekly pay with the remaining 12% being equally divided between cash at need and relief in kind at 6% each. Clifton, on the other hand, as Figures 7.1, 7.2 and 7.3 showed, continued to make additional cash payments for specific needs as well as to provide relief in kind.

Given that each township operated independently, the differences appeared on three levels of relief. Firstly, Kirkham made considerable use of the workhouse in its relief strategy whilst Clifton and Newton appeared not to have done so. Secondly, in the matter of out-relief, there were differences in township provision and the importance attached to individual strands of relief. Thirdly, when considering the total numbers of men and women relieved and the proportion of resources allocated to one group or the other, difference rather than similarity again was the order of the day. If this pattern were repeated throughout the country, there were possibly as many poor laws as there were authorities to administer them and King's call for closer examination at the local level requires even further work on this point.

Attention must now be turned to the era of the New Poor Law. Two questions have been asked. What changes, if any, would the paupers in the three townships have noticed after the introduction of the 1834 Poor Law Amendment Act and, to what extent did the Fylde Union merit the opinion that the workhouse was a place of cruelty, gloom, and squalor. As far as the nature of relief post-1834 is concerned, any comment has to be largely impressionistic. Again as Chapter Five discussed, Kirkham hardened its attitude to relief in the years after the Select Vestries Acts and continued in this strain until the formation of the Fylde Union. As far as can be ascertained from

the information available in the Minutes of the Fylde Union's Board of Guardians and the 1851 Census relief at the pre - 1820 level was never again available. Those on out-relief were given weekly cash allowances, never sufficient for a family to live on, and expected to make shift although arrangements were made for supplies of clothing and bread to be available from the Workhouse for paupers on out-relief. Whether or not the individual paupers noticed much difference was a matter of where they had lived prior to the formation of the Union and when they had first gone 'on the parish.' Newtonians drawing relief under the Old Poor Law would surely have felt the difference as their meat, cheese and meal were probably withdrawn. Similarly, Clifton's poor must have felt the withdrawal of their house rents. However, Kirkham poor from the late 1820s would probably have noticed little difference. Their relief was mostly in the form of cash then and mostly in the form of cash under the Union. Where all might have felt change was in the machinery of relief and the bureaucracy which surrounded it. The informality and face-to-face nature of the Old Poor Law was replaced by a more structured and supervised system which at least some of the paupers must have found different from that to which they had been accustomed.

As to the Workhouse and the New Poor Law, the intention was that the variety of the Old Poor Law would be replaced by the regularity and uniformity of the new arrangements. How Parliament hoped to achieve anything like such uniformity where, even in Lancashire, the new unions varied between predominantly rural Garstang and Fylde on the one hand and largely industrial towns such as Preston and Blackburn on the other has to be questioned. Populations varied from 9000 in the Lunesdale Union to 165000 in Liverpool and from two constituent parishes or townships as at Prescot to 27 at Ulverstone. Diversity was built into the system from the start and, as the discussion on the Fylde Union in Chapter Six showed, whilst the Board of Guardians might, when they felt so inclined, have paid lip service to the central authority, they were prepared be their own men when they felt occasion demanded, particularly in the matter of expenditure on staff, for they had to pay the wages.

The Workhouse as an institution suffered much at the hands of the press particularly in the years immediately after the 1834 Act and it was quick to focus on what were perceived as the vile conditions in the new workhouses and on cases of cruelty towards pauper inmates, attributing these to the New Poor Law. It was not, of course, the law itself which produced these evils. Rather it was the Guardians and the Workhouse Masters and Mistresses, men of the stamp of George Catch and Colin McDougal, and other staff who, as Chapter Six discussed, were almost as diverse a class as the paupers they controlled and who were similarly compelled to live in an artificial and restricted environment. Whilst little is known about the workings of the Kirkham Parish Workhouse it is evident that conditions in the new Fylde Union building were of themselves better than the average labourer might expect to enjoy if he lived in a house in Kirkham or Poulton. As an inmate of the Workhouse he would have had a leak-free roof over his head, a varied diet, medical attention, and spiritual care from the visiting clergy. If he were elderly he would be provided with comfortable chairs in which to sit and reading matter to while away the time, he would be allowed to dine with his peers and, if he died in the Workhouse, his coffin would be respectfully covered with a suitable pall. This was hardly the 'less eligibility' which the Act had specified. That came from the enforced abandonment of individuality, from the loss of control over daily life and over wife and children, until such time as he left the Workhouse. Further, whilst there is no reason to suppose that the Fylde Masters took McDougal and Chance as their role model, some of them appear to have been given to drink and brawling, a predisposition which must have had some effect on the more vulnerable inmates.

