

**Poor Relief and Welfare: a comparative study of the Belper
and Cheltenham Poor Law Unions, 1780 to 1914**

Thesis submitted for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
at the University of Leicester

by

Christine V. Seal, MPhil (Birmingham)
Centre for English Local History
University of Leicester

December 2009

Christine V. Seal

Poor Relief and Welfare: a comparative study of the Belper and Cheltenham Poor Law Unions, 1780 to 1914

Abstract

There are few local studies of a comparative nature encompassing poor law unions in different regions. This thesis is unique in considering a union in the north midlands and one bordering the south-west, from 1780 to 1914. The provision of relief in Cheltenham and Belper is set in the context of social and economic conditions in these two areas. Were Cheltenham and Belper different in their management of their poor between 1770 and 1914, and how did poor relief in these two unions conform or differ to the specifications laid down in the 1834 Act?

Chapter 1 looks at relief under the old poor law, while chapter 2 considers the manner in which the unions were formed. Chapters 3, 4 and 6 analyse the workhouse and union populations at various times, and chapter 5 investigates charity and its assistance to the poor. Several major themes are looked at including emigration, vagrants, the children and aged.

Cheltenham and Belper managed their poor in a similar manner, except most notably with regard to assisted emigration. Only Cheltenham used this to reduce pauperism. It provided out-relief for a greater number of paupers than Belper, and its expenditure per head was much higher. Workhouse populations were very distinctive in 1851. Belper had a high percentage of children and female able-bodied paupers at that time. By 1911 the workhouse populations had become more similar in both unions, being dominated by the elderly, sick and infirm. The thesis argues for general trends, observes a common trajectory of change, assesses charity alongside formal relief, and shows how interestingly different socio-economic contexts affected the comparative details and nature of pauperism. It thus invites further comparative research into the varied regional application of the 1834 Poor Law Amendment Act, using the benchmarks and salient features highlighted here.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank the Roger Schofield Local Population Studies Research Fund, The Economic History Society and The Royal Historical Society for financial assistance and travel grants.

I am grateful to Clive Leivers of the Family and Community Historical Research Society (FACHRS) for providing information on almshouses in Derbyshire, and to Dick Hunter, also of FACHRS, for sharing his research into vagrancy.

I would like to thank my Supervisor, Professor Keith Snell, for his patience, guidance and encouragement to complete the thesis.

Finally I would like to thank my husband Richard, daughters Emma and Jenny, and my mother, for their support, love and encouragement while researching and writing this thesis.

Dedicated to my father, Donald Henry, who died of cancer, before the completion of this thesis.

Contents

Acknowledgements	ii
List of Figures	v
List of Tables	vi
Abbreviations	viii

Chapter

Introduction	1
Who were the 'poor'?	2
Cheltenham and Belper Communities – Economic and Social Conditions	3
History of the Poor Law	5
Approaches to the Study of Poor Relief in the Past	13
Methodology	22
Structure of the Thesis and Discussion	25
1 Poor Relief in Belper and Cheltenham, 1780 to 1834	28
Socio-economic Structure of Belper and Cheltenham	30
Relief in Eighteenth Century Belper and Cheltenham	36
Poor Relief in Belper and Cheltenham between 1800 and 1834	50
1832 Royal Commission on the Poor Law	58
2 The Formation of Belper and Cheltenham Unions, 1835 to 1845	63
The Poor Law Amendment Act of 1834	64
The Formation of Cheltenham and Belper Unions	66
The Provision of Workhouses in Cheltenham and Belper	75
Relief to Paupers in Belper and Cheltenham	81
3 Poor Relief in Mid-Victorian Belper and Cheltenham	93
Changes to the Poor Law and the Economic Situation in the Mid-Victorian Period	94
The Workhouse Populations in 1851 and 1861	98
Occupations of the Workhouse Populations	104
Admissions and Discharges in the Workhouse	106
Relief to the Poor of Belper and Cheltenham between 1845 and 1860s	110
Emigration in the two Unions	116

4	The Relief of the Poor, 1860s to 1880s	121
	Changes to the Poor Law and the Economies of Cheltenham and Belper	123
	The Economy in Belper and Cheltenham	125
	The Administration of Belper and Cheltenham Unions	127
	The Population of Belper and Cheltenham Workhouse	130
	Occupations of Workhouse Inmates	136
	The Crusade against Out-Relief and Relief Expenditure	138
	Admissions to Cheltenham and Belper Workhouse	145
	The Management of Vagrants in the Unions	147
5	Charity, Relief and the Poor in Belper and Cheltenham	158
	Changes to Charity Regulations	161
	Charities for the Poor	163
	Charity Organisation Society	169
	Almshouse Provision in the Unions	172
	Schools and Education in the two Unions	177
	Self Help and the Friendly Societies	183
6	Provision for the Poor between 1885 and the First World War	188
	Changes to the Provision of Relief during this period	189
	Majority and Minority Reports	191
	Belper and Cheltenham in the 1890s and 1900s	194
	Workhouse and Union Administration Changes	196
	Age and Sex Structure of Workhouse and Union Population	199
	Relief Expenditure and Admissions to the Workhouse	205
	The Aged Paupers	212
	Children in the Union	217
	Conclusion	223
	What happened to Poor Law Provision after 1914?	232
	Bibliography	239

List of Figures

- 1.1 Plan of Cheltenham, 1810
- 1.2 Wirksworth former workhouse
- 1.3 Weekly rotation of diet for Wirksworth workhouse
- 2.1 Map showing Cheltenham union and its parishes
- 2.2 Plan of Belper union showing Belper town and surrounding unions
- 2.3 Map of Belper union parishes in 1840 showing parish boundaries, railway and turnpike roads
- 2.4 Map showing layout of Cheltenham workhouse
- 2.5 Map showing layout of Belper workhouse
- 2.6 Gatehouse entrance to Belper workhouse
- 2.7 Statement of the amount of money levied nationally and amount of money expended for relief of the poor, 1832 to 1836
- 3.1 Map of Belper town in the 1840s
- 3.2 Age profile of Belper and Cheltenham workhouses, 1851 and 1861
- 3.3 Age and sex profile in Belper and Cheltenham workhouses, 1851 and 1861
- 3.4 Percentage in each age group, Cheltenham and Belper union and workhouse population in 1851
- 3.5 Pattern of admissions and discharges for Harriet Toplis
- 3.6 Monthly admissions and discharges for Belper and Cheltenham workhouse in 1858
- 4.1 Age profile of Belper and Cheltenham workhouse population in 1871 census
- 4.2 Age profile of Belper and Cheltenham workhouse population in 1881 census
- 4.3 Comparison of union and workhouse population in 1881
- 4.4 Amounts expended on in-door and out-door relief in England and Wales, 1865 to 1884
- 4.5 Percentage spent in Cheltenham and Belper on out-relief compared to total relief
- 4.6 Quarterly admissions to Belper and Cheltenham workhouse, 1867 to 1870 and 1880
- 4.7 The mean number of vagrants relieved in England and Wales on 1 January and 1 July each year, 1866 to 1900
- 4.8 Belper workhouse, casual stone breaking block, early 1900s
- 5.1 Matthew Smith Almshouses in Belper
- 5.2 Pate's Almshouses, Albion Street, Cheltenham, c1880
- 5.3 Pate's Almshouses, Cheltenham, 2007
- 5.4 Female Orphan Asylum and School of Industry, Winchcombe Street, Cheltenham
- 5.5 Boys Orphan Asylum, Cheltenham
- 6.1 The board at Cheltenham workhouse in April 1898 with part of the workhouse infirmary behind them
- 6.2 Percentage in each age group of workhouse population for 1891, 1901 and 1911 census in Belper and Cheltenham
- 6.3 Percentage of workhouse population in each age group, 1890-2 and 1900-1 admission registers in Belper and Cheltenham
- 6.4 Percentage in each age group for Cheltenham and Belper workhouse and union population in 1901
- 6.5 Pauper boys at The Elms c 1890 – infirmary buildings to left, part of Elms to right
- 7.1 Percentage of population in age group for union and workhouse in Cheltenham and Belper, 1851
- 7.2 Percentage of population in age group for union and workhouse in Cheltenham and Belper, 1901

List of Tables

- 1.1 Earnings for head of household and family income by occupation between 1787 and 1835
- 1.2 Expenditure on poor relief in England and Wales, Derbyshire and Gloucestershire, 1776 and 1783-5
- 1.3 Examples of regular out-relief payments to Wirksworth parish poor and total allowances paid (approximately 1795-7)
- 1.4 *Abstract of Returns* showing expense and maintenance of the poor in England and Wales to 9 May 1804
- 1.5 Total money expended for the maintenance and relief of the poor in parishes and townships in Belper and Cheltenham, 1803
- 1.6 Expenditure on poor relief in England and Wales, Derbyshire and Gloucestershire, 1803 to 1817
- 1.7 Expenditure in Cheltenham parish on permanent and occasional relief between 1814 and 1831
- 1.8 Total number of paupers receiving relief in Crich parish, 1834
- 2.1 Proposed parishes for Cheltenham union, 1835
- 2.2 Population of main parishes and villages in Belper union, 1831
- 2.3 Amount expended for relief of the poor between 1834 and 1836 for Derbyshire and Gloucestershire unions
- 2.4 Amount of money expended for the relief and maintenance of the poor in Cheltenham union during year ended 25 March 1837
- 2.5 Average weekly amount of out-relief for Belper and Cheltenham unions for the period February to July 1838
- 2.6 Number of in-door and out-door paupers between 1836 and 1840 and amount spent on relief in Cheltenham union
- 2.7 Amount expended for relief and maintenance of poor in Derbyshire and Gloucestershire unions, 1834-1840
- 3.1 Composition of indoor population on 1 January in 1859 and 1864 for England and Wales
- 3.2 Age profile of Belper and Cheltenham workhouse, 1851
- 3.3 Percentage in each age group in workhouse populations for adjoining unions to Cheltenham and Belper, and Hampshire and Hertfordshire, 1851
- 3.4 Occupations of paupers in Cheltenham and Belper workhouses, 1844 to 1861
- 3.5 Analysis of specific occupations in Belper workhouse, 1844 to 1861
- 3.6 Quarterly admissions to Cheltenham and Belper workhouses, 1844 and 1858
- 3.7 Paupers admitted to the workhouse by sex and family type
- 3.8 Workhouse and union population in Belper and Cheltenham, 1851 and 1861
- 3.9 Number of paupers of all classes, including children, relieved in the 6th week of the quarter ending Lady-Day, 1846-9
- 3.10 Comparison of relief in Cheltenham union between 1843 and 1852
- 3.11 Number relieved and out-relief payments in Belper and Cheltenham unions, one week in December 1860 to 1865
- 4.1 Population of Cheltenham and Belper workhouses and unions in 1871 and 1881
- 4.2 Sex profile of Belper and Cheltenham workhouse population in 1871 and 1881

- 4.3 Age of workhouse population in Medway, Kent, Leicester, Cheltenham and Belper workhouses and nationally in 1881
- 4.4 The percentage in each age group of workhouse population for the adjoining unions to Cheltenham and Belper in 1881
- 4.5 Occupations of workhouse inmates in Belper and Cheltenham unions, 1867 to 1881 (%)
- 4.6 Poor relief expressed as percentage of total expenditure, 1854 to 1874
- 4.7 Indoor and out-door relief expenditure in Belper and Cheltenham unions for a year, 1865
- 4.8 Out-door relief as a percentage of all relief expenditure in surrounding unions to Cheltenham and Belper
- 4.9 Percentage comparison of September and March quarter admissions in Cheltenham and Belper workhouse, 1867 to 1870 and 1880
- 4.10 Tramps recorded in Cheltenham union, 1882 to 1886
- 5.1 Number of almshouse places in the two unions, 1851, 1881 and 1901, compared to workhouse places
- 6.1 Population of Cheltenham and Belper unions, 1891 to 1911
- 6.2 Percentage of male and female paupers in Cheltenham and Belper workhouse, 1890-1901/2
- 6.3 Percentage of males and females in each age group in Cheltenham and Belper workhouse population and union population in 1901
- 6.4 Poor law expenditure and the rate of pauperism in the 1890s in Belper and Cheltenham unions
- 6.5 Average numbers relieved in Cheltenham workhouse and out-doors for one week in January, 1884 to 1891
- 6.6 A comparison of expenditure on the poor in 1879 and 1909 in Belper union
- 6.7 Total admissions to Belper and Cheltenham workhouse per quarter, between 1890 and 1901
- 6.8 Number of paupers over 65 years of age in Belper and Cheltenham unions
- 7.1 Paupers in England and Wales, Belper and Cheltenham as a percentage of total population and, paupers receiving out-relief as a percentage of total relief in England and Wales, Belper and Cheltenham
- 7.2 Quarterly admissions to Belper and Cheltenham workhouses, 1858 to 1901

Abbreviations

APLC	Assistant Poor Law Commissioner
BPP	British Parliamentary Papers
CEB	Census Enumerator Books
COS	Charity Organisation Society
DLSL	Derbyshire Local Studies Library
DRO	Derbyshire Record Office
GA	Gloucestershire Archives
GLS	Gloucestershire Local Studies (Cheltenham Library)
FACHRS	Family and Community Historical Research Society
LGB	Local Government Board
MP	Member of Parliament
MOH	Ministry of Health
PLB	Poor Law Board
PLC	Poor Law Commission
PRO	Public Record Office
TNA	The National Archives

Introduction

When I came into office I found that the law was being very harshly administered. The old board had been made up of the kind of men who are known as rate savers. They were guardians, not of the poor, but of the rates.¹

Studies of the poor law have tended to concentrate on just a brief period, for example, in 1851 (Goose), or 1876-1881 (Jackson) or 1834-1884 (Driver),² whereas this thesis aims to look at changes in poor relief provision and changing workhouse populations throughout the period from the 1770s through to the First World War. There have been few local studies, particularly of a comparative nature, encompassing unions in different regions of the country.³ A detailed research specifically on two poor law unions in different regions is absent in scholarly literature. Using the unions of Belper in Derbyshire and Cheltenham in Gloucestershire, the thesis will compare poor relief in these two unions against local and regional studies. Through the investigation of these unions, it is hoped that a greater understanding of attitudes and responses to poverty in the late eighteenth century and the Victorian and Edwardian period can be gained. Poor relief was not just about subsidising low wages of labourers and other poor but also, for example, assistance in paying housing rents, providing medical assistance, paying for coffins, emigration and migration.

There has been an enormous amount of research undertaken that is relevant to this study but this sheer volume requires selective research only to be discussed. This thesis is not a general history of the poor law, but is about the economic, social and administrative conditions pertaining in Cheltenham and Belper unions. The main questions the thesis will address are: were Cheltenham and Belper unions different in their management of the poor between the late eighteenth century and 1914, and, secondly, did poor relief in the two

¹ Emmeline Pankhurst describing her experiences as a Poor Law Guardian in her autobiography, *My Own Story*, www.spartacus.schoolnet.co.uk/Lpoor1834.htm (9.1.2006).

² N. Goose, 'Workhouse populations in the mid-nineteenth century: the case of Hertfordshire', *Local Population Studies*, 62 (1999), pp.52-69; D.G. Jackson, 'The Medway union workhouse, 1876-1881: a study based on the admission and discharge registers and the census enumerators' books', *Local Population Studies*, 75 (2005), pp.11-32; F. Driver, *Power and Pauperism: the Workhouse System, 1834-1884* (Cambridge, 1993).

³ A union is defined as a number of parishes joined together under the Poor Law Amendment Act, 1834, to form a 'union' administered by an elected board of guardians.

unions conform or differ from the expectations of the 1834 Act? The thesis will also consider the type of person entering the workhouse, their age, sex and occupation, drawing on census returns and admission registers. Englander mentions that between a quarter and two-fifths of all paupers were children but is this fact confirmed by the Belper and Cheltenham admission registers and census records?⁴

The discussions of Cheltenham and Belper will set the basis for future poor law studies by investigating the various options available to the poor, including the workhouse and charity, across a wide timeframe (1780 to 1914). Future studies will have access to the empirical data on workhouse population, not just for the nineteenth century census but including two twentieth century census, taken from socially and economically different unions in two different regions of England.

Who were the ‘poor’?

What is a pauper and how do we define poverty? There have been various attempts to describe pauperism and poverty, including Lynn Hollen Lees, who describes paupers as ‘first and foremost people in receipt of poor relief, [and] those in care of the state because of their inability to support themselves.’⁵ Poverty on the other hand was described by the 1834 Royal Commission Report as resulting ‘from unemployment, the mal-distribution of labour, and the misuse of wages’ and pauperism seen as arising ‘from individual immorality and fecklessness encouraged by public policy.’⁶ Seebohm Rowntree similarly describes primary poverty as ‘income insufficient to provide even the bare necessities of physical well-being’ and secondary poverty as ‘resulting from unwise expenditure of income which, given highly disciplined budgeting could have kept the family above the poverty line in physical terms.’⁷ Rowntree also identified the five stages of a labouring man’s life and what has been termed the ‘poverty life cycle’. Poverty existed in early childhood and by late childhood the person was working but still living at home, bringing in a much needed extra income and the poverty had eased. With marriage and small

⁴ D. Englander, *Poverty and Poor Law Reform in Nineteenth Century Britain, 1834-1914* (Harlow, 1998), p. 34.

⁵ L.H. Lees, *The Solidarities of Strangers: the English Poor Laws and the People, 1700-1948* (Cambridge, 1998), p. 40.

⁶ Lees, *Solidarities of Strangers*, p. 118.

⁷ M.E. Rose, *The Relief of Poverty, 1834-1914* (1972, London, 1986 edition), p. 29.

children the family was back in the poverty trap and then their children begin to earn and poverty has eased again. By the fifth stage of the lifecycle and old age, poverty has returned again with most elderly unable to work and support themselves.⁸

One other term requires defining and that is: What do we mean by the poor law? Bosanquet, in her analysis of the Royal Commission findings in 1909 defines this as the ‘law which regulates the administration or distribution of assistance from public funds to private individuals on the ground of their failure to provide for themselves.’⁹

Cheltenham and Belper Communities – Economic and Social Conditions

Belper union was chosen initially as the writer was familiar with the union and the knowledge of poor law information available, but also as there was little reference to Derbyshire unions in previous poor law studies. It was an expanding industrial area with the development of cotton manufacture in the mill town of Belper and surrounding area, as well as coal mining, framework knitting, nail making, iron manufacture and quarrying.¹⁰ At least half of the parishes in this union were dependent on agriculture for employment. Belper was classified as a rural union. Cheltenham on the other hand was selected as a union in the south-west of England, with little industry, but with a good survival of poor law records.

As a fashionable spa town with the population rising from just 3,076 in 1801 to 35,051 in 1851, Cheltenham’s main employment was to cater for the visitors and wealthy retired population through retailing or service occupations, such as domestic servant (the largest employer), laundress, coachman or gardener.¹¹ Building trades were also large employers with the requirement for new large houses. There were brick and tile-makers, manufacturers of ornamental ironwork and stone quarrying at Leckhampton. Agricultural employment was the main occupation in the surrounding parishes to Cheltenham town.¹² One of the problems for Cheltenham was a lack of an economic base and this became a problem at the beginning of the twentieth century, with high levels of unemployment and

⁸ H. Osborn, ‘In darkest London’, *Ancestors* (2008), p. 28.

⁹ H. Bosanquet, *The Poor Law Report of 1909* (London, 1909), p. 1.

¹⁰ Framework knitting was a declining industry in the nineteenth century as was the cottage industry of nail making later in the century.

¹¹ W. Page (ed.), *V.C.H. Gloucestershire*, 2 (1907), p. 177, Gloucestershire Population Tables 1801-1901 on <http://coaley.net/glospop/tabc.htm> (7.4.10).

¹² *Kelly’s Directory of Gloucestershire* (1842 and 1851).

poverty. Light industry took off after the First World War but there was little industrial or manufactory employment available in the town. House prices slumped with over 800 large houses empty, but there was a shortage of smaller ones. In 1801 there were just 710 houses in the town of Cheltenham but by 1836 there were 6,014 houses, with large scale estates of Lansdown, Pittville, Suffolk, Bayshill and the Park, built with large houses. The *Vision of Britain* web page described Cheltenham in the nineteenth century as a ‘town of handsome squares, crescents and terraces.’¹³ Dr Garrett describes the inhabitants of Cheltenham in 1901 as

those whose gentility is founded upon family connections or sufficient private means...a large professional element...local clergy and the members of the other learned professions...staff of the several great colleges and schools. The higher ranks of the commercial class furnish a further number of charming and accomplished people.¹⁴

In 1875, the *Cheltenham Examiner* described an increase in middle-class households and of those employing one or two servants.¹⁵ Education became a vital employer in Cheltenham with the establishment of Cheltenham College in 1841, the Anglican Teaching Training College in 1847, and Cheltenham Ladies College in 1854. The town relied less on its leisure industry and more on its educational establishments to provide employment for the many servants in the union.¹⁶ At the other extreme were the areas of Fairview, St Pauls and St Peters, an area formed from 1806 on the northern fields of the town. This became the area where the poor lived and in 1840, where the workhouse was built. More than three-quarters of the union population in 1841 lived in the parish of Cheltenham and the remaining quarter in the surrounding parishes.

Belper’s social make-up was completely different to that of Cheltenham. The population was described as composed of eight per cent from the lower working class.¹⁷ The village of Belper in 1773 comprised just 550 people but with the building of the cotton mills in the Derwent valley the population of Belper had grown to 4,500. Unlike Cheltenham, Belper town comprised just one-fifth of the union population in 1841. Belper was a union with an industrial base, including the cotton mills, coal mines, hosiery,

¹³ www.visionofbritain.org.uk (3.11.2005).

¹⁴ S. Blake and R. Beacham, *The Book of Cheltenham* (Buckingham, 1982), p. 11.

¹⁵ *Cheltenham Examiner*, 22 September 1875, p. 4.

¹⁶ G. Hart, *A History of Cheltenham* (Leicester, 1965), pp. 93-5.

¹⁷ Belper Historical Society, *Belper, a study of its History based on Visual Evidence* (Belper, 1981), p. 17.

farming, quarries and four market towns (Alfreton, Ripley, Wirksworth, Belper), including Belper. The Strutt family owned the cotton mills around Belper and Milford, and Thomas Evans built mills around Duffield.

The Strutts were described as ‘good paternalistic employers whose concern for a control of the lives of their employees extended beyond the door of the mill to include the provision of education, housing, churches, chapels, a hospital and leisure facilities.’¹⁸ Thomas Evans also created housing for his mill workers.¹⁹ Belper makes for an easier comparison to the study of Merthyr Tydfil by T. Thomas, than Cheltenham, being an industrial and agricultural union. Its board of guardians was composed of mill owners, landowners, and the majority of the guardians were farmers. Cheltenham on the other hand had no industry and the majority of the board was composed of gentlemen and trades people, with a small number of farmers.

History of the Poor Law

One fifth of national expenditure in 1830 was attributed to the poor rate and this was one of the reasons for the Royal Commission Report on the Poor and the subsequent legislation of the Poor Law Amendment Act of 1834. Other factors affecting relief of the poor included a rising population in the country, changes to agricultural employment and decreases in real wages.²⁰ The main argument in the 1834 report related to payment of outdoor relief to able-bodied men, although mention is made of the aged and infirm. The ‘less eligibility’ rule²¹ was to be actively promoted so as to reduce expenditure on relief from over £7,000,000 in 1831-32.²² Relief was only to be provided in the workhouse for able-bodied men and destitution was the criterion for relief. The 1834 Act brought a change in the equal treatment of men and women. Under the new law, able-bodied men, and women with bastards, were discriminated against by the denial of out-door relief and admittance to the workhouse as the only means of assistance.

¹⁸ W.R. Watson, *Illustrated History of Duffield* (Derby, 1986), p. 111.

¹⁹ http://www.derbyphotos.co.uk/areas_a_h/darley.htm (14.6.2005).

²⁰ Englander, *Poverty and Poor Law Reform*, p. 3.

²¹ S.G. and E.O.A. Checkland (eds), *The Poor Law Report of 1834* (London, 1974), p. 38. The less eligibility rule, was that those in the workhouse were to experience conditions inferior to those of the lowest paid worker outside it.

²² Checkland, *Poor Law Report*, p. 128.

The main drive of the 1834 Act was to abolish out-door relief²³ but did this happen? Did government and local authorities actually see a reduction in poor relief expenditure following the introduction of the new Act? If the figures provided by Englander were correct, then there was a reduction to £4.5 - £5 million per annum between 1834 -1844 and in the period 1844-1864, a slight increase showing average expenditure of £5-£6 million per annum.²⁴ Norfolk, a rural county, saw out-door relief payments start to reduce from 75.5 per cent of all applicants in 1840 to 64 per cent in 1843, but to then rise and peak at 86.4 per cent in the 1870s, at a time when there was a crusade against out-door relief payments.²⁵ Can we rely on the statistics provided by the central board to be a true reflection of what was happening throughout England and Wales? Digby points out that statistical returns were collated very differently in 1840 compared to the later nineteenth century, and may not be reliable.²⁶ Snell indicates that the number receiving indoor relief increased as the nineteenth century progressed whereas out-door relief declined.²⁷ He attributed this partly to the number of workhouse places available, which increased as new or additional workhouses were built. This is backed up with data that indicates that out-relief was approximately 85% of all relief received in 1870, decreasing to 78% in 1880.²⁸ It had been thought that once the workhouse was complete, that poor relief could be abolished. This proved to be incorrect and the reality was very different, with some unions refusing to build a workhouse, and some Guardians were not in agreement with the Poor Law Commission. Opposition to the Act in the industrial north was generally on the grounds that local initiatives would disappear and enforcement of the Act would come from a central body.²⁹

Trade downturn, high prices or poor weather resulted in huge demands for relief. This happened in east London in 1855, 1860-1 and 1866-7 and resulted in food riots and a

²³ Out-door relief was the provision of money or bread to a pauper in their own home.

²⁴ Englander, *Poverty and Poor Law Reform*, p.15.

²⁵ Annual Reports of PLC, PLB, LGB; A. Digby, 'The rural poor law' in D. Fraser (ed.) *The New Poor Law in the Nineteenth Century* (London, 1976), p. 162.

²⁶ A. Digby, 'The rural poor law' in D. Fraser (ed.), *The New Poor Law in the Nineteenth Century* (London, 1976), p. 163.

²⁷ K.D.M. Snell, *Parish and Belonging: Community, Identity and Welfare in England and Wales, 1700-1950* (Cambridge, 2006), p. 218 and graph 5.4 showing mean number of paupers on in and out relief.

²⁸ Snell, *Parish and Belonging*, p. 220. See also Hurren's discussion on the crusade and the abolition of out relief in *Protesting about Pauperism: Poverty, Politics and Poor Relief in late-Victorian England, 1870-1900*.

²⁹ Englander, *Poverty and Poor Law Reform*, p. 16.

refusal to pay rates. In 1843 the *Cheltenham Examiner* reported on employment of the poor, stating that ‘the country is in very great distress.’³⁰ A week later, the same newspaper reported that 300-400 men were employed on labour tasks but work was refused to many.³¹ Thomas, in a study of Merthyr Tydfil union, found an industrial and coal mining area with plenty of employment and high wages, and little need for a workhouse.³² What type of board of guardians were they and did they take notice of the Assistant Commissioner, or were they stubborn? The guardians in Merthyr union were stubborn, preferred the old poor law system and, until the incidence of high unemployment and epidemics, refused to build a workhouse. Thomas found that the functioning of the board of guardians in the early years of the new poor law ‘reveals the attitudes of ironmasters, landowners, property owners, trades and businessmen, who, as guardians, were anxious to keep down the poor rates while ensuring that the provision of poor relief remained as flexible as possible.’³³ Thomas’ findings also show that increases in poor relief occurred in the 1840s as a result of industrial recessions and of sickness, mainly epidemics of infectious diseases.³⁴ On the other hand, a decrease in poor relief occurred when there was prosperity in the iron industry around 1844-6, mainly through the growth of the railways and a requirement for iron and secondly, when the workhouse was eventually built in 1852-4.³⁵ Did Belper experience these increases and decreases in poor relief during the 1840s? For Merthyr Tydfil union, the trade recession in the iron industry in 1842 brought strikes and large numbers laid off, and with this, the problem of providing work to such large numbers. It was estimated that able-bodied pauperism in that union increased ten-fold.³⁶ Further strikes broke out in 1850 and 1858 but during the 1870s both coal mining and iron manufacture were depressed, giving rise to high unemployment, wage cuts and strikes.³⁷ Other years of recession occurred in 1879-80, 1886-7, 1895-6 and 1905-6. Rather later, the Lancashire cotton famine of 1860-5 had a huge impact on the numbers entering the workhouse in Lancashire and other cotton manufacturing unions, with the workhouses unable to accommodate all

³⁰ *Cheltenham Examiner*, 25 January 1843.

³¹ *Cheltenham Examiner*, 1 February 1843.

³² T. Thomas, *Poor Relief in Merthyr Tydfil Union in Victorian Times* (Glamorgan, 1992), pp. 21-2.

³³ Thomas, *Merthyr Tydfil*, p. 27.

³⁴ Thomas, *Merthyr Tydfil*, p. 26.

³⁵ Thomas, *Merthyr Tydfil*, p. 26-7.

³⁶ Thomas, *Merthyr Tydfil*, p. 29.

³⁷ Thomas, *Merthyr Tydfil*, p.116.

those out of work, but was this famine in the north solely confined there or was Belper, as a cotton mill town, experiencing a similar situation? In 1862, half a million people in Lancashire received relief through the union or other charitable resources, representing approximately one quarter of the population of Lancashire. By the middle of the 1860s the number on relief had fallen to 100,000.³⁸ The *Fifteenth Annual Report of the Poor Law Board* lists the unions that were greatly distressed at this time and Belper does not feature in the list. The only Derbyshire union experiencing distress was Glossop on the northern boundary of the county near to the Cheshire and Lancashire unions.³⁹ Mass unemployment in the 1880s led to riots with the Local Government Board producing a Circular advising guardians to draw up emergency work schemes for those of good character who found themselves temporarily out of work.⁴⁰

Fraser, Novak and Rose acknowledged that the new Poor Law failed in its attempts to curtail or eliminate out-door relief.⁴¹ Recent research by Elizabeth Hurren has highlighted the importance that the crusade on out-relief played in reducing out-relief expenditure, particularly in some parts of England and Wales. Hurren reviews the stance that the Brixworth guardians took to almost eliminate outdoor relief in the union, but this had a knock-on effect in the surrounding unions, by forcing paupers to migrate or accept the workhouse in their own union.⁴² The strict policy found in Brixworth was not applied the same in every union, and indeed Cheltenham and Belper will show that they adopted a different way to manage its increasing number of poor. There was some success in reducing the number on poor relief from 39.1 out-door paupers per 1000 of population in 1871 to 10.5 in 1914.⁴³ In the clampdown on out-relief, able-bodied widows with children, who had been previously exempt, now came under the out-relief crusade. Thane quotes the

³⁸ A. Brundage, *The English Poor Laws, 1700-1930* (Basingstoke, 2002), p.105.

³⁹ *Fifteenth Annual report of the Poor Law Board, 1862-3*, Vol. XXII (1863), p. 16.

⁴⁰ GA, G/CH 57/4, Circular from J. Chamberlain, Local Government Board, *Pauperism and Distress* dated 15 March 1886.

⁴¹ D. Fraser, *The Evolution of the British Welfare State: a history of social policy since the industrial revolution*, (Basingstoke, 2003); T. Novak, *Poverty and the State: an historical sociology*, (Milton Keynes, 1988); Rose, *Relief of Poverty*.

⁴² See E. Hurren, *Protesting about Pauperism: Poverty, Politics and Poor Relief in late-Victorian England, 1870-1900* (Woodbridge, 2007); E. Hurren, 'Welfare-to-work schemes and a crusade against outdoor relief in the Brixworth union, Northamptonshire in the 1880s', *Family and Community History*, 4 (2001), pp. 19-30; E. Hurren, 'Agricultural trade unionism and the crusade against outdoor relief: poor law politics in the Brixworth union, Northamptonshire, 1870-75', *Agricultural History Review*, 48 (2000), pp. 200-222.

⁴³ Englander, *Poverty and Poor Law Reform*, p. 23.

number receiving assistance as falling from 166,407 in 1871 to 53,371 in 1891, a drop of over 100,000 in twenty years.⁴⁴

Exemption clauses in the Prohibitory Orders of 1844 and 1852 allowed for cases of sickness to be given out-relief. Williams' evidence for reducing out-relief was based on statistics published by the Poor Law Commission and Poor Law Board, but were these figures misleading and could able-bodied men be receiving out-relief by way of sickness in the family? There were regional contrasts in the way the poor law was operated. For example, in London there was more of a distinct practice for offering the 'house' only, whereas in the North and in Wales, there was opposition or reluctance by the board of guardians to implement the workhouse test or build a workhouse. Although there were not outright opposition from Lancashire and the West Riding, no new workhouses were built and some guardians sold off poor houses, leaving few workhouse places available.

The main principle of the 1834 Act was one of centralization, but Fraser states that 'powers of discretion remained in local hands,'⁴⁵ while Kidd was firmly of the opinion that the guardians possessed a certain amount of local autonomy, with day-to-day management of the poor in union hands.⁴⁶ The three central authorities in different periods, the Poor Law Commission (PLC, 1834-1847), the Poor Law Board (PLB, 1847-1871) and the Local Government Board (LGB, 1871-1918), tried 'to bring about a system of regulated and standardised relief across the localities of England and Wales' but the 'policy...failed by 1875 to standardise regional poor relief practices.'⁴⁷ The central board required 'the administration of the poor law [be] uniform...The pauper must not be pampered in one union and starved in another. Every statutory or administrative rule should be rigidly carried out in every part of the kingdom.'⁴⁸ But Fraser was more of the opinion that 'uniformity and centralisation...[were] more image than reality.'⁴⁹ Local control was vitally important but time and again it has been found that Belper and Cheltenham guardians sought advice or approval from the central board to an action under the 1834 Act.

⁴⁴ P. Thane, 'Women and the poor law in Victorian and Edwardian England', *History Workshop*, 6 (1978), pp. 30-51.

⁴⁵ D. Fraser, *The New Poor Law in the Nineteenth Century*, (London, 1981), p. 19.

⁴⁶ A. Kidd, *State, Society and the Poor* (Basingstoke, 1999), p. 2.

⁴⁷ Snell, *Parish and Belonging*, p. 233.

⁴⁸ D. Fraser, 'The English poor law and the origins of the British welfare state' in W.J. Mommsen and W. Mock (eds), *The Emergence of the Welfare State in Britain and Germany* (London, 1981), p. 20.

⁴⁹ Fraser, 'Origins of the British welfare state' p. 21.

It is very much the 'local' administration that was at the forefront of assistance to the poor. It was the locals, in the post-1834 period the elected board of guardians, who decided at what level to fund claims for relief and therefore this was bound to bring about non-standard relief payments. Lees identified four main problems affecting society, that of large families, inadequate wages, cyclical unemployment and illness. Lees covers a very wide period in her study of poor law and people, from the 1700 to the beginning of the welfare state in 1948.⁵⁰

Driver's discussion is not about the workhouse system from the perspective of the pauper, as little has been written on the pauper inmate, but he 'explores the changing nature of workhouse policy and practice in England and Wales during the fifty years which followed the passing of the 1834 Poor Law.'⁵¹ Driver argues that his 'analysis of patterns of relief regulation and workhouse construction...offers a genuinely national map of the workhouse system.'⁵² This, he says, replaces conventional history of the central board versus the local policy and practice. He uses Huddersfield as the focus for a study of poor law policy and practice and local resistance to the central board and examines the methods adopted by Huddersfield Union from a 'local' view, but he stresses that it was vital to set the 'local' in the national context. Driver suggested that the new poor law was a 'history of power relations – the power inscribed in administrative texts, the calculating power of institutional design, sometimes the power of popular resistance, frequently the power of local recalcitrance and, for the most part, the powerlessness of paupers themselves.'⁵³

The central theme of *The Workhouse System* was the process of change where Anne Crowther writes a general history of poor law to show how diverse relief practices were and the social importance of poor law institutions. As Crowther states

Workhouses have usually been regarded as uniquely reprehensible, and studied in terms of their repressiveness, or in decline, as part of the break-up of the poor law. This ignores the continuity of the workhouses even after the abolition of the poor law.⁵⁴

The main problem of the workhouse system was that it was almost obsolete at the time it was thought of. The workhouse was developed as a solution to the growing problem of

⁵⁰ Lees, *Solidarities of Strangers*, p. 9

⁵¹ Driver, *Power and Pauperism*, p. 4.

⁵² Driver, *Power and Pauperism*, p. 165.

⁵³ Driver, *Power and Pauperism*, p. 165.

⁵⁴ M.A. Crowther, *The Workhouse System 1834-1929: the History of an English Social Institution* (London, 1981), p. 4.

rural pauperism but was created when rural pauperism was in decline but urban and industrial poor increased. The urban poor could not be accommodated in the workhouse as there was insufficient accommodation for all who found themselves in dire straits.⁵⁵

Karel Williams, on the other hand, criticises the traditional narrative and descriptive history of institutions which have dominated historiography of the post-1834 poor law. He reasons that ‘historiography is the prisoner of confused and incoherent received ideas’, and the new way forward should be to ‘use formal social scientific concepts from economics and sociology to define new questions and obtain new answers.’⁵⁶ Williams criticises historians for using local studies on the operation of the poor law citing Fraser’s investigation into over thirty local studies. Williams also criticises the Webbs for not outlining the ‘effects produced by the allowance system and the mechanisms through which these effects were realised.’⁵⁷ Brundage on the other hand, provides us with an overview of poor relief from the eighteenth century to the twentieth century, highlighting changes to relief policy over this period, from the local provision to a centralised one, and from a system introduced to a largely rural population, but one that changed to domination in the late nineteenth century by the urban environment. Through various books and articles, Brundage discusses the human and economic side of pauperism but he found that investigation of the poor law concentrated on the administrative or political system of poor law. Rose, Snell and King have also concentrated on the economic effects, such as settlement and relief in aid of wages.⁵⁸

For the poor to survive they needed what has been termed an ‘economy of makeshifts’, and Kidd was referring to provision by both the state and private sectors. The mixed economy consisted of earned income, savings, loans and support from kin and neighbours, seeking assistance from guardians in times of hardship and benefits from charity.⁵⁹ What did the state provide? This was little more than what could be termed a ‘safety’ net in hard times, through either out-relief or in-door relief in the workhouse. The charity chapter is a move away from just discussing poor relief and looks at the economy of

⁵⁵ Crowther, *The Workhouse System*, p. 271.

⁵⁶ K. Williams, *From Pauperism to Poverty* (London, 1981), p. 2.

⁵⁷ Williams, *From Pauperism to Poverty*, p. 21.

⁵⁸ Brundage, *English Poor Laws*; K.D.M. Snell, *Annals of the Labouring Poor: social change and agrarian England, 1660-1900*, (Cambridge, 1985); S. King, *Poverty and Welfare in England, 1700-1850: a Regional Perspective* (Manchester, 2000) ; Rose, *Relief of Poverty*.

⁵⁹ Kidd, *State, Society*, p. 2.

makeshifts and other means to assist the poor to manage. Obviously some of the charitable means were only available to a limited number of poor, and usually the deserving poor, but by a combination of these economies the poor were better able to manage. The economy of makeshifts was also known as ‘strategies of the poor for material survival...Making shift in the English context was therefore evolved into a perception of the use of numerous, often local, resources of the poor over time to ensure the survival of individuals and families.’⁶⁰ King undertakes a micro study of Cowpe linking formal and informal charity with parish payments and employer wages from the mills. Margaret Hanly focuses on Lancashire, and uses early nineteenth century census of the poor and the record books of Quaker women who dispensed to charity, to see how the Quaker scheme assisted the poor. Sarah Lloyd, using the example of the Welsh School in London, investigates the place of the formal voluntary charity in assisting the children and their families to cope.⁶¹

The 1834 Act was written with southern rural counties in mind. The Midland counties, West Riding of Yorkshire, and Lancashire saw mainly temporary unemployment as a result of trade cycle fluctuations, but also of mechanisation, which affected, in particular, framework knitters, lacemakers, and handloom weavers. Belper was an area affected by trade fluctuations in the cotton industry, and a number of framework knitters appear regularly in the admission registers and census enumerator books. Derby, Nottingham and Leicester all accepted the 1834 Act with little opposition.⁶² Leicester, seen initially as a model union, completed its workhouse early but the Assistant Poor Law Commissioner (APLC) found relief given without requiring a labour task or meeting the less eligibility rule. The workhouse held 500 but could not cope when huge numbers were out of work in this textile centre. The number requiring relief in 1847-8 was above 17,000, representing a quarter to one-third of the population.⁶³ A depression in Leicester in 1857-8

⁶⁰ King, *Poor in England*, pp. 1 and 13.

⁶¹ For other studies on the economy of makeshifts see M. Hanly, ‘The economy of makeshifts and the role of the poor law: a game of chance’ in S. King and A. Tomkins (eds), *The Poor in England, 1700-1850: and economy of makeshifts* (Manchester, 2003), pp. 76-99; S. Lloyd, ‘Agents in their own concerns?’ Charity and the economy of makeshifts in eighteenth-century Britain’ in King and Tomkins, *Poor in England*, pp. 100-136; N. Goose, Summary of ‘Importance of the English Almshouse as part of the Mixed Economy of Welfare’, FACHRS Conference, FACHRS Newsletter. Joanna Innes uses the term ‘mixed economy of welfare’ to describe the various benefits open to paupers to survive their lack of income. D.H. Hufton, *The Poor of Eighteenth-century France, 1750-1789* (Oxford, 1974), p. 367.

⁶² D. Ashforth, ‘Urban poor law’ in D. Fraser (ed.) *The New Poor Law in the Nineteenth Century* (London, 1976), p. 131.

⁶³ Ashforth, ‘Urban poor law’, p. 134.

saw Guardians strictly apply the workhouse test to able-bodied paupers and, of the 183 applicants for relief, only 21 accepted the workhouse.⁶⁴ Ashforth cites the case of Ashton-under-Lyne, which had a population of 102,000 in 1841, but only 145 indoor paupers could be accommodated in the workhouse. This represented just 0.14 per cent of the population.⁶⁵

Approaches to the Study of Poor Relief in the Past

King describes several approaches to the study of poor relief in the past. Previous research has often ignored the poor themselves and concentrated on the legal framework and charitable provision.⁶⁶ King does not address the development of the welfare state, as this is of a later period and neither does he write the history of poor law. Settlement and removal are not covered in depth, and vagrancy, or London poor are omitted in his discussion on poverty. What King does argue for is more research on the north and Midlands through 'detailed contextualised analysis of both poverty and welfare structures.'⁶⁷ Only a small part of King's book is appropriate to this study, that on 1834-1850. The administrative approach, with emphasis on the local or national administration of the poor, has been the approach used by the Webbs,⁶⁸ while Driver, Goose, Hinde and Turnbull, and Jackson have looked at institutional histories of workhouses and their inmates.⁶⁹ Studies in the past have concentrated on just one of the approaches King describes, some have integrated all the approaches, while local studies on the management of the poor are few and far between. King's research is more than just a local analysis of poor law provision but instead is an 'attempt to draw a systematic regional picture of poverty, the character and role of the communal welfare system and the nature of the wider economy of makeshifts.'⁷⁰ In order to create sub-regions for discussion and analysis King

⁶⁴ Ashforth, 'Urban poor law', p. 137.

⁶⁵ Ashforth, 'Urban poor law', p. 133.

⁶⁶ King, *Poverty and Welfare*, pp. 3-4.

⁶⁷ King, *Poverty and Welfare*, p. 13.

⁶⁸ S. & B. Webb, *English Poor Law History Part II: the last hundred years, Vol. 1* (1929, London, 1963 edition).

⁶⁹ Driver, *Power and Pauperism*; Goose, 'Workhouse populations Hertfordshire'; Jackson, 'The Medway Union, pp.11-32; A. Hinde and F. Turnbull, 'The populations of two Hampshire workhouses, 1851-1861', *Local Population Studies*, 61 (1998), pp. 38-53; D. G. Jackson, 'Kent workhouse populations in 1881: a study based on the census enumerators' books', *Local Population Studies*, 69 (2002), pp. 57-66.

⁷⁰ King, *Poverty and Welfare*, p. 4. See also S. King and A. Tomkins (eds), *The Poor in England, 1700-1850: an Economy of Makeshifts* (Manchester, 2003). For further discussions on the economy of makeshift see

drew a line from Lincolnshire through Leicestershire, Wiltshire and Somerset. This enabled him to look at poor provision in the south and eastern counties and compare the region to the north and west counties, and to create sub-regions for discussion and analysis. The south and east were characterised by low wages and few employment opportunities for women. Based on King's sub-division both Cheltenham and Belper unions fall into the north and west division.

Although brief reference will be made to bad behavior, there were few references to this in Cheltenham and Belper unions to enable a detailed examination and comparison to be made to Green's work on bad behavior to the London workhouses.⁷¹ Green explores the role of 'insubordination' in London workhouses in the years after the new poor law showing how and why problems of discipline emerged, the number of paupers sent to prison for offences in the workhouse and the issues that gave rise to their actions.⁷²

Research in the past has tended to concentrate on the arable areas of the south and east, and Hallas addresses this imbalance by her study of poverty in the southern uplands of Wensleydale and Swaledale, both pre- and post-1834.⁷³ Employment in these upland areas was sustained through textile work and by-employments. The main employment in Swaledale was lead mining and for Wensleydale, agriculture, lead mining, crafts and services. Lees found that most research has concentrated on a town, region or institution for just a few decades and therefore the wider picture is rarely shown, yet how do we understand the 'regional' structures of poverty and welfare and decide the character of a region?⁷⁴ With more than 15,000 parishes, King thinks that this is impossible for an individual researcher.⁷⁵ For a feasible research project a smaller number of parishes were

edited chapter, S. Lloyd, 'Agents in their own concerns?', pp. 100-136 in King and Tomkins; M. Hanly, 'The economy of makeshifts', pp. 76-99 in King and Tomkins.

⁷¹ D.R. Green, 'Pauper protests: power and resistance in early nineteenth-century London workhouses', *Social History*, 31 (2006), p. 139. Reference will be made to bad behaviour by Harriet Toplis in the case study of her frequent admission to the workhouse in chapter 3.

⁷² Green, 'Pauper protests', p. 139. Reference will also be made to the discussion in D.R. Green, *From Artisans to Paupers: economic change and poverty in London, 1790-1870* (Aldershot, 1995).

⁷³ C.S. Hallas, 'Poverty and pragmatism in the northern uplands of England: the North Yorkshire Pennines c.1770-1900', *Social History*, 25 (2000), pp. 67-84.

⁷⁴ Lees, p. 9.

⁷⁵ King, *Poverty and Welfare*, p. 7. By the 1830s there were over 15,000 parishes, townships and other bodies providing poor relief to the population of England and Wales. Of these 15,000 parishes just over 1,500 parishes contained over 800 people, mainly in the urban areas.

appropriate but we must ask the question as to whether this is truly representative of the region as a whole.

Digby, in a regional case study of the eastern counties, found little growth in non-agricultural employment in these counties. Norwich saw a decline in its alternative employment of worsted manufacture, and Suffolk of its textile industry. It was mainly a case of under-employment in the eastern counties and Digby looks at social policy in this area, after the 1834 Act.⁷⁶ Digby found that over 75 per cent of guardians in rural areas declared their occupation as 'farmer'.⁷⁷ What was happening to poor relief in the eastern counties at this time? Digby shows that between 1842-6, Norfolk and Suffolk increased the amount of relief paid in sickness to twice as high as the rest of England and Wales. There were no epidemics at the time so she has assumed that able-bodied paupers were receiving outdoor relief even though they were prohibited from receiving it at this time.⁷⁸ Is what Digby describes as 'outdoor relief' being given to the able-bodied on the pretence of sickness. Is this evident in other parts of England and Wales?

Another regional study was that of Apfel and Dunkley on Bedfordshire, but here there appears to be 'a harmony of interests existing between the two levels of authority' with the guardians and central board wanting to reduce the rates.⁷⁹ Apfel and Dunkley consider the impact of the poor law in Bedfordshire from the inception of the new poor law in 1834 to 1847. In their case study of the county, they found increasing poverty in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century, for this was very much an agricultural area, mainly arable. Before 1834, expenditure on the poor had doubled for the period 1800-1820, to a peak in 1830 of £84,514.⁸⁰ The effect of the new Act was to reduce expenditure in 1837 to just £37,530 and per capita to 8s (previously in 1834, 16/4d).⁸¹ Apfel and Dunkley concluded that the board of guardians in Bedfordshire 'made genuine efforts to operate within the basic framework of official policy.'⁸²

⁷⁶ A. Digby, 'The labour market and the continuity of social policy after 1834: the case of the eastern counties', *The Economic History Review*, 28 (1975), p. 70.

⁷⁷ Digby, 'The labour market', p. 71.

⁷⁸ Digby, 'The Labour market', p. 73.

⁷⁹ W. Apfel and P. Dunkley, 'English rural society and the new poor law: Bedfordshire, 1834-47', *Social History*, 10 (1995), p. 67.

⁸⁰ Apfel and Dunkley, 'English Rural Society', p.39

⁸¹ Apfel and Dunkley, 'English Rural Society', p.40

⁸² Apfel and Dunkley, 'English Rural Society', p.67.

The 'crusade' was a means to cut poor relief expenditure from 1871 onwards by refusing out-relief and using the workhouse test as a test of destitution.⁸³ The Charity Organisation Society (COS) supported the crusade and by 1874 the Cheltenham COS were recommending that persons of bad character should only be relieved in the workhouse.⁸⁴ Hurren used the example of Brixworth union to explain how brutal the campaign against out-relief was and the effects on the population. Brixworth was regarded as one of the top 'crusading' unions in England and Wales.⁸⁵ The discussion will show in chapter 4 that the crusade had only limited success in reducing out relief expenditure, and Cheltenham and Belper's reduction in relief expenditure were nowhere near so harsh as Brixworth.

The central theme of Robert Humphreys' *Sin, Organized Charity and the Poor Law in Victorian England* was the process of change under the poor law. The book was a history of the poor law but emphasizes the role of the central body and the continuance of the workhouse even after the abolition of the poor law.⁸⁶ The other theme was a discussion of poor relief as managed by The COS. Humphreys choose to investigate nine provincial societies and many of these societies were affiliated to London COS.⁸⁷ Why did Humphrey not choose to include Cheltenham in his study? This was certainly down to the survival of COS records with only a few case study papers and correspondence surviving.

Vagrancy was a topic frequently raised centrally but it was not until the 1870s that 572 unions out of 643 unions provided vagrant or casual wards. The circular letter from the PLB in November 1868 issued advice on the treatment of vagrants.⁸⁸ Vorspan, in an analysis of vagrancy in the late-Victorian and Edwardian period, describes the conditions for detaining a vagrant and the ticket system introduced in some counties.⁸⁹ Gloucestershire was one of the first counties to introduce the ticket system in 1882 and in

⁸³ Mackinnon, p. 607.

⁸⁴ Mackinnon, p. 606.

⁸⁵ E. Hurren, 'A radical historian's pursuit of rural history: the political career and contribution of Reverend Dr John Charles Cox, c.1844 to 1919', *Rural History*, 19 (2008), p. 93; Hurren, *Protesting about Pauperism* and other papers cited previously.

⁸⁶ R. Humphreys, *Sin, Organized Charity and the Poor Law in Victorian England* (Basingstoke, 1995), pp. 4-6.

⁸⁷ Humphreys, *Sin, Organised Charity*, p. 65. The nine COS were Birkenhead, Birmingham, Brighton, Leamington, Liverpool, Manchester, Oxford, Reading and Southampton.

⁸⁸ *Twenty-first Annual Report of the Poor Law Board, 1868-9*, Vol. XXVIII, letter dated 28 November 1868, pp.75-6.

⁸⁹ R. Vorspan, 'Vagrancy and the New Poor Law in late-Victorian and Edwardian England', *The Historical Review* 92 (1977), p. 61. For an explanation of the 'ticket' system see chapter 4.

discussions in chapter four it will be found that this is one area in which Cheltenham was very different from Belper.

Emigration and migration were two ways for a union to rid itself of surplus poor. Emigration through the poor law was available until at least the 1870s, but numbers of emigrants were at their highest in the 1830s. Digby shows that 6,403 paupers from twenty counties in southern England in 1835-7 were assisted by their parish to emigrate, with two-thirds of this number coming from Norfolk and Suffolk.⁹⁰ Landowners were encouraged to pay for emigration to cut high numbers of surplus labour. In fact, in Cheltenham emigration did not start to become a real option until the 1850s and in this respect, Cheltenham was very different from the national picture. Data and material on emigration are sparse and hence only limited research into the numbers emigrating has been undertaken. Although Hill's study of Dorking in Surrey is just outside the thesis period, the journal article and its findings were very relevant to what was happening in Cheltenham in the 1850s. Hill concluded that the parish was not just ridding itself of surplus labour, but assisting the poor to improve their lives. The Dorking scheme is discussed in relation to emigration policy for the rest of the country between 1815 and 1830. Hill found that 'investigating assisted emigration at a local level enables an assessment of the viability of Wilmot Horton's claim that one great cause of distress at the time was redundancy of population.'⁹¹ Therefore, the Dorking emigration scheme was a way to lessen rural unemployment. Did the small numbers emigrating under the poor law scheme really reduce the number of unemployed, mainly labourers, and therefore reduce poor relief? This thesis will show that indeed the numbers emigrating in Cheltenham were small, only 240 in 1850, with an average cost per adult of £6 15s.⁹² Emigration will be discussed in chapter 3, and will draw on the work of Digby and Hill.⁹³

Steve King's analysis of relief in Bolton and the New Forest provided 'a framework within which to locate other detailed local studies'.⁹⁴ Using outdoor relief lists in the 1830s and 1840s, a source not available in Cheltenham and Belper, King describes pension

⁹⁰ A. Digby, 'Rural poor', p. 154.

⁹¹ J. Hill, 'The Dorking emigration scheme of 1832', *Family and Community History*, 7 (2004), p. 115.

⁹² The *Cheltenham Examiner* of 10 April 1850 reported that 240 emigrants would leave for Canada. The amounts paid to each pauper was given in the board of guardian minutes, February to April 1850, GA, G/CH 8a/7.

⁹³ Digby, 'Labour market', pp. 80-82; Hill, 'Dorking emigration'.

⁹⁴ King, *Poverty and Welfare*, pp. 239-40.

payments in the pre-and post-1834 period. The analysis showed a fall in the generosity of pensions under the new poor law. King's case study of Bolton was too brief to draw a conclusion on the impact of the new poor law on a community or to conclude on the regional structure of welfare. He states that more detailed work was required before 'we can draw wide and definitive conclusions as to the impact of the poor law on a locality.'⁹⁵

The treatment of different categories of paupers, the role of the workhouse and the balance of in and out relief varied considerably between places. There is, therefore, 'no single history of the new poor law but instead several different histories of distinctive institutional and regional practices.'⁹⁶ The central body had limited success in imposing uniformity on relief expenditure and operation of the system. As Green found, the powers of the central body were limited by 'the independence of local guardians, the strength of opposition...together with differing economic and social circumstances meant that regional experiences under the new poor law varied considerably.'⁹⁷ Indeed this was precisely what happened in Cheltenham when the guardians choose to provide an outdoor relief test rather than adopt the policy the central board required of admitting to the workhouse.

We know little of the sort of person entering the workhouse, how long they stayed or how many times they were readmitted, but Jackson explores the circumstances and characteristics of workhouse inmates for the Medway Union in Kent for the period 1876 – 1881, using admission and discharge registers together with census enumerator books.⁹⁸ He concluded that 'variations in number of paupers in the Medway workhouse reflected the national variations.'⁹⁹ Here there was a predominance of females in the workhouse but why was this the case, and how did Belper and Cheltenham compare to the Medway Union? Jackson found that there was plenty of dockyard employment available for men but little employment opportunities for women, hence the higher numbers of females seeking relief. Other results for Medway union show that 61 per cent of admissions were for lone people (single or widowed) and inmates stayed for only short periods of time.

Looking at regional studies of relief to the poor, Jackson, in a paper on Kent workhouses, found the investigations into the workhouse population had been neglected,

⁹⁵ King, *Poverty and Welfare*, pp. 249-50

⁹⁶ Green, *Artisans to Paupers*, p. 210.

⁹⁷ Green, *Artisans to Paupers*, p. 212.

⁹⁸ Jackson, 'The Medway union', p. 13.

⁹⁹ Jackson, 'The Medway union', p. 29.

with the exception of the study on Leicester in 1881.¹⁰⁰ Jackson's main aim in his paper was to investigate the eight workhouses in Kent using the 1881 census enumerator books (CEBs), as he had used in his Medway paper, and to compare Kent with Hertfordshire, Hampshire and Leicester. The results supported the findings of Goose, Hinde and Turnbull, and Page, where the workhouse population was composed primarily of the aged, sick and children.¹⁰¹ In two of the Kent workhouses, seasonal variations occurred to reflect the fluctuations of availability of work, and in general, with a bias towards males, but Jackson also found wide variations between Kent and Hertfordshire workhouses. Goose finds that few studies have analysed the family structure or the inmates themselves despite accessible CEBs to provide information on sex, occupation, age, and place of birth. Hinde and Turnbull, in their study of two Hampshire workhouses pointed in the right direction.¹⁰² Goose draws our attention to 'the paucity of comparative evidence available...lack of studies...rooted within the local or regional economic and social context.'¹⁰³ This thesis will seek to address this omission.

Goose's paper on Hertfordshire workhouses addresses various thematic points including ageing and poverty, women's work and farm service. As a county, Hertfordshire was mainly an agrarian county with only nine towns, the largest of which was St Albans with a population of just 7,000 in 1851. In comparison Cheltenham town had a population of 39,693 in 1861 and Belper town 10,082 in 1851. In many respects, Belper town has a population nearer in size to St Albans, but its industry of cotton mills, with some agriculture, makes it very different. Using the data contained in the admission and discharge registers for Hatfield Union, Goose analysed the registers to determine the composition of the workhouse population. Goose also undertakes an analysis of all the workhouse populations in the county, a total of eleven, using the CEBs. In Hertfordshire Goose found similarities in age, sex and marital status but appreciable differences to other areas. This may be down to the structure of different localities; for example, straw plaiting

¹⁰⁰ Jackson, 'Kent workhouse', pp. 51-65; S. Page, 'Pauperism and the Leicester workhouse in 1881', *Transactions of the Leicestershire Archaeological and Historical Society*, 63 (1989), pp. 85-95.

¹⁰¹ Jackson, 'Kent workhouse', p. 65.

¹⁰² Hinde and Turnbull, 'Hampshire workhouses', p. 39.

¹⁰³ Goose, 'Workhouse population', p. 52.

and cottage industries in one area of Hertfordshire show a different workhouse population to areas without these industries.¹⁰⁴

At the time of the publication of Hinde and Turnbull's paper, only one study, that of Page on Leicester¹⁰⁵ had been undertaken using census enumerator books. Hinde and Turnbull consider the structure of Winchester and Basingstoke workhouses, using the census of 1851 and 1861 and the admission and discharge registers, to give a 'cross-sectional picture of the population of the workhouses', and to trace the dynamics of the workhouse population.¹⁰⁶ Their findings show that Winchester and Basingstoke fitted the general pattern of few able-bodied males and families, and the majority of the workhouse population consisted of aged men and children. Winchester, a garrison town, found wives of servicemen seeking relief and being admitted to the workhouse rather than providing them with relief at home.

Linking into the findings of Goose, Jackson, Hinde and Turnbull was the findings of Crowther, Thane, Booth and Hurren.¹⁰⁷ The later years of the nineteenth and early twentieth century was a time of great changes, and of various commissions on the aged and poor law. Anne Crowther discusses the later years of the workhouse, between 1890 and 1929 and found workhouses were not declining but 'laying the foundations for the present system of locally controlled institutions.'¹⁰⁸ From 1913 the workhouse became known as the poor law institution. In most cases the children were removed from the workhouse into separate cottage homes (as will be found in Belper) or fostered out. Crowther also highlights the fact that those over 60 made up 46 per cent of all persons relieved, half of these in the workhouse.¹⁰⁹

From the inception of the new Poor Law, the policy makers considered the male able-bodied pauper as the main person to be targeted for admittance to the workhouse.

¹⁰⁴ Goose, 'Workhouse population', p. 66.

¹⁰⁵ Page, 'Leicester workhouse', pp. 85-95.

¹⁰⁶ Hinde and Turnbull, 'Hampshire workhouses', p. 39.

¹⁰⁷ Work in this period in the history of the workhouse, and in particular the aged paupers, has been covered by M.A. Crowther, 'The later years of the workhouse 1890-1929' in P. Thane (ed.), *The Origins of British Social Policy* (London, 1978); P. Thane, *The Origins of British Social Policy* (London, 1978); C. Booth, *The Aged Poor in England and Wales* (London, 1894); and Hurren, *Protesting about Pauperism*.

¹⁰⁸ Crowther, 'The later years', p. 37.

¹⁰⁹ Crowther, 'The later years', p. 45. This theme of an increasing percentage of elderly in the workhouse was highlighted by Charles Booth showing that 18 out of every 1000 aged 65 to 70 were workhouse paupers. C. Booth, *The Aged Poor*, p. 42 and Crother, 'The later years' p. 45.

Ashforth found that only small numbers of paupers received relief in workhouses in urban areas. For example, in the Basford union, Nottinghamshire, there were only seven per cent of able-bodied inmates, the remainder of the workhouse population was composed of 46 per cent aged and sick, 37 per cent children and 10 per cent mentally ill.¹¹⁰ Kidd cites women, children, the aged and infirm as the largest groups dependent on relief: 'it is a safe assumption that, across all categories, women comprised the majority of adult recipients of poor relief, both indoor and outdoor, throughout the history of the new poor law.'¹¹¹ As Thane and others point out, the Royal Commission 'failed to recognise women's problems' and the 1834 report does not refer to the problems of widows and deserted wives but only to unmarried mothers. Although unmarried mothers were entitled to receive poor relief, as Thane points out, they were 'more likely to be sent to the workhouse than granted outdoor relief'.¹¹² Thane also points out that there 'was considerable local variation in the actual treatment of women paupers.'¹¹³ Legislation in the 1840s required guardians and relieving officers 'to distinguish between deserving women, suitable for outdoor relief, and the undeserving, fit only for the workhouse.'¹¹⁴ More recent research has focused on the poor themselves, the children, women and sick. Lees and Thane concentrated their research on these categories of pauper.¹¹⁵ It will be argued in this thesis, and using the admission registers as evidence, that Cheltenham and Belper admitted large numbers of its unmarried mothers, rather than providing out-relief.

Methodology

This thesis will present a chronological history of poor relief, to extend our knowledge of poor law and relief in two very diverse communities. I have chosen to explore the comparisons of relief practices in Cheltenham and Belper chronologically as this best explains the changes to the management of the poor over time. At the same time I shall explore various themes, namely emigration, vagrancy, the aged and children at a time when this best explains the major changes to poor relief for these categories of paupers.

¹¹⁰ Ashforth, 'Urban poor law, p. 135.

¹¹¹ Kidd, *State, Society*, p. 37.

¹¹² S. & B. Webb, *English Poor Law Policy* (London, 1910), p. 3; Thane, 'Women and the poor law', pp. 31-2.

¹¹³ Thane, 'Women and poor law', p. 37.

¹¹⁴ Thane, 'Women and poor law', p. 36.

¹¹⁵ Brundage, *English Poor Laws*, p. 6.

The sources and records for a workhouse and union give an awareness of what life was like for the inmates and officers and for the union population. A quantitative analysis will be made of the census enumerators' books (CEBs) from 1841 to 1901, and admission and discharge registers for random years, one in each decade, together with closer analysis of a five yearly run of admissions. The CEBs provide a snapshot of the population on one day every ten years (in March or April), but the bigger picture of workhouse inmates can be seen by analyzing the registers, which provide a detailed record for every day of the year. One advantage of the CEB over the registers was their survival rate.

The use of workhouse admission and discharge registers in local, regional or national studies was rare. This is almost certainly down to the survival of the registers. The downside to using admission and discharge registers were their erratic survival. For Gloucestershire as a whole, Cheltenham is the only union to having surviving registers and a similar situation is found in Derbyshire where Belper is the only union with surviving registers. The registers were available for the majority of years between 1840 and 1890, and provide details of each day's admissions and discharges. Most registers at the end of the nineteenth century and early twentieth century were missing, therefore restricting analysis of the data to the fifty years from 1840 to 1890 and the six months from October 1900 to March 1901. The admission and discharge registers, if analysed over a number of years, can paint a picture as to what was happening to the poor, including seasonal admissions and workhouse population, but do not provide any indication of the percentage of paupers on out-relief. The content and information contained in the registers varied considerably between Cheltenham and Belper, as with Jackson's study of Medway workhouse and Kent.¹¹⁶ Record keeping by the Cheltenham workhouse master was poor, with few columns in the register completed except for surname and first name and no data provided on age, occupation or religion. This was particularly evident in the 1844 register. Belper on the other hand, produced registers with at least fifty per cent of the data entered. In Medway and Kent, Jackson found registers to be complete, record keeping was high and with few omissions of data. Data on the next meal and pauper number was not collected for the two unions in this study, as it was felt this would add little to the analysis and results. The amount of information completed in each register varied considerably between

¹¹⁶ Jackson, 'Medway union', pp. 11-32.

unions and in some cases only a name, parish, the person authorising admission and, sometimes, the reason for admission were given. It appears from the registers analysed that the quantity of data completed in the registers depended mainly on the workhouse master and guardians' instructions. Cheltenham was particularly bad around the 1840s in only providing a name and parish, while Belper's register provided occupation, name, age, parish, religion and the reason for admission.

A qualitative analysis of the correspondence ledgers of the central body (Poor Law Commission (PLC), Poor Law Board (PLB) and Local Government Board (LGB)) and board of guardian minutes and correspondence will be made for both unions.¹¹⁷ The records include statutes, circulars, orders and minutes of the board of guardians, letters and reports. Correspondence from the public requesting a review of their case or making a complaint over treatment were also found in the correspondence files. The central body, on receiving the correspondence, would refer this to the union for comment before responding. A number of pauper letters came to light, mainly in the central body correspondence files, which provide an insight into life of the poor in union and workhouse. Belper had a number of correspondence ledgers from 1884 to 1913. Access to records after 1909 was not possible due to the 100 year closure rule. This applied to admission registers and correspondence files and board of guardian minutes. Earlier board of guardian minutes for Belper provide relatively detailed information on individual pauper cases. This information does not survive for Cheltenham and was not found in its guardians' minutes.

The Cheltenham and Derby newspapers, and later in the nineteenth century, the Belper newspapers, provide information on weekly board meetings and the public's observations on the management of the poor. For example, the report of the tea party for the pauper emigrants to Quebec from Cheltenham Union, tells of the 'human' side of the guardians, which is not shown in the board minutes.¹¹⁸

The annual reports of the PLC, PLB, LGB and the Ministry of Health (1919 – 1929) provide half-yearly statistics for one day only, such as the percentage of population receiving poor relief, but as Lees points out, these statistics do not tell us what happened to

¹¹⁷ The central body files were found in the MH12 series at the National Archives (TNA) for the years 1835 to 1900 and the minutes of the boards of guardians in G/CH 8a series (GA) and D19 C/W series (DRO) from 1835 to 1906.

¹¹⁸ *Cheltenham Examiner*, 10 April 1850.

pauper numbers during the remainder of the year. How reliable were these records? For example, most paupers received assistance for a couple of weeks to get them over illness or death of a family member, but unless this occurred at the time the statistics were compiled, much data is missing. We can conclude that, with the very nature of relief being irregular, the statistics do not give us a true picture of those relieved. In 1892 and 1907, the LGB required the unions to provide numbers of people who received relief or were given assistance for the year. This showed that 2.24 times more people received relief in 1892 than previously recorded. Lee used these figures to estimate the numbers relieved between 1850-70 and calculated that 10-13 per cent of the population of England and Wales received assistance, declining to 6 per cent in 1910.¹¹⁹ Compared to percentages quoted by Williams of 6.2 per cent in 1849 and 1.5 per cent in 1920, it would appear that the annual reports are a problematical source of data.¹²⁰ The annual reports also provide evidence of indoor and out-door relief payments, which show that out-door relief rose from 1s per head in the 1840s, to 1/6 in the 1850s and 2s in 1900.¹²¹ However, Lees disputes the number of paupers that Williams has used, when his calculations were based on half yearly pauper figures.¹²² The annual reports also include information on local conditions, local concerns and reports of the assistant commissioners .

There were a number of sources considered for the analysis and discussion but their use was discarded due to their lack of survival. The relieving officer records give an idea of relief amounts paid to each pauper and the reason for applying for relief, as does the outdoor relief lists. No relieving officer records were found for either union and only a limited survival of outdoor relief lists for pre-1834. There were an insufficient number of outdoor relief lists to be of use and draw a meaningful conclusion.

It was also hoped to use more pauper stories in the discussion but again very few have survived. Occasional reference to the conditions of paupers in the union was found, mainly in the sanitary inspector reports later in the nineteenth century. These provide, for example, the conditions of housing in the poor areas of the town and union.

¹¹⁹ Lees, 'Solidarity of Stranger', pp. 180-1.

¹²⁰ Williams, *Pauperism to Poverty*, pp. 158-162.

¹²¹ Williams, *Pauperism to Poverty*, pp. 169-172.

¹²² Lees, *Solidarity of Strangers*, p. 186.

Vestry minutes were noted for their lack of content and covered mainly vestry decisions at parish level rather than at pauper or individual level. They were of little use in showing how the parish managed its poor before the 1834 Act. This was the case in Cheltenham and Belper parishes which tended to record parish business rather than refer to an individual member of that community.

Structure of the Thesis and Discussion

This thesis has tried to cover all aspects of poor law provision, with the exception of lunacy and with only brief references to medical provision. Discussions were broken down into chronological order starting with the provision for the poor from 1780 to the 1834 Poor Law Amendment Act. The thesis is based on an interpretation of data on relief and population backed up with discussions on categories of paupers and the means open to them to receive assistance, using correspondence ledgers, newspapers and parish records to provide the background and case studies.

Each chapter discusses the local records analysed and their relationship to other 'local' researchers, and to the wider picture regionally and nationally. Chapter 1 will provide an overview of Belper and Cheltenham unions before the 1834 Act, including the socio-economic structure of the two unions, wages and poor relief expenditure, the provision of workhouse accommodation and its treatment of the poor from 1780 to 1834. Chapter 2 investigates the formation of the two unions, relief practices between 1834 and 1845, and the building of the workhouses. Chapter 3 will analyse poor relief in the mid-Victorian period with a detailed analysis of admission registers and census enumerator books for age, sex, and occupation of workhouse paupers and include a detailed study of emigration. The discussion of emigration in chapter 3 is included here as the 1850s were the time when most emigration in Cheltenham took place. Chapter 4 looks at the relief of the poor in the 1860s to 1880s, again using admission registers and CEBs, for a detailed analysis of workhouse and union population. The discussion on the crusade against out-relief occurs here and is central to the discussion of relief in the 1870s. This chapter will also discuss vagrants and the methods adopted for managing this section of the poor. Vagrancy was little discussed in the mid-nineteenth century and it wasn't until the 1870s and 1880s that Cheltenham and Belper built vagrancy accommodation and this class of pauper was admitted to the casual wards of the workhouse. The discussion of charity,

confined to chapter 5, cuts across all periods of poor law history and it was not appropriate to include the discussion within the other chapters of the thesis. In order to see the whole picture as to how charity, The Charity Organisation Society, and economy of makeshifts assisted the poor, the discussion in this chapter will focus on various forms of charity including the almshouses and education. Before the 1870 Education Act all education of children was undertaken by either the church or through charity. This is the reason why this topic sits in the charity chapter. It will be shown that charity was the main provider of education for the poor for most of the nineteenth century. Chapter 6 takes on a similar format to chapter 3, with an analysis of poor relief, and workhouse and union population from 1890 to the beginning of the First World War. Included in chapter 6 will be a discussion of the aged at a time when the aged featured widely in Royal Commission reports, in new legislation to assist this category of the population, and particularly in Booth's discussion of the aged population.¹²³ The number of children in the workhouse was still high in the 1890s and a discussion of facilities and initiatives to manage the children is also included in chapter 6 as this was a time for several changes to the management of pauper children. The concluding chapter will consider whether these two unions were typical unions in their management of the poor and whether new conclusions can be drawn from the study and comparison of the two unions.

Conclusion

It has been shown that there is a huge volume of diverse research material on the poor and provision of relief, and discussion has been confined to just a small number of researchers. There are a number of questions which have not been addressed in previous research, except for a very local approach, or generally, in the country as a whole. In part, this thesis and the other local studies used in comparison, will go some way towards confirming whether there were wide ranging local practices adopted by the board of guardians. The workhouse and the boards of guardians were the two main players in the provision of relief in a union. With the emphasis in previous research concentrating on a particular region, town or institution for just a couple of decades, this thesis will concentrate its investigations on two unions in different parts of England throughout the period from the late eighteenth century to the Poor Law Amendment Act in 1834 and then

¹²³ See Booth, *Pauperism, a Picture*; and Booth, *The Aged Poor*.

until the First World War. Previous research has also concentrated on administration of the poor, the legal framework and has often ignored the poor themselves. This will be addressed by using material in the board of guardian minutes on individual pauper cases. Little is known of the sort of person who entered the workhouse as few, if any, diaries of working class people survive to enlighten the statistical data of the CEB and workhouse registers. With a good survival of admission and discharge registers and board of guardian minute books, the study will appraise whether the two unions chosen conformed to the expectations of the central body. The thesis will also add to our knowledge of social and administrative conditions in the nineteenth century in the unions of Cheltenham and Belper.

Chapter 1

Poor Relief in Belper and Cheltenham, 1780 to 1834

*To the Labouring Classes
The poor – their heritage is toil
Their fourscore years are given as spoil
To the rich man; their bread they gain
By watching, weariness and pain;
Hope knows them not; and cares and fears
Have bowed them like a load of years.¹*

The Poor Law Acts from 1597 to 1601 laid down the basis for relief of the poor. The effects of the old poor law were felt in all aspects of parish life and were seen through employment, in the regulation of wages, the grain market, in apprenticeship, marriage, settlement, in the allocation of relief and in the parish treatment of the elderly.² Was the relief system ‘generous’ during the late eighteenth and the early nineteenth century? Historians have argued that in some areas the poor were well provided for while others have argued that the relief regime was harsh, providing minimal assistance.³ Hollen Lees argued that the chronology of poor law history confirmed the view ‘that the old poor law was marked by liberality (of attitude and payment) and the new poor law implemented with a hard-nosed utility.’⁴ Snell found, when investigating agricultural labourers in southern England, seasonality of employment, and population mobility, that the parish could act as a ‘miniature welfare state’ often providing relatively generous relief payments for the time. He used settlement examinations, removal orders, and overseers’ accounts to show the experiences of work and unemployment among the labouring poor.⁵ Other commentators have described parish relief in 1802-3 as being ‘selective, discontinuous and

¹ The poem was found in parish papers for Cheltenham, Gloucestershire Archives (GA), P78/1 VE2/4. The date of the poem is not known as it was written on a separate sheet found in a bundle of documents dating approximately 1815 to 1830.

² K.D.M. Snell, *Annals of the Labouring Poor* (1985, Cambridge, 1987), p. 105.

³ R. Dyson, ‘The experience of poverty in a rural community: Broughton, North Lincolnshire, 1760-1835’, *Local Population Studies*, 70 (2003), p. 18; S. King, ‘Reconstructing lives: the poor, the poor law and welfare in Calverly, 1650-1820’, *Social History*, 22 (1997), pp. 329-35; Snell, *Annals*, pp. 105-9.

⁴ S. King and A. Tomkins (eds), *The Poor in England, 1700-1850: an Economy of Makeshifts* (Manchester, 2003), p. 8.

⁵ Snell, *Annals*, pp. 106-7; King, *Poor in England*, pp. 4-6.

supplementary'.⁶ Relief was paid not just in cash but in kind and could include the provision of bedding, clothes and boots, together with assistance for a burial. The old poor law provided for the propertied class to contribute towards maintaining the poor but the amount of relief paid and the methods for distribution of that relief were not specified. Towards the end of the eighteenth century there were developments in assistance to the poor, including income supplement systems which gave a sliding scale of benefits for families. This was based on the price of bread and the number of children in the family. It has been argued that income supplement gave little incentive to work and 'relief payments were said to be injurious to the skill, diligence and honesty of the agricultural labourer...blunting... the work ethic among the industrious poor who could secure more from the parish than could be earned in honest labour.'⁷

Lees has considered the way large families, inadequate wages, cyclical unemployment and illness affected society in the pre-1834 period,⁸ while King has argued that one way to understand 'the character and role of the poor laws and the experiences of poverty and welfare' has been to write institutional histories of the workhouse and its inmates'.⁹ Instead of writing an institutional history of just one workhouse, this chapter will investigate institutions drawn from the parishes in Belper and Cheltenham unions to give a bigger picture of relief practices and institutional provision across the area. There was a variety of experiences for the poor at this time and these experiences will illustrate the discussion on relief.

Some of the questions this chapter will consider include whether relief provided under the poor law in both unions was given in the same manner; was assistance to the poor in each parish managed the same, and was a similar amount of poor relief paid to each pauper? In this chapter I shall compare the development and growth of the two communities from 1770 to the beginning of the new poor law, although there will be occasions when I delve further back in time, in order to explain what happened subsequently to the provision for the poor and to the socio-economic structure of these two

⁶ King, *Poor in England*, p. 11.

⁷ D. Englander, *Poverty and Poor Law Reforms in 19th Century Britain, 1834-1914: from Chadwick to Booth*, Part 2 (London, 1998), p. 7.

⁸ L. Hollen Lees, *The Solidarities of Strangers: the English Poor Law and the People, 1700-1948* (Cambridge, 1998), p. 15.

⁹ S. King, *Poverty and Welfare in England, 1700-1850: a Regional Perspective* (Manchester, 2000), p. 3.

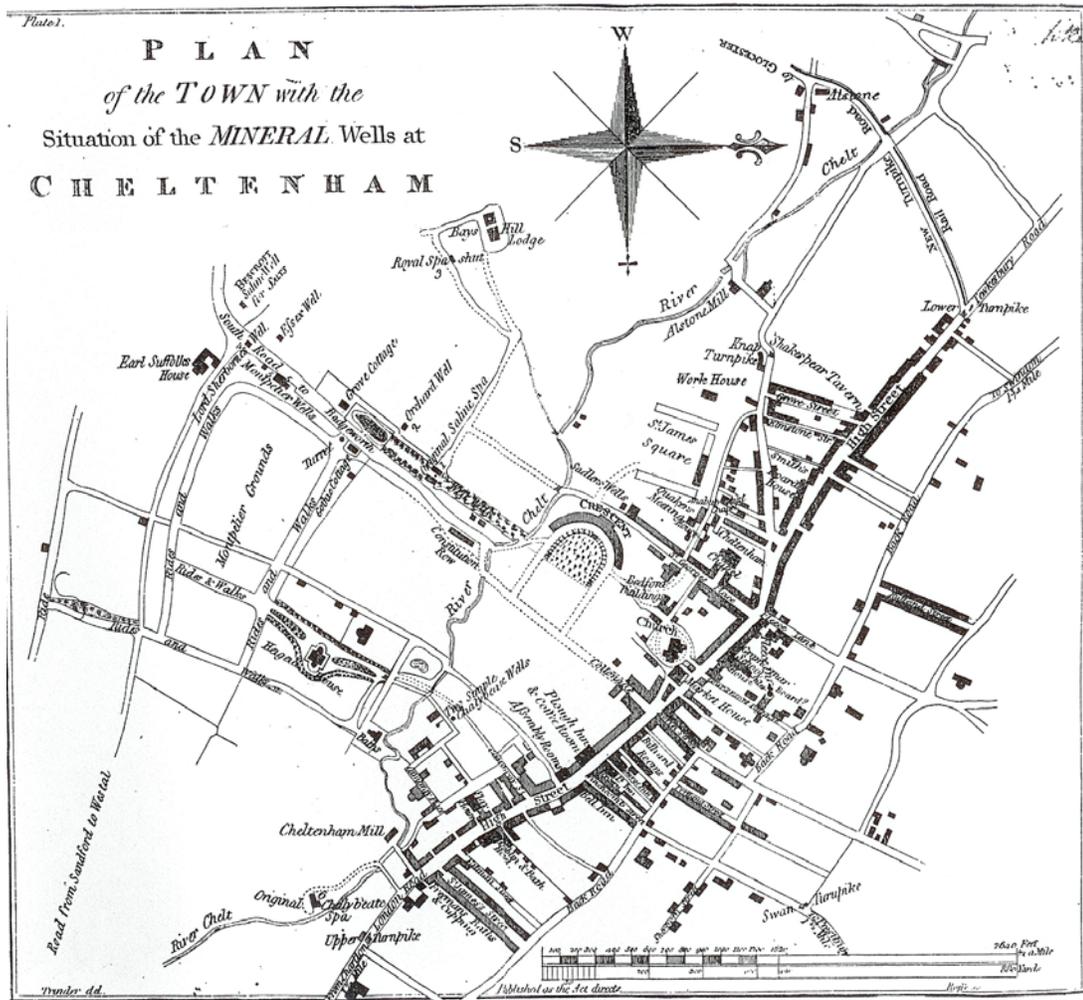
communities. The chapter will look at the history of poor law provision both nationally and in the parishes of the Cheltenham and Belper unions before the new poor law amendment Act in 1834. There will be a discussion of the workhouses in operation in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries and an investigation of relief paid to the poor in out-relief or by admittance to the workhouse. The chapter will conclude with a brief discussion on the 1832 Royal Commission investigation into poor relief. I shall use the word ‘union’ to describe all the parishes in Cheltenham and Belper to distinguish it from reference to the towns of Cheltenham and Belper.

Socio-economic Structure of Belper and Cheltenham

Medicinal springs were discovered in Cheltenham in 1716 and the town became a ‘resort of visitors in quest of health and pleasure...[with a] large number of sumptuous detached villas.’ A map of Cheltenham (figure 1.1) shows one principle street with some lanes and adjoining houses. Goding describes how an Act of Parliament in 1786 provided for the streets to be newly paved, cleansed and lighted and the houses numbered. The same Act also appointed 58 commissioners for the town.¹⁰

¹⁰ J. Goding, *History of Cheltenham* (London, 1863), p. 272.

Figure 1.1 Plan of Cheltenham, 1810



Source: Gloucestershire Archives (GA), 1810 Plan of Cheltenham showing the location of the poor house near St. James Square and the extent of the town at this time.

Following George III's visit in 1788, Cheltenham became a fashionable summer residence where small houses in the High Street could be rented for £12 in 1796. By 1816 the rent had risen to 100 guineas.¹¹ The old wells and Pump Room were rebuilt in 1803, the Montpelier well was opened in 1809, the Pittville well in 1830, and the Cambray well discovered in 1833. In the eighteenth century there were seven hotels, all on a grand scale.¹² Cheltenham was therefore a town that relied on its wealthy residents and seasonal visitors purchasing goods and services locally. This gave rise to seasonal employment.

¹¹ Goding, *History of Cheltenham*, p. 295.

¹² www.visionofbritain.org.uk (3.11.2005).

From being a poor agricultural village, Cheltenham was transformed into the 'Queen of watering places'.¹³

For the artisans of Cheltenham, the northern fields were enclosed and houses built. Later in the nineteenth century these houses were to become the poor areas of Cheltenham, known as St Paul's, very near to where the workhouse was built, and they remain a poor area today.¹⁴ Cheltenham also attracted the poor to the town to escape the hardships found in other parts of the country. Farm labourers and domestic servants from the surrounding area would attend the annual Cheltenham Mop which acted as a form of 'employment exchange'. Yearly wages were between £3 10s and £10. Other poor took to the roads and became trampers, attracted to Cheltenham for its reputation as having a mild poor law regime. Those who were utterly destitute tried to obtain settlement but were usually sent away by the overseers.¹⁵

Cheltenham was a rustic market town in the mid-eighteenth century with a population of two thousand in 1780 rising to just over three thousand in 1801 and containing 710 houses. A new Act in 1806 increased the number of town commissioners from 58 to 72. Dr Jameson, in an account of 1809, described the people as 'robust through habits of exercise in the open air, for there are no manufactories and few sedentary employments in or about Cheltenham.' The occupations of the town's population were chiefly gardeners, domestic servants, builders and labourers, coach builders and shopkeepers.¹⁶ New building took place for wealthy visitors, providing employment for the building trade and its labourers. Agriculture around the town provided food for the market. During the cholera epidemic in 1832, nine men were stationed at the main entrances to Cheltenham to prevent the spread of the disease by vagabonds. Around 2,000 people were steered around the outskirts of the town, given food and then sent on their way.¹⁷

Cheltenham was surrounded by villages, most of which were included in the union. Prestbury, to the north of the town, was a village of 485 people in 1801 but that number had almost trebled by 1831. Surrounded by agricultural land, its one highlight was the racecourse, originally on Cleeve Hill, and then relocated within the village itself. There

¹³ Goding, *History of Cheltenham*, p. 273.

¹⁴ S. Blake, *Cheltenham, a Pictorial History* (Chichester, 1996), p. xix.

¹⁵ G. Hart, *A History of Cheltenham* (Leicester, 1965), pp. 184-5.

¹⁶ Hart, *Cheltenham History*, p. 169.

¹⁷ Hart, *Cheltenham History*, pp. 184-5.

was stone quarrying on the Cotswold escarpment at Leckhampton and the remaining parishes surrounding Cheltenham were dominated by farming of cattle and sheep, and the growing of crops. Coberley and Cowley parishes were to the south-east of the town. The population of Coberley in 1775 was just 178 falling to 161 in 1801 but rising to 237 in 1821. The population of Cowley was 268 in 1775, falling to 251 in 1801 and remained around that figure until the late nineteenth century.¹⁸

Belper union, in contrast, comprised the market towns of Alfreton, Belper and Ripley and the large villages of Wirksworth and Horsley. Before 1776, Belper was as 'low in population as it was backward in civility and considered as the significant residence of a few uncivilized nailers.'¹⁹ Belper, started as a village in 1770s and a township in the late eighteenth century, was remote, and in Barrass' book described as not lying on any major route 'by either land or water. The Derwent has never been navigable above Derby and the roads of Derbyshire are notably atrocious.'²⁰ Belper was part of the parish of Duffield and it was not until 1846 that the town became a chapelry of Duffield. What was regarded as a minor rural centre in the 1770s was transformed into the second largest town in the county by Jedediah Strutt, through the harnessing of the water power for cotton mills. Strutt established the industrial community on the northern edge of the existing township of Belper, around Bridge Foot and up Belper Lane. By the nineteenth century expansion of this area was made along King Street and Bridge Street. Strutt built houses for his workers, which included gardens and allotments.²¹ The population of Belper township in 1773 stood at just 550 but had increased to 4,500 by 1801 and to 7,890 by 1831.²² Most public services in the township could be attributed to the Strutt family. Belper township became a prosperous town with one in six of the population employed in the textile trade.

There were various mills located in the Derwent valley with a mill complex built in 1780 at Milford, just to the south of Belper and six separate mills built in the river valley between 1793 and 1812. The Strutt mills employed 700 people at the Milford mill and the

¹⁸ C.R. Elrington (ed.), *Victoria County History Gloucester VII* (1981), pp. 192 and 180.

¹⁹ Whites Directory, 1857, www.belper-research.com/places/white1857.html (7.10.2004); Leaflet 6, *Belper Nailers*, Derwent Valley Visitors Centre (Amber Valley, n.d.).

²⁰ A. Barrass, *Belper Looking into the Past* (Belper, 1994), p. 10.

²¹ www.derwentvalleymills.org (30.3.2007).

²² Belper Historical Society, *Belper, a study of its History based on Visual Evidence* (Belper, 1981), p. 12; W. Page (ed.), *Victoria County History Derby II (1907 reprinted edition 1970)*, pp. 194-205, *Table of Population 1801-1901*.

mill workers worked twelve hour days for six days a week in the early nineteenth century. Each mill worker received 4s per week.²³ In many houses in the union, framework knitting and nailmaking were carried out. These were domestic industries and the frames would often be found on the second floor of the house that had a continuous length of window for light to work by. All hosiery work was carried on at home with the exception of bleaching, dying and warehousing. Messrs Ward, Brettle and Ward were established in 1803 and owned and rented out 269 knitting frames in 1824, and by 1833 this had increased to 3,000 frames. Framework knitters would be paid 2s for a dozen stockings which would take a day to make, often with the help of all the family.²⁴ With the growth of industry and competition, the wages of the 'stockingers' fell from 27s per week in 1800 to 15s per week in 1815 and to less than 10s per week by the 1820s.²⁵ The period 1810 to 1840 was a time of misery for the hosiery worker. Holbrook, Crich and Pentrich all 'suffered seriously from the violence of the stocking frame breakers'. Men from villages around Crich took part in the uprising including a Crich man, George Weightman, a sawyer, who was tried and transported for life.²⁶ The cut in wages resulted in great poverty and distress.²⁷ Poverty remained a constant problem for the framework knitter and an old man who had been in the industry all his life said that 'stockin is the poorest trade in the world, mony a thousand men as has worked at it aw their lives, niver got above six or seven shillin' a week.'²⁸

Charles Willott wrote a book about Belper and its people in the nineteenth century. He recalls attending the Strutts Long Row School for one year and nine months and then was allowed a week's holiday for the Belper Wakes. Charles was then told he was to leave school as he was wanted to work at Strutt's Mills. He describes the working hours starting at 6am until 7pm in the evening, with children allowed to leave work at 4pm on the Saturday. At this time the ten hour factory Act had not been passed. Charles recalled that a condition of being employed at the mills required the children to attend the Unitarian Chapel on a Sunday afternoon and failure to attend meant a fine of three pence. His wages for the week totalled thirteen pence so this fine would have represented a big portion of the

²³ W.R. Watson, *The Illustrated History of Duffield* (Derby, 1986), p. 111.

²⁴ Mrs D. M. Howarth of Alderwasley, <http://freepages.genealogy.rootsweb.com/~dlhdby/framewor.htm> (20.11.2007).

²⁵ Watson, *Illustrated History*, p. 108.

²⁶ G. Dawes, *The Tale of Crich* (Fritchley, 1988), pp. 202, 205.

²⁷ Watson, *The Illustrated History of Duffield*, pp. 108 and 111.

²⁸ Leaflet 5, *Belper Knitters* (Amber Valley, n.d.).

wages.²⁹ Eden's survey of 1797 listed parishes in a number of counties, including Derbyshire and Nottingham, where children would be sent to the factories and mills instead of receiving relief at home.³⁰

Alfreton was a growing coal and iron centre, as were the other villages of Heage and Morley, in the east of the union. The ironstone beds at Codnor Park, Heage and Somercotes were the most valuable in the county of Derbyshire. Three collieries were linked to the Alfreton Ironworks, employing 500 workers, 350 in the ironstone works and collieries and the remainder employed in the furnaces.³¹

The population of Crich parish was principally employed in the lead mines, in lime-burning, quarries and in the manufacture of stockings.³² By 1811 half of the working population of this parish were earning a living through farming. It was stated that more than 1 in 20 were employed in agriculture compared to large numbers employed in trade or handicraft pursuits. Agricultural wages in Belper and surrounding parishes were around 10-12s per week but if victuals were provided, wages would reduce to 6-7s.³³ Denby parish, situated to the east of Belper and near the Nottinghamshire border, mainly provided employment in the coal mines, in the manufacture of stone bottles and in earthenware manufacture. The population of Denby parish was just 881 in 1801 rising to around 1,300 for a number of years.³⁴ Heage too was another mining parish and its population doubled between 1801 and 1831. Ripley, to the north-east of Belper had extensive trade with the collieries. The famous Butterley iron-works with foundry, furnaces and steam-engine manufactory traded with the collieries later in the nineteenth century. The population of Ripley almost doubled between 1801 (1,091) and 1831 (1,997).

A contemporary report by Eden describes the township of Wirksworth as being a large parish in the west of the county. It too contained several lead mines employing a third of the 2,800 inhabitants. Around 220 people worked in a cotton manufactory. There were wool-combers, and poor women and children picked cotton and spun worsted. Eden

²⁹ C. Willott, *Belper and its People* (Belper, 1894), pp. 51-2.

³⁰ F. M. Eden, *The State of the Poor, Vol. 2* (London, 1797), pp. 294-373, 565-583 from Eighteenth Century Collections Online (ECCO), (7.3.2008).

³¹ *Directory of Derbyshire* (1829), p. ix.

³² *P O Directory, Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire* (1855), p. 47.

³³ Willott, *Belper and its People*, p. 81.

³⁴ British Parliamentary Papers (BPP), Population 3, 1841 Census (Ireland).

noted that the lead mining business was not in good shape at the time (1797) and hence not much employment was available.³⁵

Life was not easy for the nailer. Nailmasters would issue bundles of iron rods weighing 56lbs from which the nailer was expected to produce 45lbs of nails or be fined for not meeting the target. In addition to the cost of the iron the nailer would pay rent for his nailshop and fuel which would cost around six pence per week.³⁶ Nail making as a 'cottage' industry provided work for 500 common nailmakers and 500 horse nailmakers. With the advent of nail manufacturing the number of homeworkers was greatly reduced.³⁷

Between 1811 and 1821 it was easy to obtain work in the Belper area with the development of the cotton industry, but it also brought an influx of poverty stricken 'houserow' men from surrounding villages seeking work. Why were labourers in such a poverty-stricken condition? Between 1770 and 1830, 175 cottages with land attached, located in the 15 parishes around Belper, had been demolished, and only 12 new cottages built. The population in these fifteen parishes was around 5,500. The farmers were removing their poor tenants, flattening their cottages and claiming the land back. As a result, these labourers lost their gardens, pasture, potato ground and house, all means to supplement their meagre wages, and their only recourse was to move into the nearest town seeking employment.³⁸

As regards the political situation in Cheltenham and Belper, Cheltenham became a parliamentary borough in 1832 electing one Member of Parliament (MP) to the House of Commons, which was frequently held by the Liberals. In Belper, the Reform Act 1832 divided the county of Derbyshire into two divisions, each returning two MPs with Belper forming part of the southern division.³⁹

Relief in Eighteenth Century Belper and Cheltenham

Although this chapter will consider poor relief from 1780, a brief explanation is required on the origins of the poor law. This chapter will consider the various laws and draw on examples from Cheltenham and Belper to illustrate the effect of the Act on the

³⁵ Eden, *State of the Poor*, pp. 130-136.

³⁶ Leaflet 6, *Belper Nailers* (Amber Valley, n.d.).

³⁷ Willott, *Belper and its People*, p. 82.

³⁸ Willott, *Belper and its people*, pp. 81-2.

³⁹ Blake, *Cheltenham, A Pictorial History*, p. xxii; P. Naylor (ed.), *An Illustrated History of Belper and its Environs* (Belper, 2000), p. 99.

local population. The poor law was not a single law but ‘hundreds of enactments over several centuries.’⁴⁰ The Elizabethan Poor Law Acts of 1597 and 1601 were the origins of poor law provision and the purpose of these Acts was to relieve the aged, infirm, and impotent, and set the industrious poor to work, with relief funded out of local rates. Overseers, mainly shopkeepers and farmers, were appointed annually in each parish to manage day-to-day applicants for relief, and the poor could appeal to the magistrates if they were not satisfied with relief given or not given.⁴¹ The 1601 Act did not specify the amount of relief to be given and we see wide variations in the amount of pensions paid to paupers whether in kind (bread) or in cash. In Leckhampton parish, for example, one aged pauper received £1 2s 6d for one quarter’s relief; an 81 year old labourer received £2 11s plus 7d in kind; and a 76 year old received £1 12s 6d for one quarter. All examples quoted received relief on account of old age.⁴² One legal requirement of the 1601 Act was that kin ‘of every poor, old, blind, lame, and impotent person or other person, not able to work, being of sufficient ability...relieve and maintain every such poor person.’⁴³ A further Act of 1623 (21 James I, c.1) authorized the erection of workhouses for the poor by private donors.

The Settlement Act of 1662 allowed for removal to take place within 40 days of taking up residence in a parish. Keith Snell describes settlement as ‘the eligibility to receive parish poor relief in a parish or township where one had gained that status.’ Under this and later Acts, settlement could be gained in a number of ways: for bastards through birth in a parish; children took the parish of their married father; married women took the parish of their husband; by employment as an unmarried servant in a parish for one year or more; by serving a legal indentured apprenticeship and residing in the parish for at least 40 days during the apprenticeship; by serving an annual public office in the parish; by renting freehold property worth £10 per year or more; by owning immovable property; and by paying parish rates.⁴⁴ The Act of Settlement was further updated in 1697 and allowed for a settlement certificate to be issued so that residents of a parish could travel to seek

⁴⁰ A. Brundage, *The English Poor Laws, 1700-1930* (Basingstoke, 2002), p. 6.

⁴¹ 39 Elizabeth c.5; 43 Elizabeth c.2; Brundage, *English Poor Laws*, p. 1.

⁴² GA, P198/1 OV8/2 Leckhampton overseer accounts.

⁴³ *An Act for the Relief of the Poor*, www.sochealth.co.uk/history/poorlaw.htm (10.7.2009).

⁴⁴ K.D.M. Snell, *Parish and Belonging : Community, Identity and Welfare in England and Wales, 1700-1950* (Cambridge, 2006), pp. 85-6; King, *Poverty and Welfare*, p. 22; Brundage, *English Poor Laws*, p. 10.

employment. The certificate provided assurance to a new parish that, if the person became dependent in the other parish, the parish of settlement was responsible for paying the new parish's costs.⁴⁵ To remove a pauper from the parish, an order was obtained from the magistrates allowing removal to the last parish of legal settlement. For example, in Badgeworth parish Thomas Harding, Frances his wife, William the son aged 1 and Thomas aged 6 weeks were removed from Hankerton in Wiltshire by a removal order of 16 October 1800. Thirty years later the six month old Thomas, born in 1800, now had a family of his own and again Thomas, Mary his wife and Charles their son of two were removed from Hankerton in Wiltshire to Badgeworth.⁴⁶

There was a change to the law of settlement in 1795 when a pauper could only be removed from a parish if poor relief was claimed.⁴⁷ Settlement was a major problem for the overseers and in some cases it was necessary to ensure that those unmarried persons seeking work were not employed on a contract for a full year. This ensured the parish was not required to pay poor relief and the pauper or claimant could be returned to the parish of settlement or be charged to that parish. Brundage argued that the settlement and removal Acts restricted migration for those seeking employment, but was this the case in Cheltenham and Belper?⁴⁸ A considerable amount of time was spent by the parish in proving or disproving a case for settlement. One such case relates to William Price of Badgeworth, a labourer of the village, and the following settlement examination shows a lengthy investigation was necessary to determine where William had been working and living.

Examination of William Price of Badgeworth, labourer. Believes he was born in Brockworth and never placed out as apprentice. About 14 years ago at the Gloucester mop after Michaelmas was hired until old Michaelmas day following to William Davis of Redmarley d'Abitot in Worcestershire and served out his time, then at the second mop of Gloucester hired to Joseph Coopey of Churcham, farmer for a year. Being afflicted with the ague and not being able to do his business he and his master agreed to part. Further at the Gloucester Mop 9 years ago was hired to next old Michaelmas day by William Rodway of Upton St Leonards, farmer and served his time. Believed his father lived in a cottage upon waste ground in Brockworth near 30 years until he died about 13 years ago. That on the death of his aunt, that his aunt made no will and his mother lived in it since his death.

⁴⁵ King, *Poverty and Welfare*, pp. 22-3.

⁴⁶ GA, P31 OV 3/3, Removal Orders to Badgeworth (Cheltenham Union).

⁴⁷ P. Wood, *Poverty and the Workhouse in Victorian Britain* (Stroud, 1991), p. 53.

⁴⁸ Brundage, *English Poor Laws*, p. 10.

About 10 months ago was married in Badgeworth to Susannah his wife by whom he hath one living child James aged about 6 weeks.⁴⁹

This example shows that labourers moved around a considerable amount seeking employment at the hiring fairs, but William Price never strayed far from his parish of birth.

Snell's observations on settlement were that paupers normally moved relatively freely between parishes, remained until they became an imminent or actual charge, and then parish officials applied to remove them to their parish of settlement or obtain non-residential relief. Estimates show that on average about two people per year were moved from a parish, although even that is an over-estimate to judge from the Badgeworth (Cheltenham) settlements and removals, where there were two removals in 1800 but then no further removals until 1813.⁵⁰ The examination of William Brentall at Horsley Woodhouse (Belper) in 1820 is an example of such predicaments. William had lived in the same house for 42 years:

Nearly 66 years of age that he was born in the township of Horsley Woodhouse of parents legally settled there. That he served an apprenticeship with Charles Fowke of Horsley Woodhouse nail maker for 7 years and afterwards went into farmers service and continued therein till a short time before his marriage. His first place of service was with Thomas Peak of Smalley when he continued a year under a hiring for that term. Then he hired to Henry Richardson of Horsley Woodhouse for a year and served it. Then he served Paul Brentnall of Denby Carr in the parish of Denby upwards of a year no term of service was agreed upon but his wages was to be 3s a week which he received. That in about two or three months after leaving Denby Carr he intermarried in the parish church of Horsley with his present wife Hannah and then fixed his residence in Horsley Woodhouse where he has resided without interruption ever since. That upon his taking apprentice in about 11 years after his marriage the overseer of the poor of Horsley Woodhouse wished him to procure a certificate from the parish of Denby where he was supposed to be legally settled. That the examinant thereupon applied to Joseph Eley the overseer of the poor of Denby for a certificate who procured him one which examinant immediately delivered to John Saxton who transacted business for the township of Horsley Woodhouse, that he has 7 children born in wedlock...says that during the last 42 years he has resided constantly in the house which he now occupies under Dorothy Rogers, that the rent he has paid for such house for the last 20 years is £4 a year that he kept a cow for 13 years prior to the last 5 years and has also generally kept a poney during the last 12 years but never kept more than one cow and one poney at a time. That he has paid for his cow's pay different sums viz. £4, £4 10s and the last year.⁵¹

⁴⁹ GA, P31 OV 3/3, Badgeworth Settlement Examination, 2 August 1794.

⁵⁰ K.D.M. Snell, 'Settlement, poor law and the rural historian: new approaches and opportunities', *Rural History*, 3 (1992), pp. 384-5, 399; Hollen Lees, *Solidarities*, p. 51.

⁵¹ DRO, D1428 A/PO 45, Settlement Examinations, 7 August 1820.

At Leckhampton (Cheltenham) the settlement examination of William Greening of Cowley parish took place on 10 August 1829. William was a labourer born in Aston Blank and six years previously, at the first Mop in Cheltenham was hired to William Piff, a yeoman of Leckhampton, for one year at £4 10s. There was nothing in the removal order to show he had been removed from Leckhampton and it must be assumed that William met the settlement requirement for that parish.⁵²

An Act of 1696 allowed for parishes to join together, enabling larger and more efficient workhouses in Cheltenham and Belper to be built and managed.⁵³ A workhouse could be built by an individual parish or a number of parishes could combine to build one. Parishes could also contract-out their poor to farmers who would provide food, clothing and accommodation. For example, in April 1799, Cheltenham parish signed an agreement with John Dobbins for farming the poor of the parish. John Dobbins was paid £775 in instalments to take possession of the rented workhouse and its contents and to ‘keep the children and other poor persons for the time being residing in the said workhouse in habits of industry.’⁵⁴ The ‘farmer of the poor’ would receive any profit difference between the contract charge and costs of maintenance.

Most poor or workhouses were managed by individual parishes and parliamentary reports of 1776-7 tell that there were 2,000 parish workhouses in England and Wales, which equates to one parish in seven operating a workhouse.⁵⁵ Most workhouses could only accommodate small numbers of paupers, of around 20 to 50 inmates. Surviving records show that Cheltenham, Cubberley, Crich, Alfreton, Belper, and Wirksworth all had parish poorhouses going back to the eighteenth century.

Knatchbull’s workhouse Act of 1722-3 provided that relief be given only in the workhouse, and if able-bodied, in return for labour. This Act was the first provision for a workhouse test for those seeking relief.⁵⁶ A further Act in 1782, known as Gilbert’s Act, after the MP Thomas Gilbert, allowed parishes to be united. Under this Act, management of poor relief passed from parish officers to a committee of gentry. All the parishes which

⁵² GA, P198a OV3/4, Leckhampton Settlement Examinations.

⁵³ Brundage, *English Poor Laws*, p. 5. One of the earliest union of parishes was Bristol created by statute in 1696 under 7 & 8 Will.3, c.32.

⁵⁴ GA, P78/1 OV 9/2, 29 April 1799.

⁵⁵ <http://users.ox.ac.uk/~peter/workhouse>, (6.10.2004).

⁵⁶ King, *Poverty and Welfare*, p. 24.

formed this union were to be within a 10 mile radius of a workhouse. The workhouse was for the impotent poor only with the costs of maintaining paupers in the workhouse paid by individual parishes.⁵⁷ The Act required two-thirds of the owners and occupiers in the parish, assessed on property at £5 per annum and upwards, to formally adopt the Act. New Gilbert unions could borrow on the security of the poor rates at a rate equal to the last three years' rates, with all constituent parishes sharing the cost.⁵⁸ The Act provided for justices to appoint a salaried officer for each parish and a 'visitor' who would give orders to the Governor of the workhouse and to the treasurer of the union. The idle poor or disorderly were to be sent by the justices to the House of Correction.

Any persons who shall be able and willing to work, but who cannot get employment, the guardian of the poor...was required to find them employment nearby at wages...to maintain or cause such person or persons to be properly maintained, lodged and provided for until such employment shall be procured and to make up any deficiency in the earnings.'⁵⁹

Between 1797 and 1830 thirty-six unions were formed mainly in south-east England, East Anglia and the Midlands. By 1834 a total of sixty-seven Gilbert unions, incorporating 924 parishes, had been formed.⁶⁰ There were two Gilbert unions formed in Belper and Cheltenham, one in each union. In vestry minutes of 23 April 1811 notice was given that:

It was agreed at a public meeting duly holden this day at the Vestry in the Parish Church of Cheltenham in the county of Gloucester...that the Parish of Cheltenham shall from henceforth adopt, in all respects the provisions, rules, orders and regulations and comply with all the requisites prescribed by the said Act; and that our workhouse shall be immediately fitted up...and we recommend...Mr William Buckle, Mr Edward Hal and Mr Thomas Billings as fit and proper persons for guardians of the poor with a salary of £50...Mr Hanks, Mr Thomas Hayward and Mr William Bishop...for governors of the poor house for the said parish with a salary of 20 guineas per annum to one of them.⁶¹

The Guardians of the Poor and the Governor of the workhouse were paid and appointed by the magistrates, on the recommendation of the vestry. In Belper union, the only

⁵⁷ King, *Poverty and Welfare*, p. 25.

⁵⁸ *Act for the Better Relief and Employment of the Poor* (22 George III.c.83); S & B Webb, *English Poor Law Policy* (London, 1910), p. 274

⁵⁹ Webb, *Policy*, p. 275.

⁶⁰ J.R. Poynter, *Society and Pauperism: English Ideas on Poor Relief, 1795-1834* (London, 1969), p. 12; King, *Poverty and Welfare*, p. 25.

⁶¹ GA, P78/1 VE 2/2 23 April 1811, Notice of Gilbert's Act.

information we have on Gilbert Act unions refers to Wirksworth as being 'a parish duly enrolled under Gilbert's Act.'⁶²

The discussion that follows considers the research Ottoway undertook on Terling in Essex. The discussion will then relate this to what happened in Cheltenham and Belper. In a discussion on indoor relief for the elderly in the 1790s, Ottoway found that the workhouse at Terling in Essex contained mainly elderly and children and replaced out-door relief for the aged. This was clearly not the case in Cheltenham and Belper unions as there were insufficient workhouse places to accommodate all the poor requiring relief. The image of the workhouse, even at this time was one of 'fear and loathing, a symbol of neglect and despair for old men and women sunk in poverty and abandoned by their families.'⁶³ Ottoway also found a growth in the number of workhouses in the late eighteenth century. The official returns for 1802-3 state there were 3,765 workhouses reported in 14,611 parishes. The workhouses contained a total of 83,468 indoor paupers which averages to 22 inmates per workhouse.⁶⁴

In 1777 a parliamentary report states that Cheltenham had a workhouse in operation for 36 inmates, slightly more than the average number quoted by Ottoway.⁶⁵ Cheltenham's workhouse goes back even further than this. In 1755 William Nicholls was chosen as master of the workhouse and paid £8 a year for the care of the poor. He was also to receive a shilling for each vagrant he took before a justice of the peace, and if the vagrant was convicted of vagrancy, then 1s 6d more. By 1757 no pauper was to be relieved out of the workhouse except in extraordinary cases.⁶⁶ With a determination to keep down the rates in Cheltenham parish a decision to purchase a workhouse was overturned on the grounds of cost to the ratepayers and instead the parish continued to rent a house for several years. Records show that Ichabod Painter and his wife were master and mistress of Cheltenham workhouse from 1793-4 and were paid a salary of twenty guineas. They were allowed meat and drink, washing, lodging and 8 bushels of malt but tea, sugar and butter were not included. About the same time, a doctor, Thomas Minster, was appointed to attend to the

⁶² The National Archives (TNA), PRO, MH 12/1840.