Thus these studies of Clifton, Kirkham and Newton over a period of sixty years confirm not only the oft-repeated view that there was considerable diversity of administration in both the Old and the New Poor Laws but also, at least in these parts of Lancashire, that the paupers themselves probably noticed little variation between the one and the other. As far as the Workhouse was concerned, whether under parish or union, it was certainly a major part of the relief strategy. Conditions under the Fylde Union were 'more eligible' than in some other unions and the 'less eligibility' here came from the

nature of the regime rather than from the physical surroundings and treatment the poor received. It was a case of 'Plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose' or, as Derek Fraser less delicately put it "there was certainly continuity here, and copulating in the privies which was the great public scandal of the old regime continued under the new." <sup>10</sup> The law might change, Commissioners, Guardians and Overseers might vary its administration but the paupers appear to have maintained a degree of constancy in their behaviour which not even the might of the Poor Law Board could change.

### **Future Research**

This study has focussed on the Fylde area of Lancashire and confirmed that diversity ruled before and after 1834. The three townships went their own way and there was no over-arching parish policy. Even under the Union the Board of Guardians maintained a degree of independence of thought. Further work might seek to investigate other townships in the Fylde such as Freckelton or Thornton under the Old Poor Law. Poulton parish, which had the only other parish workhouse in the Fylde, might also prove of interest particularly in a comparison of its constituent townships. On the other hand the work could be taken farther afield and a detailed study similar to the present work undertaken for all the other Lancashire parishes and townships mentioned in Chapter Three namely Garstang, Leyland Ormskirk and Poulton. These had much in common with Kirkham parish and such a study would widen the focus and help to confirm or contradict the present conclusions particularly where intra-parish standards were concerned. Alternatively it might be possible to investigate the effect of external events upon the poor law. For example, Chapter Five referred to the demobilisation of troops and an increased birth-rate after the end of the Napoleonic Wars. But there must have been many women whose husbands did not return as was the case at the end of the Great War in 1918. Did these events produce a greater number of widows and orphans on the relief lists and, if so how were they treated. Educational and medical provision for the poor offer other possible avenues. In addition to the schools at Kirkham mentioned in Chapter Six, there were similar foundations in Poulton, Thornton, Wrea Green, and Fleetwood where the latter's North

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<sup>10</sup> FRASER, Derek. The Evolution of the British Welfare State: A History of Social Policy since the Industrial Revolution. London, MacMillan. 1973. P.49.

of England School for the Sons of the Clergy, now Rossall School, and the Fleetwood Testimonial Schools, both foundations of the 1840s, would be of interest. On the medical front Blackpool, Fleetwood and Lytham all opened hospitals in the middle years of the century. Investigations on these lines would all contribute to a greater understanding of life in pauperdom, of their economy of makeshifts in the Fylde, and of the experience of Christopher Waddington and his peers. Finally, this study has been concerned with a period of change but it closed at a time when change was again on the horizon as foreshadowed by the Goschen Minute. It would be of considerable interest to discover how the pauper descendants of Miller Waddington fared under the "crusade against out-relief."

### **Tailpiece**

As this study was completed the treatment of the sick, the elderly, the unemployed and the idle was again before the public view and there was even mention of the fact, as Malthus had suggested two hundred years ago, that the benefits system of 2010 was encouraging the poor to breed. The welfare state and the National Health Service which in the 1940s finally abolished the Poor Law were in crisis and Sir Frederick, Judge Aschrott and Baron Passfield would have felt at home. Future historians of the relief of poverty will have plenty to write about.

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¹ Poulton-le-Fylde College was amalgamated with Preston Polytechnic in 1975 and subsequently closed. The stock of the college library was transferred to Preston Polytechnic, now the University of Central Lancashire.

Appendix
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**Response to the Poor Law Commission's "Rural Questions"**  
**Provided by the**  
**Reverend Richard Moore – Minister of Lund**  
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Name and County of Parish or Township
Kirkham, Lancashire. Newton-with-Scales and Clifton-with-Salwick

Respondent
Reverend Richard Moore – Minister

Population and Poor Rate
1801: 821 £354. 1811: 911 £471. 1821: 958 £495. 1831: 899 £323

Expenses per Head of Population
1801 – 8s 7d 1811 – 10s 4d 1821 – 10s 0d 1831 – 7s 3d