⁶³ S.R. Ottoway, *The Decline of Life: Old Age in Eighteenth Century England* (Cambridge, 2004), pp. 247 and 275.

⁶⁴ Brundage, *English Poor Law*, p.40.

⁶⁵ <http://users.ox.ac.uk/~peter/wh/Cheltenham/Chelt.shtml> (26.5.2004).

⁶⁶ GA, P78/1 VE2/1, 1 April 1755 and 20 September 1757.

sick poor. Minster was paid eighteen guineas a year to attend patients but attendance to treat broken bones, smallpox and lying-in women was excluded. Several years later it was noted that Dr Minster was also being paid 5s per head to vaccinate poor children.⁶⁷ In 1796 there was an agreement that Messrs Haines & Co of the City of Gloucester would establish the pin trade in the workhouse belonging to St Mary parish in Cheltenham.⁶⁸ In fact vestry accounts indicated that various sums were received for mops, pins and yarns sold (£22 1s 6d in 1818-9) and the making of pins and mop heads was the main occupation of the inmates of Cheltenham workhouse.

In contrast to Cheltenham's provision for the poor, there were four poor houses in Belper union. Belper old parish workhouse was located in the stepped terraces on the northern side of Belper Lane and could accommodate around 28 paupers. The back-to-back cluster type houses were stone built with a central chimney and three-storey in height. This parish workhouse was sold when the union workhouse was built.⁶⁹ Those paupers who could spin, spun lint and tow for the use of the house, and were allowed one penny for every seven pence of spinning. In the late eighteenth century there were 28 persons in the house, twelve of those aged under seven. Subscriptions for the poor in 1794-5 amounted to £60 and were laid out in purchasing coal, beef and potatoes.⁷⁰ In Alfreton a poor house was erected just outside the town and passed over to the Visitors and guardians to manage in 1804.⁷¹

Crich poor house (Belper), was a subscription poor house. Denby, Melbourne (near Derby), Pentrich and other parishes paid Crich quarterly for rent, salaries, repairs and equipment. The house was located on Workhouse Row in Crich and built in 1734 by the parish, under the supervision of the justices. Dawes states that the weekly cost of maintaining a pauper was 3s 10d.⁷² The workhouse contract with John Walker required each subscribing parish to pay rent of £10 per year and to keep the house and garden walls in good repair. In addition the governor was to receive £20 a year and subscribing parishes would also contribute to maintenance of their poor in the house. As to the poor themselves,

⁶⁷ Hart, *Cheltenham History*, p. 250.

⁶⁸ GA, P78/1 VE2/2.

⁶⁹ www.derwentvalleymills.org/04_his/his_002f.htm, (30.3.2007).

⁷⁰ <http://users.ox.ac.uk/~peter/WH/Belper/Belper.html>, (18.5.2004).

⁷¹ R. Johnson, *A History of Alfreton* (Alfreton, 1969), p. 119.

⁷² Dawes, *Crich*, pp. 67-69. The yearly cost of keeping a pauper in Crich workhouse was £10, in 1816.

the contract provided that paupers sent to the workhouse ‘be clean and free from lice and itch and also that they have sufficient change of clothes to keep them so.’⁷³ The accounts show that Francis Moor undertook a visit to the workhouse in 1782 for which he charged £1 15s. Among the items listed in the Crich workhouse inventory for 1768 were three bedsteads but only six chairs. Where did paupers sit if only six chairs were listed when the workhouse at this time could accommodate 40 paupers? Also listed was equipment for spinning or weaving, including, ‘one pair of wool cards, four clews of coloured yarn, 31 of yarn.’⁷⁴

Wirksworth workhouse was a property built in the 1630s and occupied from 1724 until 1829 as a parish workhouse. Inmates acted as water carriers and their daily task was to fetch water from the springs using a donkey with two barrels strapped to it. Known as Babington House, the workhouse was managed by Mr Walton and his wife, and they were allowed a sum of £13 a year for managing it. Eden described Wirksworth workhouse as an old building, not intended to be used as a workhouse, and not in a good position.

Figure 1.2 Wirksworth former workhouse



Source: www.workhouses.org.uk Belper, Derbyshire (3.5.08)

The diet for most of the poor consisted of ‘water pottage’ made with a small amount of oatmeal and onion boiled in water and eaten with bread two or three times a day. This

⁷³ DRO, D2365 A/PO 18/1 Contract for maintenance of Crich Poor House.

⁷⁴ DRO, D1428 A/PO 145, Inventory of Crich workhouse goods, 1768.

same diet was eaten by the poor in the town and surrounding areas up to three times a day and when times were particularly hard.⁷⁵

Figure 1.3 Weekly rotation of diet for Wirksworth workhouse

	<i>Breakfast</i>	<i>Dinner</i>	<i>Supper</i>
Sunday	Bread and broth	Bread, broth, butcher's meat, potatoes	Milk pottage and bread
Monday	Milk pottage	Baked puddings, and treacle sauce	Ditto
Tuesday	Ditto	Bread and milk	Ditto

Source: F. Eden, *The State of the Poor*, vol. 2, p. 132.
 Sunday and Tuesday's diet was repeated during the week.

Before discussing wages and poor relief, what happened to the economy and country in the later eighteenth century? The 1770s and 1780s were years of prosperity and stable prices but between 1790 and 1812 there were high food prices. The price of bread increased during the Napoleonic wars when it was not possible to buy imported grain. Wages remained the same resulting in agricultural labourers falling into poverty. The Corn Laws, passed in 1815, kept the price of grain high. At the end of the war there was high unemployment and an agricultural depression.⁷⁶ The year 1795 was a famine year for labourers. The farmers could not afford to pay labourers a living wage as a result of increased rents charged by the landowners. The industrial revolution and mechanization led to reduced numbers of independent handicraftsmen, cottage industries declined and enclosure of commons originally resulted in families losing various means to supplement their income. Bad weather in the 1790s resulted in poor harvests and, combined with the outbreak of war in France, gave rise to difficult times in the management of the poor. Another impact on wages and food prices was the fifty per cent rise in the population of England and Wales, reaching 8.7 million in 1801.⁷⁷ Yearly wages for low paid agricultural workers averaged £16 7s 1d around 1790, which equates to 6s a week. In the 1790s the rural population increased in the south but there was also a decrease in those able to obtain agricultural employment. The annual Mop Fair in Cheltenham brought in farm labourers and domestic servants from the surrounding countryside and acted as an 'employment

⁷⁵ Eden, *State of the Poor*, pp. 132 and 136.

⁷⁶ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Poor_Law (19.6.2009).

⁷⁷ S. and B. Webb, *English Poor Law History, Part II: the Last Hundred Years, Vol. 1* (London, 1929), pp. 418-421; Brundage, *English Poor Law*, p. 24.

exchange'. For those not obtaining employment at the fair, taking to the roads and finding employment elsewhere was the only option.⁷⁸

The discussion on wages is helpful in assessing whether poor relief payments were good compared to wages in the area. The following discussion will compare the wage rates detailed by Horrell and Humphries with those found in Cheltenham and Belper unions.

Table 1.1 details the earnings of the head of the household and family income per week for 1787 to 1795. The yearly wages provided by Horrell and Humphries have been recalculated to give weekly earnings, enabling a comparison to be made with wage rates in Cheltenham and Belper. In some cases Horrell and Humphries' sample size was very small and may distort the average earnings.

Table 1.1 Earnings for head of household and family income by occupation between 1787 and 1835

	Average earnings of head of household, per week 1787-95	Family income by occupation, per week 1787-95
Low wage agriculture	6s-8s	8s 6d
High wage agriculture	7s – 9s 6d	10s 9d
Miner	10s 1d	15s 3d
Factory	9s 10d	16s 10d
Outwork	6s 2d	13s 6d

Source: Table 1 and 3, S. Horrell and J. Humphries, 'Old questions, new data and alternative perspectives: families' living standards in the industrial revolution', *Journal of Economic History*, 52 (1992), pp. 855-9.

Horrell found the average weekly earnings of an agricultural labourer in 1787 and 1795 were between 6s and 9s 6d, while a miner averaged 10s 1d and a factory hand 9s 10d. Bowley's investigation of wages in 1795 showed the agricultural labourer in Gloucestershire received 7s per week compared to 9s 3d per week in Derbyshire. Both of Bowley's figures sit between the low and high example wage quoted by Horrell's study.⁷⁹ Horrell's table of wages and family income highlight the importance of family income in family survival and to avoid falling into poverty and seeking relief. The agricultural

⁷⁸ Hart, *Cheltenham History*, pp. 184-5.

⁷⁹ A.L. Bowley, 'The statistics of wages in the United Kingdom during the last hundred years (Part 1) Agricultural Wages', *Journal of the Royal Statistical Society*, 61 (1898), pp. 704-6.

labourer earned the majority of the family income each week compared to a miner whose earned income was two-thirds of the family income. The factory worker was earning slightly over half of the family income (table 1.1). The earnings for the agricultural labourer were for more important to the household than other workers and explain the number of poor agricultural labourers seeking top-up to their earnings in order to survive from week to week.

The economy of the country at the time had big implications for wages. In the late eighteenth century in Wirksworth (Belper), for example, wool combers and worsted spinners earned 5½d to 6d a day for worsted spinning or 3-5s per week for cotton spinning, while rates for children were lower at between 1-5s per week. Wages for a labourer varied between 1s 4d to 1s 8d a day (8s to 10s per week) but in Crich a typical labourer's wage was around 14s 2d per week in 1816, while those for miners were around 10s a week. The highest wages were paid to the overseers in the cotton works of around 12s a week.⁸⁰ When comparison was made to Horrell and Humphries, the miner in the Wirksworth area was earning a similar wage but the outworker's wages were lower. In the village of Brocklesby in Lincolnshire, an agricultural labourer was paid an average of 7s 6d per week in the 1770s. This is slightly less than a labourer in Wirksworth received but on a par with the low wage quoted by Horrell.⁸¹ Were these figures typical for the country as a whole? Data was only available for a few parishes but the statistics show that in the main the average wages quoted by Horrell and Humphries were similar to data for Wirksworth and Brocklesby.

It has been said that poor relief before 1800 could be generous and flexible. Is this evident in Cheltenham and Belper? There were wide variations in the application of the poor law between an open or closed parish, between a town or country parish or between a densely or sparsely populated parish. The overseers, particularly in the rural areas, provided pensions for the elderly, disabled and widows and in addition, payments in kind, in the form of clothes, fuel and rent. Snell quotes several examples where assistance was provided in a form other than cash and this was confirmed by Dyson in his study of Broughton parish

⁸⁰ Eden, *State of the Poor*, p. 132; Dawes, *Crich*, pp. 67-8.

⁸¹ Dyson, 'Poverty in rural community', p. 20.

in Lincolnshire.⁸² In Wirksworth (Belper), for example, the weekly allowance was around 1s per week for regular pensioners and in addition, the parish paid house rents for 10 houses amounting to £11 9s per year.

Eden investigated the state of the poor and collected information on housing, household budgets, duties of families and relief practices. He called for poor law reform on the basis that ‘permanent national relief schemes fostered dependence and increased the demand for aid.’ The annual amount spent on the poor in England in the 1780s was £1,523,163 giving average expenditure per head of 4s 4d.⁸³ By 1800 poor relief in England and Wales was over £4 million per annum or an average of 8s 11d per head, a considerable increase over a twenty year period.⁸⁴

How did poor relief at this time relate to average wages and was there a considerable difference between wages and poor relief aid? Alternative means of assisting the poor arose in what Broad describes as ‘ad hoc’ initiatives.⁸⁵ These included Speenhamland, roundsman system and bread quotas. The Speenhamland magistrates in Berkshire introduced a system in 1795 to subsidise wages in 1795 with an allowance system. The allowance was calculated according to the price of bread and the number in the family, but the main problem for agricultural labourers in the south was still seasonal unemployment.⁸⁶ The roundsman system started in the later eighteenth century. Labourers, settled in a parish were sent to each of the farmers in turn and if possible given employment. The wages were paid in part by the farmers and in part by the poor rate. The roundsman system was sometimes replaced by a voluntary labour rate.⁸⁷

⁸² Snell, *Annals*, pp. 105-106. ‘To cash allowed Samuel Jones to purchase a cow’; ‘paid for a wooden leg for the boy Barker 8s 6d’; paid dame Death for nursing dame Hickey 1s 6d’; R. Dyson, ‘Poverty in rural community’, p. 18. In addition to relief, money was paid for rent, medical expenses, funerals, clothing and fuel.

⁸³ Eden, *State of the Poor*, pp. 133-5; Hollen Lees, *Solidarities*, p. 89.

⁸⁴ Brundage, *English Poor Laws*, p. 25.

⁸⁵ J. Broad, ‘Parish economies of welfare, 1650-1834’, *The Historical Journal*, 42 (1999), pp. 989.

⁸⁶ Broad, ‘Parish economies of welfare’, p. 1006.

⁸⁷ Brundage, *English Poor Laws*, pp. 56-7.

Table 1.2 Expenditure on poor relief in England and Wales, Derbyshire and Gloucestershire, 1776 and 1783-5

County	Annual expenditure on the poor, year ending Easter 1776	Average of annual expenditure on the poor in the years ending Easter 1783, 1784, 1785
Derbyshire	£17,441	£22,925
Gloucestershire	£53,812	£64,895
E & W	£1,556,804	£2,004,238

Source: DRO, Q/AR 4/3 (1817), Appendix C, p. 156.

Until 1776 no accounts of expenditure on the poor in each parish were officially required. Returns for individual parishes were not available but comparing the counties of Derbyshire (Belper) and Gloucestershire (Cheltenham) with England and Wales, expenditure on the poor in Derbyshire had increased by 31% between 1776 and 1785 (table 1.2). In Gloucestershire the increase in the same period was 21% and in England and Wales the rise was 29%. The increase in expenditure on the poor in Gloucestershire was 10% less than that of Derbyshire and 8% less than England and Wales. Therefore, Derbyshire poor expenditure was more typical of the country as a whole. Obviously the Belper area of Derbyshire may not be typical but there is no means to confirm or deny the figures provided in the report. In Crich parish (Belper) some records of expenditure on relief have been found. Expenditure on poor relief was comparatively low in 1776 for a parish of this size but only rose from £128 per year in 1776 to £167 in 1803, representing an increase of thirty per cent over 27 years.

The report by Eden on Wirksworth parish also provides evidence of the type of pauper receiving assistance and their age. Some of the cases mentioned are reproduced in Table 1.3.

Table 1.3 Examples of regular out-relief payments to Wirksworth parish poor, and total allowances paid (approximately 1795-7)

Examples of cases	Age	Weekly Allowance
A farmer's widow, lame	70	1s
A miner's widow	68	6d
A rag gatherer	74	1s
A woman with 2 children, deserted by husband	35	1s
A wool-comber's widow & 4 children	35	1s
A miner, blind	50	3s
A miner's widow and 3 children	32	4s
A miner and wife	74	2s 6d
A spinster, lame	60	1s 6d
Total weekly allowance	£4 5s 9d	
9 soldier's wives and 6 children	15s	
19 bastards	£1 5s 4d	
Miscellaneous	£1 4s 1d	
Total regular out-relief	£6 16s 8d	
43 poor receive casual relief totaling	£6 2s 5½d	

Source: F. Eden, *The State of the Poor*, Vol. 2., pp. 133-5.

In Wirksworth a miner's widow aged 68 received 6d per week, a wool-comber's widow (age 38) with four children received 2s a week and an infirm farmer (age 73) received 1s 6d. The weekly regular relief totalled £6 16s 8d and included payment itemized separately for nine soldiers' wives and children and nineteen bastards. The total regular out-relief payment equates to £356 a year, considerably higher than Crich parish mentioned previously. There were 64 cases receiving regular payment and 43 poor receiving casual relief (table 1.3).

Poor Relief in Belper and Cheltenham between 1800 and 1834

Throughout the country, and following the end of the wars with Napoleon, a severe depression set in, associated with falling prices and rising agrarian unemployment. There was unrest among both the rural and urban labourers. Industrialization and changes to agriculture resulted in large numbers of able-bodied being unemployed which was evident in Cheltenham. There was great distress in this town and several parish property owners provided food for the poor. It was not only food that was a problem in Cheltenham but houses to accommodate the poor. The vestry even agreed to pay the rent for a man living

in Withington parish (to the east of Cheltenham) as there was no available house in Cheltenham to receive him.⁸⁸

The beginning of the nineteenth century saw a wide variety of welfare provisions within the country.⁸⁹ This was a time of a post-war depression when the labour market was flooded when soldiers returned home resulting in relief costs rising. There was an industrial slump in 1811 and 1815 arising from cut backs in the production of military equipment at the end of the war. Food prices fell resulting in income from agriculture falling. To assist farmers the government passed the 1815 Corn Law which excluded the import of lower priced foreign grain. All this resulted in a surge of relief costs and a higher proportion of wages paid from the poor rates.⁹⁰ In 1830-1 there was an uprising of labourers in the South and Midlands as a result of enclosure of the countryside, the introduction of machinery, low wages, and a decline of cottage industries, leading to machine breaking and arson. By the 1820s there was still underemployment and over population in the south resulting in relief payments being paid at a subsistence level.

Sturges Bourne's Act of 1818-19, also known as the Select Vestry Act, applied to those parishes where a vestry had voted to adopt the Act. Voting under the 1818 Act to elect the vestry was weighted according to the value of property owned.⁹¹ Under this Act a parish could appoint a permanent assistant overseer and a parish commissioner. The select vestry consisted of between five and twenty people.⁹² Under the 1819 Act resident clergymen would become *ex-officio* members of the vestry. Where there were disputes on relief, two justices were required to overturn a decision. By the 1820s, 15 per cent of parishes in England and Wales had elected select vestries.⁹³ An example of the use of this Act was found at Prestbury (Cheltenham) where the workhouse and select vestry started in 1824. In other parishes a local Act was instigated. The local Act was not a poor law code

⁸⁸ Hart, *History of Cheltenham*, pp. 252.

⁸⁹ King, *Poverty and Welfare*, p. 30. In Shropshire there were seven private incorporations, four Gilbert unions, 49 statutory Select Vestries and around 100 parishes where welfare was operated by overseers indicating the vast array of welfare provision within a county.

⁹⁰ Brundage, *English Poor Laws*, p. 45.

⁹¹ B. K. Song, 'Landed interest, local government and the labour market in England, 1750-1850', *Economic History Review*, 51 (1998), p. 477.

⁹² K. Morrison, *The Workhouse: a Study of Poor-Law Buildings in England*, (English Heritage, 1999), p. 34.

⁹³ Brundage, *English Poor Laws*, pp. 50-55; Song, in his study of Oxfordshire had not found it easy to identify select vestries and his estimate of select vestries in the county of Oxfordshire was between 40 and 60 in the 1820s and 1830s, Song, 'Landed interest', p. 477.

for that parish but rather a piece of legislation which modified and supplied the general poor law. This was much evident in Crich parish where a local Act set up the workhouse and the parish's subscription scheme.⁹⁴

A national survey in 1802-3 showed there was 3,765 workhouse or poor houses in existence, rising to 4,000 by 1815 with an estimate of 100,000 paupers. Just before the Royal Commission started its investigations into the poor the number of institutions had reached 4,800. There were 83,468 indoor paupers which averaged 22 per house.⁹⁵ The old workhouse in Cheltenham was maintained by the parish vestry and by 1809 a new workhouse was rented in St James Square at a cost of £246 per year for seven years (see figure 1.1). Eventually the workhouse was purchased for £2,578. The September quarterly accounts for St Mary's parish in Cheltenham show quarterly salaries of £10 for the workhouse governor, the same for the surgeon but only £3 10s for the matron. James Fowler was the governor of the workhouse from 1814-5 and Nicholas Cook from 1817 onwards.⁹⁶ Prestbury was a parish to the north of Cheltenham and its parish property and poor house was built around 1807. This parish property was situated to the south of Upper Mill Road and to the east and north of Upper Mill Brook on land left to poor of the parish. There was an additional 6.5 acres belonging to the parish and available for the use of the poor. The women and children of the workhouse were provided with spinning wheels and yarn and there were weekly visits by a parish committee. There were many complaints of the number of vagrants in the parish and parishioners were requested by the overseer not to give them help.⁹⁷

Charlton Kings, a parish to the north-east of Cheltenham, had no workhouse but anticipated the need. The Charity Trustees exchanged a plot at the east end of Church Street for a plot at the west end of the same street. A conveyance was not signed until after the workhouse was erected in 1826. The workhouse lay back from Church Street with its yard and garden on the east behind the almshouses.⁹⁸ An inventory in the 1830s describes the workhouse as containing a governor's room and committee room, in addition to the

⁹⁴ *Ninth Annual Report of Poor Law Commission, 1842-3*, vol. XXI.1, App. A., No. 2 (1843).

⁹⁵ King, *Poverty and Welfare*, p. 3; Brundage, *English poor law*, p. 40.

⁹⁶ GA, P78/1 OV 2/1, overseer accounts, St Mary Parish Cheltenham.

⁹⁷ C.R. Elrington (ed.), *V.C.H. Gloucestershire*, 8 (1968), p.67-81; GA, P254/OV 2/1; GA, P254 VE 2/2.

⁹⁸ M. Paget (ed.), *A History of Charlton Kings* (Gloucester, 1988), p. 154.

usual bedrooms and kitchen.⁹⁹ Booker's Cottage in Cubberley, built around 1808, was one of several buildings rented in the parish for the poor in the early 1830s. Previously, the overseers rented other accommodation for the poor with an average cost of £156.¹⁰⁰

What was happening to relief expenditure at the beginning of the nineteenth century? Poor relief continued to rise in England and Wales from £5.3 million in 1802-3 (table 1.4) to £8.6 million by 1813. Official returns on poor law expenditure showed that relief costs had doubled since the 1780s and 1 in 9 of the population were receiving relief. Expenditure per head was highest in the south-east and Midlands, and the national average was 9s 7d per head in England and Wales.¹⁰¹

Table 1.4 *Abstract of Returns showing expense and maintenance of the poor in England and Wales to 9 May 1804*

Total expenditure England and Wales	£5,246,587
N. persons relieved permanently in workhouse, England and Wales	80,592
N. persons relieved permanently out of workhouse	389,729
N. persons relieved occasionally out of workhouse	299,883
N. children in Schools of Industry	20,703

Source: *The Times*, 9 May 1804, www.timesonline.co.uk (11.7.2008).

The *Abstract of Returns* quoted by *The Times* shows the amount of in and out-relief in England and Wales together with the numbers receiving permanent and occasional relief.¹⁰² The year 1817 was identified as the peak of poor relief expenditure but do the statistics confirm this? In the *Report of the Select Committee on the Poor Law* (1817), it was clearly evident that expenditure on the poor between 1785 and 1803 had doubled.

⁹⁹ GA, P76 OV8/1, Inventory of Workhouse contents, 1830s.

¹⁰⁰ C.R. Elrington (ed.), *V.C.H. Gloucestershire*, 7 (1981), pp. 180 and 192; GA, D269 B/F 97; GA, DC/E 88/31.

¹⁰¹ Brundage, *English Poor Laws*, p. 40; The cost per head varied between a high of 23s 4d in Sussex but only 4s 11d per head in Lancashire.

¹⁰² DRO, Q/AR 4/1 (3272/4), *Abstract and Returns Relative to the Expense and Maintenance of the Poor* (1804), pp. 86 and 174.

Table 1.5 Expenditure on poor relief in England and Wales, Derbyshire and Gloucestershire, 1803 to 1817

County	Total expenditure on the poor in the year ending Easter 1803	Amount spent on maintenance of the poor in the year ending 25 March 1815	% increase in expenditure 1803 to 1815
Derbyshire	£58,665	£76,595	31
Gloucestershire	£113,415	£129,896	15
E & W	£4,267,965	£5,072,029	19

Source: DRO, Q/AR 4/3, *Report from the Select Committee on the Poor Laws with the Minutes of Evidence taken before the Committee* (1817), Appendix C, p. 156.

The rise in expenditure between 1803 and 1815 was 19% in England and Wales, 31% in Derbyshire and 15% in Gloucestershire. Derbyshire's expenditure on the poor was double that of Gloucestershire, and Gloucestershire was nearer that of England and Wales. The differing sizes of the populations of Gloucestershire and Derbyshire were not taken into account, but the analysis in table 1.6 based purely on the percentage change over time. The report stated the increase had

arisen from the peculiar pressure and difficulty of the times aggravated by the high prices incident to the calamity of a deficient harvest...it is apparent that both the number of paupers and the amount of money levied by assessment are progressively increasing while the situation of the poor appears not to have been in a corresponding degree improved.¹⁰³

The Report stressed that a change to the poor law was the only means to reduce expenditure but it also set down the persons entitled to relief, and administrative method to be used. Children, whose parents could not maintain them, were to be set to work or apprenticed, as were persons having no means to maintain themselves. The lame, impotent, old, blind, and others not able to work were to be given relief.¹⁰⁴ The Select Committee was greatly concerned that despite the clearness of the law indicating the people entitled to relief, still the practice in many instances had been at variance with the law.

Having shown the national and regional picture of relief expenditure at the beginning of the nineteenth century the thesis now analyses expenditure in Cheltenham and Belper. There was detailed information in the 1804 *Abstract of Returns* for all the parishes

¹⁰³ DRO, Q/AR 4/3, *Report from the Select Committee on the Poor Laws with the Minutes of Evidence taken before the Committee* (1817), p. 156.

¹⁰⁴ DRO, Q/AR 4/3, p. 13.

in Cheltenham and Belper but in order to make a comparison between the two unions only the five main parishes of each union have been included in the analysis (table 1.5).

Table 1.6 Total money expended for the maintenance and relief of the poor in parishes and townships in Belper and Cheltenham, 1803

Township/Parish	In-Relief	Out of house of industry or workhouse	No. relieved out permanently	Occasional relief
Belper township	0	£1374	93	48
Duffield parish	£73	£398	38	50
Ripley township	£6	£313	41	12
Alfreton parish	£478*	£350	50	35
Wirksworth parish	£427	£709	82	70
Totals		£3,144	304	215
Charlton Kings parish	0	£325	38	4
Cheltenham parish	£373	£979	139	44
Leckhampton parish	0	£129	12	2
Swindon parish	0	£35	4	24
Prestbury parish	0	£168	20	20
Totals		£1,635	213	94

Source: DRO, Q/AR 4/1 (3272/4), *Abstract and Returns relative to the Expense and Maintenance of the Poor* (1804), pp. 86 and 174;

*includes money expended in building workhouse.

Table 1.5 shows money expended on relief in the main parishes of Belper and Cheltenham and is shown to explain the difference between Cheltenham and Belper in the amount spent on relief. In-relief was provided in four of the five parishes and townships in Belper union but in only one parish in Cheltenham. There were variations between the two unions in the total amount of relief paid out of the workhouse. For example in Belper out-relief totalled £3,144 but in Cheltenham was only £1,635. There were also variations between the two unions in the number that received relief permanently, a high of 304 in Belper but only 213 in Cheltenham. Occasional relief was paid to 215 in Belper but less than half that number received occasional relief in Cheltenham. At first glance the in-relief costs in Alfreton looked high but this was due to the return including the cost of building Alfreton workhouse. The discussion in chapter 3 will show that the reverse happened post-1834 when relief expenditure was greater in Cheltenham.

Parish papers found in 1911, and reported on in the *Cheltenham Examiner*, referred to the parish of Cheltenham from 1812 to 1819. The papers describe the population of

Cheltenham at around 10,000 in 1812 and a Guardian of the Poor was employed, a Mr W. Buckle. His duties were similar to the duties of the Relieving Officer post-1834. Mr Buckle received a salary of £52 a year which rose to £70 by 1816 and this amount was similar to the salary paid to Mr Samuel Pates (relieving officer) at the formation of the union in 1835. Total expenditure on poor relief in Cheltenham parish in 1812-3 was £360 3s 3d, but bearing in mind the size of the population, this was a heavy burden on the rates.¹⁰⁵ Cheltenham in the early part of the nineteenth century attracted 'large numbers of very poor people anxious to escape the hardships of life in other parts of the county and to find settlement in the town.'¹⁰⁶ Most were sent away by the overseers of the poor as their settlement was outside of Cheltenham parish. In Coberley parish the population was around 200. There were 40 families in the parish of which 35 were employed in agriculture and five in trade. Various payments were made to the poor in this parish between 1798 and 1836, and the payments were not just for pensions to the elderly.¹⁰⁷ Nineteen paupers received relief in 1803, totalling £164. This equates to approximately 3s per week per pauper, considerably lower than the amount per head quoted by Brundage for England and Wales. In the next parish of Cowley, 13 paupers received regular relief and ten occasional relief and expenditure on the poor in 1803 totalled £214.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁵ *Cheltenham Examiner*, Odds and Ends, 16 March 1911.

¹⁰⁶ Hart, *Cheltenham History*, pp. 184-5.

¹⁰⁷ Some of the payments made include 'Widow Betteridge' who regularly received 10s, the Fishers family received £1 4s when they had the smallpox while John Humphris had a broken leg and received 7s. For Joseph Brasington's daughter 6s was received for shoes and Betty Maners received 1s 6d for want of work. GA, P105 OV2/1, Overseers accounts Coberley, 1798-1836.

¹⁰⁸ Elrington, *VCH Gloucestershire*, 7, p. 192.

Table 1.5 Expenditure in Cheltenham parish on permanent and occasional relief between 1814 and 1831

April	1 year, permanent out-door	Occasional relief (year)	Number paupers in workhouse
1814 – 1815	£972	£204	40
1816 – 1817	£886	£407	61
1817 - 1818	£932	£472	74
1818 – 1819	£913	£419	75
1819 – 1820	£880	£598	-
1820 – 1821	£997	£653	69
1821 – 1822	£1,103	£639	68
1831 – 1832	£1,092	£494	-

Source: GA, P78/1 VE 2/4, Abstracts of the Accounts, 1814-1822; GA, P78/1 OV 2/3, Overseer Accounts.

What was the expenditure on relief in the parishes of Cheltenham and Belper from 1814 and how did this compare to the national statistics? In Cheltenham the average weekly payment to permanent out-door paupers between 1814 and 1832 was £972 (table 1.7) and this varied between £880 (1819) and £1,102 (1821). The peak number in the workhouse was also in the year 1818-9, although this could have been higher as the figure for the number of paupers in the workhouse was missing for the years 1819 and 1831, and between 1822 and 1831. The abstract of the account for 1821-2 confirms there were 68 paupers in Cheltenham poor house in addition to Nicholas Cook the governor and the matron. The accounts also confirm that the whole of the purchase money for the poor house had been paid.¹⁰⁹

In Crich (Belper) there were 20 regular and 20 occasional people receiving relief in 1803 and this did not change significantly during the period. Only five paupers were receiving relief in the workhouse and none of these were able-bodied paupers (table 1.8). Unlike Cheltenham the number receiving occasional relief had fallen in 1815 and expenditure on relief decreased slightly from that in 1803. Joseph Hole, the overseer of Crich parish, paid out regular weekly amounts to the poor of 1s 6d to two shillings (table 1.8).

¹⁰⁹ GA, P78/1 VE 2/4, Abstract of the Accounts, 1814-22.

Table 1.6 Total number of paupers receiving relief in Crich parish, 1834

	Able-Bodied	Aged and Infirm		Children
		Male	Female	
Outdoor relief	15	21	44	55
Indoor relief	0	2	2	1
Total number receiving indoor and out-door relief	15	23	46	56

Source: DRO, D2365 A/PO 13/2

By 1826 poor relief had risen to £493 in Crich but had fallen back to £400 in 1834. Crich parish records show that in March 1835, before Belper union was formed, £715 was expended for relief and maintenance of the poor. From April 1834 for one year the widow of David Ashover of Wirksworth received 15 weeks pay at 3s per week and John Buxton of Bolehill received 16 weeks at 5s and 23 weeks at 4s.¹¹⁰ The two examples quoted show weekly amounts were significantly higher than the weekly pensions paid between 1803 and 1815. A total of 135 paupers, made up of 15 able-bodied, 21 male and 44 female aged and infirm and 55 children received out-relief in Crich parish in 1834. This equates to approximately £2 19s per pauper in 1834 or about a one shilling per week (table 1.8). In Wirksworth parish (Belper) the doles totalled £14 19s for four weeks in 1824 and were made up of various amounts from 1s to 2s 6d per week. For nine weeks between April and July, in the same year, doles totalled £31 6s.¹¹¹ Of the examples quoted above it appears that expenditure on the poor increased between 1803 and 1834 justifying the Royal Commission's inquiry into relief provision.

1832 Royal Commission on the Poor Laws

At the setting up of the Royal Commission in 1832 there were many local systems in place to relieve the poor. King stated that 'the generous allowances encouraged idleness and immorality undermining the desirable self-help ethic.'¹¹² The general allowance resulted in high relief bills and continuing poverty. Relief payments for England and Wales

¹¹⁰ DRO, M372 vol. 3 and 4, Returns for Crich from 8 April 1834 to 12 April 1835; DRO, on film M10 vol. 12, Returns for Crich.

¹¹¹ DRO, D2372 A/PO1 on film M372 volume 3, Cash book for Wirksworth.

¹¹² King, *Poverty and Welfare*, p. 227.

were high and totalled £7.3 million in 1820, falling back to £6.82 million in 1830 and falling further under the new Poor Law to £4.6 million (1840).¹¹³

The Royal Commission of 1832-4 focused its attention on the able-bodied male and rural poverty. Some felt that the focus on rural poverty was the wrong approach as it was a time of migration from village to town and also a time when urban poverty was on the increase. The commission sent out questionnaires to all parishes, and different questions to urban parishes from those to rural parishes. Only ten per cent of parishes responded, including Alfreton and Kirk Langley in Belper and Cowley in Cheltenham. Because so few responses were received from the parishes, commissioners were sent out to gather the information. The Rector and overseer for Kirk Langley made very detailed responses. The Commission looked at employment and family incomes at parish level. Overseers were asked to provide information on weekly wages, rents and employment at various times of the year. The Commission requested additional information on labour surpluses, migrants in the parish, savings of labourers, numbers receiving relief, numbers in the workhouse, the amount spent on relief and relief provisions in the parish.¹¹⁴ For urban parishes the town queries asked for additional information on types of workers who were subject to distress, yearly earnings and whether the wages were adequate.

In the reports of the Assistant Commissioners, no reference was made to any of the Cheltenham parishes but three of the Belper parishes were referred to in Redmond Pilkington's report, those of Belper, Wirksworth and Alfreton.¹¹⁵ Belper township was described by the commissioner as 'in a disorderly and wretched condition'. The regulations of the workhouse had been remodelled but few able-bodied men applied for relief. The magistrates set the allowance at 2s for adults, 1s 6d for children and 2s 6d for the aged, but the overseer stated that

we avoid all acknowledged scale, making relief depend upon their necessities and character; we have now seldom any appeals...few labourers here are owners of cottages; they rent them at an average of £4 per annum...the average wages are 12s in summer, 9s in winter.¹¹⁶

¹¹³ King, *Poverty and Welfare*, p. 229.

¹¹⁴ Hollen Lees, *Solidarities*, p. 116.

¹¹⁵ Royal Commission of Inquiry into Administration and Practical Operation of Poor Laws, Tenth Volume, Appendix (A), Reports of Assistant Commissioners, Part I (Vol. XXVIII. – sess. 1834), pp. 387-391.

¹¹⁶ Reports of Assistant Commissioners, p. 387.

The report on Wirksworth parish concentrated on the hamlet of Middleton and the situation of the lead miners. Most of the villagers were miners with a majority owning their cottages. If they applied for relief they forfeited their cottages, but most applications for relief were from the old and infirm or widows with families. Most of the distress of the miners arose from the reduction in the price of lead. Women who made lace to supplement family income had seen a fall in their income from 1s per day to 1s 6d per week. The workhouse was not enforced in the parish and as a consequence the majority of inmates were children and the aged.¹¹⁷ The information contained in the commissioner reports provides a picture of what life was like and the economic situation in the parishes in the early 1830s, information that was not found in overseer papers for these parishes.

Before the setting up of the Royal Commission Jeremy Bentham proposed a centralization of poor relief because charity was erratic and insufficient to assist the poor. The indigent, who had no resources, were the poor who should receive relief. Bentham considered that the offering of the workhouse as a condition of relief was the best method to stop the able-bodied from applying for help. This condition for the payment of relief would sort out the true poor from the work-shy poor.¹¹⁸ On the design of the workhouse, Bentham based his design idea on a prison design called a 'panopticon'. This was a polygonal structure with a central hub and radiating arms containing the pauper accommodation. Bentham advocated that paupers should be classified according to gender, age and infirmity and the 'bad paupers' should be separated from the innocent ones.¹¹⁹ In fact, Cheltenham's K-shaped workhouse and Belper's H-shaped workhouse, both completed in the early 1840s, contained the central hub and radiating wings, enabling the paupers to be separated into the various categories that Bentham proposed.

Edward Senior, one of the commissioners employed to investigate the poor on the Royal Commission, felt that by cutting down on relief it would raise wages, lower taxes and produce a happier population. With parishes no longer subsidising wages, taxes may be reduced and employers pay more for the workers they needed.¹²⁰ One of the points the report required was for there to be national uniformity in the management of the poor.

¹¹⁷ Reports of Assistant Commissioners, pp. 389-90.

¹¹⁸ Brundage, *English Poor Law*, p. 34.

¹¹⁹ Brundage, *English Poor Law*, p. 35.

¹²⁰ Hollen Lees, *Solidarities*, pp. 118-9

Where previously a parish had adopted its own policy of managing the poor, the report specified that there would be a central authority to ensure consistency of relief practices and bring a halt to discretionary power. The reality was very different as explained in subsequent chapters.

Conclusion

The chapter has considered provision for the poor in the period 1775 to 1834 in the two communities of Belper and Cheltenham. The discussion found, that in the socio-economic structure of these two communities, there were major differences. Belper had considerable employment in industry, through the cotton mills, coal mining and quarrying, but two home-based industries were in decline, that of framework knitters and nailmakers. Most employment in Cheltenham was in the leisure industries and building trades, and in agriculture in the surrounding villages. Both communities grew substantially over the period and for Belper this was as a result of the development of the mills by the Strutt family together with a number of public services. In contrast, Cheltenham had a number of landowners with no one landowner dominating the town. With a rise in wheat prices at the beginning of the nineteenth century, by-employments and self-help were important for the family to survive.

Was assistance to the poor in each parish managed the same way and with a similar amount of relief paid to the pauper? Relief costs throughout the period rose, with expenditure on the poor doubling between the 1780s and 1802-3. Parish relief payment details were found for a number of parishes and some paupers were receiving as little as 6d per week for a widow or 2s for a widow and four children. Some paupers received relief permanently and for long periods, but others received only casual relief, but there were comparable pension levels. The amount of relief paid was only a small percentage of the sum that could be earned. Relief was also paid in kind and a number of payments were given for clothes and shoes or to cover funeral costs. Only small numbers received relief in the workhouse, the majority receiving out-relief. Relief expenditure rose in Crich from £167 in 1803 to £715 in March 1835. The in-relief figures printed in the abstracts and returns of 1804 show that only Cheltenham provided in-maintenance information compared to the four parishes and townships in Belper union. Although Belper at this time was only a township, a chapelry of Duffield, its expenditure on out-relief was £400 greater than that

of Cheltenham parish. The conclusion drawn from these abstracts was that Cheltenham was relieving greater numbers in their homes on less money. The pre-1834 parish accommodation provided free or cheap accommodation but this was sold once the new poor law came into existence and a union workhouse replaced this accommodation.

There was a brief discussion on wage rates in the late eighteenth century to see if wages paid in Cheltenham and Belper were similar to wages in other parishes of England and Wales. Poor harvest, high grain and food prices, and a dramatic rise in population affected the number of paupers seeking relief. Most wages paid in Wirksworth were similar to Horrell and Humphries' findings but this was only one parish out of 47 parishes to form Belper union.

There were only two parishes that formed Gilbert unions, and one of these, Wirksworth, was to challenge its inclusion in the union of Belper in 1837. There were a number of workhouses in Cheltenham and Belper, but Belper had a better workhouse provision than Cheltenham, and from an earlier date. The workhouses could only accommodate a small percentage of the paupers requiring relief. Cheltenham parish was the only parish to 'farm-out' its poor. Crich parish was the only parish in both unions that had a subscription workhouse and the information found gave an indication on how the charges were levied and how the paupers behaved.

The discussion in the chapter concluded with a brief discussion on the 1832 Royal Commission investigation on the poor laws, which advocated a central authority to ensure a consistency of relief practices. The next chapter focuses on the impact of the 1834 Poor Law Amendment Act and the formation of Cheltenham and Belper unions. It will also consider how the indoor paupers were managed, the building of the union workhouse and the provision of relief between 1834 and 1845.

Chapter 2

The Formation of Belper and Cheltenham Unions, 1835 – 1845

The workhouse is regarded as a prison; the poor consider it a point of honour not to go there. Perhaps it must be admitted that the system of administration is foolishly despotic and worrying, that is the fault of every administrative system, the human being becomes a machine; he is treated as if he were devoid of feeling, and insulted quite unconsciously.¹

Chapter 1 discussed the history of the poor law, the socio-economic features of Cheltenham and Belper, the poor houses and parish properties, and treatment of the poor in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century. Cheltenham and Belper were very different in their industry, employment and population. Only small numbers were relieved in the workhouses of the two unions, with four Belper parishes providing in-relief compared to just one parish in Cheltenham. There were two Gilbert unions, one in each union, and Crich was the only parish workhouse to operate as a subscription workhouse. Expenditure on relief doubled between the 1780s and 1802, while out-relief in Belper township was £400 greater in 1803 than Cheltenham.

This chapter will focus on the 1834 Poor Law Amendment Act, the formation of Cheltenham and Belper unions, the building of workhouses, and relief provision between 1834 and 1845. The aim of the chapter is to consider firstly, whether Cheltenham and Belper were similar in the manner of their formation and, secondly, was relief expenditure similar or different between the unions and to other unions in England and Wales? As Steve King points out, the lack of information and records in the early days of the new poor law made comparisons between unions difficult.² Some unions do have an extensive range of records, for example Bolton, but even there the information on individual paupers and the amount of relief received was not complete.³ In Cheltenham and Belper there are good

¹ P. Wood, *Poverty and the Workhouse in Victorian Britain* (Stroud, 1991), p. 102.

² S. King, *Poverty and Welfare in England, 1700-1850: a Regional Perspective* (Manchester, 2000), p. 238. The extensive records in Bolton include over 500 pieces of information and ledgers relating to management of the poor under the new poor law, enabling a thorough study of the management of the poor to take place.

³ King, *Poverty and Welfare*, pp. 238-9.

records of minutes, correspondence ledgers of Poor Law Commission (PLC) and admission registers but Belper has a greater number of recorded details on individual pauper cases.⁴ The impact of the 1834 Act was not uniform throughout the country giving rise to local variations. Norman McCord found the local economic situation, the attitude of influential groups and the calibre of responsible agents all affected local implementation of the Act.⁵ King's findings show that there was continuity between the old and new poor law in the areas of personnel employed in workhouses, the types of allowances and gender relief, but was this true for Cheltenham and Belper?⁶

The Poor Law Amendment Act of 1834

How were paupers to be managed under the new Act, and what changes were to be made to local administration? The Poor Law Report of 1834 stressed that there was to be no out-door relief to able-bodied paupers and that it was vital to separate the indigent poor from the working poor by the 'principle of less eligibility'. What is meant by less eligibility? This was defined as 'the position of the pauper must be 'less eligible...than that of the independent labourer.'⁷ The Royal Commission was set up in 1832 and its aim was to improve the moral and social conditions of the poor through two principles of 'less eligibility' and the workhouse test. By using this test there was expectation of a cut to the number of paupers receiving relief, and therefore a cut in relief expenditure. Despite the Report specifying that relief was only to be given in the workhouse there were exceptions to this rule, including, for cases of sudden or urgent necessity, of sickness and accident, for burial expenses, for cases of widows with legitimate children during the first six months of widowhood, and of the elderly unable to work.⁸

The strategy of the Poor Law Report provided for the reorganization of the existing administrative structure of the poor law by grouping parishes into unions. Secondly, the central commission produced national regulations and controlled the administration of the poor law, and thirdly, that relief for the able-bodied was to be in the workhouse and out-

⁴ King, *Poverty and Welfare*, p. 238.

⁵ N. McCord, 'The implementation of the 1834 Poor Law Amendment Act on Tyneside', *International Review of Social History*, 15 (1969), p. 90.

⁶ King, *Poverty and Welfare*, p. 250.

⁷ S.G. and E.O.A. Checkland (eds), *The Poor Law Report of 1834* (London, 1974), pp. 334-5; *British Social Policy, 1601-1948*, www2.rgu.ac.uk/publicpolicy/introduction/history.htm (10.7.2009).

⁸ K.D.M. Snell, *Parish and Belonging: Community, Identity and Welfare in England and Wales, 1700-1950* (Cambridge, 2006), pp. 236-7.

door relief to the able-bodied was to be prohibited after two years.⁹ The Act provided for a central body, the Poor Law Commission (PLC), which was given authority to manage the poor for five years initially. The commissioners appointed to the PLC were Thomas Frankland Lewis, a member of the 1817-18 Select Committee on the Poor Law, George Nicholls, a Nottinghamshire reformer and Bank of England reformer, and J.G. Shaw Lefevre, a bailiff for the Spencer estates. Edwin Chadwick was to miss out on a commissioner post and instead was appointed secretary to the PLC. In the first instance nine assistant commissioners were appointed to set up the unions, but this proved inadequate and by 1836 the number of commissioners had risen to twenty one.¹⁰ The PLC was limited in its powers and also lacked government support, but its first task was to appoint assistant commissioners to establish unions of parishes and local boards of guardians. In a pamphlet issued by the PLC the commission stated that the central board 'would incorporate parishes for the purpose of maintaining a common workhouse and which would generally avoid the chance of discretion and abusive practices of parochial rule...The two intractable factors of social distress and local inefficiency made reform imperative.'¹¹ The annual reports for 1835 and 1836 show the poor law unions had achieved lower poor rates, that there was rising wages and a 'moral regeneration of the labourer.'¹² Was this the reality or did the assistant commissioners' reports to the central board paint too rosy a picture? By 1839, ninety per cent of the parishes in England and Wales had been formed into unions but in some areas, particularly in the north and Wales, the assistant commissioners encountered problems.¹³

Under the 1834 Act the PLC issued two types of orders to boards of guardians. Firstly, a general order was issued to all unions. An example of a general order was the Out Relief (General Order) issued to Belper union on the 2 August 1841.¹⁴ The order required parliamentary approval and was active after forty days. Secondly, there were special orders which were not subject to parliamentary approval or a delay period and

⁹ Checkland, *Poor Law Report*, pp. 335, 375, 418-9.

¹⁰ A. Brundage, *The English Poor Laws, 1700-1930* (Basingstoke, 2002), pp. 70-1.

¹¹ E.C. Midwinter, *Social Administration in Lancashire, 1830-1860: Poor Law, Public Health and Police* (Manchester, 1969), p. 9.

¹² Wood, *Poverty*, p. 79.

¹³ Wood, *Poverty*, p. 84.

¹⁴ The National Archives (TNA), Public Record Office (PRO), HLG 66/2, General Register of Orders.

would usually be issued to one union. Special orders issued could cover, for example, medical relief or relief to the able-bodied.¹⁵

The Royal Commission were convinced that once the 1834 Act came into being, the implementation of all aspects of the Act, from the building of the workhouse to the abolition of poor relief, would be completed quickly and with little opposition. The reality was very different and the implementation of the Act varied between each union, partly dependent upon the guardians, who in many instances were at odds with the PLC. The original Bill had provided for all out-door relief to cease in 1835 but this clause met with resistance in its passage through the House of Lords and was dropped from the Bill.¹⁶

Although centrally controlled by the PLC, the management of the poor remained at the local level, but this in itself created problems leading to opposition by local officials. Under the pre-1834 Acts the government was distant from what was happening at the local level. In fact Lancashire, Yorkshire and some areas of the Midlands used this to their advantage to drag out the unionisation of their counties. Belper union was happy with the central body and petitioned both houses in Parliament in support of the PLC stating ‘that your petitioners having had three years experience of the practical working of the Act are anxious to express their conviction of the beneficial effects both of a moral and pecuniary nature which have resulted from the measure...no alteration may be made in the fundamental principles of law...that the powers now vested in the commissioners may be continued...[we] acknowledge the valuable assistance they have at all times promptly received from the advice and instructions of the commissioners and their assistants.’¹⁷ Thomas Stevens, the assistant commissioner, also wrote of the beneficial results of the new poor law in Berkshire, Oxfordshire, and part of Gloucestershire.¹⁸

The Formation of Belper and Cheltenham Unions

The formation of Belper and Cheltenham poor law unions followed the publication of the Poor Law Report in 1834 and the implementation of the Act by Parliament. Assistant poor law commissioners were appointed to form parishes into unions, with central administration of the Act undertaken by the Poor Law Commission until 1847.

¹⁵ Brundage, *English Poor Laws*, p. 85.

¹⁶ Brundage, *English Poor Laws*, p. 68.

¹⁷ Derbyshire Record Office (DRO), D19 C/W 1/2, 22 February 1840.

¹⁸ *Second Annual Report of the Poor Law Commissioners*, Vol. XXIX (1836), p. 275.

Cheltenham union was formed in 1835 by Robert Weale and Belper was formed two years later, in 1837, by Thomas Stevens. In the north of the country, the assistant poor law commissioners met with great opposition as a result of the 'lurid pictures' of what had happened in the south, but there was opposition in the industrial areas where there was ample employment and low numbers unemployed.¹⁹ Richard Day started the formation of unions in Derbyshire and Staffordshire in the spring of 1836 by discussions with local landowners both in London and in the counties. By bringing the landowners on his side and offering concessions on boundaries to the unions, he was able to complete the formation of the unions early on.²⁰

The principle for creating a union was suggested by the PLC: 'the most convenient limits of unions...has been that of a circle, taking a market town as a centre, and comprehending those surrounding parishes whose inhabitants are accustomed to resort to the same market.'²¹ Later discussion on the formation of Cheltenham union will show that the town was not at the centre of the union. In reality, there were often deviations from this criterion in order to accommodate local landowners. Brundage discusses the county of Northamptonshire as an example where a large number of unions moved away from this criterion in order to accommodate the wishes of the local landowners. For example, the Duke of Grafton, through his Steward, requested the assistant commissioner to form a union of the parishes in his estate. This resulted in a small union with no market town at its centre but the Steward's request was granted and the Potterspury union was formed.

The board of guardians in each union was based on the select vestry model and guardians were elected on a property qualification, with county magistrates sitting as *ex-officio* guardians. The new Act retained the parish as the unit of finance, with each parish responsible for the cost of relieving its own poor, and it was on this basis that the parish contribution to the funds of the union was calculated.

Cheltenham union consisted of the town of Cheltenham and the surrounding parishes. Wood comments that 'where a union had a hard core of parishes, the peripheral

¹⁹ M.E. Rose, *The Relief of Poverty, 1834-1914* (1972, London, 1986), p. 12.

²⁰ Brundage, *English Poor Laws*, p. 149.

²¹ B. K. Song, 'Continuity and change in English rural society: the formation of poor law unions in Oxfordshire', *Historical Review*, 114 (1999), p. 317.

rural parishes often believed that they carried too heavy a burden.’²² Although the parishes in Cheltenham have not recorded in the board of guardian minutes their dissatisfaction at the amount they were required to contribute to the common fund, it seems to be the case that this situation occurred all over the country. It was evident in Belper union that the small parishes’ expenditure per head was considerably greater than the larger parishes.

In Cheltenham union, Robert Weale held a meeting in October 1835 with the parochial authorities, the residing magistrates, gentlemen, yeomen and parish officers where he proposed that the new union would include the following parishes:

Table 2.1 Proposed parishes for Cheltenham union, 1835

	Population		Population
Cheltenham	22,942	Charlton Kings	2,478
Leckhampton	929	Swindon	225
Prestbury	1,231	Uckington	175
Staverton	245	Badgworth	859
Great Whitcombe	174	Shurdington	99
Cowley	223	Cubberley	181

Source: Gloucestershire Archives (GA), G/CH 8a/1, Board of Guardian Minutes 1835.

Weale also explained his views on the formation of the union and the likely results, and although there was opposition to his proposals, there were many commendations. Two weeks later Weale informed the PLC of his findings and recommendations for the union, including the qualification for appointment of the guardians, the existing provision for the poor and the amount of poor rates per head of population:

Union is of small extent but population is very considerable. Cheltenham itself has been managed under Gilbert’s Act and the Poor Rates do not amount to 3/6 per head on the population – great discretion has been used in administering outdoor relief but the workhouse is under no regular system of management and appears to be little more than a lying in hospital for mothers of bastards and an asylum for their offspring. Charlton Kings is the next parish in importance to Cheltenham and the same observation as to outdoor relief may be made of that parish.

There are no able-bodied paupers in the workhouse at Cheltenham or Charlton, the inmates are mostly children and the Charity School of the latter place is held under its roof. In all the other parishes the poor’s rates are moderate as compared with other districts but relief is given in the shape of rent to a great proportion of the able-bodied paupers... The workhouse at Cheltenham and Charlton Kings will I think be sufficient for the purposes of the union, the former for the able-bodied and the latter for children and for old people for both which purposes it is well adapted and if not of sufficient extent other property immediately adjoining to it and belonging to the parish may easily be obtained... In consequences of the large number of *ex-officio* guardians I have ventured to recommend a larger number of

²² Wood, *Poverty*, p. 86.