01 Number of Acres

Newton-with-Scales – 548. Clifton-with-Salwick – 1189. Total – 1737

02 How much Common Land

Newton – Nil. Clifton - 14 acres

Arable: Newton – 240 acres. Clifton – 629 acres

Pasture: Newton – 308 acres. Clifton – 440 acres

Meadow: Newton – Nil. Clifton – 341 acres

03 Landowners Large and Small

Newton – holdings of 60 to 100 acres

Clifton - Mr. Clifton

04 Number of Labourers sufficient for proper Cultivation of Land

Number mentioned in the Text {Query – which text}

05 Number of Agricultural Labourers in the Parish

Newton – 17. Clifton – 35

06 Number of Labourers generally out of Employment, and how maintained in summer and in winter

The working class in the Hundred of Amounderness needs never to be unemployed as weaving is carried on throughout the Hundred

07 How many non-parishioners are there?

Newton – 14. Clifton – 5. Scotch – Nil. Irish – Nil. All English

08

Weekly Wages with and without beer or cider in summer and in winter

Summer – 12s. Winter – 10s

09 Is Piecework general?

No.

10 Annual Earnings of average Labourer excluding Parish Relief

£26 0s 0d per annum. This, I hear, is a low rate.

11

Employment for Women and Children

Reaping at Harvest. Weaving at other times

12 What can women and children under 16 earn, per week, in summer, winter, and harvest, and how employed?

Summer and Winter – weaving – 4s. Harvest, if fair – 12s

13 What on the whole might a labourer's wife earn in a year, and four children, 14, 11, 8, 5 years?

Wife – 3s, 4s, 2s 6d, 6d. Low rates

14 Could the Family subsist on these earnings and, if so, on what food?

Yes. I think most comfortably on oats, bread, potatoes and buttermilk with bacon now and then and a little butcher's meat

15 Could it lay anything by? How much?

Yes, with management

16 What class of persons are the usual owners of cottages?

In general the landowners who let them with farms; and the farmers sub-let to the labourers

17 Are there any cases in your parish where the labourer owns his cottage?

None

18 What is the Annual Rent of Cottages?

£3 to £4 per annum

19 Whether gardens to the cottages?

Generally and a pig is kept by many cottagers

20 Whether any land let to labourers and, if so, at what rent?

In very few instances is land let to labourers inhabiting cottages

21 Are cottages frequently exempted from rates and is their rent often paid by the Parish?

Cottages are rated and the rates paid but the rent is seldom paid by the township

22 Have you a Workhouse?

No

23 Have you any, and how many, able-bodied labourers in the employment of individuals receiving allowance or regular relief from your parish on their own account or on that of their families: and if on account of their families, at what number of children does it begin?

No relief is granted as an annual payment.

24 What number of individuals received relief last week, not being in the Workhouse?

Newton – 13. Clifton – 18

25 Is relief given according to any, and what, scale?

No. Relief is in proportion to the wants of the applicant

26 Is any, and what, attention paid to the character of the applicant, or to the causes of his distress?

An industrious orderly character would be more readily relieved than one who has brought himself into his distress by his idleness and intemperance

27 Whether the system of roundsmen is practised, or has been practised?

Not in these townships, but in Thornton, having been introduced by Mr. Hesketh-Fleetwood

28 Whether labourers are proportioned amongst the occupiers according to the extent of occupation, acreage, rent, or number of houses employed

Not on these townships but in Thornton according to the extent of occupation

29 Is there any, and what, differenced between the wages paid by the employer to the married and unmarried, when employed by individuals?

I believe not.

30 What are your rates per pound by the year at Rack Rent, or how estimated?

From 2s to 2s 6d in the Pound at Rack Rent.

31 Have they increased or decreased during the year compared to the preceding?

The have not.

32 Have you a Select Vestry and assistant overseer and what has been the effect?

There are select vestries in these townships and the poor are better provided for than before they had such vestries.

33 Who decides in your parish how much money shall be raised in each year, or in what period less than a year, for the relief of the poor?

34 Who decides how much of that amount shall be paid by each ratepayer?

The Vestry and the Overseers.

35 If both the Overseers and the Vestry take part in deciding all or any of these matters, state the manner or degree in which they respectively interfere.

The Select Vestry and the Overseers have each an equal voice in these matters.

36 Is the amount of agricultural capital in your neighbourhood increasing or diminishing, and do you attribute such increase or decrease to any cause connected with the administration of the Poor Laws?

It is much the same as it has been for some time. Perhaps as a body they are in a more healthy state, there being fewer sales for distress. Their daughters dress well and if they themselves did not live so well, might save a little money.

37 Is the industry of the labourers in your neighbourhood supposed to be increasing or diminishing, that is, are your labourers supposed to be better or worse workmen than they formerly were?

The labourers are considered to be both more industrious and better workmen than formerly.

38 Do the labourers in your neighbourhood change their services more frequently than formerly? And how do you account for that circumstance?

They do not.

39 Can you state the particulars of any attempt which has been made in your neighbourhood to discontinue the system [after it has once prevailed] of giving to able-bodied labourers in the employ of individuals, parish allowances on their own account and on that of their families?

I cannot.

40 What do you think would be the effects, both immediate and ultimate, of an enactment forbidding such allowances and thus throwing wholly on the parish employment all those whose earnings could not fully support themselves and their families?

Most beneficial: in case the labourer received the whole of his wages from his employer the master would have more interest in looking after his labourer who would be more anxious to please his master.

41 Do you know of any cases in which the clause of Mr. Sturges-Bourne's Act enabling relief to be made by way of loan, has been acted upon?

I do not.

42 Would it be advisable that the parish, instead of giving allowance to the father, should take charge of, feed and employ his children during the day and, if such a practice has prevailed, has it increased or diminished the number of able-bodied applicants for relief?

Both un-natural and impolitic.

43 Is relief in allowance generally given in consequence of the advice or order of the magistrates or under an opinion that the magistrates would make an order if application were made to them?

I think the magistrates would not make an order for relief unless it were proved that an able-bodied man could not find employment or that his earnings and that of his family were not sufficient to keep him.

44 What do you think would be the effect, immediate and ultimate, of making the decision of the Vestry, or Select Vestry, in matters of relief, final?

A great evil: the poor would then be entirely at the mercy of the ratepayers.

45 If an appeal for the Vestry or the Select Vestry shall continue what do you think the effect, immediate and ultimate, of restoring the law . . .so that in any parish having a Workhouse or Poorhouse, the magistrate should not have the power of ordering relief to be given to persons who should refuse to enter the Workhouse or Poor House?

I think the effect in all its bearings would be much the same as it is under the Law as it now stands. Magistrates, at least in this neighbourhood, never order relief when persons have refused to go into the Workhouse who would never have been sent there, I am persuaded, if they could be managed in any way without resorting to this step. The poor will generally be satisfied with less relief in their townships than it would cost in the Workhouse.

46 What do you think would be the effect of an Act enabling parishes to tax themselves to facilitate emigration?

It would generally fail in its objects and might lead to oppression, as the authorities of a parish thus taxed might refuse relief and treat harshly those who would not be banished.

47 What is the allowance received by a woman for a bastard, and does it generally repay her, or more than repay her, for the expense of keeping it and is the existing law for the punishment of a mother whose bastard child becomes chargeable often executed for the first or second offence?

1s 9d is the usual allowance, is sufficient to maintain it. Punishment never inflicted for the first offence, and rarely for the second, but when the law is enforced, it has had a decidedly good effect.

48 What number of bastards have become chargeable to your parish and what has been the expense occasioned by them during each of the last five years, and how much of that expense has been recovered from the putative fathers, and how much from the mothers?

In Newton only one, and expenses regularly paid. In Clifton, 18 – expenses £194 12s 7d. From putative fathers recovered £111 5s 3d. Paid by the Township £83 7s 4d. Expenses after the fathers £18 0s 0d = £101 7s 4d.

49 Can you suggest any, and what, change in the Law respecting bastardy?

The allowance should be uniform. The father should be obliged to take the money to the overseer or take care that when due it should be paid to him, or in default thereof, the overseer should be empowered to apply for a warrant for his apprehension without previous demand; and that the committing justice should have a discretionary power of making the term of imprisonment either two or three months with or without hard labour.

50 Can you suggest any improvement in the mode of keeping, and auditing, and publishing Parish Accounts?

I cannot.

51 Can you suggest any, and what, alterations in the Settlement Laws, for the purpose of extending the market for labour or interfering less with contracts or diminishing fraud or litigation?

Any law to prevent a frequent change in the agricultural servants would be beneficial; as it is either the servant must quit his service before the expiration of the year or he gains a settlement. This often leads to litigation and fraud.

52 Do you think it would be advisable to afford greater facilities than now exist, either for the Union or for the subdivision of parishes or townships for any purpose connected with the management of parochial affairs?

I think that townships and rural need no alteration in this respect, for in general, when a township is extensive there is an overseer for each hamlet who looks after the poor and their necessities, and reports to the Vestry whose orders he executes in his district.

53 Can you give the Commissioners any information respecting the causes and consequences of the agricultural riots and burning of 1830 and 1831?

In this neighbourhood we have had no such disgraceful acts committed.

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Transcribed from microcard of Parliamentary Papers 1834/XXX/282-292 held by the Lancashire County Library Local Studies Library in the Lancashire Record Office.  
No location reference.

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