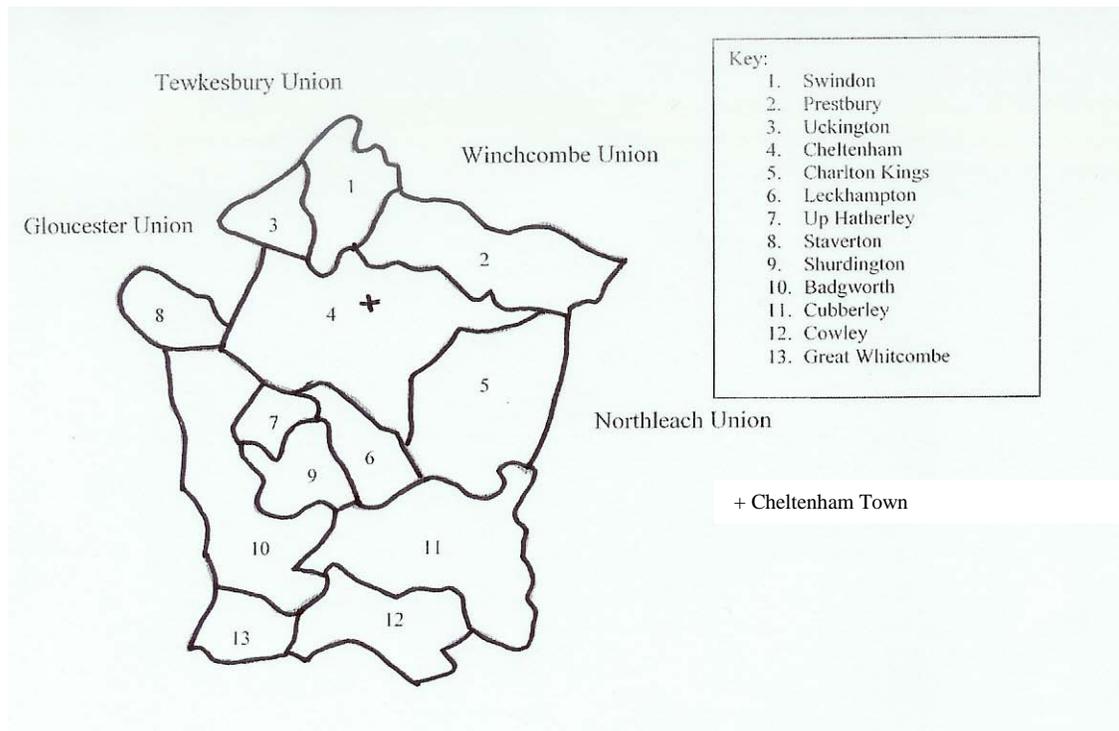
elected guardians than I should otherwise have done and I trust your Board will think I have acted prudently in so doing. The qualification I have fixed for the guardians is also higher than I have usually recommended, and my reason for doing so is that rents at Cheltenham are much higher than in most other places in this county, and that from the circumstances of the other parishes being agricultural, it is not likely that any efficient persons will be excluded by it.²³

From the letter it was noted that, although Cheltenham was considered a small union in terms of acreage (26,526 acres in 1831), as a town with surrounding small villages, its population was considerable and its rentals were high. The union was declared on the 30 October 1835, and comprised 13 parishes with a total population of 29,822 (1831). The qualification for the election of guardians was set at not less than £40 rateable value per annum, £10 more than that set for Belper.²⁴ The number of guardians to be elected was 27. In a schedule contained in the correspondence files the commissioner describes the length of the union as 6 miles, the width as 7 miles and the greatest distance from the meeting place of the guardians as 5 miles. Cheltenham town therefore was not the centre of the union, as shown on the map in figure 2.1 and does not fit the description by Song, as having its market town at the centre.

²³ TNA, PRO, MH 32/85, letter Robert Weale to PLC, 24 October 1835.

²⁴ *Gloucestershire Echo*, 27 March 1930.

Figure 2.1 Map showing Cheltenham union and its parishes



Source: Gloucestershire Archives (GA), extracted from parishes map of Gloucestershire (n.d.)

In contrast, Thomas Stevens, the assistant poor law inspector, appears to have had many problems forming unions in Derbyshire because of the incorporations impinging on the unions. Stevens sought advice from the PLC: ‘Wirksworth, a large parish here is under Gilbert’s Act pray give me clear directions about such cases. I fear I have several of them in the north.’²⁵ Stevens held a public meeting in Belper to which one or two influential ratepayers from every parish had been invited to attend and hear the proposed disposition of the parishes. Prior to the meeting, he had requested any objections to the proposed plan of the union in writing, and apart from Wirksworth representatives who objected and did not attend the meeting, no objections to the plan had been received. The letter to the PLC went on to explain and set out his plans for the union and the important points included:

Belper has on the other hand grown with astonishing rapidity into a place of considerable importance and it is likely to continue to increase, for the River Derwent, which passes through the Town, affords a great and never failing power applicable to any description of machinery. The market must also increase and Belper will become every day a more convenient place of resort for the guardians and a more advantageous situation for obtaining the supplies of the union workhouse.

²⁵ TNA, PRO, MH 32/68, correspondence of Thomas Stevens, 10 February 1837.

There are materials for a very good union in Belper and we may expect a satisfactory Board of Guardians.

There is no workhouse sufficient for the wants of the union and it will therefore be necessary to have a new one erected. Materials are cheap at Belper and the expense will not be oppressive to the parishes.

I have recommended 47 guardians to be elected besides which there will be thirteen *ex-officio* guardians but we must not depend upon these last for regular attendance. I recommend a rental of £30 per annum to be the qualification of an elected guardian. There will be a sufficient choice at this rate and the little shop keepers, who have been hitherto usually returned for the Incorporated Parishes, will be excluded.²⁶

As stated previously, Wirksworth was missing from the meeting of parishes with Thomas Stevens. The overseers, churchwardens and guardians of the township of Wirksworth wrote to the PLC outlining their case for a separate union based on Wirksworth. Their argument for setting up a union based on the township included :

That the population of Wirksworth and the vicinity does not consist of a mere agricultural population but of one composed of persons engaged in agricultural, manufacturing and mineral pursuits and that, in consequence of this diversity of occupation, they are not called upon to grant relief to able bodied paupers...that Belper is so locally situated with respect to Wirksworth that the Poor and infirm will be subject to undue hardships in making their applications for necessary relief...that the system will be unsatisfactory to the Ratepayers and Oppressive to the Poor. That the inhabitants of the town having lately incurred great expenses in buying and enlarging a workhouse, which is capable of being further enlarged...feel aggrieved in being compelled to make a great sacrifice in the disposal of the same. That within the distance of four or five miles from town there is a population exceeding 20,000 connected with it as their market and post town.²⁷

Attached to the letter was a map produced by Wirksworth of the proposed union based on this market town, together with a signed statement from the Magistrates. Thomas Stevens, the assistant commissioner for the area, also made reference to Wirksworth's request to be considered a separate union, when he was reporting on the proposed Belper union. His observations to the PLC included:

Wirksworth is a parish duly enrolled under Gilbert's Act; a memorial has been already forwarded to you from its Guardians and Overseers in requesting to be made the centre of another union. I have appraised them at two vestry meetings which I have attended that I cannot second their wishes, for the amount of poor rate expenditure in this part of the county is too light to justify small subdivisions. I believe their anxiety to be the centre of a union arises from purely selfish motives. This town has for some time past been gradually declining and this is an expiring struggle for its importance...It is an ancient town and had formerly a considerable trade depending upon the proceeds of the lead mines. This source of its wealth has greatly declined and they have no great river or other natural resource to

²⁶ TNA, PRO, MH 12/1840, letter Thomas Stevens to PLC, 22 March 1837.

²⁷ TNA, PRO, MH 12/1840, correspondence of PLC.

rely upon and are nearly surrounded by hills which make the place difficult of access. So that in the probable course of events Wirksworth will still decline.²⁸

Belper union was formed on 8 April 1837, a medium size union in terms of its acreage (66,610 acres in 1831) but it was composed of a number of large villages and towns with a union population of 33,388 in 1831. Belper's rentals were considerably lower than in Cheltenham but the number of parishes far exceeded the number in Cheltenham and a total of 47 guardians were elected. The population of the main parishes was also greater than Cheltenham. Whereas Cheltenham had only three parishes with a population over 1,000, Belper had seven parishes with a population greater than 1,000 (table 2.2).

Table 2.2 Population of main parishes and villages in Belper union, 1831

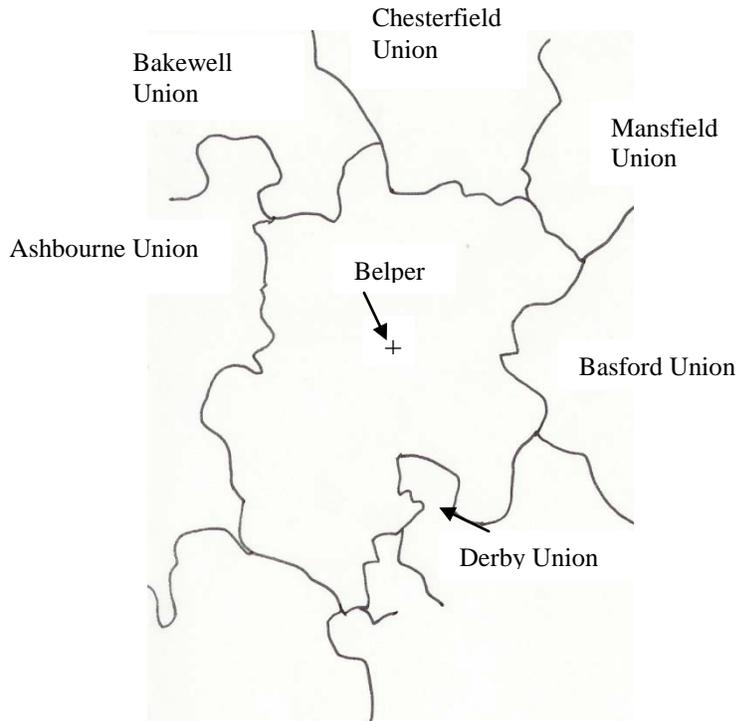
Parish/Village	Population in 1831
Belper	7,896
Crich	2,115
Denby	1,272
Duffield	2,725
Heage	1,845
Ripley	1,997
Wirksworth	4,082

Source: W. Page (ed.), *VCH Derbyshire 2* (1907), p. 194.

Figure 2.2 shows Belper union with the town of Belper at its centre and surrounding unions, and figure 2.3, the parishes that formed the union.

²⁸ TNA, PRO, MH 12/1840, letter Stevens to PLC, 22 March 1837.

Figure 2.2 Plan of Belper union showing Belper town and surrounding unions



Source: www.workhouses.org.uk, extracted from plan of Midland Unions

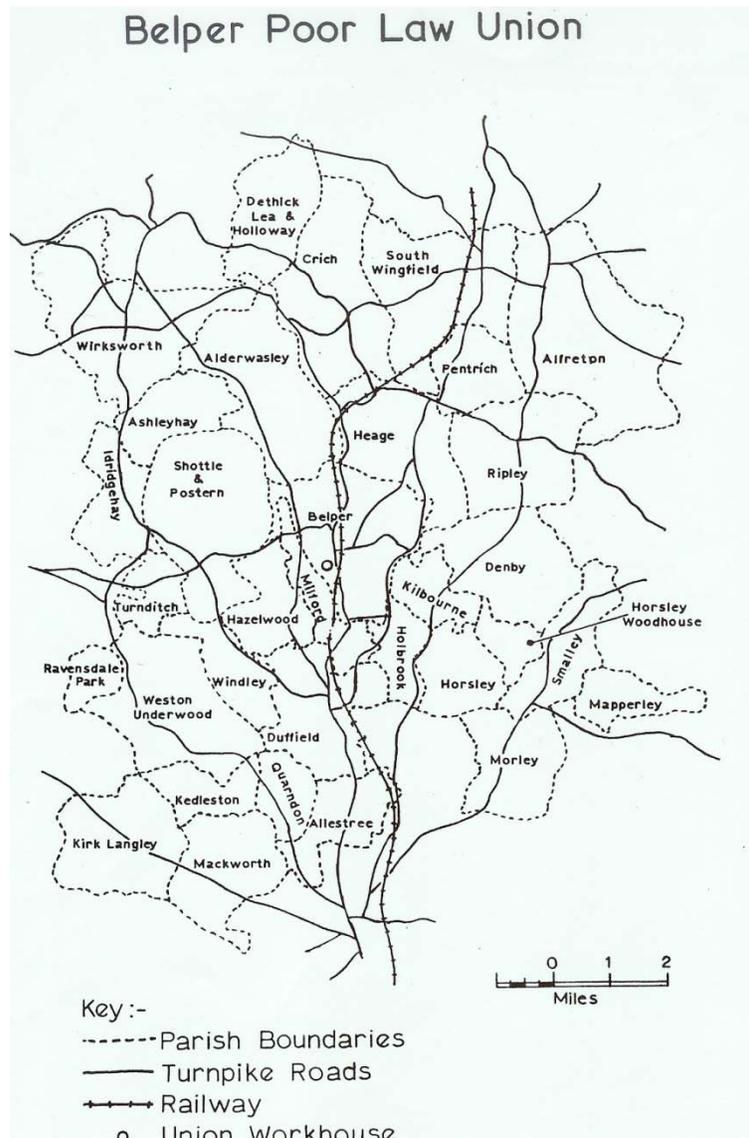
Thomas Stevens attended the first meeting of Belper board and was content that the meeting had passed without any objections from Wirksworth: ‘They have elected good officers and have done all that could be done at a first meeting, have resolved to have a new workhouse and have appointed a building committee.’²⁹ The quarterly reports of Stevens to the PLC describe three visits to Belper union in the quarter ending January 1838. He describes his visits as:

On the whole a satisfactory union though there is considerable party spirit in the board owing to the jealousy between Wirksworth, Alfreton and Belper. The Clerk a very good officer. The guardians have at last agreed to build a new workhouse. As soon as it is completed everything will go on well I think. The orders forbidding out relief not yet issued.³⁰

²⁹ TNA, PRO, MH 32/68, 8 May 1837.

³⁰ TNA, PRO, MH 32/68, letter T Stevens to PLC, 13 January 1838.

Figure 2.3 Map of Belper union parishes in 1840 showing parish boundaries, railway and turnpike roads



Source: Belper Historical Society, *Belper, a study of its History based on Visual Evidence* (Belper, 1981), Figure D, p. 9.

The unions in Oxfordshire, the adjoining county to Gloucestershire, were also formed in a relatively short period, and the assistant commissioner planned several unions simultaneously, even across county boundaries. One of the unions in Oxfordshire, Witney, raised similar objections to those raised by Wirksworth. The shopkeepers in Burford, a small market town on the Gloucestershire and Oxfordshire border, objected to being united with Witney union. Burford's poor house was regarded as being in a dreadful state. There

was a further objection from Bampton parish, another market town, on the grounds that it had a good workhouse which could accommodate 150-200 paupers. Despite these objections, and as happened in Belper union, the assistant commissioner had the influential ratepayers behind him and formed one large union of 40 parishes based on the town of Witney.³¹ In many ways Richmond was a similar union to Cheltenham, both with regard to the occupations of the employed and in the appointment of its guardians. Like Cheltenham, Richmond union was set up without much argument and the union chose to retain the workhouse in Richmond town and sell off the other two workhouses in the union. The guardians in Richmond, as in Cheltenham, were drawn from the upper classes, tradesmen and builders and were in favour of the new Act. The assistant commissioner had 'no hesitation in stating it is the result of their [the guardians] experience in this union, that it has been eminently beneficial as a means of reclaiming many of the labouring classes from indolent and vicious habits, encouraging industry and forethought and restoring that independence of character which the old poor law was rapidly destroying.'³² In Derbyshire there were nine unions formed relatively quickly between March 1837 and July 1838. Belper union, together with Glossop and Hayfield unions (Derbyshire) had a major textile industry, although not on the scale of the Lancashire unions. As with Belper and the other Derbyshire unions, a majority of the Lancashire unions were also set up in 1837, on a similar timescale. The exception was the urban unions of Lancashire which took rather longer.

The Provision of Workhouses in Cheltenham and Belper Unions

The 1834 Act provided for the 'strict discipline of a well-regulated workhouse', and by 'well regulated' it meant the classification of inmates by both sex and character. For example, the men were to be classified into able-bodied men and aged men. What happened during the day in the workhouse was strictly regulated and visiting by family and friends was not permitted.³³ The 1834 report by the Royal Commission did not like the existing workhouses:

³¹ Song, 'Oxfordshire', pp. 318-321.

³² S. Fowler, *Philanthropy and the Poor Law in Richmond, 1836 – 1871*, Special Paper No 3 (Richmond, 1991), p. 2.

³³ Checkland, *Poor Law Report*, p. 388.

The young are trained in idleness, ignorance and vice; the able-bodied maintained in sluggish, sensual indolence; the aged and more respectable exposed to all the misery that is incident to dwelling in such a society...and the whole body of inmates subsisted on food far exceeding...not merely the diet of the independent labourer but that of the majority who contribute to their support.³⁴

From the beginning the PLC pushed for a workhouse in each union as this was felt to be more adaptable to changes in the number and classification of inmates.³⁵ One of the assistant commissioners, Sir Francis Head, advocated and encouraged a single workhouse to be built in place of several poor houses in many regions. Samuel Kempthorne was employed to produce designs for workhouses, with one design based on a cruciform and the other on a hexagon. The plans were reproduced in the *First Annual Report of the PLC*. New workhouses were built piecemeal with those in northern England and Wales introduced slowly, Todmorden as late as 1877. Todmorden fought against a new workhouse and electing a board of guardians.³⁶ By 1839, of the 583 unions formed, 252 new workhouses were built, 175 old workhouses were in use and 67 new workhouses under construction.³⁷ From the beginning the public disliked the workhouses and they became known by terms like ‘the bastille’ or ‘the spike’.³⁸

Cheltenham adopted an unusual K-shaped plan (figure 2.4) and in the late nineteenth century added infirmary wards to the east in two parallel ‘pavilions’, and a casual ward to the north. Around 1870 a chapel was built.³⁹ The original workhouse contained a chapel in the central area (see figure 2.4).

³⁴ S. Fowler, *Workhouse, the People, the Places, the Life behind Doors* (Kew, 2007), p. 44.

³⁵ Wood, *Poverty*, p. 93.

³⁶ N. Longmate, *The Workhouse: a Social History* (London, 2003), p. 80.

³⁷ Fowler, *Workhouse*, p. 45.

³⁸ Snell, *Parish and Belonging*, p. 209.

³⁹ K.A. Morrison, *Report of St Paul's Hospital formerly Cheltenham Union Workhouse*, National Monuments Record, NBR o: 100618, dated 16 March 1993, p. 1.

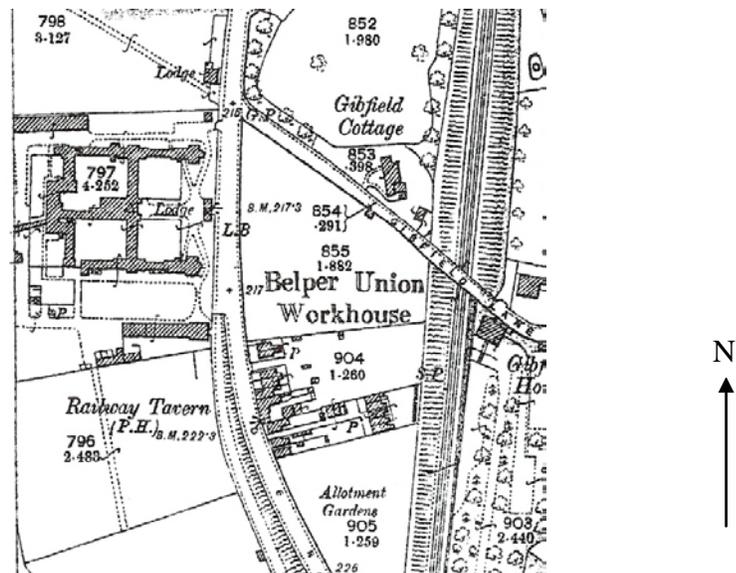
Figure 2.4 Map showing layout of Cheltenham workhouse



Source: National Monuments Record (NMR), NBR No: 100618 OS Glos Sheet XXVI.3

Belper's workhouse (figure 2.5) was 'Elizabethan' in style but does not fit in with the designs produced by Kempthorne. It formed three sides of a square with a central building linking the two side wings.

Figure 2.5 Map showing layout of Belper workhouse



Source: DRO, Ordnance Survey 25":1 mile, 2nd Edition.

It was the intention of the new Act that once unions were formed, larger workhouses were to be built and poor relief was available for able-bodied paupers in the workhouse only. The workhouses were to be strictly disciplined with classification and separation of paupers. Initially, the PLC required male and female paupers to be separated and it was not until 1842 that the Workhouse Rules Order brought in the categories of classification. The 1842 order provided for the workhouse to have separate accommodation for males and females, and then to be further divided into the aged and infirm, the able-bodied, and children aged 2 to 15. There were also to be separate day rooms, exercise yards and dormitories for each category of pauper. The majority of workhouses, 341 in total, were authorised for building before 1840, but where a union was reluctant to build a new workhouse the PLC had the authority to order the closure of an existing workhouse, if it was defective, and also limit expenditure for improvement of existing facilities.⁴⁰ Cheltenham and Belper met the desired classification of inmates in the 1830s by the allocation of paupers to the various workhouses in the union. The first annual report of the PLC stated that 127 new workhouses had been approved, with over half of these able to accommodate between 300-500 paupers. All did not go smoothly for the PLC as there was major resistance to the new Act and the building of new workhouses. Todmorden union sold off its workhouses and ran the union without a workhouse. By 1846 only four workhouses had been built in the Lancashire textile area.⁴¹

Did Cheltenham and Belper move as quickly as other unions and build a new workhouse? Belper had agreed to build a new workhouse soon after its formation. It was not until 15 February 1842 that this was completed on a site offered to the board by the Strutt family, *ex-officio* guardians and mill owners. Until that time, the poor of Belper union were accommodated in four poor houses at Wirksworth, Crich, Alfreton and Belper. The aged and infirm were accommodated in Wirksworth, and the able-bodied and children at Alfreton workhouse. The workhouse committee reported that Alfreton workhouse contained only 38 paupers in December 1838, seven men and ten women with illness or general infirmity, together with 21 children. The conditions at the workhouse had improved thanks to the care of the present master and matron. The progress of the new

⁴⁰ F. Driver, *Power and Pauperism: the Workhouse System, 1834-1884* (Cambridge, 1993), pp. 79-80.

⁴¹ Wood, *Poverty*, p. 94.

workhouse was not as straightforward as originally thought and there was lengthy correspondence between the Clerk of Belper and the PLC. Belper's proposals did not meet with approval from the Commissioners and they were repeatedly requested to add additional accommodation to meet 'seasons of temporary depression in trade when the test of the workhouse is most requisite.' In further correspondence between the PLC and the board of guardians their attention was drawn to the need to 'excite in the poor the habits of providence and frugality so essential to their happiness (and hitherto so lamentably neglected). It is necessary that the guardians should appear at all times prepared to admit into the workhouse a much greater number of paupers than was usually chargeable to the union.'⁴²

Cheltenham too had several existing poor houses, one in the centre of Cheltenham at St James Square, one in Prestbury and one at Charlton Kings. The board proposed that the paupers should be divided into three groups with the able-bodied accommodated in Cheltenham, the children at Charlton Kings, and the aged and infirm at Prestbury. It wasn't until October 1836, a year after the union was formed that a committee was set up to investigate the expense of adapting the workhouses of the union and maintenance of these establishments. The committee looked at the likely expense of erecting a new workhouse for the reception of all classes of indoor paupers in the union. Cheltenham was mindful of the requirement of the PLC to carry out the system of classification of paupers as far as possible. In order to achieve this they called in the architect Mr Cope to consider how best the existing buildings could be altered or extended. Mr Cope reported to the board in February 1837 that it would be possible to build onto the existing workhouse but he also pointed out that he did not think the PLC would agree to these alterations.⁴³ Cheltenham and Belper were therefore similar in their use of pre-1834 workhouses and in the distribution of paupers to other workhouses. Cheltenham and Belper's management of the existing workhouses was similar to other unions in England and Wales. For example, Huddersfield and Macclesfield retained their pre-1834 poor houses, and separated out their

⁴² TNA, PRO, MH 12/1840, letter PLC to Belper Union, November 1837; TNA, PRO, HLG 66/2, General Register of Orders.

⁴³ Gloucestershire Archives (GA), G/CH 8a/1, Minutes of Board of Guardians, 27 October 1836 and 23 February 1837.

paupers, (as Cheltenham and Belper had done) rather than build one workhouse to accommodate all classifications of pauper.⁴⁴

There was much dithering by both boards on the way forward with regard to the new workhouses, and guardians from Belper visited and viewed plans of several proposed workhouses in Derby, Mansfield, Burton on Trent and Boston. The guardians considered the workhouse plan by Scott and Moffatt for Boston to be the most appropriate for Belper. The chosen tender to build the workhouse was £6,700.⁴⁵ In fact the complete cost of building the workhouse and the land came to £9,903.⁴⁶ Belper workhouse was built beyond the southern edge of the town and completed in February 1842. It consisted of a three-storey high building in the Elizabethan style with a gatehouse onto the road and outbuildings creating the workhouse yard.⁴⁷

Figure 2.6 Gatehouse entrance to Belper workhouse



Source: C. Seal, photograph 2005.

The lowest tender for Cheltenham workhouse was £7,574, which together with the price of land, totalled £10,000. Cheltenham was reminded by the PLC that under the 1834 Act the amount to be expended in purchasing land and building a workhouse for a union was

⁴⁴ Driver, *Power and Pauperism*, p. 150.

⁴⁵ DRO, D19 C/W 1/1, 10 March 1838.

⁴⁶ TNA, PRO, MH 12/1841, expenditure account for Belper Union Workhouse.

⁴⁷ www.ihbc.org.uk/context_archive/58/titus/workhouse.html (18.5.2004).

restricted to the average amount of the poor rate for the preceding three years. The PLC recorded

that the excess of the tenders above the maximum in the building order is attributable to the high price of land, labour and building materials in the centre of the union. The commissioners regret that they possess no power to meet the case of a district like the Cheltenham union populous but hitherto comparatively little burdened with pauperism.⁴⁸

As a comparison to Cheltenham and Belper expenditure on new workhouses, Sunderland spent just £4,000 on its workhouse and was regarded as a 'high spender by north-eastern standards...but modest by the standards of the south-east.'⁴⁹

The PLC issued six choices of diet to the boards of guardians for their workhouses in 1836. The Second Annual Report specified that diets were not to be 'superior or equal to the ordinary mode of subsistence of the labouring classes of the neighbourhood' and the guardians were to consider the 'usual mode of living of the independent labourer of the district.' The PLC orders indicated that there should be silence at meals, and a strict daily timetable of work.⁵⁰ The elderly were given the option of having tea and extra butter and sugar in lieu of gruel for breakfast.

Relief to paupers in Belper and Cheltenham

Under the 1834 Poor Law Amendment Act the PLC 'were given discretion to regulate out-door relief as they saw fit through directives.'⁵¹ Why was out-relief not abolished? The Marquis of Salisbury opposed 'ending all outdoor relief' in 1834 and despite Senior trying to persuade Salisbury that banning out-relief was essential, this clause was omitted from the Act.⁵² Out-door relief was therefore only prohibited to able-bodied paupers and could be given to non able-bodied. Out-door relief was still available for 'urgent necessity, temporary illness and infirmity affecting any member of the family of an applicant, for burials, for widows in the first six months following bereavement, and for widows with a legitimate child.'⁵³ Therefore, with many exceptions, it meant that relief was not abolished in a large numbers of instances.

⁴⁸ TNA, PRO, MH 12/3913, 28 January and 23 February 1839.

⁴⁹ Wood, *Poverty*, p. 95.

⁵⁰ Wood, *Poverty*, pp. 100-101.

⁵¹ Checkland, *Poor Law Report*, p. 42.

⁵² Brundage, *English Poor Law*, p. 68.

⁵³ Wood, *Poverty*, p. 114.

In the *First Annual Report of the Poor Law Commission* the commissioners considered ‘a complete adoption of the workhouse system and the extinction of all out-door relief to the able-bodied’⁵⁴ The result was that relief, in theory, was discontinued to all able-bodied paupers who were not resident in their own parish. The reasons given for this regulation was that ‘relief was generally out of the reach of adequate investigation and of the constant revision which is necessary to stem the influx of fraudulent claims.’⁵⁵ One reason why out-door relief was not abolished was because indoor relief was too expensive. Wood shows that the cost to keep an indoor pauper was 6s per week whereas out-door relief was around 2s a week.⁵⁶ Most guardians preferred small amounts to be paid in out-relief rather than the heavier cost of keeping a pauper in the workhouse.⁵⁷ The workhouse was also not able to accommodate all who required relief at times of crisis. Therefore out-door relief became the only way to assist paupers in times of crisis except for the use of the out-door labour test.

Paying out-door relief was a desire to make economies in the workhouse, or reduce pressure on the house facilities or a means to postpone developing additional facilities and the subsequent expenditure.⁵⁸ Out-door relief was banned in the Brixworth union (1870s), where Albert Pell abolished relief despite opposition from Earl Spencer, who was an *ex-officio* guardian in this union.⁵⁹ The opposite was true in the New Forest union where King found that ‘the guardians and relieving officer...discovered immense amounts of sickness and disability in their male pauper populations and these labels were used to justify the continued granting of pensions and casual payments.’⁶⁰

An order was made in Cheltenham union on 6 May 1836 for the discontinuation of out-door relief to able-bodied persons, which took effect from 21 June 1836. Despite this order, Cheltenham, in consultation with its relieving officer, agreed a change to the means of distribution of out-relief. ‘Out-relief in money be distributed by relieving officer at the residences of the pauper and out-relief in kind be delivered by relieving officer at

⁵⁴ *First Annual Report of the Poor Law Commission*, Vol. XXXV (1835), p. 37.

⁵⁵ *First Annual Report of the Poor Law Commission*, Vol. XXXV (1835), p. 35.

⁵⁶ Wood, *Poverty*, pp. 142-3.

⁵⁷ M.E. Rose, ‘The allowance system under the new poor law’, *Economic History Review*, 19 (1966), p. 612; As Wood indicated, the inspectors did not expect unions to totally stop out-relief but instead they urged an increased use of the workhouse with stricter control of out-relief. Wood, *Poverty*, pp. 142-5.

⁵⁸ Wood, *Poverty*, p. 98.

⁵⁹ Brundage, *English Poor Law*, p. 126.

⁶⁰ King, *Poverty and Welfare*, p. 248.

workhouse but not all in one day.’⁶¹ As to out-relief for bastard children, Mr Weale attended the board at Cheltenham on 30 March and recommended that no out-relief be given to paupers with bastard children. The relieving officer was to issue an order for admission to the workhouse for mother and child or the child only. In the case of the children being admitted, and if relief was administered, there was to be an order to the magistrates for enforcement against the mother and father. In the *Second Annual Report of the PLC* Robert Weale reported on the counties of Gloucestershire, Worcestershire and Somerset, indicating that Cheltenham union had received orders to discontinue relief to able-bodied paupers out of the workhouse. He went on to comment that ‘in nearly all the parishes comprised in these unions the practice of relieving able-bodied labourers, either by paying rents, providing habitations, or making weekly allowances, prevailed to a greater or lesser extent. But the principle of not giving any other than indoor relief to that class of pauper applicants had, since the union, but before the issuing of orders, been fully recognised.’⁶² Englander and other historians found local studies ‘support the consensus that the new poor law failed to abolish out-relief’.⁶³ Karel Williams’ evidence came from figures published by the PLC and PLB.⁶⁴ Could some able-bodied paupers be receiving out-relief by way of sickness? The exemption clauses under the 1844 and 1852 Act allowed out-relief to be paid in cases of sickness. Unfortunately there are no records surviving detailing individual pauper cases and the reasons why relief was paid, to confirm or deny Williams’ evidence. Recent research has generally agreed ‘that the new poor law saw reduced entitlement, reduced generosity and harsher sentiments.’⁶⁵ The effect on wages of prohibiting outdoor relief to the able-bodied, the separation of man and wife in the workhouse, the formation of unions and medical relief were many of the topics discussed by *The Select Committee on the Poor Law Amendment Act* in 1837. The Report

⁶¹ GA, G/CH 8a/1, 9 March 1837.

⁶² *Second Annual Report of the Poor Law Commission*, Vol. XXIX (1836), p. 356.

⁶³ D. Englander, *Poverty and Poor Law Reform in 19th century Britain, 1834-1914: from Chadwick to Booth* (London, 1998), p. 85; Rose, ‘The allowance system’ p. 607; A. Digby, ‘The rural poor law’ in D. Fraser (ed.), *The New Poor Law in the Nineteenth Century* (London, 1976), p. 149; D. Ashforth, ‘Urban poor law’ in D. Fraser (ed.), *New Poor Law in the Nineteenth Century* (London, 1976), p. 129.

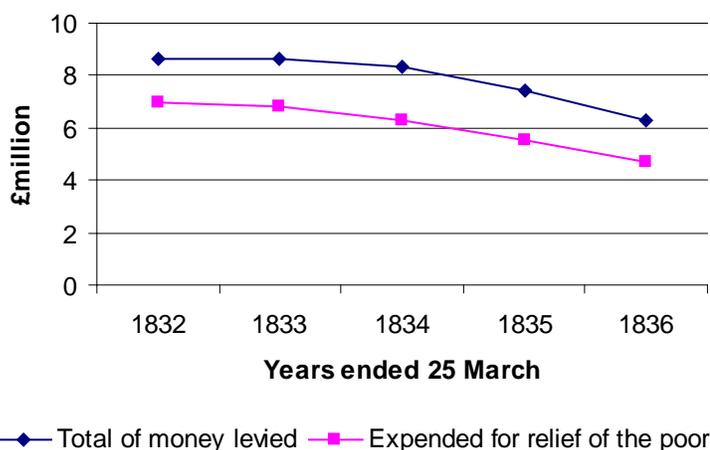
⁶⁴ K. Williams, *From Pauperism to Poverty* (London, 1981), pp. 71, 75.

⁶⁵ King, *Poverty and Welfare*, p. 238.

produced was favourable to the Act but ‘called for closer vigilance to prevent cruelties and greater flexibility in granting out-relief.’⁶⁶

So if out-relief was not abolished what happened to relief payments and poor rates in the years after the 1834 Act? The new poor law was introduced in the belief that it would reduce poor rates and the PLC claimed that, nationally, poor rates had reduced from a high of 9s 1d in 1834 to 5s 10d in 1847.⁶⁷ It is assumed that these were average rates but the actual rates per head of population varied considerably. In Cheltenham union the poor rate was only 3s 10d, whereas in Tewkesbury, the next door union, the rate was 10s 10d.⁶⁸ The average rate and cost per head in Belper union was 5s 4¾d but there were huge variations between the parishes from the 3s per head in Belper township to 16s 2d per head in the parish of Mugginton.⁶⁹ We know from annual reports of the PLC that during the late 1830s and 1840s average spending fell, as did the number of paupers in receipt of relief. Further evidence of a decrease in relief paid to the poor appears in the second annual report. Figure 2.7 shows money levied and money expended for relief between 1832, the commencement of the Commission of Inquiry, and 1836. The graph shows that the amount expended on relief of the poor nationally had decreased from £6.3 million in 1834 to £4.7 million in 1836, a fall of fifteen per cent. The money levied in rates also fell.

Figure 2.7 Statement of the amount of money levied nationally and amount of money expended for relief of the poor, 1832 to 1836



⁶⁶ Brundage, *English Poor Law*, p. 163.

⁶⁷ Midwinter, *Social Administration*, p. 9.

⁶⁸ P. Higginbotham, <http://www.workhouses.org.uk/> (19.9.2007).

⁶⁹ TNA, PRO, MH 12/1840, Poor rates and expenditure per head in parishes of Belper union.

Source: *Second Annual Report of the Poor Law Commission*, Vol. XXIX (1836), p. 30.

What was happening in the country on employment and how did this affect relief expenditure? A big trade depression in 1837, mainly in the north and Midlands, threw large numbers out of work, but there was little evidence of the trade depression affecting Cheltenham and Belper unions. A picture of life in 1837 was provided by a letter from the 'Reformers of Great Britain and Ireland' and signed by the chairman, P.H. Muntz and secretary Joseph Holl. The letter referred to the Reform Bill and conditions of the population:

The motive and purpose of all legislation is the happiness of the universal people. Let us try the Reform Bill by that test. Let us look around, and examine carefully. What do we find? Merchants bankrupt, workmen unemployed and starving; workhouses crowded, factories deserted; distress and dissatisfaction everywhere prevalent.⁷⁰

Bad harvests, trade depressions (1840-3), cholera, Irish immigration and famine all impacted on the number of paupers, the number unemployed, and amount of relief paid out by the unions.⁷¹ In Cheltenham, at a public meeting in 1843 a report was received on the best way to employ the poor and who was to be employed. The unemployed were to undertake such tasks as cleansing the streets, forming new paths, lime-washing houses of the poor, and improving drainage in the poorer areas of Cheltenham union. Married men were given precedence over single men for any work available. All applicants for work were required to be resident in Cheltenham for a minimum of twelve months and produce a testimonial of good conduct from either a ratepayer or former employer. Married men received 1s per day and single men 9d per day.

To such men, although the wages might not appear much, yet it was something to be saved from this dreadful alternative – it was something to keep the honest labourer from losing his reliance on his own exertions and seeking relief at the parish, or at the hands of private charity – to give him employment where he might earn his bread, without having to thank any body but himself – to keep up that becoming and honest pride which the English labourer had ever entertained, and which, he trusted, he would ever continue to entertain.⁷²

The report confirmed that it was not just Cheltenham that was affected but the whole country was in great distress.

⁷⁰ GA, P78/1 VE 2/4, letter found among papers for St Mary's Parish, Cheltenham dated 7 December 1837.

⁷¹ Wood, *Poverty*, p. 75.

⁷² *Cheltenham Examiner*, "Employment of the Poor", 25 January 1843.

Table 2.3 was compiled from the Appendix to the *Second Annual Report of the Poor Law Commission* and shows that the amount expended on the poor in Gloucestershire and Derbyshire, the two counties that Cheltenham and Belper reside in, fell by nineteen per cent and fourteen per cent respectively between 1834 and 1835 and by 28 per cent and 24 per cent respectively between 1834 and 1836.

Table 2.3 Amount expended for relief of the poor between 1834 and 1836 for Derbyshire and Gloucestershire Unions

	Pop. 1831	Expended for relief of the poor in years ended 25 March			Decrease in 1835 compared to 1834 £	Decrease in 1836 compared to 1834 £	Percentage Decrease 1835 compared to 1834	Percentage Decrease 1836 compared to 1834
		1834 £	1835 £	1836 £				
Derbyshire	237,170	72,721	62,886	55,018	9,835	17,703	14%	24%
Gloucestershire	387,019	161,449	130,156	116,185	31,293	45,264	19%	28%

Source: *Second Annual Report of the Poor Law Commission*, Vol. XXIX (1836), Appendix D, No. 2, p. 564.

The population of Derbyshire was about 150,000 less than Gloucestershire but the amounts spent on relief were more than 50 per cent greater in Gloucestershire. It must be assumed that Derbyshire unions were either paying small amounts to their paupers or the number of paupers was considerably less than Gloucestershire.

Further evidence on the reduction of expenditure since the formation of Cheltenham union appeared in the *Third Annual Report of the Poor Law Commission*. It was noted earlier that Belper union was not formed until 1837, as were a number of Derbyshire unions. The figures provided until 1837 were based on the old poor law system. The report shows the amount of money expended for the relief and maintenance of the poor in each of the unions in operation for twelve months, during the year ended 25 March 1837.

Table 2.4 shows that Cheltenham union experienced an eighteen per cent reduction in poor relief expenditure between Lady Day 1836 and Lady Day 1837.⁷³ The average annual expenditure before 1836 was £5,732 and this had fallen to £4,709 by March 1837.

⁷³ *Third Annual Report of the PLC for England and Wales, 1836-7*, Vol. XXXI (1837); Report by Rt. Hon. Lord John Russell, pp. 53-4.

Unfortunately there was no chart for Belper showing quarterly pre-1837 expenditure to enable a comparison between the two unions.

Table 2.4 Amount of money expended for the relief and maintenance of the poor in Cheltenham union during year ended 25 March 1837

	N. of parishes	Pop. 1831	Quarters				Expend To Mar 1837	Average Annual Exp. Before Union	Amount of decrease	Decrease %
			Mid-summer	Michael -mas	Christ-Mas	Lady Day				
Cheltenham	12	29,861	£1,073	£1,226	£1,185	£1,225	£4,709	£5,732	£1,023	18

Source: *Third Annual Report of the Poor Law Commission for England and Wales, 1836-7*, Vol. XXXI (1837), pp.53-4.

In the *Fourth Annual Report of the PLC* each union was asked to respond on the effect a change of system produced on the aged, the impotent and the helpless. Cheltenham union responded that it ‘increased their comforts’ while Gloucester union responded that ‘the relief afforded to the aged and infirm is more uniform, if not greater in amount, than that which they enjoyed previous to the formation of the union.’⁷⁴ A revised relief order was issued to unions in August 1837 advising wider discretion be given to the board of guardians, confirming a ban on out-relief to the able-bodied, women and their families but the order provided for exceptions. The exceptions included cases of sudden urgent necessity, of sickness, and of workhouse accommodation not being available.⁷⁵

Low payments characterised out-door relief, with weekly payments ranging from 9d to 6s per adult. Male unskilled labourers received 15s per week in 1835 but an elderly person received a pension of just three shillings or twenty per cent of a weekly wage. Parish overseers, under the new Act, were not allowed to give money, but only to relieve the poor with ‘articles of absolute necessity...and also to provide lodging to people deemed to need it because of sudden and urgent necessity.’⁷⁶ For both unions, the relieving officer detailed out-relief expenditure to the weekly board meetings. The average weekly amount of relief paid was calculated for each relieving officer district, for a six month period in 1838, and the union totals are shown in table 2.5. These are average weekly figures and

⁷⁴ *Fourth Annual Report of the Poor Law Commission for England and Wales, 1837-8*, Vol. XXVIII (1838), p. 73.

⁷⁵ Brundage, *English Poor Law*, p. 164.

⁷⁶ Snell, *Parish and Belonging*, p. 346.

amounts varied considerably between weeks, from a high of £70 4s 3d in district No. 2 in Belper to a low of £25 8s in district No. 1 in Cheltenham (see table 2.5).

Table 2.5 Average weekly amount of out-relief for Belper and Cheltenham unions for the period February to July 1838

Cheltenham Union 1 February to 26 July 1838		Belper Union 3 February to 28 July 1838	
<i>No 1 District</i>	<i>No 2 District</i>	<i>No 1 District</i>	<i>No 2 District</i>
£29 8s 1d	£16 19s 11d	£39 5s 2d	£41 12s 8d
Total average weekly relief £46 8s 0d		Total average weekly relief £80 17s 10d	
£32 7s 4d (21.6.1838) Highest	£21 11s (22.2.1838) Highest	£44 12s (17.2.1838) Highest	£70 4s 3d (31.3.1838) Highest
£25 8s (19.7.1838) lowest	£15 4s 6d (12.7.1838) lowest	£35 15s 10d (31.3.1838) lowest	£34 2s 4d (24.2.1838) lowest

Source: GA, G/CH 8a/1, minutes of guardians, Cheltenham; DRO, D19 C/W 1/1, minutes of guardians, Belper.

The lowest amounts paid occurred at different times in the two unions, in Cheltenham in July and in Belper during the quarter ending Lady-Day. Belper union was paying out nearly double the amount of weekly relief as Cheltenham, £80 in Belper compared to £46 in Cheltenham, and this was at a time before Cheltenham was issued with an out-relief order. There is no explanation in the board of guardian minutes in Belper to account for the higher out-relief weekly payments. Further information on the number of paupers relieved, both in-doors and out-doors, were found in five surviving quarterly abstracts for Cheltenham union. Far from decreasing out-relief, table 2.6 shows that numbers receiving out-relief increased over time from a low of 365 paupers receiving relief in 1836 to a four-fold increase, to 1,258 in 1840. Under the new Act it was expected that in-relief numbers would increase and this was clearly the case in Cheltenham, with in-door paupers increasing from 150 in September 1836 to 292 in 1840 and this was at a time before the new Cheltenham workhouse was completed.

Table 2.6 Number of in-door and out-door paupers between 1836 and 1840 and amount spent on relief in Cheltenham union

Quarter Ending	N. Indoor Paupers			N. Out-door Paupers			Total Charge	In Relief	Out Relief		
	Adults		Child	Total	Adults					Child	Total
	M	F			M	F					
24.6.1836				163				410	£1,073	£243	£495
24.9.1836	31	52	67	150	100	203	62	365	Missing		
22.3.1837	49	85	110	244	159	223	569	951	£1,268	£410	£598
21.6.1837	46	90	140	276	125	212	421	858	£1,311	£437	£565
24.6.1840	57	96	139	292	300	309	649	1,258	£1,652	£464	£873

Source: GA, P198a OV2/2 and 8/2, Quarterly Abstracts.

By the *Seventh Annual Report of the PLC* in 1841 it was clear that the new regime was working well in Gloucestershire and Derbyshire unions until around 1838.

Expenditure on the poor had fallen from 6s 2d (1834) to 4s 1d per head (1838) in Derbyshire unions and from 8s 4d (1834) to 5s 5d per head (1837) in Gloucestershire unions. Unions in both counties experienced a rise in expenditure per head between 1838 to 1840 (table 2.7) but it did not reach the 1834 figure.⁷⁷

Table 2.7 Amount expended for relief and maintenance of poor in Derbyshire and Gloucestershire unions, 1834-1840

	Pop.	1834 £	1835 £	1836 £	1837 £	1838 £	1839 £	1840 £	Decrease 1840 on 1834 £	Decrease 1840 on 1834 %
Derbs	237,170	72,721	62,886	55,018	48,867	48,335	49,348	53,635	19086	26%
Glos	387,019	161,449	130,156	116,185	105,670	111,383	118,610	125,168	36000	22%
Derbs	Per head	6s 2d	5s 4d	4s 8d	4s 1d	4s 1d	4s 2d	4s 6d	1s 8d	
Glos	Per head	8s 4d	6s 9d	6s	5s 5d	5s 9d	6s 2d	6s 6d	1s 10d	

Source: *Seventh Annual Report of the Poor Law Commission, 1840-1*, Vol. XI (1841), pp. 16-17.

By the 1840s relief expenditure in England and Wales had started to increase again. Out-relief rose from £2.9 million in 1840 to £3.3 million in 1845. Although out-door relief had increased in 1842-3 to nearly £10 million, it had almost fallen back to its 1840 level by 1845. In-door relief expenditure in England and Wales remained nearly constant across the five years.⁷⁸

⁷⁷ *Seventh Annual Report of the PLC for England and Wales, 1840-1*, Vol. XI (1841), pp. 16-17.

⁷⁸ K. Williams, *From Pauperism to Poverty* (London, 1981), table 4.6, p. 169.

Was every pauper who applied to the board given out-relief? No, as there were at least two categories of paupers who were only offered the workhouse; that of able-bodied men and single women with bastard children, as the following examples show. The 1834 Report intended that there would be no in-depth investigation of pauper cases for relief. Instead, the offer of the workhouse as a means for relief was to be:

a self-acting test for the claim of the individual...If the claimant does not comply with the terms on which relief is given to the destitute, he gets nothing, and if he does comply, the compliance proves the truth of the claim – namely his destitution.⁷⁹

The amounts paid in relief do not show the whole picture of poverty in a particular area. When available, the list of paupers before the board show the kind of cases seeking relief, why they required relief, the cases refused and those given relief in kind and money. When we look at the case of Henry Storer, a stonemason aged 42 (1838), the true reality of relief was seen in the decision of the guardians in Belper. Henry had a wife aged 37 and five children, whose ages ranged from eight months to ten years. He earned 21s a week and regularly contracted for work on his own. Henry applied for relief on account of the frost preventing him from working. The guardians ordered the family to Alfreton workhouse.⁸⁰

Two further examples show the boards in both unions refused relief for single women with bastard children. Maria lived in Belper and worked at the cotton mills earning 6s per week, but her child had been ill and she was unable to work for two weeks. Maria asked for 6s relief but was refused relief by the Belper board.⁸¹ Mary Troughton applied for relief in Cheltenham union. A single mother aged 24, with two bastard children, Mary earned her living from washing and applied for relief on 31 December 1835. Mary and the children were ordered to the workhouse by the board.⁸²

Conclusion

The first aim of this chapter was to investigate whether Cheltenham and Belper were similar in the formation of their unions. Cheltenham union was formed shortly after the 1834 Act and Belper followed two years later. These two unions appear to have followed southern and Midland counties in the progress of unionisation. Cheltenham union

⁷⁹ Checkland, *Poor Law Report*, p. 378.

⁸⁰ DRO, D19 C/W 1/1, minutes of Board of Guardians, 3 February 1838.

⁸¹ DRO, D19 C/W 1/1, Minutes of Belper Board of Guardians, 3 February 1838.

⁸² GA, G/CH 8a/1, Minutes of Cheltenham Board, 31 December 1835.

was very different from Belper in that its guardians were required to hold a higher property rental or rateable value in order to be eligible to stand for election as a guardian and this precluded a number of the farmers from becoming board members. This was set at not less than £40 in Cheltenham but only £30 in Belper. The assistant commissioner, charged with setting up Derbyshire unions, reported to, and sought frequent advice from, the PLC as to how to manage a parish under Gilbert's Act and other incorporations. King's investigation throughout the country found wide variations in the time from formation of the union to the board of guardians taking control. In fact both Cheltenham and Belper were of short timescale, from the meeting of the parishes with the assistant commissioner to the first board meeting, Cheltenham taking only a month and Belper four months. Belper union consisted of a greater number of parishes with a higher acreage than Cheltenham. The result was that Belper's board of guardians consisted of 47 elected guardians compared to 27 elected guardians in Cheltenham. Population of each union was similar at the time of formation. Both unions elected an *ex-officio* guardian as chairman with the vice-chairman being an elected guardian. The only opposition to the formation of Belper union came from Wirksworth which considered their town and surrounding parishes to be an ideal union but this opposition was soon halted by Thomas Stevens, the assistant commissioner. In most cases Belper guardians appeared to bend over backwards to please the commission and even submitted a petition to Parliament congratulating the commission on the excellent advice and assistance given to the union since its formation.

The building of Belper workhouse produced several changes in direction by the guardians before agreement was reached to build the house based on the Scott and Moffat plan. Cheltenham union was in a better position as regards workhouse accommodation, although this union, too, dithered as to whether to build a new workhouse or amend its existing workhouses. Both Cheltenham and Belper had workhouses scattered around the union. The individual workhouses accommodated one or two classes of pauper and required additional resources to run each workhouse. Extra officers were employed to run the workhouses, increasing costs to each union. The new workhouses were completed in both unions in the early 1840s and the unions then started the process of selling off the old poor houses and other surplus parish properties. Cheltenham and Belper followed other

unions, notably Bolton and Huddersfield, in using their existing stock of poor houses to accommodate the various classes of pauper until the new workhouse was built.

The second aim of the chapter was to consider whether relief expenditure was similar or different between the unions and to other unions in England and Wales. The first question considered was why out-relief was not abolished. With a number of clauses omitted from the 1834 Act, out-relief was only banned to able-bodied paupers, but there were exceptions to the banning of out-relief, as discussed in the chapter. Cheltenham was issued with a Prohibitory Order in 1836 banning relief, except in the workhouse, but the poor in Cheltenham continued to receive out-relief despite this order being in place. Reasons cited for continuing out-relief included the inability of the workhouse to accommodate all the paupers in times of crisis, bad weather and trade depressions. The cost of indoor relief, being greater than out-relief was also a factor in the continuing granting of out-relief. The discussion then looked at expenditure in England and Wales and in the two unions. There were several factors which needed to be considered before a conclusion could be drawn on the rise or fall of poor relief. First, was the economy of the union buoyant in the late 1830s to 1840s compared with what it had been in the 1820s and early 1830s? There was little evidence of the trade depression in the north and Midlands affecting Belper and Cheltenham. If this was the case then a fall in the number on relief and the amount received would be expected. The number of indoor paupers in Cheltenham increased over the period as did the number of paupers on out-relief, and it was the same for the amount spent on relief. No comparable figures were found for Belper. There have been insufficient studies at the local level to draw conclusions as to whether the amount paid to an individual pauper decreased over time. Records for Belper and Cheltenham do not provide this type of information, and the analysis of relief payments to the poor has not been undertaken.

Taking the discussion on relief and workhouses further, the next chapter will investigate the workhouse population and welfare of the poor in the mid-Victorian period. This was a time when management of the poor under the 1834 Act had settled down and a majority of new workhouses had been built.

Chapter 3

Poor Relief in Mid-Victorian Belper and Cheltenham

The former system of gifts took away from the poor their reliance on their own exertion; it made them improvident in summer and forgetful of the hardships of winter. It was highly necessary to inculcate to the poor the duty of laying something aside when they were in work for their necessities, when work was scarce.¹

By the 1850s the poor law had ‘bedded’ in, unions had been formed and most workhouses had been built or altered to accommodate the truly destitute able-bodied pauper. Chapter two discussed the development of poor relief in Cheltenham and Belper unions from the time of the new Poor Law Amendment Act in 1834. The discussion also included the formation of the unions in 1835 and 1837 respectively. It also looked at the replacement of the original poor houses and workhouses, which were scattered throughout the unions, with one new workhouse, and looked at poor relief between 1835 and 1845.

The discussion in this chapter will centre on the mid-nineteenth century, the changes, new laws and effects on the two unions and the country as a whole. Using data from the census and the admission registers for both workhouses, the workhouse population will be analysed, looking particularly at age, sex and occupation, to see whether the composition of the workhouse population and the activities that went on in the unions were typical of other parts of England and Wales. It will draw on comparative local studies of Winchester and Basingstoke, and a county study of Hertfordshire.² None of the studies used as a comparison to Cheltenham and Belper are regional studies. Apart from Goose’s study of the county of Hertfordshire the other studies discussed are unions in the south of England.

¹ ‘Report on Best Means of Employing Poor’, *Cheltenham Examiner*, 25 January 1843.

² N. Goose, ‘Workhouse populations in the mid-nineteenth century: the case of Hertfordshire’, *Local Population Studies*, 62 (1999), pp. 66-7; Other local studies include: N. Goose, ‘Poverty, old age and gender in nineteenth century England: the case of Hertfordshire’, *Continuity and Change*, 20 (2005), pp. 351-384; A. Hinde and F. Turnbull, ‘The populations of two Hampshire workhouses, 1851-61’, *Local Population Studies*, 61 (1998), pp. 38-53; Other studies that are relevant to this discussion include: A. Digby, ‘The rural poor law’ in D. Fraser (ed.), *The New Poor Law in the Nineteenth-century* (London, 1976), pp. 149-170; E.C. Midwinter, *Social Administration in Lancashire, 1830-1860: Poor Law, Public Health and Police* (Manchester, 1969); S. Page, ‘Pauperism and the Leicester workhouse in 1881’, *Transactions of the Leicestershire Archaeological and Historical Society*, 63 (1989), pp. 59-97; J. Robin, ‘The relief of poverty in mid-nineteenth century Colyton’, *Rural History*, 1 (1990), pp. 193-218; P. Searby, ‘The relief of the poor in Coventry, 1830-1863’, *Historical Journal*, 20 (1977), pp. 345-61; T. Thomas, *Poor Relief in Merthyr Tydfil Union in Victorian Times* (Glamorgan, 1992).

Nigel Goose's analysis of Hertfordshire workhouses was a step towards filling gaps in the data on workhouse population. He wrote that:

Local and regional economic opportunities were thus a potent factor helping to determine the age and sex profile of nineteenth century workhouse populations, and to explain the substantial variations that could be found both within and between counties.³

This was equally true for Cheltenham and Belper and its surrounding counties. Although Goose found similarity in age, sex and marital status of the workhouse paupers, there were also variations between workhouses, mainly due to the economic situation of the union and the administrative practices of the guardians. Hertfordshire workhouses showed a 'skew towards men...the over-representation of agricultural labourers...[and] the plight of poor old men.'⁴

Hinde and Turnbull's study of two specific union workhouses, those of Winchester and Basingstoke, is more akin to this research into Cheltenham and Belper, except that Hinde's study is investigating two unions in the same county and this research is looking at two unions in different parts of England.

Changes to the Poor Law and the Economic situation in the mid-Victorian Period

The 1840s saw the demise of the Poor Law Commission (PLC) and its replacement in 1847 by the Poor Law Board (PLB). George Nicholls became the permanent secretary with responsibility for day to day administration of the Act. The assistant poor law commissioners who worked in the field, setting up the unions and monitoring the boards of guardians, were renamed poor law inspectors and their numbers increased from nine to thirteen.

The Outdoor Relief Prohibitory Order of 1844 was issued to most unions, prohibiting outdoor relief to able-bodied paupers and their families. Relief for these paupers was to be solely in the workhouse. In 1852 the Outdoor Relief Regulation Order amalgamated the 1844 labour test order and other orders. This Order permitted out-door relief to able-bodied paupers, subject to a test for men. At least half of the relief was to be in kind i.e. in food or clothing. A further circular in 1852 indicated that where there was an efficient workhouse then all able-bodied paupers should be sent and set to work there.⁵

³ Goose, 'Workhouse populations', p. 59.

⁴ Goose, 'Workhouse populations', p. 66.

⁵ S. Webb and B. Webb, *English Poor Law Policy* (1910, London, 1963 edition), p. 91; *The 1844 Outdoor Relief Prohibitory Order and The 1842 Outdoor Labour Test Order*, <http://users.ox.ac.uk/~peter/workhouse/gco/outdoorreliefprohibitory.shtml> (10.8.2009).

Up until 1865, and under the Settlement Law of 1662 and subsequent amendments, a pauper was chargeable and removable to the parish of settlement. The parish was the unit for rating purposes, and the rates for each parish were calculated largely to cater for the number of settled paupers receiving indoor or out-door relief. Changes in 1846 allowed those resident in a parish for five years to become 'irremovable' and for widows, who took their husband's parish on marriage, to become irremovable after one year of widowhood.

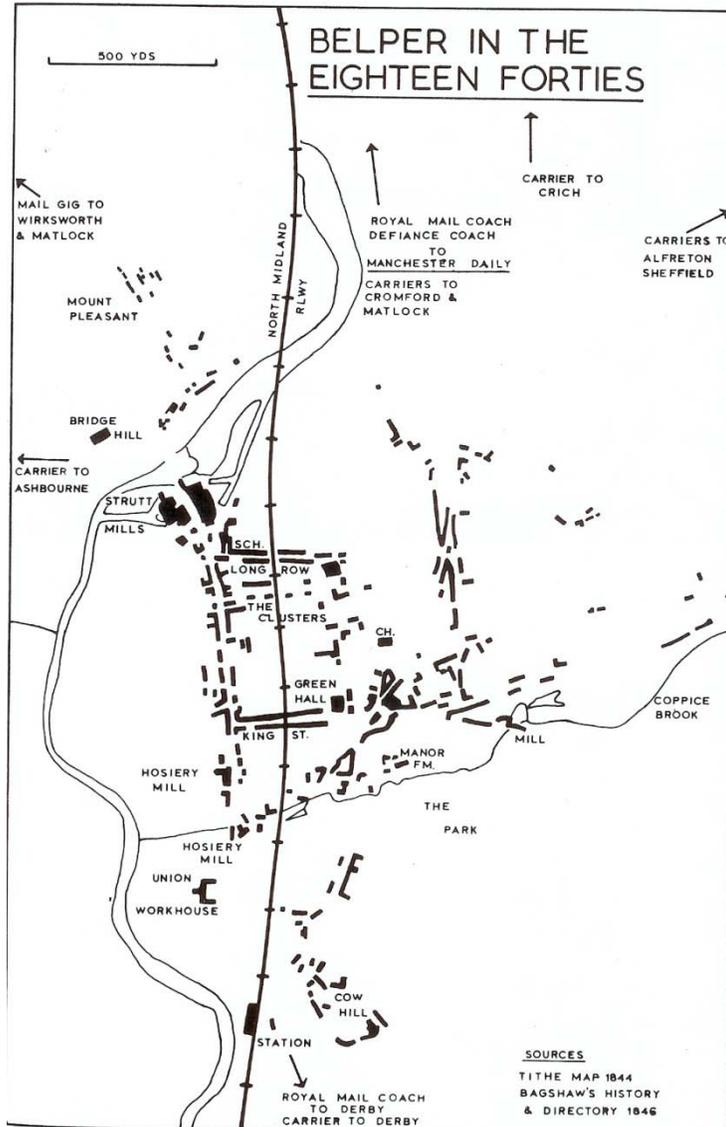
What were the local economies of Belper and Cheltenham in this period, and how far did they reflect the economic features in the rest of the country? A trade depression occurred in the 1840s and this period was described by Dunkley and others as the 'hungry forties'.⁶ The trade depression had little effect on Cheltenham as this union had little industrial employment, but harsh winters and the subsequent effects on the paupers of the union were recorded on several occasions in the guardian minutes. Beamish, in his statistical study of Cheltenham, highlighted the fact that most people migrated to manufacturing towns for employment at this time, but a large number also migrated to Cheltenham 'with a desire and intention of living in idleness and of preying upon the wealthier classes, who, by indiscriminate donations...[became] a very heavy burden upon the struggling householders and tradesman'.⁷

The town of Belper had grown considerably since the beginning of the nineteenth century but it was still comparatively small. The map of Belper in the 1840s (figure 3.1) was drawn after the completion of the workhouse and shows the Strutt Mills, the school, Long Row and the Clusters housing, built for the mill workers, and other hosiery mills.

⁶ P. Dunkley, 'The hungry forties and the new poor law: a case study', *The Historical Journal*, 17 (1974), pp. 329-346.

⁷ R. Beamish, 'Statistical notice of the town and parish of Cheltenham', *Journal of the Statistical Society of London*, 20 (1857), p. 420.

Figure 3.1 Map of Belper town in the 1840s



Source: Belper Historical Society, *Belper, a study of its history based on Visual Evidence* (Belper, 1981), p. 7, figure C.

In the framework knitting industry of the east Midlands, a deepening depression during the 1840s saw large numbers in destitution. A report into the framework knitter industry was published in 1845 and, drawing on witnesses from the industry, it was shown that framework knitters suffered greatly. Men were reported as taking work at any price rather than be committed to the workhouse. In Leicester, for example, over 17,000 paupers were receiving relief in 1847-48, representing a quarter to one-third of the population, with the workhouse

only able to accommodate 500 paupers.⁸ The *Derby Mercury* reported on the commercial crisis occurring in January 1858 and the suffering of the framework knitters. The case of the framework knitters was taken up by the gentry and trades people of Belper and a subscription started to provide temporary relief to the families of the knitters. The paper pointed out that, even in full employment, the wages were inadequate to support their families.⁹ A discussion of occupations later in the chapter will look at framework knitters in the Belper union during the period. Rather later, the Lancashire cotton famine of 1860-5 had a huge impact on the numbers entering the workhouse, with the house unable to accommodate all those out of work, but was this famine in the north solely confined there or was Belper, as a cotton mill town, experiencing a similar situation?¹⁰ The *Fifth Annual Report of the Poor Law Board* lists the unions that were greatly distressed at this time and Belper did not feature on the list. The only Derbyshire union affected was Glossop on the northern boundary of the county, near to the Cheshire and Lancashire unions.¹¹ Despite the observations by the PLB that Belper was not affected by the trade crisis, the newspapers reported differently. In November 1857 the trade depression had deepened and the newspapers reported that ‘the hosiery business is almost at a standstill, little or no work being given out’. In January 1858 a further report appears in the paper on the commercial crisis. The paper confirmed the ‘damaging effect upon almost every branch of trade carried on in the town, hundreds of operatives have been thrown out of employment and probably no class has suffered more than the framework knitters’.¹² By March 1860 trade was good and most of the population in Belper union were employed, but nine months later the *Derby Mercury* reported that:

Trade in fearful condition, severity of the weather, the strike and dullness of hosiery business combined make money as scarce as gold nuggets. Stone masons completely thrown out. Stockingers [framework knitters] average 4s per week for the last six months. No public charities, no soup kitchens, poor distressed must look for help to small private sources of benevolence.¹³

⁸ D. Ashforth, ‘The urban poor law’ in D. Fraser (ed.), *The New Poor Law in the Nineteenth Century* (London, 1976), p. 134.

⁹ Derbyshire Local Studies (DLS), GF900BEL (48136), Belper, *Derby Mercury*, 13 January 1858.

¹⁰ A. Brundage, *The English Poor Laws, 1700-1930* (Basingstoke, 2002), p. 105.

¹¹ *Fifth Annual Report of the Poor Law Board*, vol. L.1 (1852), p. 22.

¹² DLS, GF900 BEL (48133-6), *Derby Mercury and Derby and Chesterfield Reporter*.

¹³ DLS, GF900 BEL (48138-9), *Derby Mercury*, 13 March 1860 and 16 January 1861.

A year later the Strutts' mills were in full employment, 'as is their regular custom', but the horsenail trade was depressed and there was scarcity of employment among the framework knitters.¹⁴ Trade was in a depressed state again in 1865 and soup was distributed to the poor.

The composition of the board of guardians varied between the unions with farmers dominating the board in the 1840s in Belper and almost equal numbers of farmers and gentlemen on Cheltenham board. From the 1860s the composition of Cheltenham board changed to one of dominance of the elected guardians by the small traders, particularly for Cheltenham wards with farmers mainly elected in the surrounding parishes.¹⁵

The Workhouse Populations in 1851 to 1861

Was the composition of Cheltenham and Belper workhouse population similar to the rest of the country? This section will analyse the populations of Cheltenham and Belper workhouse and compare to that found in other unions. In the following analysis of the age of pauper inmates the term 'able-bodied' will be used to describe those in the 15-59 age group. Nowhere in the Poor Law Act was this term defined, but the Webbs provided a definition of this category of pauper: 'should denote those persons above the age of childhood and below that of the aged who for the time being were in the enjoyment of normal health.'¹⁶ The annual reports of the PLB have used the term able-bodied in a different way and I have taken the term 'adult non able-bodied' to refer to all those over age 14 who were sick, aged and not capable of employment. It is not possible to compare the statistics compiled from the census for Belper and Cheltenham on age with the statistics compiled by the PLB for England and Wales. The percentage of children in Cheltenham and Belper workhouse in 1861 (figure 3.2) is very near to the 1864 percentage in England and Wales (table 3.1), and there is little difference in the percentages in all age groups between 1854 and 1864.

¹⁴ DLS, GF900 BEL (48140), *Derby and Chesterfield Reporter*, 21 January 1862.

¹⁵ Derbyshire Record Office (DRO), D19 C/W 1/3; The National Archives (TNA), Public Record Office (PRO), MH 12/1842-4, MH 12/3917; Gloucestershire Archives (GA), G/CH 8a/11.

¹⁶ Webb, *English Policy*, p. 32.

Table 3.1 Composition of indoor population on 1 January in 1859 and 1864 for England and Wales

	Adult, not able-bodied	Adult able-bodied	Children	Percentage paupers receiving indoor relief
1 January 1859	45%	16%	38%	14%
1 January 1864	46%	17%	36%	12%

Source: *Fourth Annual Report of Local Government Board*, vol. XXXI [C,1255] (1875), Appendix pp. 386-7; D. Fraser (ed.), *The New Poor Law in the Nineteenth Century* (London, 1976), Table 1, p. 5, Table II, p. 18.

Note: excludes vagrants.

The population of Cheltenham workhouse totalled 525 inmates at the 1851 census compared to just 197 paupers in Belper workhouse. By 1861 the number of paupers in Cheltenham had fallen to 337 while that in Belper had fallen slightly to 183.

Table 3.2 Age profile of Belper and Cheltenham workhouse, 1851

Age	All Workhouse Population %		Male Population %		Female Population %	
	Cheltenham	Belper	Cheltenham	Belper	Cheltenham	Belper
Under 15	34	51	40	63	30	37
15-59	44	35	30	19	55	53
60+	22	14	30	18	15	10
Total Paupers	525	197	249	103	276	94
Further breakdown of 15-59 age group						
15-29	20	12	12	8	27	17
30-59	24	23	18	11	28	36

Source: Census 1851, HO107/1973 and 2144.

Belper's workhouse population in 1851 was dominated by the children (51%) compared to just 34 per cent in Cheltenham workhouse (table 3.2 and figure 3.2), but why did Belper's workhouse population contain so many children? An examination of the board of guardian minutes recorded no details or reason for the increase in the number of children. It was expected that the workhouse population aged under 15 in Belper would be similar to that of Hertfordshire, which had cottage industrial employment for women and children. In Belper union the cotton mills or framework knitting was the employment available for women and children but the percentage of children was very different to that of Hertfordshire, where children represented approximately one-third of the workhouse population in 1851.¹⁷

¹⁷ Goose, 'Workhouse populations', p. 56.

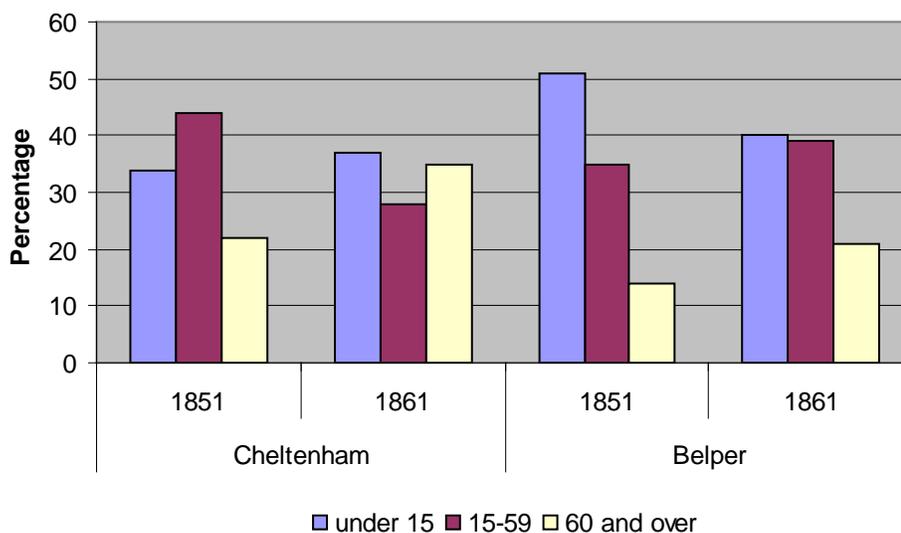
The aged workhouse paupers represented 22 per cent of the workhouse population in Cheltenham (1851) compared to just 14 per cent in Belper. In this age group, males dominated in both unions (table 3.2 and figure 3.2). This was different from Goose's findings in Hertfordshire where the aged represented 31 per cent of the workhouse population. In Hinde and Turnbull's study of Winchester and Basingstoke workhouses only 20 per cent of the workhouse population was aged, very similar to the aged population in Cheltenham. Hinde put forward several reasons for the dominance of aged males, including the fact that men were less able to look after themselves, they were not so useful as women in looking after children, and therefore their families were reluctant to offer them a home.¹⁸ A statistical notice written by Richard Beamish in 1857 refers, among other observations, to 'longevity in Cheltenham receives further interesting confirmation from the number of aged paupers found within as well as without the workhouse.' There were 326 paupers in the workhouse on Lady-Day 1856 of whom 111 were aged 50 to 94, which equates to 34 per cent of the workhouse population. There were 152 children in Cheltenham workhouse, 47 per cent of the workhouse population.

The Cheltenham workhouse population in 1851 was dominated by the 15 to 59 age group (44%) compared to just 35 per cent of this age group in Belper workhouse (table 3.2 and figure 3.2). The 15-59 age group in Hertfordshire workhouses recorded a similar percentage to that of Belper. As regards the male-female ratio in 1851, the 15-59 age group was composed of a higher percentage of females in both Cheltenham and Belper workhouse (figure 3.2). Was the pattern of a higher percentage of females in the 15-59 age group seen in other unions? In Hertfordshire there were also a higher percentage of females in this age group but the actual percentage was much lower in this county. Why was Belper so different from the Hertfordshire female workhouse population? Was this down to the availability of work for women or were there more unmarried or widowed women admitted to the workhouse? In fact, the excess of females in the 15 to 29 age group was due to women with illegitimate children or pregnant women being admitted, whereas married women of this age were less likely to be admitted. In the 30-59 age group it was mainly widows and children admitted to the house which increased the excess of females in this age group. With two very different economic situations and employment opportunities in the two unions (domestic service in Cheltenham and cotton mills in Belper), it was not expected to see a similar

¹⁸ Hinde, 'Hampshire workhouses', p.41.

percentage of female paupers in the workhouse for both unions. Looking at the male to female ratio for the whole workhouse, female paupers in Cheltenham workhouse were 53 per cent. In Belper workhouse male paupers were 52 per cent of the workhouse population.

Figure 3.2 Age profile of Belper and Cheltenham workhouses, 1851 and 1861



Source: HO107/1973 and 2144; RG9/2509 and 1303.

The *Cheltenham Examiner* in May 1852 reported that there was not one able-bodied pauper in Cheltenham workhouse despite the fact that the union contained a population of 40,000 in its thirteen parishes. With no able-bodied paupers it was reported that the master had been forced to employ labourers to undertake the work previously completed by the able-bodied paupers. The workhouse inmates consisted of 93 old and infirm men, 105 old and infirm women, six women with illegitimate children, adults suffering from accident and sickness, and children.¹⁹

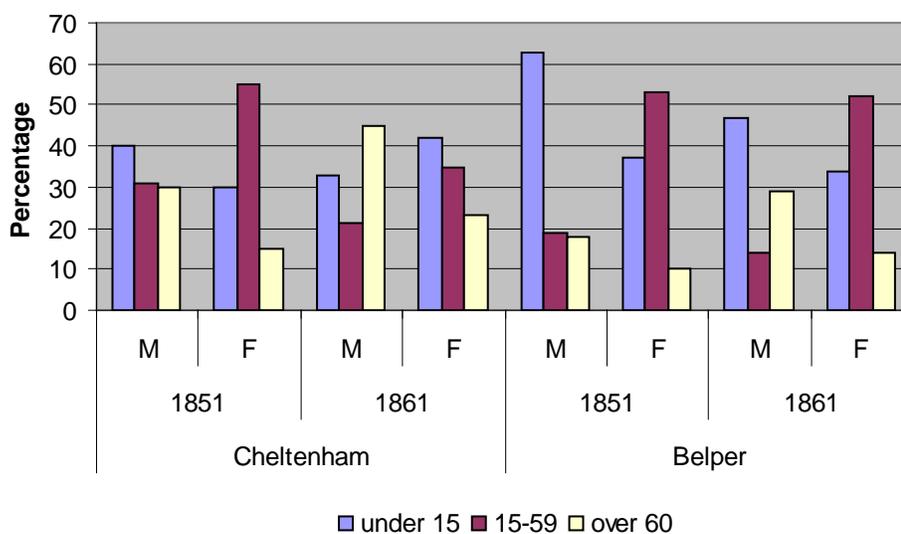
A further analysis was made comparing the 1851 workhouse population in both unions with the 1861 workhouse population. Were there changes in the workhouse population in the decade from 1851? In Cheltenham workhouse the number of aged paupers had increased by 1861 with a subsequent decline in the 15-59 age group (figure 3.2). In Belper workhouse the number of children declined, with a subsequent rise in the aged, but the rise in the number of aged was not as great as the rise in Cheltenham. David Thomson's view of the elderly at this time presents a different picture and he suggests that workhouses 'were not especially important in providing care for the aged' but Goose does not accept this view in the light of

¹⁹ J. Goding, *Norman's History of Cheltenham* (London, 1863), p. 595.

his findings on Hertfordshire aged men.²⁰ In Cheltenham and Belper there was an increase in the number of aged in the workhouse in the decade from 1851, but that number in the workhouse was only a small part of the union population and confirms Thomson's view that only the truly destitute or sick aged agreed to admission to the workhouse.

Further analysis of the workhouse population by sex for the 1851 to 1861 decade shows a fall in the percentage of males under 15 and subsequent rise in the percentage of females under 15 in Cheltenham (figure 3.3). In 1861 the percentage of aged males increased by fifteen per cent, but the percentage of aged females increased by only eight per cent. In Belper the percentage of males under age 15 decreased by 1861 but still remained higher than the percentage in Cheltenham. Again, as happened in Cheltenham, the percentage of aged males in Belper increases by ten per cent and the percentage of aged females by only three per cent.²¹

Figure 3.3 Age and sex profile in Belper and Cheltenham workhouses, 1851 and 1861



Source: CEB, HO107/1973 and 2144; RG9/2509 and 1803.

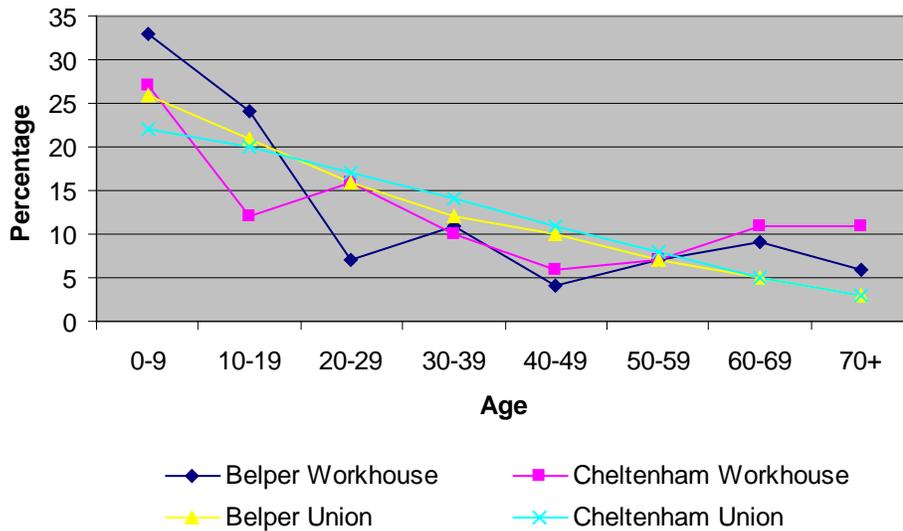
When a comparison was made of the union population with the workhouse population in 1851 the following picture emerged. The union and workhouse population was divided into 10 year age groupings. The graph shows there was a greater percentage of children in the workhouse than in the union and then, in the 20-29 ages, a dramatic fall in the percentage in the workhouse of this age group (figure 3.4). There was a similar percentage in workhouse

²⁰ Goose, 'Workhouse populations', p. 67.

²¹ See Goose study of Hertfordshire where males dominated the workhouse population in all age groups with the exception of the 14 and under group. Goose, 'Workhouse population', p. 66.

and union in the 30-39 age, but the workhouse percentage in the 40-49 age group fell below the union percentage. By age 60 the percentage in this age group is greater in the workhouse than union. The graph lines for both union populations were highest for the children, between 20-25 per cent, and both lines fell to a low of less than five per cent for aged population (aged 70 plus). In the workhouses the graph line peaked for the children (27-34%) falling to around 6-11% of those aged 70 plus.

Figure 3.4 Percentage in each age group, Cheltenham and Belper union and workhouse population in 1851



Source: *BPP 1851 Census of Great Britain, Population 8, Vol. 1*, (Shannon, 1970), pp. 425, 534; CEB, HO107/1973 and 2144.

Further analysis was made of workhouse populations in the surrounding unions to Cheltenham and Belper, revealing a different picture. How did the local and county studies of Goose, and Hinde and Turnbull compare? Belper's able-bodied workhouse population shows a similar percentage to Hertfordshire, Basingstoke, Bakewell and Chesterfield, while in Cheltenham the able-bodied percentage is higher and nearest in percentage terms to Winchester. It was found that Winchcombe workhouse consistently admitted a far higher percentage of aged than able-bodied paupers, and therefore Winchcombe workhouse stands out as a very different workhouse to Cheltenham and Belper. Most of the workhouses record around 20 per cent of aged paupers in the workhouse with the exception of Winchcombe and Hertfordshire. Belper also stands out from the average picture for having a small percentage of aged paupers in the workhouse. Tewkesbury, Belper and Basingstoke show a high percentage of children (table 3.3).

Table 3.3 Percentage in each age group in workhouse populations for adjoining unions to Cheltenham and Belper, and Hampshire and Hertfordshire, 1851

	Chelt- enham	Tewkes- bury	Winch- combe	Chester- field	Bakewell	Belper	Winch- chester	Basing- Stoke	Herts
Under 15	34%	46%	32%	41%	41%	51%	40%	44%	34%
15-59	44%	31%	23%	39%	37%	35%	40%	38%	35%
60 & over	22%	23%	45%	20%	22%	14%	20%	18%	31%

Source: Hinde, 'Hampshire workhouses', table 2, p.42; Goose, 'Workhouse populations', p. 56, table 1; CEB, HO107/1974, 1968, 2149, 2147.

Occupations of the Workhouse Population

As described previously, Cheltenham union had little industry and most of the union population were employed in the building trade, as domestic servants, shop assistants or labourers, and servicing the 'leisure' industry. Belper union was composed of 37 parishes with a diverse range of occupations, ranging from the cotton mill workers in Belper, coal miners in the east of the union, and framework knitters, pottery workers, hosiery work and nailers spread throughout the union.

Analysis was made of occupations for all workhouse inmates aged over 15. Those in employment were divided into three categories: agricultural labourers (ag lab), domestic servants, and other occupations. Two further categories of children (those 14 and under) and 'no occupation' completed the five categories of analysis. In the case of Belper union, the occupations of nailmaker, cotton mill worker and framework knitter were extracted from the 'other' category and analysed separately (see table 3.5). It was difficult to further divide the 'other' category in Cheltenham as most were described as labourers and not specific building occupations.

Table 3.4 Occupations of paupers in Cheltenham and Belper workhouses, 1844 to 1861

Occupation	Belper				Cheltenham		
	1841	1844	1851	1861	1844*	1851	1861
Ag Lab	7%		13%	8%		5%	15%
Domestic Servant		6%	21%	15%		23%	14%
Other occupation	6%	40%	13%	28%		29%	31%
Children	45%	49%	47%	40%		35%	37%
No occupation	42%	5%	5%	8%		7%	2%
vagrants			1%	1%		2%	
Total N. Paupers in workhouse	117	527	197	183		525	337

Source: CEB HO107/107/180, 2144, 1973; RG9/1803, 2509; DRO Admission/Discharge Registers D3390/1/2. GA, G/CH, 60/3. *No occupations were listed in admission registers for Cheltenham in 1844.

Data on occupation in Cheltenham union were missing in the 1844 admission register. This was also early days for both workhouses, as they were only completed in 1840 and workhouse numbers were low in comparison to later years.

In Belper the percentage recorded as domestic servants and agricultural labourers fell between 1851 and 1861 with a subsequent rise in the percentage in the ‘other’ occupation group. In Cheltenham the percentage of agricultural labourer increased but the percentage of domestic servants fell leading to a small rise in the percentage in the ‘other’ category (table 3.4). Comparing the two workhouses, domestic servants were a similar percentage in both census while the agricultural labourer percentage was very different. With employment in Cheltenham in the leisure industry I had expected to find a higher percentage of paupers in the workhouse with occupational title of domestic servants than in Belper workhouse, but this proved not to be the case. Those defined as vagrants were similar in both workhouses in 1851 but the 1861 census for Cheltenham did not state who were the vagrants.

Table 3.5 Analysis of specific occupations in Belper workhouse, 1844 to 1861

	1844	1851	1861
Mill hands/factory hands	52	6	15
Framework knitters/seamers	44	3	5
Nailer	16	2	5

Source: CEB 1851: HO107/2144; 1861: RG9/2509; Admission Register, DRO D3390/1/2, 1844.

The admission registers for Belper workhouse defined occupations in greater detail than the occupations detailed in the census. As the 1844 admission register shows (table 3.5), a greater number of the three occupations were listed in that year than in the two census years,

making analysis with the census difficult. From the two census years there did not seem to be a great number employed in the three occupations but the 1861 census does show an increase in the number of factory and mill workers (table 3.5).

There were no children in the workhouse aged under 15 and recorded in employment, which was very different to Goose's findings for one Hertfordshire union.²² In Belper union there were children working at Strutt's cotton mills who were provided with schooling on the top floor of North Mill, but none of the children under 15 in the workhouse were recorded in 1851 or 1861 as employed in the mill. There was the case of seven girls in Belper workhouse aged eleven to fourteen given the opportunity of lodging and employment at the silk mill in Derby. They were brought before the board and asked if they objected to working at the mill. There were no objections and the master of the workhouse took the girls to Derby.²³ There was a similar case in Cheltenham union where Mr Dormay, a silk throwster of Overbury, (a village twelve miles to the north of Cheltenham) sought approval of the board to take girls aged thirteen to sixteen for five years apprenticeship, but the conditions stipulated he would return the girls to the workhouse if the mills stopped 'for want of work'.²⁴

Admissions and Discharges in the Workhouses

In Hinde's paper on the Winchester and Basingstoke unions he found that most people admitted to the workhouses stayed for a short time only and it was only the elderly who stayed for longer periods. Were these short stays in the workhouse found at Cheltenham and Belper? A majority of the paupers admitted to Belper workhouse in 1844 stayed for only a short period and the case of Harriet Toplis explains the short and frequent stays. This case was recorded in the board of guardian minutes for Belper union in October 1840. She was described as age 18, single and destitute and was ordered to the workhouse. Harriet appears on the census enumerators book for Belper workhouse in 1841, age 15. There was a discrepancy of three years in her age. The records showed her to leave the workhouse on 15 May 1841 to provide for herself but we find her applying on 20 May, just 5 days later, to be re-admitted to the workhouse. The Guardians ordered that meat dinners were to be withheld from her. This was a rule laid down by the Guardians for those discharging themselves and then applying to be re-admitted within a set period:

²² Goose, 'Workhouse populations', p. 58. Goose estimated that 16% of boys and 26% of girls in the 5-9 age group and 45% of boys and 56% of girls in the 10-14 age group were employed in 1851 in Berkhamsted union.

²³ DRO, D19 C/W 1/6, board of guardian minutes, 11 May 1850.

²⁴ GA, G/CH 8a/13, board of guardian minutes, 31 August 1865.

Ordered that if any pauper give notice and leave the workhouse and afterwards apply for and re-admitted therein, before the expiration of one month from the time of leaving and not being able to give satisfactory reasons for the same, shall not be supplied with the meat dinners for the space of one month.²⁵

Figure 3.5 Pattern of admissions and discharges for Harriet Toplis and noted behaviour

1822	Harriet born, Kirk Langley, Derbyshire		
10 Oct 1840	applied for relief, sent to workhouse		
15 May 1841	discharged to provide for herself		
20 May 1841	applied to be re-admitted – meat dinners withheld		
1 Jul 1841	left workhouse. Applied again for re-admittance. No meat dinners for 2 months		
20 Nov 1841	re-admitted, having previously left 18 weeks ago		
2 July 1842	committed to jail for refusing to work in workhouse and then re-admitted to workhouse		
6 May 1843	admitted by board, destitute, very bad character	dis. 17 May	11 days
		To jail	
14 June	admitted by Relieving officer, destitute	dis. 7 July	21 days
5 Aug	admitted by board, common prostitute, destitute	dis. 7 Aug	2 days
11 Nov	admitted by board	dis. 11 Nov	
11 Nov	together with others, all of notorious character, broke windows, taken before magistrates		
16 Jan 1844	admitted, age 22, Mill Hand from jail by Master,	dis. 9 Feb	24 days
24 Feb	admitted by board	dis. 15 Mar	19 days
2 May	admitted by Relieving officer	dis. 5 May	3 days
5 Aug	admitted by master, described as “a very bad character”	dis. 6 Aug	1 day
4 Sep	admitted by Relieving Officer	dis. 7 Sept	3 days
19 Oct	admitted by Relieving officer	dis. 30 Oct	11 days
28 Dec	admitted by Relieving Officer	dis. 30 Dec	2 days
5 April 1845	admitted by board	dis. 14 June	39 days
1846-48	admitted by board and relieving officer with bad leg, crippled and lame		
5 May 1849	born in workhouse, Hannah Toplis, illegitimate	died Sept. 1849	
11 July 1851	born in workhouse, William Toplis		
27 Oct 1853	admitted Harriet and William, pregnant		
12 Feb 1854	born in workhouse Sarah Ann	dis. 3 June	8½ mths
11 July	admitted by overseer Harriet, Wm, Sarah	dis. 8 Mar 55	240 days
13 July	William moved to the workhouse school		
10 Apr 1855	admitted Wm and Sarah, deserted by mother	dis. 4 June	55 days
7 Jun	admitted Harriet, Wm and Sarah by relieving officer	dis. 9 July	30 days
16 July	admitted Harriet, Wm and Sarah by relieving officer	dis. 16 Aug	30 days
2 Jan 1856	admitted Harriet, Wm and Sarah by relieving officer	dis. 18 June	5½ mths
18 Jun 1858	Harriet discharged and taken before magistrates for Having her children chargeable		
Dec quarter 1858	Mary born (not in workhouse)		

Source: DRO, Board of Guardian Minutes, D19 C/W 1/3, 4, 5; Admission and Discharge Registers, D3390/1/2-4 and 1/6-7; Birth and Death Registers, D3390/3/1-2; CEB, HO107/2144 and HO107/180.

²⁵ DRO, D19 C/W 1/3, 26 September 1840.

Harriet appears frequently in the admission registers but there was no sign of a husband. Only three of the children were born in the workhouse but the minutes of the board of guardian do not elaborate on her case, only describing her in the earlier years as a bad character.²⁶ The case of Harriet Toplis illustrates a common feature of poor relief, where paupers were admitted frequently to the workhouse but their length of stay was of short duration.

Hinde argued that demand for relief varied depending on several factors, including the time of year and the economic situation in the union.²⁷ Although there was a good survival of admission registers for Cheltenham and Belper their completion was erratic and often information such as the date of admission or occupation was not completed. Admission and discharge information was collected for the years 1844 and 1858, and additionally from 1840 to 1856 for the Harriet Toplis case. The 1844 register for Cheltenham was not complete and comparison of quarterly admissions with Belper in 1844 was not possible.

Table 3.6 Quarterly admissions to Cheltenham and Belper workhouses, 1844 and 1858

	31-Mar	30-Jun	30-Sep	31-Dec	Total
Belper 1844	136	146	109	137	528
Cheltenham 1844	dates missing from admission register				
Belper 1858	137	120	77	99	433
Cheltenham 1858	127	113	124	159	523

Source: GA, admission registers G/CH 60/12 and 60/3; DRO, D3390/1/2 and 1/7.

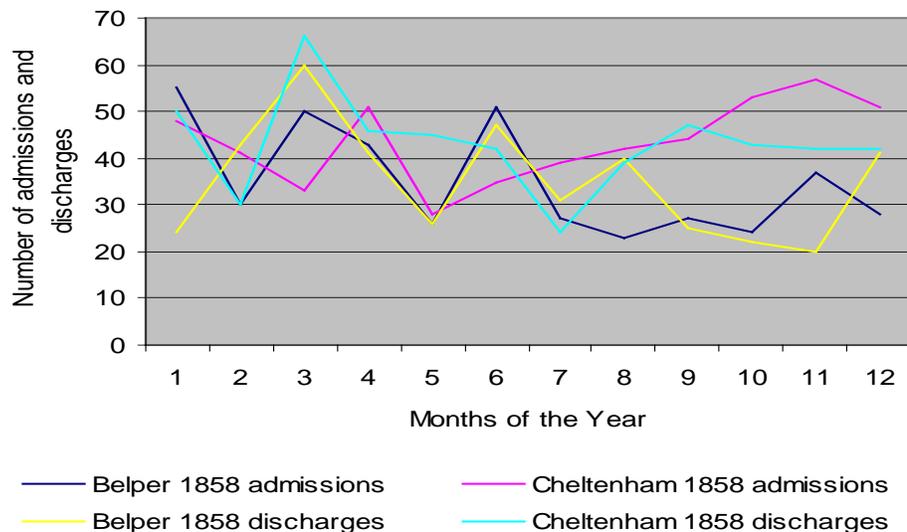
Goose in his study of Hertfordshire workhouses found that seasonal unemployment reached its peak at the end of winter in March and April, and that seasonal fluctuations in employment opportunities was a major feature of the rural economy. A total of 528 paupers were admitted to Belper workhouse during 1844 with the lowest number of admissions in the quarter ending 30 September, but there was little difference between the March and December quarters (table 3.6). When the 1858 registers were analysed, the December quarter in Belper recorded a lower number of admissions than the June quarter. It was expected that workhouse admissions would peak at the end of the winter when little alternative employment was available and indeed this was evident in Belper (table 3.6). In Cheltenham, where large numbers were employed to service the needs of visitors to the Spa town, the September quarter recorded a similar number of admissions to that of the March quarter. The number of admissions was highest in the December quarter in Cheltenham (table 3.6). The Cheltenham

²⁶ DRO, D19 C/W 1/3-5; D3390/1/2-4 and 1/6-7; CEB, HO107/2144.

²⁷ Hinde, 'Hampshire workhouses', p. 50.

'season' ran from May to September and explained the higher number of admissions to Cheltenham workhouse for the December quarter.

Figure 3.6 Monthly admissions and discharges for Belper and Cheltenham workhouse in 1858



Source: DRO, D3390/1/7; GA, G/CH 60/12.

Hinde calculated that, in an average workhouse of 150 paupers, there were 30-40 admissions and discharges per month with most only staying a short time. He plotted the monthly admissions and discharges for the Hampshire workhouses in a time series. This showed a seasonal pattern of admissions peaking in January and February and falling in June and July. The discharge pattern lagged behind the admissions and showed a peak in spring and a fall in discharges in the late summer. Hinde concluded that the seasonal pattern of admissions and discharges was typical of southern and eastern counties.²⁸

Figure 3.6 shows the monthly totals of admissions and discharges in 1858 for both workhouses. Were Cheltenham and Belper admissions and discharges similar to Hinde's pattern? Admissions in Belper peaked in January, March and June in 1858 and fell in February and May and remained a constant number of admissions from July onwards. In Cheltenham, admissions were highest in January, April and from October onwards while admissions were lowest in March, May and June. As Cheltenham and Belper workhouses contained a higher number of paupers than that quoted by Hinde it was expected that the average number of admissions would be higher. In fact the average number admitted per

²⁸ Hinde, 'Hampshire workhouses', pp. 43-5 and figure 2, p. 44.

month over the year 1858, in Belper was 35 and Cheltenham 43. Belper and Cheltenham admissions showed some similarity to Hinde's findings in that admissions peaked in January but there were also considerable differences. It may be that 1858 was not an average year and if a different year had been chosen the results may have matched Hinde's findings.

The admission registers allow further discussion of the types of person admitted to the workhouse and table 3.7 shows a breakdown of the workhouse inmates into families. By far the highest number of families was the female heads with children. In 1858, where reason for admission had been given, 21 per cent were admitted for medical reasons in Belper and 25 per cent in Cheltenham. These figures were not complete as 45 per cent of admissions in Belper and 36 per cent of admissions in Cheltenham had given no reason for admission or the entry was blank.²⁹

Table 3.7 Paupers admitted to the workhouse by sex and family type

	Number of families admitted during year		
	1844 Belper	1858 Belper	1858 Cheltenham
Husband, wife and children	9	13	13
Widowers and children	8	2	2
Female and children	66	48	51

Source: Admission Registers, DRO, D3390/1/7 and 1/2; GA, G/CH 60/12.

Five families with children were admitted more than three times during 1844 to Belper workhouse and in Cheltenham six families with children were admitted on several occasions. In Belper in 1858, fourteen wives were deserted by their husbands or the husbands were in prison. Orphaned children or children with no parents in the workhouse totalled 48 in Belper and 46 in Cheltenham in the census year 1851.

Relief to the Poor of Belper and Cheltenham between 1845 and 1860s

In the late 1840s there were changes to the method of calculating relief numbers. Before 1848 the number relieved during the quarter ending Lady-day was to represent the number of persons relieved in each year, but after that date the returns were made half-yearly of both indoor and outdoor paupers. Only unions or single parishes under the control of the PLB were compelled to submit a return of paupers relieved on 1 January and 1 July each year.

²⁹ A further example was found in Axminster union where females aged 21 to 40 years represented 21 per cent of the workhouse population. Unfortunately a like-for-like analysis with Cheltenham and Belper unions was not possible as Robin analysed her data into different age groupings and has combined the results for the 1851 to 1881 censuses into one figure. J. Robin, 'The relief of poverty in mid-nineteenth century Colyton', *Rural History*, 1 (1990), p. 212.

For the remainder of England and Wales an estimate was made.³⁰ Can we rely on the PLB statistics? In some weeks and years the local newspapers in Cheltenham and Belper have recorded the relief statistics and they will act as a comparison to the 'official' statistics produced by the PLB.

Under the 1842 Act the guardians were allowed 'to prescribe a task of work to be done by any person relieved in any workhouse in return for food and lodging afforded to such person.'³¹ The Out-door Relief Prohibitory Order of 1844 originally required that no out-door relief was to be given to able-bodied paupers without a task of work and one-third of that relief was to be given in kind, as bread or tickets to purchase food. The exceptions to the Prohibitory Orders against out-relief was for 'cases of sudden and urgent necessity', sickness or accident, defraying cost of burial, a widow in first six months of widowhood, and wife and child of man in Her Majesty's forces. The PLB tried to bring in a new general order on out-door relief in 1852 but, following objections from many boards of guardians, they were forced to modify this order and the revised Out-door Labour Test Order was brought in later that year. The order only applied to able-bodied males receiving out-door relief who were required to perform an unpleasant or monotonous task in order to receive their relief.³² A circular from the PLB in 1852 indicated that, where there was an efficient workhouse, able-bodied paupers were to be sent to the house and set to work there.³³

Wood states that the cost to keep an indoor pauper was 6s per week whereas out-door relief was around 2s per week.³⁴ How did the cost of maintaining a pauper in Belper and Cheltenham workhouse compare to Wood's findings? In Cheltenham the guardians reported back to the Cheltenham board on the cost of indoor relief and stated that the cost per head per week was 2s 11d in 1850. Costs for the surrounding union of Tewkesbury were 2s 1d and for Winchcombe 2s 3³/₄d, but the size of the workhouse in these surrounding unions was considerably smaller. As to why indoor pauper costs for Gloucestershire unions were lower compared to Wood, no explanation can be provided.³⁵ Based on the evidence provided by

³⁰ S.G. Nicholls, *A History of the English Poor Law, 1714-1853* (London, 1904), 2, p. 423.

³¹ Nicholls, *A History*, p. 354; 5 & 6 Vict.cap57, 5th section, 1842.

³² Brundage, *English Poor Law*, pp. 72, 86, 91.

³³ *Fifth Annual Report of the Poor Law Board, 1852-3*, vol. L.1 [1625] (1852), p. 22.

³⁴ P. Wood, *Poverty and the Workhouse in Victorian Britain* (Wolfeboro Falls NH, 1991), pp. 142-3. Many commentators, including Rose and Digby have stated it cost more to keep a pauper in a workhouse than pay outdoor relief. For example, in Lancashire and West Riding unions the annual indoor cost in 1854 was £5 10s 5d compared to £3 11s 5d per year for an out-door pauper. M.E. Rose, 'The allowance system under the new poor law', *Economic History Review*, 19 (1966), p. 613.

³⁵ GA, G/CH 8a/7, minutes of the board of guardians, 31 October 1850.

Wood, it was clearly cheaper to pay out-door relief than to keep a pauper in the workhouse, and the numbers receiving indoor or out-door relief varied considerably between unions.

Numbers in the workhouse represent only a small percentage of the population of a union.

Table 3.8 Workhouse and union population in Belper and Cheltenham, 1851 and 1861

	Belper Union		Cheltenham Union		Percentage workhouse population to union population	
	N. in workhouse	N. in union	N. in workhouse	N. in union	Belper	Cheltenham
1851	197	46,872	525	44,184	0.4	1.2
1861	183	51,711	337	49,792	0.35	0.7

Source: *Imperial Gazetteer of England and Wales* (1870-2) from a Vision of Britain Through Time <http://www.visionofbritain.org.uk> (3.11.2005); *White's Directory of Derbyshire* (1857 edition) from <http://www.belper-research.com/places/belper/White1857.html> (7.10.2004).

In Belper the population of the workhouse in 1851 was 197, far below the number the workhouse could accommodate and representing 0.4 per cent of the union population, while in Cheltenham the workhouse was at full capacity and accommodating 1.2 per cent of the union population. In 1861 the percentage of workhouse population to union population remained a similar percentage in Belper but in Cheltenham workhouse the number of paupers had fallen by nearly 200 and the percentage of workhouse to union population had also fallen to 0.7 per cent (table 3.8). Belper and Cheltenham union had union populations of similar size but Cheltenham workhouse was built to accommodate a further 200 paupers. Neither workhouse was anywhere near full capacity in 1861.

During the 1840s the variations in average numbers relieved reflected the economic situation of the time.³⁶ There were many factors affecting the high numbers relieved in winter 1845-6 including severe weather and the potato blight, as well as the high price of cotton, diminished demand for manufacturing, shortened hours of work or temporary work, particularly in Lancashire. According to the report the workhouses were full during this period, but this was not the case in Cheltenham and Belper.³⁷ Returns for both unions from 1846 to 1849 were found in the correspondence files of the PLC and PLB. Table 3.9 shows the number of paupers relieved in the sixth week of the quarter ending Lady-Day.

³⁶ For example, in County Durham unemployment peaked in 1843 when 27,591 paupers were relieved in the quarter ending Lady-Day 1843 but in 1840 the unemployed had fallen to 18,520. Dunkley, 'Hungry forties', p. 332.

³⁷ *Thirteenth Annual Report of the Poor Law Commission*, vol. XXVIII.1 [816] (1847), pp. 6-7.

Table 3.9 Number of paupers of all classes, including children, relieved in the 6th week of the quarter ending Lady-Day, 1846-9

	Indoor		Out-door		Vagrants		Total N. Relieved	
	Belper	Cheltenham	Belper	Cheltenham	Belper	Cheltenham	Belper	Cheltenham
1846	216	339	1,051	606	1	45	1,268	990
1847	196	380	1,192	1,099	-	52	1,388	1,531
1848	232	444	1,197	967	16	168	1,445	1,579
1849	241	426	1,196	1,285	1	264	1,438	1,975

Source: The National Archives (TNA), PRO, MH 12/1843, Return from Belper Union, 25 February 1850; TNA, PRO, MH 12/3917, Return from Cheltenham Union, 19 February 1850.

The workhouses were not full in the second half of the 1840s and the number of vagrants relieved in Cheltenham is enormous compared to Belper. Vagrant wards were not found in either workhouse and most of Cheltenham vagrants were accommodated in lodging houses in the town. Less paupers were relieved out-doors in Cheltenham in 1846 and 1848 and, except for 1846, the total number relieved in Cheltenham was greater than Belper, despite similar union populations (table 3.9).

Table 3.10 Comparison of relief in Cheltenham union between 1843 and 1852

Year	N. receiving out-door relief	Applications for relief week ending 17 July 1852	Paid out in kind	Paid out in money	Total paid in relief
1843	427	25	£15 13s	£35 3s	£49 6s
1851	1,072	30	£34 4s	£111 13s	£145 18s
1852	1,059	36	£32 1s	£142 3s	£133 6s

Source: *Cheltenham Free Press*, 17 July 1852.

Table 3.10 shows a comparison of relief expenditure and numbers receiving relief between 1843 and 1852. There was a big jump in the number receiving relief between the two years and the amount paid out in relief in 1851 was almost three times the 1843 figure. Was this a more liberal approach to out-door relief by the guardians in 1851 or was it an indication of the lack of employment available in July 1852? Neither the minutes of the board of guardians nor the press elaborate on the relief statistics. Nationally, the percentage of total expenditure spent on poor relief remained constant between 1844 and 1854, at around 72 per cent.³⁸

³⁸ D. Fraser, *The New Poor Law in the Nineteenth Century* (London, 1976), table III, p. 22;

What happened to relief provision in times of bad weather? Cheltenham seemed to suffer the effects of severe weather to a greater degree than Belper, mainly due to the fact that most employment was in the building trade and severe cold weather called a halt to the building of housing. The PLB were concerned that the number of paupers relieved in Cheltenham had increased considerably between the second and third week of the quarter ending Lady-day 1854 and requested information from the union as to the reason for this. Cheltenham responded that the severity of the weather was the main problem. Numbers relieved increased from 2,487 to 2,898.³⁹ In Cheltenham, those relieved on account of 'want of work' in the eighth week of the quarter ending March 1855 were 79 men, 73 wives and 232 children with amounts varying between 7d for single men to 12s 8d for a family with eight children.⁴⁰ Following an increase in the poor rate in Cheltenham the guardians were asked to justify the increase. The board confirmed that the increase in poor rate was attributed to the higher cost of provisions for the workhouse and higher numbers of 'struggling poor who, by the late severe weather, have been compelled to avail themselves of parochial relief.'⁴¹ By 1856, in the second week of the March quarter the stone breakers receiving out-relief included Robert Dix, his wife and nine children. The family received 20 loaves and 13s 4d; and David Grace, his wife and three children received 12 loaves and 8s. In two of the Cheltenham districts in the third week of the March quarter 1856, 43 able-bodied men were given out-relief in return for a task of work in the stone yard.⁴²

Severe weather was again a problem for Cheltenham in 1858 and St Peter's parish in the town set up a relief fund. Coal was distributed and provision tickets issued to 'urgent and distressing cases.' A soup kitchen also opened on three days a week during the severe weather.⁴³ The beginning of 1861 saw a further bout of severe weather with frost continuing for four weeks stopping all outside employment. Up to 700 poor had applied for assistance and 500 men were employed in completing footpaths, cleaning roads and preparing ground ready for stonework to be laid. Those employed were all men with families and they received

³⁹ TNA, PRO, MH 12/3920, 11 February 1854.

⁴⁰ TNA, PRO, MH 12/3920, March 1855. In the depression of 1857-8 the guardians in Leicester applied the workhouse test to able-bodied applicants. Those applying for relief totalled 183 but all were offered the house and only 21 accepted. This was very different to Cheltenham where the out-door labour test was applied. (Ashforth, 'Urban poor law', pp. 136-7.)

⁴¹ *Cheltenham Examiner*, 14 March 1855.

⁴² TNA, PRO, MH 12/3921, January 1856.

⁴³ *Cheltenham Examiner*, 13 January 1858.

1s per day.⁴⁴ No references to the relieving of paupers because of severe weather were found in Belper.

What happened to relief payments and the number receiving relief in the early 1860s? Table 3.11 shows the amount expended in relief and the number of paupers receiving outdoor relief and relief in the workhouse in one week in December for the years 1860 to 1865. Relief payments were only £73 for Belper union in 1860 but by the following year had risen by 26% to £100. Numbers receiving relief in Belper increased steadily between 1860 and 1865 with only a small increase in the amount paid out. The 1860 amount of £73 in Belper represented around 1s per pauper, but this is only an average and less or greater amounts were paid, depending on family size.

Table 3.11 Number relieved and out-relief payments in Belper and Cheltenham union, one week in December 1860 to 1865

	Belper union			Cheltenham Union		
	Total Paid in Out-relief	N. out-relief	In workhouse	Total Paid in out-relief	N. out-relief	In workhouse
1860	£73	1,124	172			299
1861	£100	1,222	198	£194	2,506	367
1862	£82	1,280	250	£216	2,602	385
1863	£81	1,256	220	£211	2,737	386
1864	£89	1,360	233	£220	2,860	341
1865	£90	1,321	198	£220	2,888	326

Source: Derbyshire Local Studies (DLS), GF900BEL (48139-44); *Cheltenham Examiner*, 18 December 1861 and 29 December 1862.

Note: total paid in out-relief was rounded to nearest whole pound.

Unfortunately the newspapers in Cheltenham did not record the out-relief data in 1860 but the workhouse numbers were low compared to the earlier years, peaking in 1863 and falling back to almost their 1860 level. As with Belper, the numbers on out-relief gradually increased over the five years. The total paid in out-relief increased over the time. The amount of £194 paid in out-relief in 1861 represented around 1s 6d per pauper. With union populations of similar size the numbers receiving relief in Cheltenham between 1860 and 1865 were double that of Belper but December was a peak month in Cheltenham for relief, which may explain the difference in numbers receiving relief.

⁴⁴ *Cheltenham Examiner*, 16 January 1861. There was also evidence that employment policies in other unions favoured married men over unmarried men when employment was scarce. This was found in both Hampshire and Norfolk; Hinde, 'Hampshire workhouses', p. 39.

We know little of the paupers applying for relief, except for the correspondence with the central body. In Belper in the 1860s there were several complaints made to the guardians on the payment of relief. A man named Robert Parker complained to the PLB that the guardians had refused him relief despite many applications to the board. It transpired that the guardians considered Parker to have ‘intemperate habits’ and this was the reason relief was refused. In Crich parish (Belper) the Rev. Chawner wrote to the PLB alleging that a great number of families were in distress as a result of the depression in the cotton trade. Belper clerk responded to the PLB that the guardians had considered the Rev. Chawner’s letters on two occasions but could see no reason for ‘departing from the provisions of the General Prohibitory Order’. In fact the Belper board confirmed that the distress was among the framework knitters and not from the stagnation of the cotton trade. Only four or five applications from Crich parish for relief were made and most received relief as a result of illness or incapacity in the families thus refuting the allegations of the Rev. Chawner.⁴⁵

When George Vallance of Fritchley wrote to the PLB complaining that he was refused out-door relief in 1849 the PLB response was that they could not interfere in an individual case. George was aged 69, of bad health and not capable of earning even a small amount. Three months previously he had received medical relief but had been compelled to enter the workhouse at Belper which he describes as:

Being an old man I found that I must have perished in it for there is not the slightest comfort even there is no fire and I find that my body inwardly cold and requires artificial heat. Surely the few years or even days I may have to live you would see but a man 69 years of age might depart the world in a small degree of comfort...die in a union when a small relief would be the means of giving him a comfort instead of misery.⁴⁶

Emigration in the two Unions

Emigration was an alternative strategy for managing the paupers. The *Poor Law Report* of 1834 questioned how best to manage a surplus of labour. The report found several cases of parishes paying for emigration of its paupers. In Benenden in Kent the parish expenditure had been reduced by a third over a four-year period. This parish expenditure excluded the emigration expenses.⁴⁷ The 1834 report recommended:

⁴⁵ DRO, D19 C/W 1/9, 10 May 1862 and 14 February 1863. As usually with the framework knitters, the silk weavers of Coventry were out-workers. They experienced similar depressions as Belper with a catastrophic slump in the early 1860s; Searby, ‘Relief Coventry’, p. 347.

⁴⁶ TNA, PRO, MH 12/1843, letter to PLB, 10 July 1849.

⁴⁷ S.G. and E.A.O. Checkland (eds), *The Poor Law Report of 1834* (Harmondsworth, 1974), p. 487.

That the vestry of each parish be empowered to order the payment out of the rates raised for the relief of the poor, of the expenses of the emigration of any persons having settlements within such parish, who may be willing to emigrate; provided, that the expense of such emigration be raised and paid within a period to be mentioned in the Act.⁴⁸

Approval of the PLC or PLB was required for any pauper requesting permission to emigrate, and correspondence was found in PLB correspondence ledgers with the unions on a regular basis. Under Section 62 of the 1834 Act a parish could raise money to pay for its paupers to emigrate to the colonies and between 1834 and 1860, 25,015 paupers had been assisted to emigrate under the Act.⁴⁹

A further Bill was passed in 1849 allowing increased ‘powers for promoting and assisting emigration.’ By 1852 emigration at the expense of the poor rate totalled 3,271 paupers in England and Wales, of which four-fifths went to Australia. In this respect, Cheltenham union differed from the rest of the country by choosing to send paupers to Canada. In the period 1834 to 1853 about 24,000 paupers emigrated nationally but following a policy change by the PLB, only 488 paupers emigrated in 1853.⁵⁰ Emigration on the poor rate in 1866-7 almost ceased, with only eighteen cases. By the late 1850s the central board indicated that it would not sanction emigration to the Australian colonies except in exceptional circumstances. *The Twelfth Annual Report of the Poor Law Board* stated ‘we must consider that at present emigration cannot be considered as any practical remedial measure for the repression of pauperism.’⁵¹

Did Cheltenham and Belper take advantage of the emigration policy to reduce the number of paupers? Cheltenham took advantage of this emigration policy and 240 paupers were provided with between £2 15s to £35 5s to emigrate to Quebec in 1850. Single paupers received £5 15s plus clothing.⁵² The guardians even gave a tea party for the paupers in the Town Hall in Cheltenham prior to their sailing from Gloucester Docks.⁵³ In the admission and discharge register for Cheltenham 28 paupers (21 single, 2 couples and families) were discharged from the workhouse for emigration to Quebec on 10 April 1850 and 36 paupers

⁴⁸ Checkland, *Poor Law Report*, p. 490; Poor Law Amendment Act 1834, 4 & 5 Will.IV.c.76, section 62.

⁴⁹ G. Howells, ‘On account of their disreputable characters: parish-assisted emigration from rural England, 1834-1860’, *History*, 292 (2003), pp. 588, 593. For example, in Norfolk 3,000 poor were assisted to emigrate in 1836 but in the next twenty years only 1,000 paupers received assistance.

⁵⁰ Webb, *English Policy*, p. 141; 12 and 13 Vic.c.103, sec. 20; *Fifth Annual Report of the Poor Law Board, 1851-2, vol. L.1* (1852), p. 7.

⁵¹ Webb, *English Poor Law Policy*, p. 142; *Twelfth Annual Report of the Poor Law Board, 1859-60, vol. XXXVII.1*, p. 19.

⁵² GA, G/CH 8a/7, board of guardian minutes, March 1850.

⁵³ *Cheltenham Examiner*, 10 April 1850.

(10 single, 9 families and couples) were discharged on 8 April 1851.⁵⁴ Looking at the names on the emigration lists, Charles Sole emigrated in 1850 and then the names of Mary and Anthony Sole appear on the 1851 emigration list. Were these brother and sister or wife and child? Unfortunately, there is no relationship given on the lists. The PLB were concerned that no sums allowed for emigration should be paid to the pauper emigrants, and in March 1850 requested confirmation from Cheltenham board. The board responded that ‘the whole will be expended in their conveyance to the port of embarkation and in the payment of their passage money...I am to request you will be good enough to issue an order in pursuance of the 12 and 13 Vic.c.103, sec. 20 sanctioning the proposed emigration.’⁵⁵ Further correspondence with the PLB enquired as to the amount of money required to provide clothing for each pauper and Cheltenham board confirmed that an additional sum of 20s was required to clothe each pauper. The order of 10 July 1849 had raised £250 to assist the poor of Cheltenham to emigrate to Quebec.⁵⁶

Further emigration took place in 1871 when the PLB authorized five girls to emigrate to Canada. In the same report Baron de Ferrieres, an *ex-officio* guardian, confirmed receipt of a letter from Miss Bilborough in Canada, informing him of the safe arrival in Canada of a number of boys from Cheltenham union, who had been found work on farms or adopted by well-to-do men around the town of Belleville. The Baron was pleased that the lads were doing well and ‘on the certain prospect there was for every steady and industrious boy sent out to get his own living.’⁵⁷ As late as 1893 James Brown of the St Pauls area of Cheltenham applied for assistance to emigrate. The Church Emigration Society granted him £2 10s towards the cost of his passage to Cape Town and further assistance came from the Self-Help Emigration Society in London, towards the fare of £13.⁵⁸

In Howell’s discussion of parish-assisted emigration, he found that most labourers emigrating were of good character. For example, in Great Creaton in Northamptonshire, seven industrious labourers were selected for emigration to Australia in 1840 as ‘the most likely to succeed and send home good accounts which we feel will operate to stimulate some of our young men to emigrate without expense to the parish.’⁵⁹ Robin, in her paper on relief

⁵⁴ GA, C/CH 60/8, admission and discharge register, 10 April 1850 and 8 April 1851.

⁵⁵ TNA, PRO, MH 12/3917, 14 March 1850.

⁵⁶ TNA, PRO, MH 12/3917, 20 March 1850.

⁵⁷ *Cheltenham Examiner*, 21 June 1871.

⁵⁸ GA, D2465 1/25, Case Worker papers for Charity Organisation Society in Cheltenham.

⁵⁹ Howells, ‘Parish-assisted emigration’, pp. 594, 597.

in Colyton, Devon, describes how the 'feoffes'⁶⁰ and the poor law paid for a number of long-term unemployed to seek employment elsewhere in 1852, 1854 and 1867. Some unemployed received assistance with emigration costs to America while other paupers received assistance with travel costs to other places in England, where work might be found.⁶¹

In Cheltenham union all emigration costs were paid by the union with the exception of those that emigrated at the end of the century, when grants were applied for from various organizations to assist the pauper. Belper refused paupers assistance with emigration and this is one area where the two unions differed.

Conclusion

In response to the question raised at the beginning of the chapter, as to whether the composition of the workhouse population and relief practices were similar to the rest of England and Wales, the evidence found as follows. The age structure in Cheltenham workhouse showed that females aged 15 to 59 were dominating the workhouse population in 1851 and that there was a far higher percentage of males aged under 15 (40%) and age 60 plus (30%) than the other age groups. In comparison females in the Belper workhouse aged 15-59 comprised 53 per cent of the workhouse population, very similar to Cheltenham, but males aged under 15 totalled 63 per cent, 23 per cent higher than Cheltenham. Belper's workhouse population saw just nine more male paupers than females. The percentage of children in Belper workhouse had fallen to 40 per cent in 1861. The males age 60 and over were only 18 per cent in Belper. When the age groups were further sub-divided into 10 year age groups, a similar picture of variations between the ages in both workhouses was shown in figure 3.3. Therefore, in most age groups, Cheltenham and Belper had very different workhouse populations. To confirm whether Cheltenham and Belper had a typical workhouse population, analysis was made with Goose's Hertfordshire study and with Hinde and the two Hampshire workhouses. The conclusion drawn from the discussions and data was that the able-bodied population in Belper was similar to that of Basingstoke and Hertfordshire while that of Cheltenham was nearer to Winchester. Both Belper and Basingstoke had a similar percentage of children in their workhouses.

With higher numbers in Cheltenham workhouse in 1851 were the guardians adopting a harsh policy of admitting more paupers to the workhouse then or did this reflect the policy

⁶⁰ Feoffes or trustees ran a charitable trust dating back to 1546 who had to own property and were drawn mainly from landowners, businessmen and the professional class. Robin, 'Colyton', p. 212.

⁶¹ Robin, 'Colyton', p. 212.

adopted by other unions? Belper saw only a seven per cent drop in numbers between 1851 and 1861 as did Winchester, but Basingstoke experienced a fifty per cent drop and Cheltenham a 36 per cent fall in numbers in the workhouse. The census and admission registers show that the number of domestic servants represented a similar percentage in 1851 and 1861. Although children under 15 in both workhouses were sent for employment to Derby and Overbury, no under 15s appear to have been employed, prior to their admission to the workhouse. The case study of Harriet Toplis illustrated the point that most paupers entering the workhouse only stayed for a short period of time. The peak period for admissions to the workhouse differed between the two unions reflecting the occupations and economy in the union. Admissions to the workhouse peaked in December quarter in Cheltenham workhouse (1858) while in Belper the June quarter showed the highest number admitted. The number of paupers receiving relief in Cheltenham in one week in December between 1860 and 1865 was double the number receiving out-relief in Belper. The amount of out-relief paid in Cheltenham was also double that of Belper despite being unions with similar populations.

The composition of the board of guardians in both unions is one domain where Belper and Cheltenham differed greatly. Belper's farmers dominated the board while in Cheltenham, from 1861 there was a higher number of traders on the board. It has been shown in the discussions in this chapter that in some spheres Belper and Cheltenham unions showed similar results, but in other spheres, notably emigration, occupations of the paupers, numbers on out-relief, and the board of guardians, they were very different unions in the mid-Victorian period.

Age, sex, occupation and relief practices will be considered further in chapter 4 when the discussion will centre on the late 1860s to the early 1880s. There will also be a discussion of the vagrant population.

Chapter 4

The Relief of the Poor, 1860s to 1880s

It is not desirable that the working classes should be familiarized with poor law relief and if once the honourable sentiment which now leads them to avoid it is broken down, it is probably that recourse will be had to this provision on the slightest occasion.¹

The 1860s to 1880s were a time of change. There was the crusade against out-door relief, and the building of additional accommodation in the workhouses, including infirmaries and vagrant wards. Chapter 3 discussed relief to the poor in the mid-Victorian period, the composition of the workhouse and union population, and the use of emigration as a means to reduce poor relief expenditure. The composition of the board of guardians, emigration policy and occupations of the workhouse inmates showed Cheltenham and Belper unions to be very different at this time.

The discussion in this chapter will focus on the crusade against out-door relief. Historians that have covered the crusade against out-relief include Mackinnon, Thomson and Williams.² Was the crusade an effective campaign to reduce relief expenditure? Were there any significant changes to the economy and workhouse population at this time? Data from the admission registers and census will be analysed for age, sex and occupation, in an attempt to establish whether the composition of Cheltenham and Belper workhouse population and the activities that went on in the unions were typical compared to other parts of England and Wales. The chapter will draw on comparative local studies of Medway union and Leicester, and a regional study of Kent unions, for the discussion on workhouse populations. Finally, the chapter will look at vagrancy and how this was managed in Cheltenham and Belper, drawing on studies of Bromsgrove and Worcestershire. The discussion of vagrancy has been included in this chapter as the major

¹ Gloucestershire Archives (GA), G/CH 57/4 'Pauperism and Distress', Cheltenham union correspondence files with Local Government Board (LGB), 15 March 1886.

² M. MacKinnon, 'English poor law policy and the crusade against out-relief', *Journal of Economic History*, 47 (1987), pp. 603-625; D. Thomson, 'The decline of social welfare: falling state support for the elderly since early Victorian times', *Ageing and Society*, 4 (1984), pp. 451-482; K. Williams, *From Pauperism to Poverty* (1981).

changes to management of vagrants occurred in the 1880s and this was a time when casual wards were built.

Mackinnon wanted to establish why unions subscribed to the crusade initiated by the central body and concluded that the unions saw the crusade as a means to cut poor relief expenditure.³ Hurren used the example of Brixworth union to explain how brutal the campaign against out-relief was and the effects on the population. Brixworth was regarded as one of the 'top ten performing boards of guardians in England and Wales.'⁴ Was poor relief expenditure cut in Cheltenham and Belper at the onset of the crusade and had expenditure returned to its pre-crusade level after a number of years? This question will be discussed in the section on relief expenditure.

Previous research on workhouse population in the 1880s has been undertaken by Jackson on a study of Medway union, and by Page on Leicester union. Jackson found the ratio of outdoor to indoor paupers declined, that the changes to the number of paupers in Medway reflected that of the national variations, but was this true in Cheltenham and Belper?⁵ As stated in the introductory chapter, the discussion on vagrancy has been included in the discussion of the 1880s as this was a time when changes were made to the management of vagrants, and the building of specific accommodation for this class of pauper occurred in both Cheltenham and Belper in 1883 and 1874 respectively. The main discussions on vagrancy were led by Hunter, Matthews and Vorspan. Hunter has argued that, although the central body tried to impose a uniform system for vagrants, unions 'adopted approaches that were informed by a range of factors.'⁶ Hunter's study used Yorkshire in his analysis of vagrancy, while Vorspan was concerned about vagrancy in the late Victorian and Edwardian period, highlighting the fact that one inspector felt that there

³ MacKinnon, 'Crusade', p. 603.

⁴ E. Hurren, 'A radical historian's pursuit of rural history: the political career and contribution of Reverend Dr John Charles Cox, c.1844 to 1919', *Rural History*, 19 (2008), p. 93.

⁵ D.G. Jackson, 'The Medway union workhouse, 1876-1881: a study based on the admission and discharge registers and the census enumerators' books', *Local Population Studies*, 75 (2005), pp. 11-32.

⁶ D. Hunter, 'Vagrancy in the East and West Ridings of Yorkshire during the late Victorian period', *Local Historian*, 36 (2006), p. 193; S. Page, 'Pauperism and the Leicester workhouse in 1881', *Transactions of the Leicestershire Archaeological and Historical Society*, 63 (1989), pp. 85-95; R. Vorspan, 'Vagrancy and the new poor law in late-Victorian and Edwardian England', *The English Historical Review*, 92 (1977), pp. 59-81; G. Matthews, 'The search for a cure to vagrancy in Worcestershire', *Midland History*, 11 (1986), pp. 100-116.

had been no progress in managing vagrancy since 1869 and the majority of vagrants were under 65 years of age.

Changes to the Poor Law

There were a number of changes to poor law regulations at this time. The Union Chargeability Act of 1865 provided for all poor law charges to be imposed uniformly on the property within the union, regardless of the number of relief recipients in a parish.⁷ Out of this arose the ‘Goshen Minute’, brought into effect in 1869 to control poor expenditure, by topping up low wages from charitable sources, while those who were totally destitute were relieved by the poor law.⁸ The Pauper Inmates Discharge and Regulation Act of 1871 provided stricter regulations for the admittance and discharge of vagrants, and encouragement was given to the unions to build separate ‘deterrent’ wards or wards on a ‘cell’ system.⁹ In 1871 an Act allowed for the termination of the Poor Law Board (PLB) and its replacement by the Local Government Board (LGB). Several offices of government were merged with the LGB including the General Register Office, the Local Government Act Office, and the Medical Department of the Privy Council. All departments now under the LGB were answerable to the President and Secretary of the Board.

It wasn’t until 1873 that the first woman inspector, Jane Senior, was appointed to the LGB and was able to influence policy on the care and treatment of children. Jane Senior reported on the treatment of pauper children and came down firmly in favour of ‘cottage homes’, to bring a family system to the poor. Jane Senior’s report was based on the ‘Mettray’ principle, where children were divided into separate family units rather than put in one building.¹⁰ The management of children in the workhouse and cottage homes will be discussed further in Chapter 6. At this time also, both the Workhouse Visiting Society and the Ladies Sanitary Association championed domestic influence in the running of welfare institutions. There were also campaigns to have women elected as poor law guardians. From the beginning of the Poor Law Amendment Act, men were to dominate

⁷ A. Brundage, *The English Poor Laws, 1700-1930* (Basingstoke, 2002), p. 104; 28 and 29 Victoria cap.79, *An Act to provide for the Better Distribution of the charge for the Relief of the Poor in Unions*.

⁸ Brundage, *English Poor Laws*, p. 109.

⁹ *First Annual Report of the Local Government Board, 1871-2*, vol. XXVIII.1 (1872), pp. 54-63; *Third Annual Report of the Local Government Board, 1873-4*, vol. XXV.1 (1874), pp. xviii-xx; F. Driver, *Power and Pauperism: the Workhouse System 1834 – 1884*, (Cambridge, 1993), p. 89.

¹⁰ Driver, *Power and Pauperism*, pp. 99, 101.

both the board of guardians and all government posts, leaving women to become involved in charitable events. It wasn't until 1875 that the first women guardians were appointed and, between 1875 and 1886 there were still only 50 women guardians in England and Wales.¹¹ By the end of the first decade of the twentieth century 1,289 women guardians had been elected in 500 Poor Law Unions.¹²

Women guardians were said to bring certain qualities to a board and this was the case in Cheltenham when two women guardians were appointed in 1882 and co-opted onto the house and visiting sub-committee, and the school and boarding-out sub-committee. The reasoning behind the decision for women to serve on some committees rather than others, was that they understood the needs of children and could assess in detail their needs in a workhouse. Two further women were elected to Cheltenham board in 1882, Lucy Phillipps, a spinster and gentlewoman, and Julia Ryder, a widow and gentlewoman, both of Cheltenham parishes, but both refused to serve.¹³ At this time no women were elected to Belper board.

The majority of infirmaries, vagrant wards and children's schools were built in the period 1867-83. Driver estimated that expenditure on these additional workhouse buildings totalled £2.9 million in the years 1867-83, with 155 infirmaries authorised over the period.¹⁴ Were Cheltenham and Belper authorised to add additional buildings to the workhouse? The Belper workhouse infirmary was built in 1888 costing £9,983, as much as the whole workhouse cost to build in 1840. Of that sum, £550 was expended to purchase the land in 1886 and £1,300 spent on fitting out the infirmary.¹⁵ Both unions experienced improvements and additional buildings within the workhouse site but Cheltenham workhouse accommodation was considered inadequate in the 1870s. A report by Mr Longe, the inspector, described how the total accommodation of the workhouse in 'proportion to the population of the union, is below the average of the other unions of the same character in my district'. The report highlighted that accommodation for adult males was insufficient, not just by a few beds, but required 'an improved arrangement for the

¹¹ Brundage, *English Poor Laws*, p. 128.

¹² M.A. Crowther, *The Workhouse System, 1834-1929: the History of an English Social Institution* (London, 1983), p. 77.

¹³ GA, G/CH 8a/21, April 1882.

¹⁴ Driver, *Power and Pauperism*, pp. 88 (table 5.4) and 89.

¹⁵ The National Archives (TNA), Public Record Office (PRO), MH 12/1873.

reception and management of an idle class of able-bodied men who habitually throw themselves on the rates during the winter months'.¹⁶ A previous inspector, Mr Graves, reported previously that Cheltenham workhouse was crowded in parts and it would improve the position if the children were moved out but as the inspector commented, 'many fruitless attempts have been made to induce the guardians to erect detached school buildings.'¹⁷

What provision was made for the children in the workhouse to receive education under the 1870 Elementary Education Act? From 1881 the boys in Belper workhouse were sent to Belper national school and the board of guardians proposed that girls in the workhouse were sent to a school in the town and their workhouse clothes altered so that the children were not so conspicuous.¹⁸ In Cheltenham the school committee recommended sending children to the British school in Baker Street as numbers in the workhouse school had fallen to only about twenty children. A female attendant was employed to escort the children to school and then supervise their exercise and duties out of school hours.¹⁹

The Economy in Belper and Cheltenham

What happened to trade and employment between 1865 and 1885? The American Civil War resulted in a shortage of cotton and large numbers of workers were laid off in the manufacturing districts in the north, particularly in Lancashire, but this appears to have had little effect on the textile mills in Belper union.²⁰ There was an appeal in the *Derby and Chesterfield Recorder* for 'contributions of small sums of money' and donations of food for the 'poor and needy at this season of the year.' The newspaper reported an unemployment crisis in January 1868 and the charity committee were to dispense the charity every Tuesday to the deserving poor through the Belper soup kitchen.²¹ Cheltenham union did not experience strikes, as happened in the highly industrialised

¹⁶ TNA, PRO, MH 12/3928, 25 Oct. 1870.

¹⁷ E. Smith, *Provisional Workhouses*, appendix to report (London, 1867-8), pp. 63-4, <http://parlipapers.chadwyck.co.uk> (5.1.2009).

¹⁸ Derbyshire Record Office (DRO), D19 C/W 1/17.

¹⁹ GA, G/CH 8a/17, 13 August 1874 and 4 November 1875.

²⁰ As a comparison to Belper, Mommsen stated that in Lancashire at this time there were 270,000 applications for relief which represented a 300% increase of those receiving relief compared to a normal year. As a result, rates rose one shilling in the pound and private charitable funds were raised to supplement the poor rates. W. J. Mommsen and W. Mock (eds), *The Emergence of the Welfare State in Britain and Germany* (London, 1981), p. 57.

²¹ *Derby and Chesterfield Recorder*, 31 January 1868.

Merthyr union, but it did experience high numbers seeking relief as a result of severe weather, particularly in 1871, 1874 and again in 1878/9.²²

It was reported by the LGB that the 'mid-winter of 1878 to 1879 had brought with it an account of privation and want, such as has not appeared and prevailed since the years 1862-3 and 1864, the period long to be remembered as the time of cotton famine.'²³ The report listed the causes as general depression of trade, stagnation in cotton manufacture and iron works, inclemency of weather, and frost of extraordinary duration and intensity. Strikes by bobbin turners, cotton operatives, cotton porters, dock labourers and coal heavers, threw those engaged in subsidiary trades out of work. The inspector, Mr Long, reported little material effect in Gloucestershire, Herefordshire, Worcestershire, Staffordshire and Somerset, while Mr Cane, the inspector in the Midlands, reported that the number of paupers in Derbyshire had increased from 7,231 to 8,009. Mr Cane also reported that 'the numbers would have been greater had it not been for voluntary associations and private charities stepping in to provide relief.'²⁴ In a report on the unemployed in Cheltenham the committee, consisting of six guardians, reported to the LGB that 'the distress which at present prevails in this union cannot compare with that which prevailed in 1870-1 and in 1879-80 when special steps were taken for the relief of the poor.'²⁵ On those dates the guardians assisted the unemployed through voluntary subscriptions or by the use of the workhouse stone yard.

There was great distress throughout the country in 1886 and the LGB pressed the board of guardians to pay relief to as many of the unemployed as possible to reduce the current high unemployment.²⁶ In a circular from J. Chamberlain, addressed to unions in March 1886, it confirmed the 'exceptional' distress among the working classes, was partly as a result of the continued severity of the weather. Pauperism returns at this time showed an increase they had not reached since the previous periods of distress. 'They are

²² The number unemployed in Cheltenham was nothing like the 12-15,000 men and dependents starving and destitute in Merthyr as a result of the strike in 1875. Cheltenham had around 200 men given work in 1874 as a result of bad weather. In Merthyr around 540 men were provided with work on the roads during the strike, with each man plus wife receiving 7/6 and for a child under 6, 1/6. T. Thomas, *Poor Relief in Merthyr Tydfil Union in Victorian Times* (Glamorgan, 1992), pp. 126 and 129; Cheltenham Examiner 22 and 29 January 1879.

²³ *Eighth Annual Report of Local Government Board, 1878-9*, vol. XXVIII.1 (1879) p. 136.

²⁴ *Eighth Annual Report of Local Government Board*, pp. xxii, xxiv, 136, 140.

²⁵ GA, G/CH 57/4, Report on Distress amongst the Unemployed, February 25th 1886.

²⁶ *Derby Mercury*, 3 March 1886.

convinced that in the ranks of those who do not ordinarily seek poor law relief there is evidence of much and increasing privation, and if the depression in trade continues it is to be feared that large numbers of persons usually in regular employment will be reduced to the greatest straits.’²⁷ The circular recommended the guardians confer with the local authorities and arrange for the execution of works for the unskilled labourer such as spade husbandry on sewage farms or laying out open spaces.²⁸ In 1879 the severe weather returned and Cheltenham poor relief committee had met daily in January to grant relief in kind. Each family, and there were 675 families recorded as receiving relief in January, had been relieved from 2-3 times.²⁹

The Administration of Belper and Cheltenham Unions

In rural areas of both Cheltenham and Belper unions, where there were few ratepayers. Some large landowners in England and Wales took little interest in poor law elections and it was found that the majority of guardians were farmers and traders. This was evident in both Cheltenham and Belper unions where ‘gentlemen’ were only a small number and the farmers in Belper and the traders in Cheltenham, formed the largest group on the union boards. In Cheltenham in 1873, the traders outnumbered the farmers by 15 to 10.³⁰

How well were the unions managed by the guardians and was their management style the same as found in other unions? In an extract from the *Daily Telegraph* the Cheltenham guardians were held up ‘to public contempt in nearly every public print and found guilty even by the Poor Law Board...[They] have not, after a period of nine months, taken one single effectual step towards duty.’³¹ The letter to the newspaper was not signed but called both Mr Graves, the inspector, and the guardians ‘hopeless’. The letter also cited a lack of hospital ward essentials, crowded wards and ‘the same hopeless misery.’³² Further correspondence to the PLB came from Mr Alfred Fleischmann of Suffolk Place in Cheltenham. He described the union as ‘regulated and dependent upon the political prejudices and ignorance of the elected guardians,’ and further described the workhouse as

²⁷ GA, G/CH 57/4, Circular, *Pauperism and Distress*, Local Government Board, 15 March 1886.

²⁸ GA, G/CH 57/4, 15 March 1886.

²⁹ *Cheltenham Examiner*, The Relief of the Poor, 22 January 1879.

³⁰ GA, G/CH 8a/16, Board of Guardian minutes 14 April 1873.

³¹ TNA, PRO, MH 12/3926, copy of *Daily Telegraph*, 18 May 1868.

³² TNA, PRO, MH 12/3926, copy of *Daily Telegraph*, 18 May 1868.

‘one of disorganization, tyranny and petty terrorism’ and the guardians as ‘unfitted for their post’. He found that the majority of the *ex-officio guardians* were so disgusted with their proceedings that they stayed away rather than sanction a ‘Pandemonium’ by their presence.³³ Little was written further on these accusations so it was difficult to determine whether this was someone with a grudge or a true observation of Cheltenham board. In answering the question raised here it would appear that Cheltenham union management style was very different from Belper union. Certainly Cheltenham board was elected on political lines in the early days of the union.

There was plenty of correspondence between Cheltenham board of guardians and the LGB over accommodation for the children and vagrants in the workhouse. One plan agreed by the board was for separate schools, infectious wards and tramp wards to be built on garden land, close to the existing workhouse but separated by a road. The LGB were prepared to accept this as it was a considerable improvement on the present position but then the *Cheltenham Examiner* reported on the discussions at the board for purchasing the Elms. This article was headed up ‘Another phase of the Workhouse Questions’.³⁴ The discussions and decisions made by the guardians on the workhouse accommodation go back to 1869 and included building on garden ground and purchasing the Elms. Building a new workhouse was suggested by the LGB but was not agreed by the guardians. The guardians also suggested purchasing Alstone Lodge as a home for the children. Finally, at the end of March 1882, the guardians agreed to purchase The Elms. Throughout this period of thirteen years the guardians were shown to be indecisive and the LGB despaired of them ever reaching agreement on the way forward.

Belper board took the unusual step of applying to the central board for permission to hold their meetings fortnightly, instead of the usual weekly meeting. A newspaper report quoted how various unions in surrounding counties had made the move to fortnightly meetings and permission was reluctantly granted in September 1871.³⁵ The *Derby Reporter* gave a lengthy report on the visit of the inspector, Dr Smith, to Belper union. Dr Smith had recently replaced Mr Lane as inspector but his manner met with

³³ TNA, PRO, MH 12/3926, correspondence files of 14 November 1868; *Cheltenham Free Press*, November 1868.

³⁴ TNA, PRO, MH 12/3937 and 3938; *Cheltenham Examiner*, 21 January 1880.

³⁵ DRO, D19 C/W 1/13, 30 September 1871; TNA, PRO, MH 12/1854, 1871.

opposition from the guardians. The correspondence files indicate lengthy discussions between the inspector and the guardians on improvements to the workhouse with the inspector stating that ‘the course I shall now adopt will not be to again communicate with the board of guardians but to forward my observations to the PLB’, to which the chairman replied ‘well gentlemen, Dr Smith now refused to supply us with a copy of his observations.’ Local notes show that the Belper board ‘engaged in the occupation of Roasting an inspector’ and Dr Smith experienced ‘the sharp taste of the tongue of the Belper Board.’ The guardians lavished praise on the excellent manner of the previous inspector, Mr Lane.³⁶ By the beginning of 1871, the *Field Reporter* wrote that the difference between the board and the inspector was resolved, and the two parties met, allowing the affair to pass through the usual diplomatic stages. The report in the correspondence file stated:

First there were requisitions by the inspector then a strong proclamation of resistance by the Guardians, addressed personally to Dr Smith and a refusal to do anything, followed by a stern ultimatum from the PLB. Then came a conference between the parties which has resulted in an amicable compromise. The guardians have united spirited resistance with the good sense which can discriminate between what is reasonable and what is extravagant and the result seems likely to be satisfactory to all parties.³⁷

This episode highlights that, in some instances, the board of guardians and the inspector were not working to the same agenda, but on this occasion good sense prevailed.

Workhouse officers in Cheltenham came in for criticism and the master William Welch and his wife Hyacinth were investigated over their behaviour. There was evidence of general laxity, carelessness in the management of the house, and disobedience of orders and regulations laid down by the LGB. Other officers complained of the ‘unkind and unfeeling conduct of the matron...her constant interference with them in the performance of their duties...described as continual bullying.’³⁸ Three officers resigned during the time the special committee of the guardians were investigating the complaints. The master and matron used workhouse resources to entertain guests, and paupers complained of the quality of food. The official inquiry, led by inspector Mr Wodehouse, was held in November 1874 and the case proved:

³⁶ TNA, PRO, MH 12/1853, 3 June 1870.

³⁷ TNA, PRO, MH 12/1853, 6 January 1871.

³⁸ GA, G/CH 8a/17, 24 September 1874.

that master and matron were absent from the workhouse at the same time;
the workhouse door was left unlocked;
the master failed to visit sleeping wards of male paupers at night;
no inventory was kept of money and effects of deceased paupers;
and failure to account for the sale of lard, bones and rags from the workhouse.³⁹

The board required Mr and Mrs Welch to resign after the case was proven against them and they reluctantly resigned at the end of December 1874, having held the posts for four years. The next master, Charles Reach, only lasted for 18 months before resigning through ill health and was succeeded by William Pearce in June 1876, who remained in post for twenty-two years, until 1898.⁴⁰ There were no recorded instances in Belper workhouse at this time.

The Population of Belper and Cheltenham Workhouse

This section will continue the discussion on workhouse population in 1851 (Chapter 3) when it was shown that the percentage of paupers in each age group was different in Cheltenham to that found in Belper. Data from the CEB has been analysed and informs the following discussion.

The union population in both Cheltenham and Belper continued to grow throughout this time with the population in Belper union rising at a higher rate than Cheltenham. There was an increase in the percentage of the workhouse population to union population between 1871 and 1881 rising from 0.5% to 0.7%, but the percentage of workhouse to union population remained the same in Belper. Cheltenham had a far greater capacity to accommodate paupers in the workhouse (around 500 inmates) than Belper (approx. 300 inmates), but Cheltenham was criticized on a number of occasions in the 1870s for not accommodating able-bodied paupers when there was capacity to do so. This would account for the differential between the two unions (table 4.1).

³⁹ GA, G/CH 8a/17, 17 December 1874.

⁴⁰ TNA, PRO, MH 9/4, record of officers in Cheltenham union, p. 471.

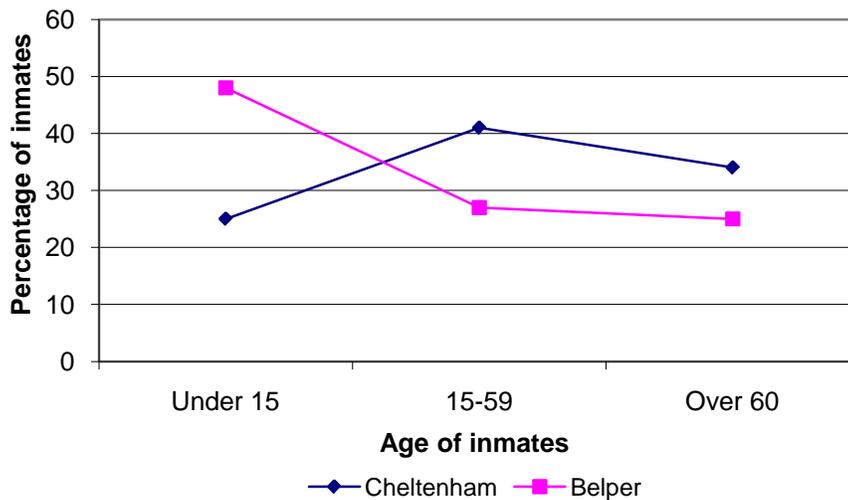
Table 4.1 Population of Cheltenham and Belper workhouses and unions in 1871 and 1881

	Union population	Cheltenham N. in workhouse	% workhouse to union population	Union population	Belper N. in workhouse	% workhouse to union population
1871	53,166	269	0.5%	52,864	192	0.4%
1881	55,505	401	0.7%	58,184	229	0.4%

Source: CEB 1871, RG10/2675. 3584; CEB 1881, RG11/2577, 3413; *Kelly's Directory of Gloucestershire*, 1881, p. 388; *Digest of the English Census of 1871* (London, 1873), Table VI and VII; *Census of England and Wales* (1881), II.

The discussion will first consider the ages of workhouse inmates in 1871 and then a comparison will be made with an analysis of inmate ages in 1881. In Cheltenham workhouse the highest percentage of paupers in 1871 was the able-bodied age group, representing 40 per cent of the workhouse population. This compares to 27 per cent of this age group in Belper. The highest percentage of paupers in Belper workhouse were the under 15s (figure 4.1). Therefore in 1871 these two unions were composed of different workhouse populations.

Figure 4.1 Age profile of Belper and Cheltenham workhouse population in 1871 census

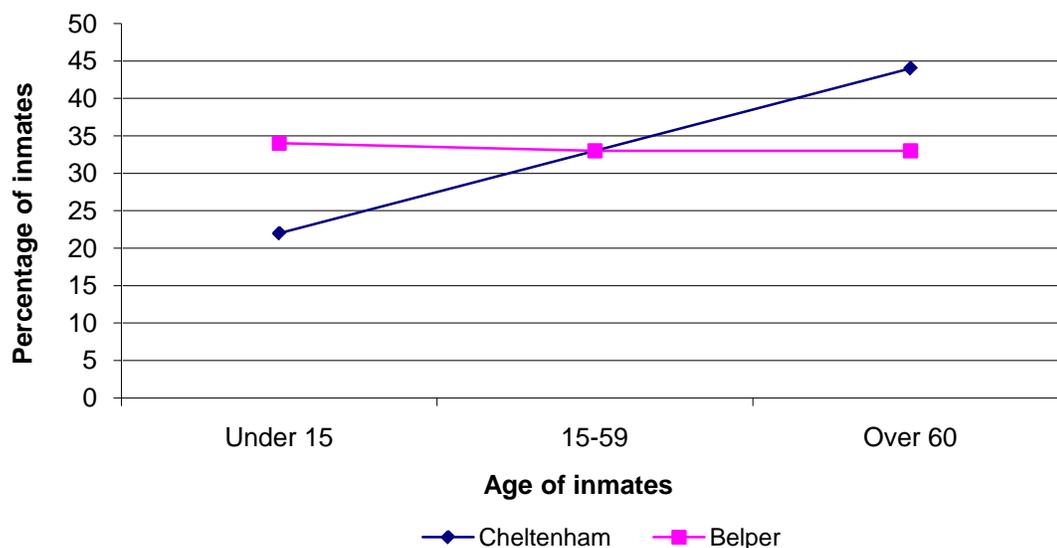


Source: 1871 CEB, RG10/2675 and 3584.

By 1881 the workhouse population in Cheltenham was dominated by inmates over 60 years of age. Belper workhouse recorded a similar percentage in each age group (figure

4.2). The percentage in the 15-59 age group in 1881 was similar in both unions. The other major change was an increase in the number of paupers in both workhouses.

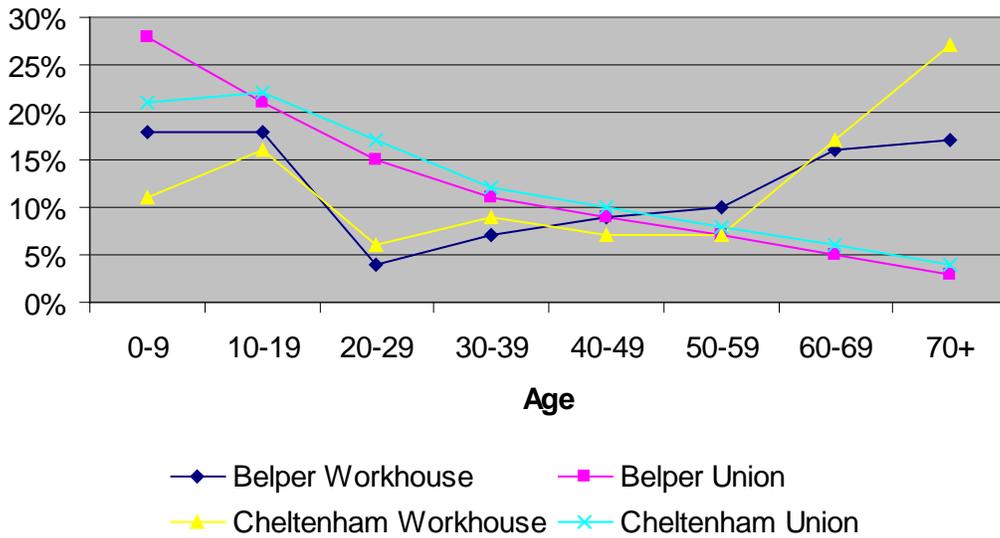
Figure 4.2 Age profile of Belper and Cheltenham workhouse population in 1881 census



Source: 1881 CEB, RG11/2577 and 3413.

Further analysis was made comparing the union population with the workhouse population in 1881, to see if the pattern of ages found in 1851 analysis was similar. As with the 1851 analysis, the population was broken down into ten year age groupings. Figure 4.3 shows that the peaks of the Belper workhouse population occurred in the 0 to 20 and 60 to 70 plus age groups and were relatively fewer in the 20 to 59 age groups. The union population shows a high percentage in the 0 to 9 age, falling to just 3 to 5 per cent of the union population in the 60 plus age group.

Figure 4.3 Comparison of union and workhouse population in 1881



Source: CEB 1881, RG11/2577, 3413.

The graph line, showing the age of paupers in Cheltenham workhouse, saw movement up and down and the peak age group was the 70 plus, with a relatively low percentage of paupers (6-8%) in the 20 to 59 ages. The union population in Cheltenham shows a similar pattern to Belper, that of a low percentage of union population in the 70 plus age (4%) and a higher percentage in the 19 and under age group. The peak age in Cheltenham union was the 10 to 19 age group. The workhouse age profile shows ‘life cycle poverty’ where there are fewer middle-age paupers in the workhouse and higher numbers of children and aged. Both these age groups experienced poverty when there were young children and what money was earned split among a large number of family members. The aged were often retired or unable to work and only had poor relief or the workhouse to fall back on if family could not assist.

The workhouse population in the mid-Victorian period showed that female paupers dominated Cheltenham workhouse while Belper workhouse was dominated by male paupers. Had the percentage of male and female inmates changed in 1871 and 1881 from that of the mid-Victorian period? In each workhouse in 1871, table 4.2 shows males dominated both workhouse populations, and by a considerable margin in Cheltenham. In the separate age groups, the highest percentage of male paupers in Cheltenham workhouse was the aged and in Belper the under 15s. In the female workhouse population the highest

percentage of female paupers in Cheltenham was the able-bodied group while in Belper it was the under 15 age group.

Table 4.2 Sex profile of Belper and Cheltenham workhouse population in 1871 and 1881

Age 1871	Male, percentage		Female, percentage		All, percentage	
	Cheltenham	Belper	Cheltenham	Belper	Cheltenham	Belper
Under 15	24	45	27	52	25	48
15-59	35	19	50	37	41	27
60 plus	41	36	22	11	34	25
N. inmates	167	105	103	87	270	192
% M:F	62%	55%	38%	45%		
Age 1881						
Under 15	23	30	21	41	22	34
15-59	30	27	38	42	33	33
60 plus	47	43	41	17	44	33
N. inmates	220	141	181	88	401	229
% M:F (1851 %)	55% (47%)	62% (52%)	45% (53%)	38% (48%)		

Source: 1871 CEB, RG10/2675 and 3584; 1881 CEB, RG11/2577 and 3413. (Percentages for 1851 are provided in brackets at the foot of table 4.2).

Table 4.2 shows again that males dominated the workhouse population in Cheltenham and Belper in 1881, but this time Belper had a higher percentage of males than in 1871. The highest percentage of males in both workhouses was the aged. The highest percentage of females in Cheltenham workhouse was the aged. The able-bodied females and females under 15 were a similar percentage in Belper. Therefore the percentage of male to female paupers in the workhouse had changed from the mid-Victorian period. Male paupers dominated both workhouses.

Nationally, the statistics show that the workhouse population in 1881 was composed of 48 per cent males and 52 per cent females, broken down into the under 15 group representing 36 per cent of the workhouse population, the able-bodied 56 per cent, and the over 60s representing seven per cent of the workhouse population. Neither Belper nor Cheltenham workhouse population was close to the percentage of male to female found in workhouses nationally.

Was the workhouse population in Cheltenham and Belper similar to unions in England and Wales? Comparison was made to Jackson's study of eight Kent workhouses and a Medway study in the year 1881. Thirty-four per cent of the workhouse population in Kent were aged under 15 (similar to Belper) and 36 per cent of the workhouse population in Kent were aged over 60, again similar to Belper. Further comparison was made to the study of Leicester workhouse by Page, where the workhouse population was dominated by the 15-59 age group (43%), 10 per cent greater than that of Cheltenham and Belper (table 4.3).

Table 4.3 Age of workhouse population in Medway, Kent, Leicester, Cheltenham and Belper workhouses and nationally in 1881

Age	Medway	Kent	Leicester	Cheltenham	Belper	Nationally
14 & under	33%	34%	28%	22%	34%	36%
15-59	32%	29%	43%	33%	33%	56%
60+	35%	36%	38%	44%	33%	7%
N. paupers in workhouse	605	1184	911	401	229	

Sources: D.J. Jackson, 'The Medway union workhouse, 1876-1881: a study based on the census enumerators' books', *Local Population Studies*, 75 (2005), pp. 16-17; D.J. Jackson, 'Kent workhouse populations in 1881: a study based on the census enumerators' books', *Local Population Studies*, 69 (2002), p. 58; S. Page, 'Pauperism and the Leicester workhouse in 1881', *Transactions of the Leicestershire Archaeological and Historical Society*, 63 (1989), Table III p. 89; CEB 1881, RG11/2577, 3413.

The percentage in each age group in Medway workhouse was similar to that of Belper. Medway, Cheltenham and Belper recorded a similar percentage in the 15 to 59 age group.⁴¹

When comparison of workhouse population was made with the adjoining unions to Cheltenham and Belper, Winchcombe had a much higher percentage in the over 60 age group and a very small percentage in the under 15 age group (table 4.4). Comparing Chesterfield workhouse to Belper shows there was a higher percentage of able-bodied and a lower percentage of over 60. Bakewell too had a high percentage of able-bodied and the percentage in the over 60 age group was considerably lower than Belper and Chesterfield.

⁴¹ Belper and Medway were similar unions in some respects in that they both had employment in agriculture and industry, with mining and cotton mills in Belper union, and cement and brick manufactory, and clothing manufacturing in Medway, but they differed in that Medway employed large numbers in the military dockyards.

This shows that there are considerable variations between Belper and Cheltenham and between the workhouse population in unions adjoining Cheltenham and Belper.

Table 4.4 The percentage in each age group of workhouse population for the adjoining unions to Cheltenham and Belper in 1881

	Tewkesbury	Winchcombe	Cheltenham	Belper	Chesterfield	Bakewell
Under 15	24	11	22	34	36	29
15 – 59	38	36	33	33	39	51
60 plus	39	53	44	33	25	19
N. paupers in workhouse	80	47	401	229	331	99

Source: CEB 1881, RG11/2564, 2578, 3433, 3446.

Occupations of Workhouse Inmates

The analysis of occupations of the workhouse inmates was made using census and admission registers. The recording of occupation in the admission registers varied greatly. No occupation was recorded by the master in Cheltenham workhouse in 1867. The number without a recorded occupation in the admission registers varied between 9 per cent in 1868 and 27 per cent in 1870. In Belper, between 20 and 50 per cent of the workhouse population had no occupations listed in the workhouse registers. These omissions of occupation in the registers do not permit a true comparison to be made, both between the two unions and with other research. The census for 1871 and 1881 provides a more reliable indicator of the occupations of the inmates. Only 7-10 per cent of inmates in Belper had no occupation recorded.

Table 4.5 Occupations of workhouse inmates in Belper and Cheltenham unions, 1867 to 1881 (%)

	1867 %		1868 %		1869 %		1870 %		1871 %		1880 %		1881 %	
	C	B	C	B	C	B	C	B	C	B	C	B	C	B
Ag Lab	-	0.3	1.0	-	1.2	-	0.6	-	6.3	7.3	-	-	12	7.4
Domestic Servant	-	4.3	21	6.3	21	6.4	9.1	5.6	14	8.9	23	4.9	31	6.6
Other occ.	-	19	41	28	39	30	34	34	32	25	39	43	29	44
Children	-	27	27	34	27	17	30	32	25	48	23	32	23	35
No occupation /entry blank	-	50	9	31	12	47	27	28	19	48	15	20	6	7
N. inmates admitted during year or N. at census	616	346	577	379	600	419	503	301	270	192	390	466	401	229

C=Cheltenham; B=Belper

Source: CEB 1871: RG10/2675, 3584; CEB 1881: RG11/2577, 3413;

Admission/Discharge Registers GA, G/CH 60/16-18, 20; DRO, D3390/1/10-12, 15-16.

In both unions, as in 1851, the dominant occupations of the workhouse inmates were labourer and domestic servant. The occupational group headed 'other' in Belper included labourer, nailmaker, mill worker and those in the textile industry.⁴² Only a small percentage of the workhouse inmates in Belper were recorded as agricultural workers. Cheltenham had little manufacturing and its dominant occupations were in the service and leisure industries. The percentage of agricultural labourers in Cheltenham workhouse had doubled between 1871 and 1881 and of the twelve per cent recorded in agriculture in 1881, all came from the rural outskirts of the town and the surrounding parishes (table 4.5). In Cheltenham workhouse there was a dramatic rise in those recorded as domestic servants between 1871 and 1881.

One interesting fact that came to light when analysing the occupations in Cheltenham workhouse for 1870 was the inclusion of 'prostitutes' as an occupation. In the analysis of occupation, prostitutes were included in the no occupation category. They represented between 1.8 and 4.2 per cent of the workhouse population in 1870. This was not a great percentage of the 503 paupers admitted to Cheltenham workhouse during 1870 but it was significant for the master to record these females separately in the admission register.

⁴² Although Belper paupers were employed in the textile industry there was a far greater diversity of occupation in this union than in the Leicester union, even though Belper and Leicester were textile towns.

The Crusade against Out-Relief and Relief Expenditure

The 1870s saw a major 'crusade' against out-relief, but why did the central board have a change of policy? The crusade came into being as a result of three reviews undertaken between 1869 and 1874. The Goshen Minute of 1869, The Fleming Report of 1871 and the Longley Strategy of 1874 'all stated that poor relief outside the workhouse should be eradicated. If a pauper were destitute he or she should be forced to enter the workhouse to receive minimal welfare care'.⁴³ It was to affect all the population of a union, including 'children, the disabled, the infirm, sick, widows, widowers and the aged were purged from Relieving Officers' out-door relief registers'.⁴⁴ Until the 1870s 73 per cent of paupers still received relief in their homes. In order to offer relief only in the workhouse it needed adequate workhouse facilities, and the provision of these improved facilities did not occur until the 1870s.⁴⁵ Most workhouses back in the 1850s were only 50 to 70 per cent full and able to accommodate every classification of pauper requiring relief. Neither Belper nor Cheltenham workhouse were near full capacity (see table 4.1). In 1871 Belper was 64 per cent full and Cheltenham 54 per cent full.

By the 1881 census the crusade against out-relief was having an effect on the number of paupers in the workhouse and the percentage of the workhouse occupied had increased to 76 per cent in Belper and 80 per cent in Cheltenham. As Rose stated 'poor law reform half designed but not implemented in 1834 was re-modelled under the impact of the crises of the 1860s.'⁴⁶ By the 1870s central government had taken the lead and recommended that the guardians should abolish all forms of out-relief.⁴⁷ The central board stated that 'outdoor relief was morally and economically destructive' and they saw the out-relief crusade as a means to 'improve the moral character of society and reduce relief expenditure', by using the workhouse test as a test of destitution.⁴⁸ The circular from the LGB to the inspectors in December 1871 highlighted further the LGB concern on increasing out-relief and stated:

⁴³ Hurren, 'Reverend Cox', p. 93.

⁴⁴ Hurren, 'Reverend Cox', p. 93.

⁴⁵ Brundage, *English Poor Laws*, p. 116.

⁴⁶ M.E. Rose, 'The crisis of poor relief in England, 1860-1890' in W.J. Mommsen and W. Mocks (eds), *Emergence of the Welfare State in Britain and Germany* (London, 1981), p. 65.

⁴⁷ E. Hurren, 'Welfare-to-work schemes and a crusade against outdoor relief in the Brixworth Union, Northamptonshire, in the 1880s', *Family and Community History*, 4 (2001), p. 19.

⁴⁸ Mackinnon, 'Crusade', p. 607.

A certainty of obtaining out-door relief in his own home whenever he may ask for it extinguishes in the mind of the labourer all motive for husbanding his resources, and induces him to rely exclusively upon the rates instead of upon his own savings for such relief as he may require. It removes every incentive to self-reliance and prudent forethought on his part and induces him, moreover, to apply for relief on occasions when the circumstances are not such as to render him absolutely in need of it.⁴⁹

The Charity Organisation Society (COS), founded in the late 1860s, supported the crusade against out-relief. The COS argument was, that if relief was easily available, then it would lessen the motivation to thrift.⁵⁰ In 1874, Cheltenham union out-relief committee recommended that persons of bad character be relieved in the workhouse. Habitual beggars were no longer to receive out-relief but only offered the workhouse. Persons resident in the union for less than three years (except for medical cases), their only means of relief was in the workhouse.⁵¹ There was no compulsion from the central body to ensure unions restricted relief to the workhouse but instead the central board recommended changes in union policy. Despite the restrictions most unions still gave out-relief and this was clearly the case in Belper (see table 4.7).

The paupers most affected by the crusade were the single able-bodied men and women. At this time the majority of workhouse inmates were elderly, disabled, sick, widowed or deserted women, children and orphans. Married couples with family and some single women with children were more likely to receive out-relief than be forced to enter the workhouse. The guardians' view was that it was cheaper to keep families on out-relief than to admit them to the workhouse.

Table 4.6 Poor relief expressed as percentage of total expenditure, 1854 to 1874

Year	Total Expenditure (£m)	Percentage expended as poor relief
1854	7.32	73
1864	9.68	67
1874	12.85	60

Source: D. Fraser, 'The English Poor Law and the Origins of the British Welfare State' in W.J. Mommsen and W. Mock (eds), *The Emergence of the Welfare State in Britain and Germany* (London, 1981), Table 1.1, p. 20.

⁴⁹ D. Englander, *Poverty and Poor Law Reform in Nineteenth Century Britain, 1834-1914: from Chadwick to Booth* (London, 1998), p. 107.

⁵⁰ Mackinnon, 'Crusade', p. 606.

⁵¹ GA, G/CH 81/16, minutes of guardians, 22 January 1874.

Table 4.6 shows that although total expenditure had increased over the two decades from 1854, the percentage expended as poor relief consistently fell over the same period. Some of the decrease in pauper numbers was attributed to the good economic situation in the 1870s, reducing the number of unemployed. Williams highlights that, as a result of the crusade, expenditure fell by £903,000 (25% of total expenditure) between 1871 and 1876.⁵² Mackinnon found that between 12 and 15 per cent of paupers were relieved in the workhouse in the 1860s, but by the 1880s the number relieved in the workhouse had increased to approximately 20 per cent and by the beginning of the twentieth century to over 30 per cent.⁵³ There were 41 poor law unions with 15 per cent of the total population of England and Wales who stuck religiously to the crusade and who reduced expenditure by a further £390,000 by 1893.⁵⁴

Although Cheltenham and Belper unions were similar in the size of the union population, Cheltenham's expenditure on both indoor and outdoor relief was considerably higher than Belper's (table 4.7).

Table 4.7 Indoor and out-door relief expenditure in Belper and Cheltenham unions for a year, 1865 to 1878

	Indoor relief expenditure		Out-door relief expenditure		Total relief expenditure	
	Belper	Cheltenham	Belper	Cheltenham	Belper	Cheltenham
1865	£1,536	£2,637	£4,719	£11,947	£8,978	£18,223
1866	£1,528	£2,669	£4,931	£11,964	£9,629	£19,589
1868	£1,646	£3,570	£5,857	£13,706	£10,631	£22,945
1872	£1,706	£2,514	£6,163	£12,720	£11,865	£20,690
1873	£1,727	£2,604	£5,883	£12,154	£11,320	£20,536
1874	£2,065	£2,886	£5,880	£11,945	£11,864	£20,675
1875	£1,675	£3,361	£5,542	£10,886	£11,857	£20,077
1876	£1,567	£3,077	£5,354	£9,677	£10,606	£18,073
1877	£1,560	£3,495	£5,570	£8,347	£10,756	£16,967
1878	£1,743	£3,681	£6,101	£7,598	£11,607	£17,087

Note: total relief expenditure includes other costs including officer salaries, cost of removing paupers etc.

Source: *18th to 21st Annual Report of Poor Law Board* (1865-1868); *2nd to 9th Annual Report of Local Government Board* (1873-1880).

⁵² Williams, *Pauperism to Poverty*, pp. 96-107.

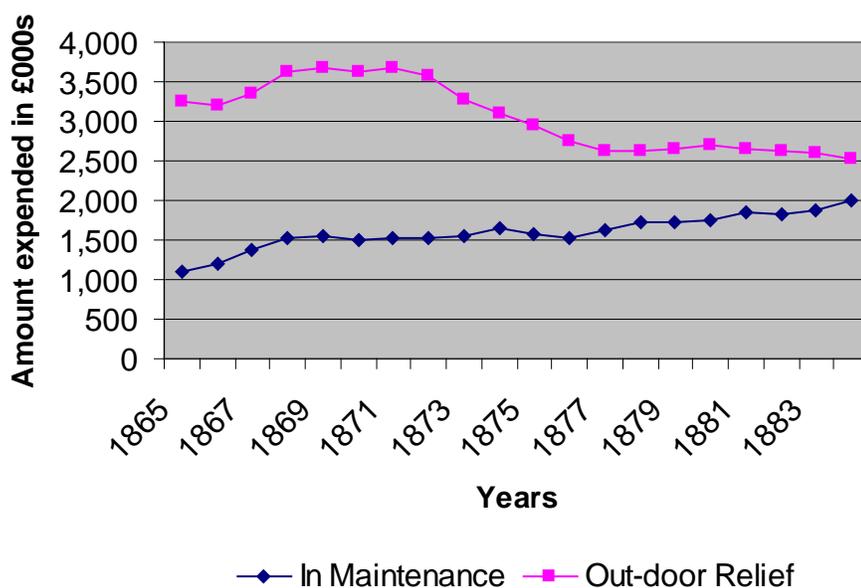
⁵³ Mackinnon, 'Crusade', p. 604.

⁵⁴ Hurren, 'Reverend Cox', p. 93.

Indoor relief expenditure in Cheltenham rose steadily between 1865 and 1878, with the exception of 1872-3, when that expenditure fell below the 1865 amount. In Belper, indoor relief expenditure peaked in 1874 and then fell back to its 1868 level before climbing slowly again. Out-door relief expenditure in Belper rose over the years with small falls between 1875 and 1877. In Cheltenham out-door relief expenditure peaked in 1868 and then fell substantially to finish approximately £4,500 lower than 1865. Total relief expenditure remained constant in Belper around the years 1872-5, fell slightly in 1876-7 and was back to its peak in 1878. In Cheltenham, total relief expenditure peaked in 1868, and fell to below the 1865 total in 1878. Therefore both unions showed a different pattern of relief expenditure between 1865 and 1878.

When Cheltenham and Belper were compared to the national expenditure on indoor and out-door relief between 1865 and 1884, indoor relief expenditure rose steadily in England and Wales to £1,993,000 whereas out-door relief expenditure fell from a peak of £3,677,000 in 1869 to £2,518,000 in 1884 (figure 4.4). This pattern was seen in Cheltenham union but not in Belper.

Figure 4.4 Amounts expended on in-door and out-door relief in England and Wales, 1865 to 1884

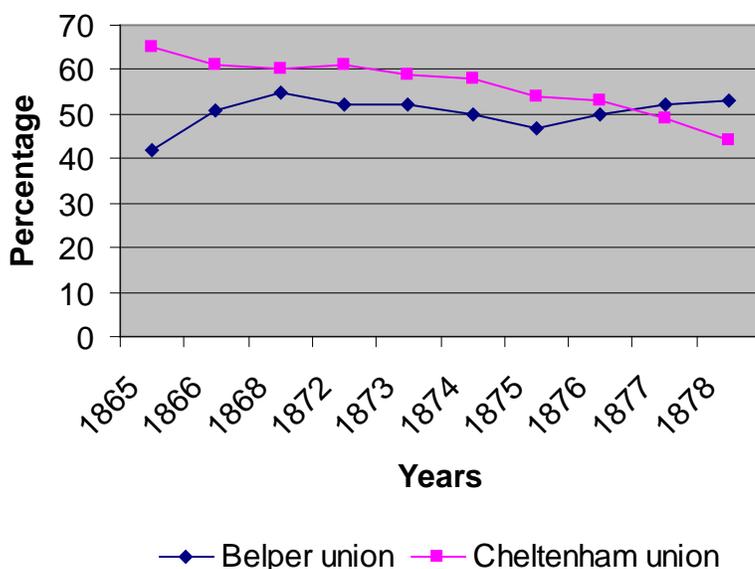


Source: K. Williams, *From Pauperism to Poverty* (London, 1981), p. 170.

In Belper at Lady Day 1881 it was reported by the inspector that 84% of paupers received out-relief and that the rate per head was 3s 1d, well above the average for the county of Derbyshire. Previously in 1880 the inspector commented that ‘the Belper workhouse was not large enough even for the limited use it made of it, that the percentage of pauperism to population had increased and the guardians were giving allowances to some paupers for a year without regular investigations of their case.’⁵⁵

The percentage spent on out-door relief compared to total relief was analysed and showed that in Cheltenham the total spent on out-relief compared to total relief was higher than Belper in the 1860s. The percentage spent on out-relief compared to total relief in Cheltenham fell from a high of 65 per cent in 1865 to 44 per cent of total relief in 1878, except for the year 1872, when there was a small increase of 1.8 per cent (figure 4.5).

Figure 4.5 Percentage spent in Cheltenham and Belper on out-relief compared to total relief



Source: calculated from table 4.8 statistics, provided by annual reports of PLB and LGB.

In Belper the percentage spent on out-door relief to total relief expenditure rose from 42 per cent in 1865 to 55 per cent in 1868 and the pattern of rises and falls continued through the 1870s (figure 4.5).

⁵⁵ TNA, PRO, MH12/1861 and 1863.

How typical was the expenditure on relief in Cheltenham and Belper compared to its surrounding unions? Further analysis of out-relief as a percentage of all relief expenditure was made to the surrounding unions.

Table 4.8 Out-door relief as a percentage of all relief expenditure in surrounding unions to Cheltenham and Belper

	Tewkesbury	Winchcombe	Cheltenham	Chesterfield	Bakewell	Belper
1865	59	60	65	67	54	42
1866	57	58	61	64	52	51
1868	56	59	60	63	54	55
1872	59	62	61	63	50	52
1873	43	58	59	62	48	52
1874	54	55	58	57	47	50
1875	54	54	54	56	44	47
1876	54	52	53	56	41	50
1877	56	50	49	56	38	52
1878	52	51	44	57	38	53

Source: 18th to 21st Annual Report of Poor Law Board (1865-1868); 2nd to 9th Annual Report of Local Government Board (1873-1880).

All unions, with the exception of Belper, showed a fall in the percentage of out-door relief to total relief expenditure. The largest fall in the percentage of out-relief expenditure between 1865 and 1878 was in Cheltenham and Bakewell, with a 21 per cent fall in Cheltenham and a 16 per cent fall in Bakewell. The percentage expenditure on relief in Belper rose over the years by 11 per cent (table 4.8). This was no where near the cuts achieved by Brixworth union. By 1880 the number of claimants of out-door relief in Brixworth was just 494 for the year, a fall of 1,523 paupers no longer receiving relief.⁵⁶ As a result of the big cut in expenditure and number receiving relief, Brixworth was regarded as one of the ‘top ten performing board of guardians in England and Wales.’⁵⁷

In 1871 there were a large number of able-bodied paupers relieved out of Cheltenham workhouse going against the crusade on banning out-relief. This was due to the severity of weather in the third and fourth week of the quarter ending on Lady Day. The central board made strong observations to the guardians that all able-bodied paupers were to be relieved in the workhouse and drew the guardians’ attention to article 1 of the General Out-Relief Prohibitory Order. The central board also drew the guardians’ attention

⁵⁶ Hurren, ‘Reverend Cox’, p. 93.

⁵⁷ Hurren, ‘Reverend Cox’, p. 93.

to a strict adherence to the workhouse test by stating that: ‘as soon as he is...made aware that the only form in which he can receive relief is as an ordinary inmate of the workhouse, an inducement to support himself and his family will be held out to him which is altogether wanting.’⁵⁸ At the time there were only ten able-bodied men in the workhouse and the board required the guardians to, ‘meet, henceforth, the claims for relief from able-bodied persons, more especially single able-bodied men, by an offer of the workhouse to the full extent of the accommodation which it affords, and not to resort to out-door relief, although accompanied by labour, until the workhouse is absolutely full.’ The guardians responded to the central board stating that relief to able-bodied paupers had ceased.⁵⁹

In Cheltenham severe weather arrived again in December 1874 necessitating the appointment of a committee to look after the stone yard, classify the applicants into three classes and provide labour opportunities for the able-bodied applicants for out-relief.⁶⁰ Just one week later the inspector reported in January 1875, that out-relief was too high compared to the Burton Union.⁶¹ A crisis point was reached in February 1877 when Cheltenham workhouse was severely overcrowded and the board was looking at the possibility of boarding out ‘the best conducted aged male paupers’ to the neighbouring unions. Tewkesbury, Gloucester, Winchcombe and Northleach were approached but only one union, Winchcombe, could assist Cheltenham with the overcrowding problem. Winchcombe offered to take ten men from Cheltenham workhouse on condition that Cheltenham union provide bedding for the men and with satisfactory terms of reimbursement.⁶² Was this offer taken up? There was no further reference in the board minutes to the overcrowding problem that year.

A report in 1868 on out-relief in Cheltenham stated that the policy was to admit men later than usual to the stone yard but that this resulted in an evasion of work. The chair of the committee decided that all men were admitted no later than 9 o’clock in the morning. Relief amounts were considered ‘extreme’ (high) and many employed in the stone yard received relief in kind totalling 10s 6d, more than they could earn in ordinary employment. This relief in kind was in addition to money given by the Committee for the

⁵⁸ GA, G/CH 8a/15, correspondence LGB to Cheltenham Union.

⁵⁹ GA, G/CH 8a/15, 2 and 16 February 1871.

⁶⁰ GA, G/CH 8a/17, 31 December 1874.

⁶¹ GA, G/CH 8a/17, 7 January 1875.

⁶² GA, G/CH 8a/18 February 1877.

Relief to the Unemployed, 'which in some cases, increased the weekly allowance to 16s per week.'⁶³ There were 280 men in the stone yard at this time but no stone for the men to break. Single men still received 2lb of bread per day, married men 4lb bread, with 1lb extra for each child. The guardians and the union relief committee agreed that they should confer with the relief committee on the best method of providing relief to the large numbers out of work.

Numerous cases appeared in board of guardian minutes on the recovery of relief payments from family of inmates, and parents were instructed to remove children from the workhouse or pay a sum towards their board. For example, a warrant was ordered to be obtained for the apprehension of George Averiss for leaving his wife and children chargeable to the union and William Little was apprehended under a warrant for deserting his wife and family. William was sent to prison for two weeks. The board took proceedings before the magistrates compelling Charles Kitchen to pay 5s per week towards his mother's maintenance, George Phelps of Birmingham to pay 1s 6d per week for his mother, and William Davis of Cheltenham to pay the same amount for the upkeep of his father.⁶⁴

The discussion has shown that the out-relief crusade had some success in reducing the amount spent on out-relief in Belper and Cheltenham but the initiatives taken were nowhere near as harsh as that found in Brixworth union.

Admissions to Cheltenham and Belper Workhouse

This section will consider whether there was a pattern to admissions to the workhouse in the 1870s and 1880s. How do admission statistics on the workhouse in Cheltenham and Belper compare to the national figures on admissions? Nationally, the statistics show that there was between ten and seventeen per cent less in the workhouse in the summer quarter (July to September) compared to the winter quarter (January to March), but do the Cheltenham and Belper records confirm this.⁶⁵ Using data taken from the admission registers for the years 1867 to 1870 and 1880, the number of admissions to the

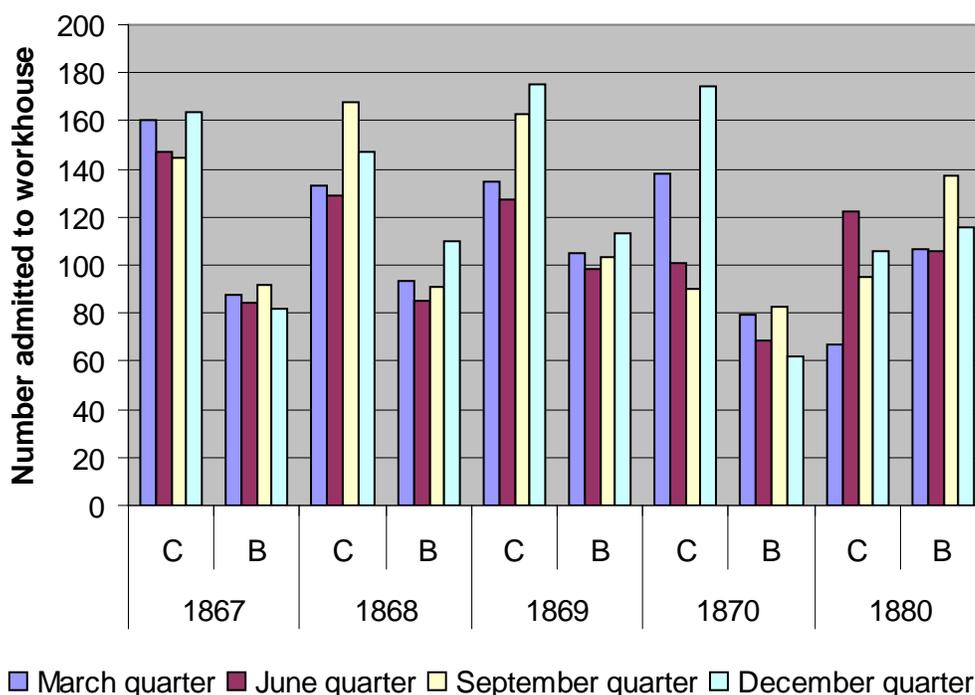
⁶³ TNA, PRO, MH12/3926, 9 January 1868.

⁶⁴ GA, G/CH 8a/21, 6 September 1883; G/CH 8a/22, 5 February 1885. Brixworth union used other methods to reduce outdoor relief expenditure including prosecuting the children of elderly parents for the cost of their maintenance, refusing relief to almspeople as they were regarded as in receipt of charity already, and stopping medical care outside workhouse. Hurren, 'Reverend Cox', p. 94.

⁶⁵ Jackson, 'Medway', p. 17.

workhouse for each quarter was calculated. In analysis of admissions to both workhouses quarterly admissions in Belper were the highest in the September quarter in 1867, 1870 and 1880 but in the years 1868 and 1869 it was the quarter ending in December that experienced the highest number of admissions. In Cheltenham, for the years 1867, 1869 and 1870 the December quarter admitted the highest number of paupers. In 1868, the September quarter recorded the highest number of paupers, while in 1880 it was the June quarter that admitted the greatest number of paupers. Belper in 1870 and Cheltenham in 1880 were the years that admitted the lowest number of paupers during the year. For the years where admissions have been recorded for this study, the admission numbers each quarter were similar, averaging around 126 to 154 in Cheltenham, except in 1880, when the average was only 97. In Belper workhouse the average admitted each quarter varied considerably reflecting the economic situation at the time (figure 4.6).

Figure 4.6 Quarterly admissions to Belper and Cheltenham workhouse, 1867 to 1870 and 1880



Source: GA, Admissions registers G/CH 60/16-18, 20; DRO, admissions registers D3390/1/11-12, 15-16.

In a study of Medway, Jackson found that summer admissions to Medway workhouse in 1881 rarely fell below ninety per cent of the winter levels. Maximum numbers in Medway workhouse occurred between January and April and the minimum numbers between August and October. There was a reduction of 15 to 22 per cent between the maximum workhouse numbers and the minimum.⁶⁶

Table 4.9 Percentage comparison of September and March quarter admissions in Cheltenham and Belper workhouse, 1867 to 1870 and 1880

	Cheltenham	Belper
1867	9% higher in March than September	4.5% higher in September than March
1868	26% higher in September than March	2% higher in March than September
1869	20% higher in September than March	2% higher in March than September
1870	35% higher in March than September	5% higher in September than March
1880	42% higher in September than March	28% higher in September than March

Source: GA, Admissions registers G/CH 60/16-18, 20; DRO, admissions registers D3390/1/11-12, 15-16.

There were enormous variations in the percentage difference between the winter and summer quarters (see table 4.9) and the expected percentage difference between the quarters (as stated by Jackson) was not evident in Belper. Some years showed a higher percentage admitted in the summer quarter than in the winter quarter. Belper and Cheltenham therefore differed from Jackson's findings in some of the years analysed.

The Management of Vagrants in the Unions

The management of vagrants was covered under the Vagrancy Act 1824 (5 Geo.4,c.83). Under the 1834 Poor Law Amendment Act, vagrants were entitled to relief but this was to be given in the workhouse. The 1842 Act saw the introduction of compulsory detention for four hours after breakfast and a work task.⁶⁷ In November 1868, the PLB issued a circular letter giving the recommendations for the treatment of vagrants. Their advice was to keep each vagrant in separate accommodation, to keep the deserving vagrant apart from the undeserving, and any vagrant refusing to perform a task was to be taken before the magistrates. In the large Midland and northern cities, vagrants slept and

⁶⁶ Jackson, 'Medway', p. 17.

⁶⁷ Matthews, 'Vagrancy in Worcestershire', p. 106; The Poor Law Amendment Act 1842, 5 & 6 Vict., c.57, s.5.

worked in solitary confinement to prevent contamination of other paupers. By 1904, 434 unions had adopted this method including Belper. The dietary given for men was to be 8oz of bread for supper and the same for breakfast but the guardians could substitute one pint of gruel for 2oz of the bread.⁶⁸ The Order of 1871 stipulated that a vagrant could not discharge himself before 11am on the morning following admission, and a casual admitted more than once in the last month to a casual ward in the same union, was to be detained until 9am on the third morning after their admission.⁶⁹ The Casual Poor Act of 1882 (45 and 46 Vict., c.36) provided for the ‘vagrant to stay until 9am on the second day after admission, and the fourth day if a second application was made within one month to the same union.’⁷⁰

How were Cheltenham and Belper vagrants managed compared to the regulations on management of these paupers? Vagrants appear in the census enumerator books under various categories, such as ‘casual’, vagrant or tramp, and approximately 2.5 per cent of the workhouse population were vagrants. Of these vagrants, males dominated at a ratio of 2:1, most in the able-bodied age group.⁷¹ Between 1866 and 1900 the mean number of vagrants relieved in England and Wales on one day varied between 2,274 (in 1872), to 6,194 in 1881 and 11,287 in 1898 (figure 4.7).⁷² Was this pattern of an increase in vagrancy numbers over the second half of the nineteenth century evident in Cheltenham and Belper? Unfortunately only a few statistics on vagrants admitted to the workhouse appear in the newspapers. In most entries in the admission registers the vagrants were not indicated and it is not therefore, possible to confirm the facts.

⁶⁸ *Twenty-first Annual Report of the Poor Law Board*, 1868-9, vol. XXVIII.1 (1869), circular dated 28 November 1868, pp. 75-6; *Second Annual Report Local Government Board*, 1872-3, vol. XXIX.1 (1873), p. 56.

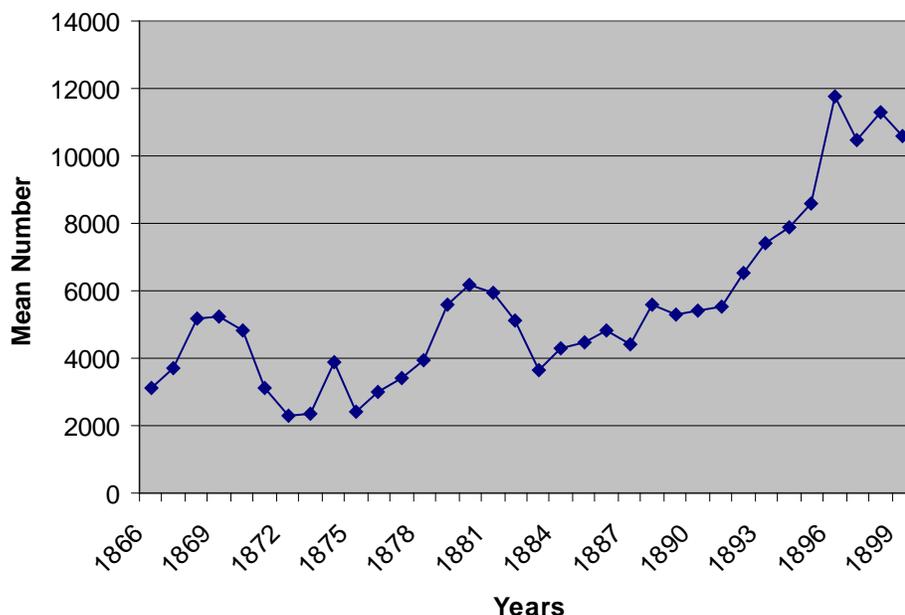
⁶⁹ Vorspan, ‘Vagrancy and the new poor law’, p. 61; Hunter, ‘Vagrancy’, p. 186.

⁷⁰ Brundage, *English Poor Law*, p. 119.

⁷¹ Hunter, ‘Vagrancy’, p. 186; Jackson, ‘Kent workhouse population’, p. 63.

⁷² *11th Annual Report of the Local Government Board*, 1881-2, vol. XXX.Pt.I.1 (1882), p. 272; *29th Annual Report of Local Government Board*, 1899-1900, vol. XXXIII.1 (1900), p. 380.

Figure 4.7 The mean number of vagrants relieved in England and Wales on 1 January and 1 July each year, 1866 to 1900



Source: *11th Annual Report of the Local Government Board, 1881-2*, vol. XXX.Pt.I.1 (1882), p. 272; *29th Annual Report of Local Government Board, 1899-1900*, vol. XXXIII.1 (1900), p. 380.

How reliable were these statistics produced on 1 January and 1 July, showing the number of vagrants relieved on just two days of the year? Taking the average of the two dates does not show the huge variations between the January and July figures. For example, in January 1889 the total of vagrants was 6,712 but the July total only 3,850. When the two days were averaged the figure was 5,281, similar to other years.⁷³ The mean therefore was not a useful method to look at the vagrancy pattern of admissions.

In May 1869 the inspector, Richard Lane, had reported on the condition of Belper workhouse and made reference to there being no vagrancy wards and therefore vagrants were not relieved in the workhouse.⁷⁴ The average number of vagrants relieved in Belper union in 1870 was 50, but in 1869 the weekly average was higher. The vagrancy committee in Belper started enquiries in 1872 to find out how vagrants were relieved in Leicester, Derby, Nottinghamshire, Stafford, Warwick, Lincoln, Somerset and West Riding

⁷³ *11th Annual Report of the Local Government Board, 1881-2*, vol. XXX.Pt.I.1 (1882), p. 272; *29th Annual Report of Local Government Board, 1899-1900*, vol. XXXIII.1 (1900), p. 380.

⁷⁴ TNA, PRO, MH 12/1852, report of poor law inspector, Richard Lane.

of Yorkshire. The resulting enquiries showed ‘that where the relief of vagrants has been placed under the management of the police authorities and that relief administered at properly constructed vagrant wards, where task work was enforced under proper supervision, vagrancy had been most materially checked.’⁷⁵ At the time, vagrants arriving in the townships of Alfretton, Ripley and Wirksworth were provided with accommodation in lodging houses but once vagrant wards were completed in 1874, relief was provided at Belper workhouse. The architectural notes for Belper Guardians show that the vagrant building was one storey in height and used for the reception of male and female vagrants included, sixteen sleeping cells, fifteen labour cells, a fumigating room and a clothes store (figure 4.8).⁷⁶ From 1876, the vagrants requiring relief applied to the porter at the casual wards and not to the relieving officer, as had previously been the case.⁷⁷ Cheltenham took a different route from Belper union and appointed police sergeant John Birks as an assistant relieving officer for vagrants.⁷⁸

Figure 4.8 Belper workhouse, casual stone breaking block, early 1900s



Source: A. Barrass, *Belper Looking into the Past* (Belper, 1994), p. 46.

⁷⁵ DRO, D19 C/W 1/13, 3 February 1872.

⁷⁶ TNA, PRO, MH 12/1854, correspondence files Belper.

⁷⁷ DRO, D19 C/W 1/15, 8 September 1876.

⁷⁸ GA, G/CH 8a/12, 30 October 1862.

How was vagrancy managed in Cheltenham union? Cheltenham's treatment of vagrants was similar to Bromsgrove union, where police officers were appointed inspectors of nuisances, and their main role was to check on the comings and goings of vagrants. In a visit to Cheltenham workhouse in June 1866, John Graves, the inspector, found 'no resolution under the 5 and 6 Vict. Act [The Poor Law Amendment Act] in force in the workhouse but male tramps were required to break stone for two hours in the morning before receiving breakfast.' The police in Cheltenham union kept a tramp book and records were forwarded to the guardians once a quarter while the tramp master, Thomas Perry, saw the vagrants in and out, and kept the records.⁷⁹ The Cheltenham house committee reported that Mr and Mrs Garrison were appointed to set up the new tramp wards and ensure they were in full working order ready for use in April 1884. To assist them, an assistant taskmaster was appointed to supervise the old tramp wards and stone yard between 6am and 6pm and he received 18s per week pay but no rations.⁸⁰ Until 1903 admission to the tramp ward was allowed until 10.30pm but from July 1903 the tramp wards closed at 10.00pm.⁸¹ Cheltenham board reported repeated attempts by the tramps to evade the task imposed on them and the board solution was to fence in the north-east side of the sheds in the stone yard and divide the 'bankers' into compartments. The compartments held 'one man's task', contained an earth closet, and tramps were locked in until their task was complete, then returned to the tramp wards.⁸²

A further recommendation in a circular letter of November 1868 introduced a system to discriminate between the deserving and undeserving vagrant. This was achieved by the first union issuing a ticket to a deserving vagrant, stating the cause for seeking relief and the route to be taken. The vagrant presented the ticket at the workhouse, and providing he had walked a certain number of miles from his last place of relief, the vagrant was not required to perform a task. Unfortunately, the PLB ended its circular letter with a warning on the ticket system, that the board 'could not pronounce on this system and its

⁷⁹ Extract from report of John T Graves, after a visit on 7 June 1866 to Cheltenham workhouse, <http://parlipapers.chadwyck.co.uk> (1.5.2009).

⁸⁰ GA, G/CH 8c/1, minutes of house committee.

⁸¹ GA, G/CH 8L, vagrancy committee papers. S. Fowler, 'Vagrancy in mid-Victorian Richmond, 1836-1871', *Local Historian*, 21 (1991), p. 68. Vagrancy was a big problem in Richmond union, and the guardians shut the vagrancy ward much earlier than Cheltenham, at 8pm.

⁸² GA, G/CH 8a/18, 1 February 1877.

effectiveness as it had only been going a short while.⁸³ This ticket system was introduced first in Berkshire, with Gloucestershire and Wiltshire following in 1882, North Wales in 1884, West Sussex in 1908 and East Sussex in 1909. Dorset, Herefordshire and Ayrshire did not adopt this scheme fully but instead issued bread tickets so the vagrants could receive the midday ration.⁸⁴ In 1885 the vagrancy committee in Cheltenham reported further on the arrangement for the treatment of tramps. The introduction of the ticket system was regarded by the Cheltenham vagrancy committee as unsuccessful. The committee thought the lack of uniformity in carrying out the 'Berkshire' system was the reason for the failure of the ticket system, resulting in tramps being sent to Cheltenham when unions had no right to send them. For example, the committee showed that tramps for London were sent from Evesham to Cheltenham, or if leaving Hereford en-route to Bristol were sent via Ledbury, Upton and Cheltenham. Tickets also arrived with altered destinations and other irregularities, and vagrants were known to use the tickets for the purpose of begging. No solution to the problem was offered by the committee.⁸⁵ Tewkesbury, the next union to Cheltenham did not operate the ticket system.⁸⁶

On arrival at the vagrant ward in Cheltenham, the master separated the vagrants arriving with tickets from the ordinary tramps. Each vagrant received 5oz of bread and one pint of gruel or broth for supper and breakfast but was required to complete three hours work before leaving the tramp ward.⁸⁷ A tramp who complied with the rules was provided with a certificate of recommendation to the next workhouse on his journey.⁸⁸ For Cheltenham and Richmond, the dietary provided was below that set down in the 1871 Act.⁸⁹

⁸³ 21st *Annual Report of the Poor Law Board*, 1868-9, vol. XXVIII.1 (1868) pp. 75-6.

⁸⁴ Vorspan, 'Vagrancy and new poor law', p. 72.

⁸⁵ GA, G/CH 8a/22, 1 October 1885.

⁸⁶ GA, G/CH 8a/25, October 1889 and May 1890.

⁸⁷ Fowler, 'Vagrancy Richmond', p. 68. The dietary for vagrants in Richmond differed from Cheltenham in 1868 and was the minimum allowed. It consisted of 6ozs bread for supper and the same for breakfast and the dietary level was set to stop the flood of vagrants.

⁸⁸ GA, G/CH 8a/13. Bromsgrove union also adopted the 'ticket' system in 1867. This system required the tramps to prove they were able-bodied and in search of work, and had travelled 20 miles that day in search of work. The vagrant ward provided bed and food for one night with the food consisting of 4oz of bread evening and morning. N. Land, *Victorian Workhouse: a Study of the Bromsgrove Union Workhouse*, (Studley, 1990), p. 74.

⁸⁹ Matthews, 'Worcestershire vagrants', p. 107.

Under the 1871 Act the task for a male casual pauper was to break 3 cwt of stones or pick 1lb unbeaten or 2lbs beaten oakum. A female was required to pick ½lb unbeaten or 1lb beaten oakum or perform at least 3 hours scrubbing and cleaning tasks.⁹⁰ In a meeting of the vagrancy committee in Cheltenham it was found that no record had been kept of the amount of stone to be broken under the 1882 general order. The record was then written down and stated that casual paupers in Cheltenham workhouse were required to undertake the following tasks:

Casual paupers who remained for one night only:

Males – the breaking of 4 cwt of blockstone into roadstone or 1.5 cwt of roadstone into gravel or the picking of 1lb of unbeaten or 2lbs of beaten oakum or three hours work in digging or pumping or cutting wood or grinding corn.

Females – the picking of ½ lb of unbeaten or 1lb of beaten oakum or 3 hours work in washing or scrubbing and cleaning

Casual paupers who were retained for more than one night:

Males – for each entire day of detention, the breaking of 13 cwt of blockstone into roadstone or 5cwt of roadstone into gravel or the picking of 4lbs of unbeaten or 8lbs of beaten oakum or nine hours work in digging or pumping or cutting wood or grinding corn.

Females – for each entire day of detention, the picking of 2lbs of unbeaten or 4lbs of beaten oakum or 9 hours work in washing, scrubbing and cleaning or needlework.⁹¹

Belper set the tasks for vagrants as far back as 1875 requiring the casual paupers to:

One night only:

Males – break 1½ cwt stones

Females – pick ½ lb unbeaten or 1lb beaten oakum or not less than 3 hours washing, scrubbing, cleaning

More than one night:

Males – break 7cwt of stone for each day of detention

Females – pick 2lb unbeaten or 4lbs beaten oakum for each day of detention or not less than 9 hours washing, scrubbing and cleaning.⁹²

Tasks for female vagrants in both workhouses were the same, whether detained for one night or more, but the guardians in Cheltenham listed various tasks for male vagrants to undertake. Belper male vagrants detained for more than one night were required to break more stone into gravel than Cheltenham vagrants.

⁹⁰ Matthews, 'Worcestershire vagrancy', p. 107.

⁹¹ GA, G/CH 8L, vagrancy committee report of 15 December 1903.

⁹² DRO, D19 C/W 1/14, 16 January 1875.

The new requirements for work had the desired effect in both Cheltenham and Bromsgrove of reducing the number of vagrants. The twelve month figure of vagrants not receiving relief in Bromsgrove showed a decrease of 1,650 vagrants. The vagrancy committee in Cheltenham reported that there had been a great increase in vagrants for the week ending 29 September 1887, resulting in 147 vagrants admitted, an increase of 71 compared to the week before, and an increase of 74 compared with the corresponding week of 1886. Three reasons were cited for the increase, the first being the hot summer and early season for harvesting, fruit gathering and hop-picking. Secondly, that all the lodging houses in Cheltenham were crowded and, thirdly, that a large number of navies had arrived in Cheltenham in search of employment at the gasworks. Vorspan and Matthews both drew the same conclusions that a large number of vagrants were those genuinely seeking work, travelling from town to town to find work, as the navies arriving in Cheltenham did in 1887. Although the weekly total was high, the quarterly total for Michaelmas was less than the corresponding quarter in 1886. The board's attention was drawn to the 'striking and continued success of the system adopted in this union, in conjunction with the other unions in Gloucestershire, it being remembered that the increase of vagrancy throughout the United Kingdom has been very marked during the past two years.'⁹³ This drop in vagrancy numbers in Cheltenham was noticeable when comparing the figure for 1882 with the years 1883 to 1886 (table 4.10).

Table 4.10 Tramps recorded in Cheltenham union, 1882 to 1886

1882 (before new system adopted)	7,963
1883	5,446
1884	4,715
1885	4,233
1886	2,295

Source: GA, G/CH 8a/24, 6 October 1887.

To illustrate the plight of vagrants the following case study of vagrant Alice will be related. Alice was told to leave Tewkesbury workhouse along with other vagrants in the morning of 19 January 1881. There was deep snow on the ground and when one of the

⁹³ GA, G/CH 8a/24, 6 October 1887.

other vagrants asked if they could remain until the weather improved, they were informed that ‘we ought to be thankful that we were allowed to do so early without doing work.’ Four of those discharged were en-route to Cheltenham and two to Gloucester. Alice was one of the four discharged who had no money and was wearing a pair of men’s boots. The other three went on ahead when she was unable to keep up. Alice was found on the side of the road, having fallen, by a man from the village of Uckington, just to the west of Cheltenham. With the snow so deep, a horse and cart could not travel and two men carried her to the union. On admittance to the vagrant ward, Alice was found to be in a fearful state, scarcely able to walk and bloated. The vagrancy committee forwarded the evidence from the tramp master, master of the workhouse, correspondence between Tewkesbury and Cheltenham clerks, and reports in newspapers to the LGB to take appropriate steps ‘with a hope that whatever they may determine upon it may prevent the re-occurrence of what your committee still think was a case of harsh and cruel treatment.’⁹⁴

In Cheltenham, another notorious character was a young man named Sargeant, aged 24. He had written to the PLB complaining of being sent to the vagrant ward instead of the main workhouse. The guardians defended the master and the board on this complaint confirming the allegations were ‘completely unfounded’, and that the pauper was one of the worst characters in the town. Sargeant had the ‘habit of coming into the house when he pleased and leaving, when he lied, for a week’s spree.’ As a result, the board had ordered that he was not to be admitted to the house but only to the tramp ward.⁹⁵ The admission registers show him admitted six times during 1868 and 1869, once on the order of the Justices at St Margarets Weston, and once ‘returned’, but the remainder of the register entries do not describe his reasons for admission.

Conclusion

The Poor Law Board was replaced in 1871 by the Local Government Board (LGB) and at the same time various departments of government were annexed to the LGB, giving greater accountability to government than previously. Mackinnon argued that workhouse accommodation in most unions was poor in the 1840s and 1850s, and the crusade on out-relief could not have happened earlier than it did. There was a real possibility of a

⁹⁴ GA, G/CH 8a/20, report of committee to board of guardians, 10 February 1881.

⁹⁵ TNA, PRO, MH 12/3926, 30 January 1869.

reduction in poor rates when the crusade against out-relief started, and this was clearly the case at the start, but in the long run the statistics on the number of paupers receiving relief showed this not to be the case. The percentage spent on out-relief compared to indoor relief in Cheltenham and the surrounding parishes showed a fall between 1865 and 1878, indicating that the crusade against out-relief had its effect, but in Belper the percentage of out-relief to indoor relief actually rose slightly during this period. The pattern of relief expenditure differed between the two unions, and the analysis of the ratio between in-door and out-door relief, although showing a decline in Cheltenham, finished at the same level in 1878 as 1865. Although the population of Cheltenham and Belper were similar Cheltenham's expenditure on relief was considerably greater.

The 1860s to 1880s were a period of additional building to augment workhouse accommodation. Both Cheltenham and Belper followed the trend and added infirmaries and vagrant wards.

Cheltenham came up against the central board for its management of paupers in times of unemployment, and was censored for not admitting the able-bodied men to the workhouse when there was sufficient space to accommodate these men. Belper was not greatly affected by the 'cotton famines' of the 1860s and trade slumps of the 1870s, and this was put down to the diversification of industry in the union.

Poor recording of occupation and age in the workhouse registers by the master in both unions proved a hindrance to the analysis of occupation and population. There were few agricultural workers in the unions and with little industry in Cheltenham, the number employed in domestic services was high. Most of the Belper workhouse population were employed in nailmaking, mining, in the mills and the textile industry, but there were also large numbers of children recorded. The ages of the inmates in the workhouse had changed since the mid-Victorian period. Analysis of the workhouse population shows that in Cheltenham in 1871 the workhouse population was dominated by the 15-59 age group. In Belper the under-15 age group were 48 per cent of the workhouse population. By 1881 the workhouse in Cheltenham was dominated by the over-60 group but in Belper all three age groups recorded a similar percentage. The number of paupers in both workhouses rose between 1871 and 1881. I had expected that the age and occupations of the workhouse population in Cheltenham and Belper would be similar to the rest of England and Wales.

In fact this was not the case and the age of Cheltenham inmates was very different due to its relative lack of industry. The composition of the workhouse population in Belper was similar to that of Kent and Medway.

The board of guardians in Belper was composed mainly of farmers. Small tradesmen dominated the board in Cheltenham. In Cheltenham we saw the election of two women to the board for the first time. The Belper board in this period did not take to the new inspector and there was a stand-off between the two but all was resolved within six months, with a satisfactory conclusion to the matter by all parties.

Regarding admissions to the workhouse, Cheltenham recorded similar admission numbers each quarter, but in Belper workhouse the average number admitted each quarter varied considerably, reflecting the economic situation at that time. There were also great variations in Belper and Cheltenham in the quarters admitting the maximum and minimum numbers to the workhouse. If Jackson's findings were typical with regard to workhouse admissions in the rest of England, then Belper and Cheltenham were not typical unions in the number admitted to the workhouse.

The focus on vagrants in the last section of this chapter considered the different methods adopted by Cheltenham and Belper in managing vagrants. Cheltenham was one of only a few unions to adopt the 'ticket' system for its vagrant paupers, which had the effect of reducing the number of vagrants admitted to the workhouse. Both unions built vagrancy cells and wards but the tasks set for the longer stay vagrants in Belper were tougher.

The next chapter will consider the options open to the poor of Cheltenham and Belper to obtain additional assistance in day-to-day living costs. It will make an examination of charity found in the two unions from the voluntary hospitals, orphan asylums, almshouse and schools, to the small endowments provided to support a few respectable poor.

Chapter 5

Charity, Relief and the Poor in Cheltenham and Belper

*Behold Lord of Life this myte I restore
Rendering thanks unto thee for all that I have
And this little harbour I leave for the poore
Devised to lodge four who els may alms crave
Sure truste I repose and myne I exhort
Henceforth this Hospital as it needs to renew
Allowing such things as my will doth pyrport
Wch I meane and pray God for ay to continue
God grant that others more able than I
Hereafter may better poore people supply.¹*

Previous chapters have considered the workhouse and union population and the provision of relief to paupers in Cheltenham and Belper unions. This chapter will examine the types of charity available to the poor in the two unions from the almshouses, friendly societies and schools to the small endowments to support a few respectable poor. As an additional means of support to the poor, charity played an essential role in the unions. The discussion of charity has been included as a separate chapter to understand how the different elements of charitable provision assisted the poor from 1780 through to the twentieth-century. Breaking the discussion of charity down and including in each chapter would not have shown the continuity of, for example, the almshouses and the part they played in assisting the poor.

The framework through which one understands charity in the eighteenth and nineteenth century is determined by the 'economy of makeshifts'. The term was explained in the introduction chapter but in short, it was a means for the poor to survive by drawing on local assistance through charity, either of a temporary nature or longer term in, for example, an almshouse.²

¹ G. Hickling, *Duffield in Appletree* (St Albans, n. d.), p. 52. Inscription found on the inner side of wall when almshouses were demolished at Duffield (Belper union).

² For further discussion of the 'economy of makeshift' see S. King and A. Tomkins (eds), *The Poor in England, 1700-1850: an Economy of Makeshifts* (Manchester, 2003); S. Lloyd, 'Agents in their own concerns? Charity and the economy of makeshifts in eighteenth-century Britain' in King and Tomkins, *Poor in England*, pp. 100-136; M. Hanly, 'The economy of makeshifts and the role of the poor law: a game of chance' in King and Tomkins, *Poor in England*, pp. 76-99; N. Goose, Summary of 'Importance of the

Was the management and availability of charity in each union the same or very different? This is the main question the chapter will consider. The location and regionality are important when discussing the economy of makeshifts. As King and Tomkins state

Differences in land tenure...presence or absence of a charitable elite...generate...variations in the composition and robustness of the makeshifts economy within and between counties.³

Discussions in previous chapters have shown the two unions to be very different in their employment and prosperity. Will this be the same in the provision of charity and in alternative means to assist the poor?

Charity was a vital component in the welfare equation and goes back many centuries. Between 1700 and 1850 there was a move away 'from an age of charitable pity for 'Christ's poor' to an age of philanthropic concern for the social rehabilitation of marginalised citizens of the state.'⁴ The poor lived on the verge of poverty and found earnings cut through illness, unemployment, old age or quiet trade times. There were only three means open to the poor to survive, 'begging, charity or poor law.' The state was there to relieve the destitute only through the workhouse or out-door relief.⁵ The income of charities was drawn from regular subscriptions, gifts, donations, legacy, or purchases at charitable sales, with subscribers becoming members of the charity or society and entitled to vote in it. Many guardians on the union boards were also members of charitable boards of schools, hospitals and almshouses. The most likely groups to receive charity were children, the sick and elderly, as examples quoted later will show.

The 22nd *Annual Report of the Poor Law Board* stated that 'the role of charity was equally easy to define, the role lay in assisting those who have some but insufficient means and who though on the verge of pauperism are not actually paupers.'⁶ Charity could take many forms from that involving the family, the neighbourhood, the workplace, the permanent charitable institutions which provided 'institutional support for the sick, the

English Almshouse as part of the Mixed Economy of Welfare', *FACHRS Conference*, Apsley Guise, FACHRS Newsletter 2008.

³ King and Tomkins, *Poor in England*, p. 259.

⁴ M.E. Roberts, 'Head v Heart? Voluntary associations and charitable organisation in England, c.1700-1850' in H. Cunningham and J. Innes (eds.), *Charity, Philanthropy and Reform: from the 1690s to 1850* (Basingstoke, 1998), p. 66.

⁵ C.L. Mowat, *The Charity Organisation Society, 1869-1913: its Ideas and Work* (London, 1961), p. 4.

⁶ P. Wood, *Poverty and the Workhouse in Victorian Britain* (Stroud, 1991), p. 144.

aged and the orphan, and they also provided a diversity of educational and leisure activities.’⁷ Before the 1834 Poor Law Amendment Act philanthropic activity arose from members of the landed class but increasingly the rise of the industrialist class increased the amount of charity available. This point will be demonstrated in the discussions later in the chapter.

Charity has been discussed and analysed by many historians and usually forms part of a wider discussion on relief of the poor. The 1832 Royal Commission on the Poor Law made only brief comment on the role of charity and Brundage concluded that the ‘poor law and charity continued to operate on parallel tracks.’⁸ Peter Wood found that giving charity without investigation into the reasons for relief, discouraged the poor from ‘the practise of self help’ and found that poor law and charity were frequently relieving the same poor persons and families.⁹ It was not possible to prove this statement as records of poor relief and charity do not provide names to cross-reference between the poor law and charity. Alan Kidd gives many examples of the types of charitable provision that could be found in any one town, from the voluntary hospitals, the Girl’s Friendly Societies, the Ragged Schools, the Waifs and Strays, Dispensaries and other smaller charity formations.¹⁰ Were there too many charities and insufficient funds coming into them to really help the poor? How many of these types of charitable provision could be found in Belper and Cheltenham unions, and did they really assist all the poor? Kidd also stressed that for the poor to survive they needed an ‘economy of makeshifts’. This economy included earned income, savings and loans, support from kin and neighbours, claiming welfare assistance in times of hardship and benefits from charity. Social welfare in the nineteenth century was therefore a ‘mixed economy of welfare’ provided by state and private sector.¹¹ Lloyd states that ‘charity was an important source of assistance to the eighteenth century poor, particularly to the young, sick and elderly’, as will be demonstrated in the discussion in this chapter. Charity supplemented diet and income, it provided shelter (almshouse, orphan home), clothing and education but it depended on the local social and economic resources.¹² Jean

⁷ Wood, *Poverty and the Workhouse*, p. 44.

⁸ A. Brundage, *The English Poor Law, 1700-1930* (Basingstoke, 2002), p. 113.

⁹ Wood, *Poverty and the Workhouse*, p. 143

¹⁰ A. Kidd, *State, Society and the Poor in Nineteenth Century England* (Basingstoke, 1999), pp. 90-2.

¹¹ Kidd, *State, Society*, p. 2.

¹² Lloyd, ‘Agents in their own concerns’, p. 120.

Robin addressed the economy of makeshifts when studying poor relief in Colyton. Welfare in this village had three strands. Firstly, poor law, secondly charitable funds managed by the Feoffes, and, thirdly, mutual provident societies. By 1890 over 90 per cent of those born in 1850 had sought poor law or charity or both.¹³ Norman McCord discusses philanthropic activity under three headings. Firstly, permanent charities providing support to the aged, children and orphans, mainly in institutions. Secondly, charity to meet a temporary need in the case of bad weather, unemployment or a disaster, and thirdly, private charity given by individual men and women to a family or individual. In his discussion of voluntary resources for temporary need McCord found that this aspect of charity had been little discussed in social history writing.¹⁴ All these forms of charity were seen in both unions.

Changes to Charity Regulations

In 1812, Romilly's Act came into existence, named after Sir Samuel Romilly who supported charitable reform. The Act was for 'registering and securing charitable donations for the benefit of the poor people of England.'¹⁵ A Royal Commission was set up in 1818 to look into all charities where work was 'based on endowments given by one or more benefactors for a particular purpose', for example in the provision of almshouses or schools. The Commission made a close examination of all trusts and then made suggestions as to how best to manage the endowments to ensure misappropriation of funds did not occur in the future. In fact, as will be indicated later, there were many misappropriations of charity funds in the two unions. The Commission published a forty volume report of its findings and one of the recommendations was to require the setting up of a permanent board of commissioners, which was not achieved until 1857, when the Charitable Trusts Act was passed.¹⁶

In urban areas in particular, the relieving officer and the guardians worked closely with charities and with the Charity Organisation Society (COS), if there was a branch in that town. In 1869 George Goschen was greatly concerned over the 'indiscriminate

¹³ King and Tomkins, *Poor in England*, pp. 21-2.

¹⁴ N. McCord, 'The poor law and philanthropy' in D. Fraser (ed.), *The New Poor Law in the Nineteenth Century* (London, 1976), pp. 90-1; Wood, *Poverty and the Workhouse*, p. 44.

¹⁵ R. Burlison, 'Acts of Charity', *Ancestors* (June 2006), pp. 13-14.

¹⁶ Burlison, 'Charity', pp. 114-5; A. Brundage, *Private Charity and the 1834 Poor Law*, www.class.csupoma.edu/his/Tonyart.htm (5.2.2007).

distribution of charitable funds and double distribution of relief to the same persons by poor laws and charity.’¹⁷ In the Goschen minute of 1869, the Poor Law Board (PLB) argued that, ‘in order to prevent duplication of effort, charities should attempt to care for men and women who were not absolutely destitute, because local guardians were forbidden to help them under the doctrine of less eligibility.’¹⁸ Charles Booth, in his description of the means to support paupers, described Belper union as having funds available for the sick poor in most churches but the church charities did not provide regular doles. In Cheltenham union Booth found that parish doles were regularly given from church alms to the sick and aged including the provision of coal, blankets and clothing in winter.¹⁹ Here is one difference between the two unions: that the churches played a greater role in Cheltenham in providing alms to the poor. Charities and the church did provide support for the poor, but generally the help was to those who temporarily needed assistance, perhaps as a result of sickness or adverse weather. There were also COS pensions of 1s or 6d weekly to supplement other sources of income which will be considered later in the chapter.

In a pamphlet on relief for the deserving poor the Rev. W.E. Chadwick found that ‘owing to the work of the Charity Organisation Society and to the devoted labours of many other thoughtful men and women, we are year by year learning better how to help the poor.’²⁰ The society had investigated moderate size parishes with no manufactories and where the main employment was market gardening, fieldwork, and labouring in branches of the building trade. This was exactly the situation in Cheltenham. All of these trades were affected by adverse weather, as the many cases cited in earlier chapters of the thesis, and as this chapter will confirm. The average family, in the lower classes, spent all of their earnings each week and were totally reliant on debt or charity for assistance in times of no work. The Select Committee on Distress from Want of Employment was set up in 1895 and gathered information from all parts of the country. The report stressed the crucial importance of the work of voluntary agencies when unemployment was high but also the

¹⁷ K. D. M. Snell, *Parish and Belonging: Community, Identity and Welfare in England and Wales, 1700-1950* (Cambridge, 2006), p. 262.

¹⁸ S. Fowler, *Workhouse, the People, the Places, the Life behind Doors* (Kew, 2007), p. 207.

¹⁹ C. Booth, *The Aged Poor in England and Wales* (London, 1894), pp. 191, 207.

²⁰ Rev. W. E. Chadwick, *The Relief of the Deserving Poor* (London, 1898), Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, pp. 3, 12-17. The policy was not to give relief in money and Thomas Brown received 2s 6d in grocery tickets and 1s 6d for coal on Friday, 7 March 1895.

way these voluntary agencies worked in close cooperation with the agencies of government.²¹

Charities for the Poor

Nigel Goose stated in a recent conference that research has concentrated more on the experiences of the poor than on legislation, but by going along this route the historian encountered problems in finding sources of personal experience. Where records have survived, the historian can determine the formal relief payments but where philanthropy was concerned, this was less easy to quantify.²² In most cases, it was not possible to measure almsgiving, but charitable giving by a will was easier to track and this provided information on the amount to be paid, whether it was a one-off payment, or regular payments through an endowment. The information contained in the will was not always explicit and often stated that 'the residue of my worldly goods' was left to the poor. The investigations and report by the Charity Commissioners between 1819 and 1840 helped in part to explain the charities, sums endowed and whether the charity was still in existence, but only endowed charities were required to register their accounts. Charitable funds were given to hospitals, education and other institutions.

Anthony Brundage, in his discussion on organized charity and the poor law, argued that charitable initiatives from the churches, such as teaching in Sunday School, visiting the sick and providing charitable relief to the deserving poor, all helped to show the poor that 'discipline, thrift, sobriety and other desirable traits could be nurtured, social bonds strengthened and godless revolutionary levelling thwarted.'²³ But was it evident that the poor actually benefitted from guidance by the 'do-gooder' of society? There were many cases, quoted in the board of guardian minutes of cooperation between poor law and charity, of sending paupers to hospitals or homes for orphans, or paying annual subscriptions from poor law funds for these societies. For example, in Belper the guardians agreed the sum of 20 guineas for a subscription to Derby Infirmary and five guineas yearly to a convalescent home at Holbrook. In Cheltenham the guardians subscribed £5 5s in

²¹ For example, the guardians in Marylebone union accepted that the deserving cases were to be dealt with by charity but the idle, thriftless and dissolute characters were only to receive assistance through the poor law and workhouse. McCord, *Philanthropy*, pp. 101-2.

²² N. Goose, Summary of 'The importance of the English almshouse', p. 2.

²³ Brundage, *English Poor Law*, p. 38.

February 1881 to the Eye Hospital and in return received twenty out-patient tickets for attendance at the hospital each year. In 1906 the sum of £5 was paid by Cheltenham guardians to the Friendless Girls Association ‘for the care of friendless girls...in consideration of the rescue work done by reclaiming girls who would otherwise remain chargeable to the union.’ Women visitors took time to visit the inmates, and members of the local communities in both unions provided gifts such as books and magazines, food to the poor in the workhouse, oranges for the children, trips to the pantomime, or local landowners took the children to their home and provided tea.²⁴

Transient or irregular charity was vital in times of depression, high unemployment, bad weather or in local circumstances, and could consist of providing food for the poor in the form of the soup kitchen or work organized by the parish.²⁵ In most cases it was the respectable poor who were given help from charity, with the most common form of assistance to the temporary unemployed being the soup kitchen. Soup kitchens and temporary shelters gave assistance to the unemployed or homeless poor who did not want to endure the workhouse test. Charity was the only option if there was no help from the family. During times of severe weather the guardians were unable to manage the huge number out of work and with no state agencies in the nineteenth century, assistance in times of trade depression, bad weather and unemployment was vital.²⁶ In 1861 there were upwards of 700 men without employment in Cheltenham and, while some were employed repairing footpaths and cleaning roads, others became reliant on charity. The St. Peter’s Relief Fund was recommended ‘as a most desirable mode of affording relief during the trying period of winter. The members of the committee have...instituted careful enquiries as to the wants of the poor of this parish.’ The most urgent and distressing cases were to receive provision tickets and coal and there was a soup kitchen for parishioners opening

²⁴ Derbyshire Record Office (DRO), D19 C/W 1/23; Gloucestershire Archives (GA), G/CH 8a/29; G/CH 8c/14, Minutes of House and Visiting Committee June 1906.

²⁵ King and Tomkins, *Poor in England*, p. 247. Some examples of jobs given to the poor included mending the roads, footpaths and clearing the graveyards.

²⁶ Similar examples were found in Sunderland during the hard winter of 1816 where £2,437 was raised in public subscriptions to provide employment for the poor. This was a considerable sum in those days but as this was an urban union with a greater population than either Belper or Cheltenham a sum like this was needed just to assist a small number of the unemployed population. McCord, *Philanthropy*, pp. 91-2. In Lancashire the poor law inspector was sent to coordinate the relief provided by the guardians with that of charity at the time of the cotton famine in 1862, but many philanthropists, despite this close working with the guardians, still saw some abuses in the delivery of assistance. Brundage, *English Poor Law*, pp. 105-8.

three times a week during the bad weather.²⁷ Bad weather occurred again in 1895 necessitating the setting up of a poor relief fund and in the 6 February 1895 edition of the *Cheltenham Examiner* there was an appeal.

The Committee of the fund have decided to distribute tickets for coal to bona fide working men now thrown out of employment on account of frost...the Committee are greatly in need of funds for this purpose and also to enable them to continue relief afforded by the soup kitchen in New Street, and they now ask for your increased support.²⁸

A further report on the 1895 relief fund was sent to the Local Government Board by the Mayor of the town of Cheltenham. The Mayor advised that a public relief fund had been started by Cheltenham Municipal offices to assist men out of employ as a result of the weather and severe frost in 1895. Cheltenham managed this by placing books of twelve tickets costing one shilling in shops throughout the town, for members of the public to purchase and then give away to the unemployed poor. Each recipient was then entitled to a quart of soup and a quarter of a loaf of bread with a cost to the Relief Committee of 3d. The total number of tickets claimed in the week ending 16th February was 4,232. Most of the churches and chapels in the town also gave relief away, again usually in the form of soup. A further initiative by the relief committee was to distribute tickets entitling the recipient to receive one shilling worth of food or coal. A sub-committee was formed, which included a special enquiry agent and the police, to ensure the genuine needy were the recipients of this charity.²⁹ Once again we see that Cheltenham union had a greater potential to fund initiatives to assist the poor in times of crisis, whether through the church or the Borough Council.

In Belper union at least two occasions of trade depression necessitated the request for contributions from the public to assist those out of employ. In 1855 there was a period of trade depression when the gentlemen of Belper distributed soup weekly to the unemployed.³⁰ The *Derby Mercury* reported again in January 1858 that a subscription had commenced. A commercial crisis had a damaging effect on most trades in the town, and

²⁷ *Cheltenham Examiner*, 13 January 1858 and 16 January 1861.

²⁸ *Cheltenham Examiner*, 6 February 1895.

²⁹ The National Archives (TNA), Public Record Office (PRO), MH 12/3950, 27 February 1895, Report by the Mayor of Cheltenham. The number of tickets distributed averaged 98 a day.

³⁰ *Derby and Chesterfield Reporter*, 16 March 1855. 40 gallons were distributed on 28 February and a further 60 gallons on 7 March 1855.

hundreds were thrown out of work.³¹ The Derbyshire papers did not report so much detail as the Gloucestershire papers, and the impression given was that Derbyshire people were not as generous in their assistance to the poor at times of crisis compared to Gloucestershire people. This can be illustrated with a case described in the *Cheltenham Examiner* in 1886. A hard working mother and her five children survived on a little bread and lard. They had no fire to keep them warm or to cook food. The elder children had no shoes to attend Sunday school until these were bought for them by charity. The widow's total income was 4s and a few loaves per week. Her rent was 2s per week leaving her with little to feed and clothe her children. The widow was a needlewoman by trade but in the previous week was only employed for one day. An appeal by the Rev. Hebblethwaite, the pastor of King Street Chapel in Cheltenham, brought in various sums of money. The widow had pawned blankets and clothes for bread and the pastor paid £3 1s 11d to redeem the blankets and clothes and keep the mother and children from the cold. Pawn shop tickets totalling more than £2 13s were found at the widow's house and funds were required to redeem these tickets. The mother and children were grateful for the acts of kindness but the pastor stressed in his appeal for funds that there were many needy and deserving people whom he needed to assist.³² Again it is the church that instigated the plea for funds to assist the deserving poor and used the newspaper to publicise their cause with a heart-wrenching case.

Charities in Cheltenham dedicated their sermons to good causes. The Rev. Francis Close preached both his morning and evening sermon in April 1847 to aid the funds of the Cheltenham Servants' Home and collected £35 7s 6d on the day. The *Cheltenham Examiner* reported on the sermon and highlighted the two-fold object of affording 'a temporary asylum to servants of good character out of place...[and] to afford the means of registry for good servants.'³³ The congregation of St. Peter's in Belper was composed of middle and lower classes of small shopkeepers and factory hands, and were least able to

³¹ *Derby Mercury*, 13 January 1858.

³² *Cheltenham Examiner*, 17 March 1886.

³³ *Cheltenham Examiner*, 14 April 1847. A further example of sermons for the poor from outside of Cheltenham and Belper was found in Richmond. Richmond union in Surrey was a union of similar size and characteristics as Cheltenham, with little industry and few working-class organisations. A similar situation occurred in Richmond union and was quoted in the parish magazine. The sum of £179 2s 9d had been raised by seven services or lectures for various charities. S. Fowler, *Philanthropy and the Poor Law in Richmond, 1836-1871* (Richmond, 1991), p. 26.

raise funds from so poor a congregation. A report describes the factories and warehouses in Belper union as rarely in full-time work, resulting in shortness of employment, and the poor in a destitute state generally. In June 1877 St. Peters announced that sermons would be preached and collections made for funds for the national schools. The notice stated that 'liberal contributions are earnestly and respectfully solicited in order that these schools may be maintained without having recourse to the rates of the township.'³⁴ These two examples of churches giving sermons for good causes were from two very different church communities. The Rev. Francis Close in Cheltenham was vicar in a parish very different from that of St. Peters in Belper. In this area of Cheltenham there were few poor and the congregation was composed of a higher number of middle-class parishioners and small shop owners, compared to the small shopkeepers and factory hands of St Peter's Church in Belper.

The following examples show how small sums from charity formed part of the 'economy of makeshifts' and assisted the poor to manage their day-to-day living. There were at least twenty charities in Belper Union and at least fifteen charities in Cheltenham Union providing money and other assistance to the poor. For example, in Holbrooke (Belper) the charity of John Lockoe, founded in 1676, was applied 'to the benefit of deserving and necessitous inhabitants of Holbrooke...by providing them with clothes, bedding, fuel, medical or other aid in sickness, food or other articles in kind and in certain other ways.' The Webster Charity founded in 1699 arranged for 'twelve of the aged poor of Holbrooke [to] receive £1 a year from it and four Holbrooke children may have a free education at the Duffield Endowed school.'³⁵ Besides assisting Holbrook poor, Lockoe's charity assisted the poor of Kilbourne, Belper and Horsley with amounts between 10s and 40s yearly. Further sums were distributed annually at the vestry on Christmas Eve, drawn from Henry Smith Charity (£15), Taylor's Charity (19s 2d) and Lockoe Charity (£6 13s). Widows received 2s each and the rest of the poor from 6d to 1s 6d each. This was clearly a case of preferential treatment for widows.³⁶ A different type of charity in the town of Belper was that provided by the Strutts for the mill workers of the town. A Unitarian chapel was built in 1788 by Jedediah Strutt and a Sunday school was provided for the mill

³⁴ DRO, D2609 A/PI 16/1, Volume 1 and 2.

³⁵ *Kelly's Directory of the Counties of Derby, Notts, Leicester and Rutland* (London, 1891), pp. 230-1.

³⁶ DRO, D2609 A/PF 1/7 Charity Commissioner Papers, 27 January 1827, p. 99.

children. The Strutts also provided houses to rent, food from their farms, medical assistance, and education for the mill workers. Strutt built Short Row first and then north and south terraces of Long Row in 1793 and by 1831 Strutt owned one-fifth of the houses in Belper. A cottage hospital in the town, consisting of a row of brick cottages, was maintained by George H. Strutt for the poor and sick.³⁷

In Prestbury parish (Cheltenham), the majority of the charities were regulated under a scheme of 1891 called Prestbury Parochial Charities. Under the 'umbrella' was the Poor's Ground charity regulated by a scheme of 1866 and by 1889 it included 6 acres and 6 cottages producing £38 a year. By 1905 the cottages had been sold for £550. The Church House and Poor's Ground produced income amounting to £25 in 1826 and this was used to repair the almshouses, provide coal to the poor and to support the Sunday School. Various prominent people, including Mary Ellis, gave stock to Prestbury charities which was used to assist poor men and women. The income from these charities totalled £185 in 1888.³⁸

Another area of charitable provision was the voluntary hospitals. Guys Hospital in London was founded in 1721. Most voluntary hospitals became general hospitals in the nineteenth century. The hospitals were run by subscription income and subscribers were able to nominate patients to receive care each year. Indeed, in most cases, patients only gained admittance if they were deemed 'a proper subject of the charity.'³⁹ For most poor the only hospital care was provided by the workhouse infirmary. Dispensaries were more involved in treating the poor than the voluntary hospitals. This was mainly an out-patient system with local doctors paying visits. A voluntary dispensary was recorded in Cheltenham as far back as 1813 and Cheltenham board of guardian minutes record frequent reference to this dispensary. Wood found that some unions provided public dispensaries from the 1850s while other unions supported voluntary dispensaries from the poor rates.⁴⁰ Cheltenham was fortunate in having a dispensary and voluntary hospital, and additionally a dispensary attached to the workhouse. The dispenser at the workhouse was employed by the union. Apart from the cottage hospital provided by the Strutts in Belper there was no

³⁷ A. Barrass, *Belper Looking into the Past* (Belper, 1994), p. 16.

³⁸ C.R. Elrington (ed.), 'Tewkesbury and the northern vale' in C.R. Elrington (ed.), *V.C.H. Gloucestershire*, 8 (1968), pp. 67-81 at www.british-history.ac.uk (19.11.2007).

³⁹ Kidd, *State, Society*, p. 92.

⁴⁰ Wood, *Poverty and the Workhouse*, p. 109.

dispensary to assist the poor of this union. The nearest voluntary hospital for Belper union, apart from the small cottage hospital provided by the mill owners, was in Derby.

Charity Organisation Society

One of the major societies set up in the second half of the nineteenth century was the Charity Organisation Society (COS), founded in 1869 in the large towns of England and Scotland. The role of the COS was highlighted by many historians as playing a major role in London and the provincial cities.⁴¹ The full name for COS was the Society for Organising Charitable Relief and Repressing Mendicity, and Lord Lichfield became its first chairman. It popularised the casework method and founded the social worker profession, but also advocated co-operation between poor law and charity by proposing an adoption of an efficient means of assisting the poor so that alms were less pauperising.⁴² Cheltenham COS was anxious to point out that it co-operated with the local poor law officers and stated its principle:

Charity should prevent or remove *distress*, while the poor law should deal with those *destitute* cases in which, for various reasons, dependence on the rates is unavoidable. The society was not to supplement out-door relief by a dole and charity and poor law must not overlap. Using the 'principle' detailed above the society wanted to distinguish between the cases of temporary distress arisen 'from sickness, accident or occasional loss of work' and the cases of destitution arisen 'from faults of character, such as idleness and drunkenness.'⁴³

Where the unemployed were concerned, the charity was not there to create employment, particularly 'when the demand for it is greater than the supply', and the COS also stressed that chronic distress of the aged was more suited to the poor law. The elderly person who had been thrifty, had a good character and received assistance from relatives, but who still had insufficient means to maintain themselves was the ideal poor person for the COS to assist.⁴⁴ The COS believed that the 'most serious aspect of poverty was the degradation of

⁴¹ Brundage, *English Poor Law*, p. 115. See also R. Humphreys, *Sin, Organized Charity and the Poor Law in Victorian England* (Basingstoke, 1995). Of all the provincial cities with COS, Humphreys choose to study just nine. These were chosen for the good survival of papers detailing payments made.

⁴² Mowat, *COS*, p. 3; O. Hill, *The Work of Volunteers in the Organisation of Charity in Victorian London – Homes of the London Poor* (1883) from www.victorianlondon.org/publications/homesofthepoor-4.htm (23.7.2007).

⁴³ Charity Organisation Society, *Charity Organisation Work in Cheltenham: Appeal for Help* (Cheltenham, 1894), p. 4. Humphreys classed the deserving applicants 'as those who from illness, or failure of work, or other misfortune were temporarily distressed but who allegedly with COS's prompting, could soon become self-sufficient.' Humphreys, *Sin, Organised Charity*, p. 104.

⁴⁴ COS, *Work in Cheltenham*, p. 5.

the character of the poor man or woman...[which] indiscriminate charity only made things worse' and that 'true charity demanded friendship, thought, the sort of help that would restore a man's self respect and his ability to support himself and his family.'⁴⁵ In a discussion in *Philanthropy and the Victorians*, Brian Harrison describes the 'increasing philanthropic efficiency – of a gradual shift from alleviating misery toward preventing it, through organisations like the COS.'⁴⁶ Brundage, on the other hand, described a survey of the COS activities outside London showing that the COS were 'ineffective in the campaign against outdoor relief and...failed to assist the deserving poor', despite use of the case-work method of investigation.⁴⁷ At the time of the Royal Commission on the Poor Law, between 1905 and 1909, six of COS's leading campaigners sat on the Commission. The COS wanted to retain the deterrent character of poor relief with the 1909 Majority Report advocating a central role for voluntary agencies.⁴⁸

The aims of the society included the 'systematic co-operation with poor law authorities, charitable agencies and individuals...[and] careful investigation of applications for charitable aid by competent officers.' Most COS did not achieve this cooperation with other agencies and with the guardians. The COS promoted habits of providence and self reliance and its main aim was to deal with the causes of pauperism.⁴⁹ For the district committee of the COS, the principles of work were:

The working man does not require to be told that temporary sickness is likely now and then to visit his household; that times of slackness will occasionally come; that if he marries early and has a large family, his resources will be taxed to the uttermost; that if he lives long enough, old age will render him more or less incapable of toil...if he is taught that as they arise they will be met by state relief or private charity, he will assuredly make no effort to meet them himself...the road to idleness and drunkenness will be made easy to him.⁵⁰

In Cheltenham, the COS was founded in 1879 to help individuals and families in difficulties. How did the COS in Cheltenham help the poor? In the first year of working, when voluntary contributions to assist the society totalled £325, there was the Penny Bank, nurses for the poor (which led to the District Nurses Association), a labour register and

⁴⁵ Mowat, *Charity Organisation Society*, pp. 2, 18.

⁴⁶ B. Harrison, 'Philanthropy and the Victorians', *Victorian Studies*, 9 (1966), p. 354.

⁴⁷ Brundage, *English Poor Law*, p. 115.

⁴⁸ Brundage, *English Poor Law*, p. 116.

⁴⁹ Mowat, *Charity Organisation Society*, p. 25; Humphreys, pp. 84-7.

⁵⁰ Mowat, *Charity Organisation Society*, p. 42.

there was considerable co-operation with the Town Relief Committee. By 1881 the COS had petitioned the Town Council 'to furnish the poorer parts of the town with a constant supply of water' and useful work was undertaken including the visiting of hospital outdoor patients, the provision of a provident dispensary and the care of friendless boys. In 1882 an appeal was made by the Cheltenham COS for funds, claiming 'that there were many thousands of poor in the town...that the parish allowance should be increased by 6d or 1s.' The poor received half a crown and a loaf of bread as a weekly allowance but when 1s 6d was deducted for rent this was not a large sum to live on.'⁵¹

The Cheltenham COS assessed cases first by enquiries of the relieving officer, employer, landlord or any other person who could verify the character of the family, the earnings were verified, a visit made to the home and to relations, and then the facts collected were presented to the executive committee of the society. One fact the society found was that the spirit of independence was 'not too prevalent among our poor neighbours in Cheltenham.'⁵² In 1893-4 a total of 316 cases were dealt with, of which 149 were old cases and 75 new cases. Of the 316 cases, 72 cases (23%) were not assisted by the society and 20 cases were withdrawn. Humphreys provides similar figures for Leamington COS showing that 16 per cent were not assisted, 61 per cent were assisted and 23 per cent of cases referred. Unfortunately, we are not told how many people this 61 per cent represented. Compared to Southampton COS where only 37 per cent were assisted, Leamington COS was assisting a higher percentage of deserving paupers.⁵³

The COS case papers in Cheltenham detail particular cases. Joseph Homer of 43 Bloomsbury Street in Cheltenham applied for assistance as he was sick. A letter sent to Joseph informed him that the committee was unable to give any help as they considered that he would be better off in the workhouse infirmary. Joseph was asked to report to Dr Pearson at 11am the next day (Saturday) when the doctor considered what could be done

⁵¹ *Cheltenham Examiner*, 22 February 1884. As Cheltenham appealed for funds, Leamington COS also lacked funds thereby cutting the amount of assistance it gave to the deserving poor. Leamington also lacked voluntary visitors to undertake the case studies of claimants. Humphreys, *Sin*, p. 77.

⁵² COS, *Work in Cheltenham*, p. 4. Leamington COS was a society very similar to Cheltenham relying on the service industries for employment. Leamington hoped that, by using the COS principles, they would be able to rid the town of 'scrounging imposters and eliminate wasteful indiscriminate charity while...instilling self-respect in to the squalid lives of 'deserving' working class residents.' Humphreys, *Sin*, pp. 75-6.

⁵³ Humphreys, *Sin, Organised Charity*, table 6.3, p. 115.

for him.⁵⁴ The *COS Appeal for Help* quoted a pension case that it had been able to assist, as an example of the type of elderly poor the society helped.

B. G., a respectable old servant, applied for help, being quite past work, owing to age and illness. She bore an excellent character, and through many years of domestic service she had liberally helped her poorer relations, she had also managed to lay by a sum of £20. The Committee promised her a weekly pension of 9s. A special fund was started for her relief, to which she added her savings, and those who knew and respected her when in service, have subscribed to it, their help having that personal element which is so much better than the mere grant of money from a pension fund.⁵⁵

There were also cases described that the society was not prepared to assist and the following was described as a 'bad case'.

Application was made by a poor-looking woman who said her husband had been out of work for three weeks, and was then ill in bed. They had no food, no fire, and everything was pawned. On inquiry, it was discovered that laziness and drink on the part of both man and wife were the direct cause of their poverty. No relief could have cured their ills, and cases such as they should, in justice to the hard-working poor, be left to the Poor Law, to which we referred them.⁵⁶

One of the COS's other aims was to promote thrift among the working classes. Female lodges connected to the Foresters and Oddfellows, and volunteer collectors helped start a savings club in St Peters area of the town. The society also co-operated closely with the numerous charitable institutions in the town described later in this chapter. Cheltenham has shown again that its middle-class population were anxious to assist the poorer parts of the union. The COS in Cheltenham was to become the Family Welfare Association in 1946. Belper union had no branch of the COS and the nearest was in Derby. No reference was made in Belper papers to the society assisting the poor in the union.

Almshouse Provision in the Unions

Almshouses were built by the wealthy to alleviate the sufferings of the poor and were places where the poor might spend their last years in peace and comparative comfort.⁵⁷ The reality was that almshouses provided a very small number of deserving poor with accommodation and a yearly income, with alms people receiving clothes or coals in addition to a regular pension. They could also target a specific type of person or social

⁵⁴ Gloucestershire Archives (GA), D2465 1/25, Case Worker Papers of Charity Organisation Society, 13 October 1893.

⁵⁵ COS, *Work in Cheltenham*, p. 5.

⁵⁶ COS, *Work in Cheltenham*, p. 6.

⁵⁷ Hickling, *Duffield in Appletree*, p. 51.

group.⁵⁸ For example, in Tynemouth, the Master Mariner Asylum was only for master seamen or their widows and family. Almshouses go back to the medieval monasteries ‘where Christian duty dictated the care of people in need.’⁵⁹ It will be shown in the discussions on the provision of almshouse accommodation in the two unions that the founders of the almshouses came from a variety of backgrounds but none from an aristocratic background. The almshouses themselves were built in a variety of styles. The Matthew Smith Almshouses in Belper (figure 5.1) were built in the style of buildings in the township and lacked the ‘superior’ style of Pate’s Almshouses in Albion Street in Cheltenham (figure 5.2). Pate’s takes its style from the Regency buildings of the town.

Figure 5.1 Matthew Smith Almshouses in Belper



Source: Richard Seal photograph, 2006.

Founders of the almshouses set down the rules as to who was to benefit from their legacy, and often included the requirement to live in a certain parish or be a regular church attender. In Belper union there were various almshouses providing care for the elderly. The Matthew Smith almshouses on the Butts in Belper were erected in 1713 by Matthew Smith and subsequently rebuilt by Gregory Gregory in 1829. Potterells Almshouses in Duffield parish were originally built for Edward Potterell in 1667 and consisted of a house with eight rooms. This was sold around 1856 and two new almshouses were built for four people over the age of 60. The alms people were required to be of good character, and

⁵⁸ Lloyd, ‘Agents in their own concerns’, p. 123.

⁵⁹ A. Hallett, *Almshouses* (Princes Risborough, 2004), p. 6.

attend regularly at church. They received 1s weekly and a gown to the value of 40s annually.⁶⁰ Another set of almshouses were built for aged or impotent people of Duffield or the hamlets, including widows and others of honest behaviour. These were endowed by Anthony Bradshaw. Each alms person was given 6s 8d per annum to buy russet cloth for coats and “AB” was sewn on the breast of the coat. The rules and conditions for these almshouses were preserved and tell us that the person was to:

Observe Sabbath and holy days; no drunkenness or misbehaviour; no lodgers; good and godlie behaviour and quiet communication; keep rooms clean; keep gardens replenish with herbs; eldest to keep key to the register; youngest to clean pews and monuments in church; to live quietly, peaceably and lovingly one with another.⁶¹

In contrast to a plentiful provision of almshouse places in Belper Union (25 places in 1881), only three sets of almshouses have come to light in Cheltenham union. Anne Goodrich gave an almshouse consisting of six rooms with a garden in 1720 for the ‘religious poor’ of Prestbury. By 1891 the conditions for admittance to the home had changed. The almshouse then accommodated three almspeople of good character who had resided in the parish for at least three years, were not in receipt of poor law relief, and who were ‘unable to maintain themselves by their own exertions.’⁶² The charity paid each alms person five shillings per week. The Hay Almshouses were not built until 1899 and were managed by the Mayor of Cheltenham and the Rector. The object of this charity was ‘to provide a home for aged and infirm persons who would otherwise be probably compelled to end their days in the union workhouse.’ The rules stated that either sex could be admitted, single or remarried, were to live in the parish of Cheltenham and ‘on no account were able-bodied to be elected to the Homes.’⁶³ The number of alms people accommodated in this almshouse increased the number of almshouse places in the union in 1901 above that of Belper, to 32 places (table 5.1).

⁶⁰ I am grateful to Clive Leivers of the Family and Community Historical Research Society (FACHRS) for the information on Derbyshire Almshouses. Potterells Almshouses – W. R. Watson, *Illustrated History of Duffield*, (Derby, 1986) and DRO, D1046 A/PF 17. Smith Almshouses, Belper – C. Charlton, *A History of the Matthew Smith Almshouses* (1991). The sum of 1s per week was equivalent to £2 2s per year, a relatively low sum when Alannah Tomkins stated that men in the St. Bartholomew almshouses in Oxford received 9d per week, even in the 1890s, and had to find some other means to supplement their income. A. Tomkins, ‘Almshouse versus workhouse: residential welfare in 18th century Oxford’, *Family and Community History*, 7 (2004), p. 53.

⁶¹ Almshouse Project, FACHRS – Derbyshire Almshouses, researched by Clive Leivers.

⁶² GA, P254 CH/7, paragraph 42, 12 May 1891.

⁶³ GA, CBR C3/3/5/1/2, Deed of Trust, 1 September 1899.

Figure 5.2 Pate's Almshouses, Albion Street, Cheltenham, c1880



Source: S. Blake, *Cheltenham, a Pictorial History* (Chichester, 1996), image 127.

Figure 5.3 Pate's Almshouses, Cheltenham, 2007



Source: Photograph, Christine Seal, 2007.

Alannah Tomkins used a case study of almshouses and workhouses in Oxford to discuss conditions and admittance to these institutions. Her findings showed that almshouse rules applied strict conditions for admittance to an almshouse but pensions paid to alms persons

varied considerably.⁶⁴ The discussion on Pate's almshouses in Cheltenham will confirm Tomkin's discussion on rules and pensions in almshouses.

Pate's almshouses were founded by Richard Pate in 1578 with the charity providing financial assistance for the almshouses and grammar school. The original almshouse was described as having a chapel attached to it for public and private worship of the inmates together with extensive plots of pasture and cultivated lands behind. The almshouses stood on the north side of the High Street and by 1811 were in a poor state of repair. The then owners, Corpus Christi College, sold the building to a local builder who in turn built the 'small and incommodious ones in Albion Street'. The new almshouse (figures 5.2 and 5.3) accommodated six inmates, who were allowed two rooms each and received 8s weekly, and £2 6s 8d annually for livery gowns. The rules stipulated inmates must be aged 60 years and upwards.⁶⁵ W.T. Hunt of Carlton Street in Cheltenham recommended John Webb for a vacancy in April 1874. Mr Hunt described John as 'aged 74, Cheltenham being his native place and baptized in the old parish church...having worked for me for 9 years and upwards and always found him honest and straightforward in all respects...I think him a worthy subject being disabled from work to be admitted to a room in the almshouse.'⁶⁶ Another recommendation came for John stating 'his character is excellent...and my idea is that we should have a man on the premises according to the Deeds, he could look after the garden, which is now very neglected both back and front. Mr. and Mrs. Hayman think most highly of him.'⁶⁷

In regional studies by M. Rose it was shown that in the main, almshouse provision was provided for elderly women rather than men.⁶⁸ This was true in Cheltenham union almshouses where, for each census, women dominate each almshouse, particularly in 1901.

⁶⁴ Tomkins, 'Almshouses versus workhouses', pp. 45-58.

⁶⁵ GA, P78/1 VE 2/3. The sum of 8s per week equates to £20 per year and was similar to the sum paid to alms people in Stone's almshouses in Oxford. Tomkins, 'Almshouses versus workhouses', p. 49.

⁶⁶ GA, P78/1 CH 6/4.

⁶⁷ GA, P78/1 CH 6/4.

⁶⁸ M. Rose, 'Crisis of poor relief in England, 1860-1890' in W. J. Mommsen and W. Mock (eds) *Emergence of the Welfare State in Britain and Germany* (London, 1981), pp. 50-70.

Table 5.1 Number of almshouse places in the two unions, 1851, 1881 and 1901 compared to workhouse places

	Total N. in residence in almshouses	Age over 60 in almshouse			Age over 60 in workhouse		
		M	F	Total	M	F	Total
Belper 1851	19	11	7	18	19	9	28
Chelt. 1851	11	2	7	9	74	41	115
Belper 1881	25	11	7	18	60	15	75
Chelt. 1881	12	4	7	11	104	74	178
Belper 1901	20	11	6	17	95	27	122
Chelt. 1901	32	9	23	32	103	75	178

Source: Census returns for 1851, 1881 and 1901; FACHRS Almshouse Project: I am grateful to Clive Leivers for providing the information on the Belper union almshouses.

In most cases there is a difference between the number in residence in the almshouse and the total number over 60. Often inmates had family with them on census night, and a few residents were under age 60.

In Belper union almshouses, the opposite was true. Here elderly men dominate in each census year (table 5.1). Comparing the composition of the workhouse population with the almshouse population in each union, elderly males outnumber the elderly females in the workhouses. Females were the main recipients of almshouse places in Cheltenham union. Therefore the dominance of male inmates in the almshouses of Belper union shows that this union did not match to Rose's findings.

Schools and Education in the two Unions

Education was not compulsory until the 1870 Education Act but schooling was provided by charities, Sunday Schools or the factories. The opportunities for all children to attend school in the period before the 1870 Education Act, whether poor or an orphan, varied considerably between the unions. What facilities were provided in Cheltenham and Belper union for education of the children? The discussion on schooling and education for the poor will show that there were a number of schools available throughout the nineteenth century, and, apart from a few charitable places, most required parents to make a contribution to school fees. From 1833 it was expected that all children would receive two hours of education a day but it wasn't until the 1870 Education Act that Board Schools were financed by the rates but a fee was still to be paid by the parents. From 1891 schooling was free for all children. Throughout the nineteenth century, there were many

national and British schools established by subscription. From 1870 the Education Act took over the running of these schools.

The National Society of the Church of England established national schools in 1811 offering education for the poor. A national school was erected in 1851 in Wirksworth (Belper) and accommodated 224 boys and girls and 115 infants. The British School in Wirksworth was held in the Congregational Church Sunday School room for 300 children and the 150 infants were taught in the Baptist Sunday School accommodation. A new school for the infants was not erected until 1895.⁶⁹ Other forms of schooling included Sunday schools, and by 1831 Sunday schools were attended by approximately 1.25 million children, providing them with basic literary education and religious instruction.⁷⁰ The earliest school in Belper was the Sunday School founded by the Strutts in 1785. A day school was built in 1807 and by 1818 a new school housed 500 in Belper as well as one at Milford for 400 children.⁷¹

Ragged schools provided education to the poor or 'ragged' children, and this was claimed by John Pounds, a Portsmouth shoemaker in 1818 or the Rev. Dr. Thomas Guthrie of Edinburgh, to be 'the first truly free school'. It was also claimed that the term 'Ragged School' was used for the first time in 1840 by the London Mission for 'children raggedly clothed', but Cheltenham opened a ragged school shortly after London in 1849. By 1851, 150 children were registered. The school was promoted by Mrs Guinness for boys aged seven years and upwards and for girls of all ages.⁷²

Schooling in Crich (Belper) goes back to the early nineteenth century where a Select Committee on Education for the Poor, in 1818, found that Crich parish had three day schools for boys and three for girls accommodating a total of 140-160 children, and four Dame schools of 20-30 in each. Sylvia Taylor found that the poor in Crich did not have the financial means to attend the school but were eager for education. A parochial school was erected in 1848, paid for by public subscriptions of £600 and a grant of £250 from the government. An infant class was added in 1855. The full grant for the parochial school

⁶⁹ *Kelly Directory of Derbyshire* (London, 1895), p. 379.

⁷⁰ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sunday_School (27.3.2009).

⁷¹ Belper Historical Society, *Belper, a Study of its History based on Visual Evidence* (Belper, 1981), p.18.

⁷² R. Beamish, 'Statistical notice of the town and parish of Cheltenham', *Journal of the Statistical Society of London*, 20 (1857), p. 411; http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ragged_schools (27.3.2009).

was dependent on a satisfactory report of the school's inspector and in 1864 the school lost two-tenths of its grant because 'it was found wanting'.⁷³

Cheltenham Old Charity School was founded around 1683 by a bequest from George Townsend, to teach poor children to read and write. The School was re-established in 1713 by public subscription and money from Lady Capel. From 1729, the school for 30 boys was housed in a room over the north porch of St Mary's Church. It became the National school in 1847 and a new school was built in Devonshire Street in Cheltenham. The boys wore long coats, yellow stockings and yellow caps and bands.⁷⁴ Richard Beamish found in 1857 that Cheltenham Old Charity School was abused, mismanaged and neglected, but this happened in endowed schools throughout the country. The Rev. Richardson turned the school around and in 1847 the school accommodated 150 boys aged up to thirteen years.⁷⁵ Between 1855 and 1863 the number on the school register varied between 91 and 155. The percentage of those children on the register who attended school varied between 73 per cent (1857) and 88 per cent in 1863.⁷⁶

The School Board were greatly concerned over funding, particularly:

to the effect that the amount of the endowment arising from Lady Capel's estate shall be deducted from any grant that the school may be entitled to claim from government. Under these circumstances the committee feel it necessary to recommend the discontinuance in future of the clothing hitherto awarded at Christmas to about 25 of the most deserving boys.

The report concluded that :

While the committee would desire to see for the divine blessing upon their labours, they currently look to their fellow parishioners for increased pecuniary aid and...additional subscriptions to enable them satisfactorily to meet the liabilities necessarily incurred in carrying on this school which has been so long identified with the district of the parish generally over the whole of which its benefits are distributed.⁷⁷

What other facilities were available to educate the children? Before the founding of the School of Industry for Girls in Cheltenham, schooling for the girls was only available in Sunday schools. Queen Charlotte was the patron of the Female Orphan Asylum and School of Industry, as it became known. It was established in 1806 by Mrs Williams, a

⁷³ S. Taylor, *Education in Crich – a brief history* in <http://freepages.genealogy.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~dlhdby> (29.8.2008).

⁷⁴ G. Hart, *A History of Cheltenham* (Leicester, 1965), p. 166.

⁷⁵ Beamish, *Statistical Notice*, p. 411.

⁷⁶ GA, P78/1 SC 1/5/1 (1853-1863), Cheltenham Old Charity School Report.

⁷⁷ GA, P78/1 SC1/5/1, Report of Cheltenham Old Charity School or Boys National School, 1863.

lady employed by Queen Charlotte to dispense many of her charities. It was moved to Winchcombe Street in 1818, and a new building was erected in 1834

to instil into the orphans the principles of religion and morality...to make them good household servants...and to teach them that the lowest stations in life may be rendered respectable by good principles and honesty.⁷⁸

The building was to be renamed 'Charlotte House'. The girls were aged between eight and fifteen, and were taught the skills needed by 'under servants' including how to sew and make up clothes. The clothes were sold to raise money for the asylum. The school was 'to reform, instruct and stimulate the industry of the poor and also to give them habits of cleanliness, order and economy.'⁷⁹ On expiry of their six years of education the girls were still employed working in the school and paid until work as a servant was found for them. The school hoped that this approach would stop girls falling into vice and enable them to earn an honest livelihood. Poor girls had the advantage of purchasing ready-made clothes at a quarter of their price if they were recommended by a subscriber to the school, or two respectable inhabitants of Cheltenham. The expenses of running the home were considerable, particularly the heavy cost of rents for Cheltenham houses. The asylum accommodated 38 children and, in 1881, there were girls resident with an age range from seven to eighteen, looked after by three staff.⁸⁰ Any subscriber of a guinea or more had a right to send a child to the school but that child must be able to read. The board of guardians in Cheltenham did not make any reference in the board minutes to sending girls to the school so it must be assumed that girls were sent to the home by wealthy people in the union or from other unions.

⁷⁸ Hart, *History of Cheltenham*, p. 207.

⁷⁹ *Cheltenham Chronicle*, 25 May 1809.

⁸⁰ GA, 1881 census RG11/2570; Cheltenham Museum and Art Gallery: Charities in Cheltenham.

Figure 5.4 Female Orphan Asylum and School of Industry, Winchcombe Street, Cheltenham



Source: S. Blake, *Cheltenham, a Pictorial History* (Chichester, 1996), image 130.

In 1910, at the annual meeting of subscribers to the Orphan Asylum, the report showed that the health of the girls was good, with three girls leaving the asylum during the year to go into domestic service, but the full number of 30 girls had been kept up. Subscriptions totalled £117 7s 7d but this was a falling off from previous years.⁸¹ Despite falling income the orphanage remained in existence until 1958. There was no wealthy visitor or resident to provide the income to support an asylum in Belper.

Opened in 1867, the Boys Orphan Asylum in Cheltenham accommodated fifteen boys supervised by three staff, and in 1881 the ages of the boys ranged from 8 to 14. The places of birth of the boys were widespread, from Weston super Mere to Bideford in Devon, Newmarket, Ebbw Vale and Radnorshire.⁸² The boys' asylum continued in use until 1956 but few records survive to tell of the charitable work the asylum undertook. No records of this type of home were found anywhere in Belper union.

⁸¹ *Cheltenham Examiner*, 3 February 1910.

⁸² GA, 1881 census RG11/2571.

Figure 5.5 Boys Orphan Asylum, Cheltenham



Source: S. Blake, *Cheltenham, a Pictorial History* (Chichester, 1996), Image 131.

Were there further charities available to assist the children of Belper and Cheltenham unions? Once again Cheltenham residents rose to the occasion and assisted the poor in the union. The Ladies Working Party in Cheltenham was set up around 1905 under the education committee of the council. Its main duties were to distribute clothes among the poorest of the poor children attending the elementary schools but ‘for which gifts a considerable proportion of the recipients would either have been prevented from attending school or would have attended in great discomfort.’ Despite the mild winter of 1909 the demand was still great and around five hundred garments were given away. At this time the ladies were seeking money as well as donations of clothes. The newspaper appeal stressed that clothing was not given to the poor without the strict investigation by attendance officers.⁸³

George Townsend of Cheltenham rose from the humblest of walks of life to become a Councillor in the Court of Charles II. He owned three valuable estates in Cheltenham and bequeathed all of them to charity. His education was at Pates Grammar

⁸³ *Cheltenham Examiner*, 24 April 1910.

School in the town and from experience he knew that ‘amongst the humbler classes there existed those who possessed talents, but had not the means to cultivate them, to the advantage of themselves or society at large.’ The estate at Cold Aston (12 miles outside of the town and just outside the union boundary) was worth £240 pa in 1863.⁸⁴ From that estate he bequeathed yearly support for four scholars to attend Pembroke College in Oxford, chosen from the endowed grammar schools in Cheltenham, Gloucester, Winchcombe and Campden, and a further four chosen by the Trustees. The scholarship was worth £50. Apprenticeship for poor boys was another means to support the poor. Again, George Townsend left a portion of the annual proceeds of his estate at Wormington ‘for the binding and putting forth of a poor boy, able to read, to be an apprentice.’ The boy was to be settled in Cheltenham and preference was given to a boy educated at the Old Charity School in the town.⁸⁵

Self Help and the Friendly Societies

Morality appeared regularly in poor law discussion and the nineteenth century commentators wanted the population to become self-reliant, thrifty, responsible for their own future and, hopefully, to join friendly societies to support their own families. In the late eighteenth century Frederick Eden thought friendly societies and other forms of self-help should be encouraged.⁸⁶ Anthony Brundage stated that friendly societies were ‘based on the principle of self-help within a cooperative framework rather than the dispersing of charity.’⁸⁷ The Victorian period was a time when voluntary bodies, including the friendly societies, the cooperative societies, burial clubs, and savings banks allowed the working class to help themselves. In exchange for a subscription or regular payment the societies provided support to the working class in a time of crisis. For the poorest section of the labour force the fees were too high and therefore it was the slightly better off working class who could afford the fees.

The largest working-class organization was the friendly societies, with 5.6 million members in the country. Friendly societies originated in the seventeenth century but became better known in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century. The social

⁸⁴ J. Goding, *Norman's History of Cheltenham* (London, 1863), p. 412.

⁸⁵ Goding, *History of Cheltenham*, p. 417.

⁸⁶ Snell, *Belonging*, p. 276; Brundage, *English Poor Law*, p. 32.

⁸⁷ Brundage, *English Poor Law*, p. 116-7.

structure of the societies varied greatly and depended on the type of employment in the area. The Registrar General returns on Friendly Societies in 1872 found that only half the societies completed and returned their forms. From these returns historians calculated that one in four of the population were paying into a society, with the number paying into a society varying greatly, depending on the type of employment and incomes available in the parishes.⁸⁸ Lancashire societies reported 17 per cent of the population contributing in 1831, Midland counties 10 per cent of the population, but only 3 per cent or less in the agricultural counties of Berkshire, Herefordshire, Sussex and Westmorland. The Manchester Unity of Oddfellows had around 710,000 members in 1899 and their view was that 'self help was morally and socially preferable to redistributive provision implemented by the state.'⁸⁹ Assistance was provided by the societies through insuring against loss of earnings, such as sickness, accidents at work and death.⁹⁰ Regular subscriptions were required from the member and when assistance was required this was paid in proportion to the subscription paid in. In some parts of the country, notably the industrial areas of South Wales and the northern counties of England, the benefit societies were an essential service for the communities and included sick and doctor's funds. They could limit the burden to the rates and preserved 'the self-respect of the workman, who, but for these provisions, would in cases of severe sickness or accident be reduced to the humiliating necessity of obtaining relief from the parish.'⁹¹ Benefits were only paid to the member and not to the family.

Were there friendly societies in Belper and Cheltenham unions? Belper, as an industrial union, had a greater number of Friendly Societies than Cheltenham. In Wirksworth (Belper), at the time of Frederick Eden's report (1797), there were eight friendly societies with an average of 85 members.⁹² In Crich, also part of Belper Union, the first friendly society for the benefit of the sick and infirm members was set up in 1794.

⁸⁸ Kidd, *State, Society*, p. 122.

⁸⁹ P. Thane, 'The working class and state welfare in Britain, 1880-1914', *The Historical Journal*, 27 (1984), pp. 878-9.

⁹⁰ Wood, *Poverty and the Workhouse*, pp. 42-3.

⁹¹ T. Thomas, *Poor Relief in Merthyr Tydfil Union in Victorian Times* (Glamorgan, 1992), pp. 34-5. For example, the board of guardians was not concerned about a strike in 1857 in Merthyr as it appeared that most of the strikers survived through charity, friendly society contributions or credit from shopkeepers. Thomas, *Poor Relief*, p. 117.

⁹² F. Eden, *The State of the Poor: a History of the Labouring Classes in England* (1797), in Eighteenth Century Collections Online (ECCO), (7.3.2008), p. 131.

In Belper there was the church sick and funeral society which required persons who wanted to be admitted as members to attend on a Saturday at eight o'clock in the evening. The rules gave examples of different contributions that could be made and the benefits available. For example, for 1½d per week and 10d per year, sickness was paid at 1s 6d per week with full pay for 13 weeks, half pay for a further 13 weeks and third pay for 26 weeks. Medical attendance and £1 at death was also paid. For increased payments by members of 3d per week, 6s per week was paid for sickness, reducing as previously described over time and £2 10s paid at death.⁹³ Charles Booth indicated in his report on old age and charity that 'with the exception of the Rechabites and Boiler Makers Association, none of the other benefit clubs available in the union [Belper] provided for old age.'⁹⁴ By 1857 there were many friendly and Odd Fellows' societies in Belper helping to keep the poor rate down.⁹⁵

Only one friendly society was found in Cheltenham union. Prestbury had a friendly society established in 1830. In a return of sickness and mortality for five years from 1831-35 there were 90 people listed of various occupations including labourer, bricklayer, stone mason, carpenter, cooper, gardener, painter, cordwainer, farmer, smith and plasterer. Details of payments made, the date members joined the society, and date of birth were recorded. Little was paid out by the society indicating that the men were healthy, and suffered little unemployment or sickness.⁹⁶

The Cheltenham Loan Fund Society was very different to the friendly society and was established in 1834. Its objective was 'to place the honest and industrious labourer or mechanic in a situation to support himself, or to extricate him from difficulties in which, by some calamity, he may be involved.' This society undertook the ideals of the poor law, to help the poor to help themselves rather than calling on poor relief in difficult times. One of the rules ensured that no person in receipt of parochial aid was assisted with a loan from this fund.⁹⁷ The rules of the society date back to the early days of the union and 1836 when the society was supported by subscriptions, donations or loans. Again the wealthy of Cheltenham were the instigators of this loan scheme. The sums lent were not less than £1

⁹³ DRO, D2609A/PI 16/1, Vol. 2.

⁹⁴ Booth, *Aged Poor*, p. 191.

⁹⁵ *Directory of Derbyshire* (1857) on www.belper-research.com/places/belper/white1857.html (7.10.2004).

⁹⁶ GA, Q/RSf1, January 1831 to December 1835.

⁹⁷ *Cheltenham Chronicle*, 29 January 1835.

or more than £15, with interest of 5 per cent per annum deducted from every loan at the time of making. Weekly repayments were paid at the rate of 1s in the pound and each applicant for a loan provided a recommendation from a respectable person, stating they were of good character and sober habits. A surety from a resident householder of Cheltenham parish was to be provided.⁹⁸ No similar loan scheme was available in Belper union.

Conclusion

The main question raised at the beginning of the chapter was whether the management and availability of charity in these two unions were similar or very different. There was greater charitable provision in Cheltenham than Belper, but charities were only able to assist a small number of poor and for the remainder of the population the only solution to poverty was to enter the workhouse. The availability of charity and the number of charitable institutions show Cheltenham to be a prosperous union. Booth's description of charity for the aged in each union showed that Cheltenham was a more prosperous union in terms of the number of charities, with greater assistance to its aged poor. Belper as an industrial union benefitted from the philanthropy of its mill owners, mainly the Strutt family, who provided housing, schools and shops for their mill workers. By the 1834 Poor Law Amendment Act the industrialists and traders in Belper union were contributing to charity, in addition to landed society. Charity was vital in times of high unemployment or bad weather, and churches and relief committees in both unions established soup kitchens at various times of crisis. The churches in Cheltenham played a greater role in raising awareness and funds for the poor. Cheltenham and Belper were not unique in this approach to helping the temporary poor and examples were found around the country.

Cheltenham and Belper had few almshouse places and were not typical of what was available elsewhere. In 1881, twelve places in Cheltenham union and 25 places in Belper union were available in the almshouses, accommodating mostly the over-60s. Historians have found that it tended to be the over-60 female accommodated in the almshouse and the over-60 male in the workhouse. This was certainly true in the workhouse but Belper differed from historians' findings, accommodating a higher number of male aged over-60

⁹⁸ GA, Q/RSf1, Rules of the Cheltenham Loan Fund Society, 1836.

in its almshouses.⁹⁹ The rules and applications for places provided a useful insight into what happened in homes and almshouses and the type of person assisted. The poor, who had received assistance through poor relief, were precluded from applying for an almshouse place or for a loan.

Of the two unions, only Cheltenham had a branch of the COS. Most COS branches were found in an urban area and often with a middle-class population, such as was found in Cheltenham. Using case officers the society investigated the circumstances of the applicant for relief. The thrifty and those of good character who sought relief received assistance from the COS, and the examples of cases quoted in this chapter illustrate the way the society handled its applications and the assistance that was given. Only Cheltenham had a loan fund society providing loans to those of good character. Opportunities to join friendly societies were greater in Belper than Cheltenham.

Schooling was another area for charitable assistance before the 1870 Education Act. The discussion on educational provision in the two unions showed the various types of schooling available to all children. The charity school in Cheltenham only assisted a few boys but in Belper the Strutt family, who were the main industrialists in the union, provided schooling for the children from the beginning of the nineteenth century. Cheltenham had additional provision for boys and girls in orphan homes, which was not available to the poor in Belper. Good records survive for these institutions as well as regular reports in the newspapers, giving an insight into the lives of the orphans while they were in the homes and of those who subscribed from the local population to fund the running of the societies.

Chapter 6 continues the discussion on workhouse and union population and also considers the management of children and the aged.

⁹⁹ Take for example the adjoining union to Cheltenham, Tewkesbury, which had five sets of almshouses in the town alone plus two further sets outside of the town. Almshouse places for Tewkesbury totalled 57 places in 1881; GA, RG11/2578.

Chapter 6

Provision for the Poor between 1885 and the First World War

*'I found the old folks in the workhouse sitting on backless forms, or benches. They had no privacy, no possessions, not even a locker. After I took office I gave the old people comfortable Windsor chairs to sit in, and in a number of ways we managed to make their existence most endurable.'*¹

From 1885 there was still to be found in most unions the mixed workhouse, some unions had separate infirmaries, and separate homes for the children starting to appear in the late 1880s.² Cheltenham workhouse children moved into a separate home, The Elms, in 1882 and Belper children into the cottages homes in 1909. The aim of this chapter is to consider how the poor were given assistance from the mid-1880s to the First World War. Discussion will centre on the workhouse and union population generally and specifically on the aged paupers and children. There will also be a look at changes to legislation over the period and how this impacted on the two unions. Historians working on this period have concentrated on the break-up of the poor law, the various Acts of Parliament, and the Royal Commission investigations rather than on the history of the workhouse and its population.³ This was a time of considerable discussion as to how the poor were managed and on changes to both relief and benefits. Pat Thane's work on the aged prompted many discussions as to how the aged were looked after post 1885.⁴ The chapter will also draw on the work of Charles Booth on the aged and his detailed discussions of the aged in each parish, which enabled a comparison of the two unions, using information not found in the board of guardian minutes. Booth argues that the aged poor in the countryside (rural and semi-rural) were much better off than those in an urban environment, despite the higher

¹ Emmeline Pankhurst describing her experiences as a poor law guardian (elected 1894) in her autobiography, *My Own Story*, www.spartacus.schoolnet.co.uk/Lpoor1834.htm (9.1.2006).

² M.A. Crowther, 'The later years of the workhouse, 1890-1929' in P. Thane, *The Origins of British Social Policy* (London, 1978), pp. 36-7.

³ See A. Brundage, *The English Poor Laws, 1700-1930* (Basingstoke, 2002); P. Thane, 'The working class and state welfare in Britain, 1880-1914', *The Historical Journal*, 27 (1984), pp. 877-900; M.A. Crowther, *The Workhouse System, 1834-1929: the history of an English Social Institution* (London, 1981).

⁴ P. Thane, *Ageing and the Economy: Historical Issues* (London, 1984).

wages paid in the towns.⁵ This argument is considered further in the discussion of the elderly and the increasing elderly population in the workhouses. The main sources used in the discussion that follows include the correspondence files of the Local Government Board (LGB), newspapers and some fruitful correspondence files from Belper union. There was no comparable source in Cheltenham so comparisons with Belper have relied on newspaper reports.

Changes to the Provision of Relief during this Period

Under the 'less eligibility' rule a pauper was less eligible than the lowest type of labourer, a rule that had applied in theory since 1834. In 1907 this rule was formally changed and only applied to the vagrant class. Less eligibility until 1905 had also meant electoral disqualification and paupers receiving relief became a charge on relatives. The Chamberlain Circular of 1886 allowed guardians in areas of depression to 'set up employment schemes funded from the rates.' Claimants for out-door relief were to work on community schemes but were paid at a lower rate than local wage levels. Paupers could apply for supplementary relief and avoid the workhouse but the 'sting in the tail' was that the LGB would not fund this additional expenditure and instead the union borrowed money until conditions improved.⁶ These employment schemes will be discussed later.

An order in January 1893 empowered the guardians to appoint a workhouse visiting committee and a ladies visiting committee. The ladies were to visit and examine the parts of the workhouse occupied by females and children and report any matters requiring attention to the guardians. Belper appointed its ladies' committee in 1893, in addition to its workhouse visiting committee, which comprised guardians. The ladies' committee in Belper consisted of up to 42 ladies elected annually by their parish, and some of the ladies appointed included The Mother Superior of Belper Convent, the Hon. Mrs Curzon and Hon. Blanche Curzon of Kedleston Hall and Miss Arkwright of Wirksworth.⁷ No reference was found to a visiting ladies' committee in Cheltenham.

⁵ C. Booth, *Pauperism, a Picture and Endowment of Old Age* (London, 1892); C. Booth, *The Aged Poor in England and Wales* (London, 1894).

⁶ E.T. Hurren, *Protesting about Pauperism: Poverty, Politics and Poor Relief in late Victorian England, 1870-1900* (Woodbridge, 2007), pp. 143-4.

⁷ Derbyshire Record Office (DRO), D19 C/W 1/21 and 22, 18 March 1893 and 25 April 1896.

A circular was issued in January 1895 relating to the character of workhouse inmates. It pointed out that workhouses were primarily provided for relief of the able-bodied and admittance was based on a deterrent factor. However, and as will be argued later, workhouses in the late nineteenth century were dominated by the aged and infirm and this 'led to a change in the spirit of the administration.'⁸ A report of the house committee in Cheltenham in 1896 recommended reclassification of inmates according to their character and three classes of classification were defined. All paupers were carefully interviewed and 84 paupers were classed as No I, "as of God" (excellent character), 29 to No II, 'as of fair' (good character) and 61 to class III 'as of bad or indifferent character.' Age was not taken into account and accommodation was re-arranged according to the committee's decision.⁹

The Poor Law Act of 1899 allowed the guardians to detain a pauper for one week if they considered the pauper discharged themselves frequently without good reason.¹⁰ From 1907 the unemployed able-bodied pauper was managed under the Unemployed Workman Act, which provided for a distress committee to be set up. This was composed of local council and board of guardian members with powers to make special provision for the unemployed through emigration, migration, labour exchanges and farm colonies.¹¹

The Pensions Act was introduced in 1908 providing a pension of five shillings per week for men and women over seventy years of age, but there were income limits. It became law in January 1909 but those who had received poor relief, except for medical needs, were disqualified from receiving a pension for two years.¹² Belper was asked to report on the number of 70 year olds in receipt of relief on the 1 July 1910. There were 97 in the workhouse and 267 on out-relief, of which 28 had received relief that would not disqualify them for an old age pension.¹³ A circular of December 1910 drew the attention of the guardians to the removal, from 1 January 1911, of the disqualification for old age pensions arising from the receipt of poor relief.

⁸ DRO, D19 C/W 6/9, Circular, 29 January 1895.

⁹ Gloucestershire Archives (GA), G/CH 8a/30, 3 December 1896.

¹⁰ D. Englander, *Poverty and Poor Law Reform in Nineteenth Century Britain, 1834-1914: from Chadwick to Booth* (Harlow, 1998), p. 42.

¹¹ S. and B. Webb, *English Poor Law Policy* (London, 1910), p. 169; *34th and 35th Annual Report of Local Government Board* (1905 and 1906).

¹² Brundage, *The English Poor Laws*, p. 142.

¹³ DRO, D19 C/W 6/23, 1 July 1910.

The National Insurance Act was introduced in 1911 and required both workers and employers, together with the state, to make contributions. The contributions provided a flat rate benefit when a worker was sick, an invalid or unemployed. A major drawback to the Act was that dependants of the worker, together with the self-employed and casually employed, received no assistance, except for maternity benefit, which was paid to the wife. Women, unless in a long-term manufacturing job, were excluded from the Act, a case of 'those who earned and contributed received, others did not.'¹⁴ From 1913 the workhouse became known as the 'poor law institution'.

Majority and Minority Reports

The Royal Commission on the Poor Law was set up in 1905 and sat between 1905 and 1909 investigating the provision and administration of poor law and relief. Of the twenty members sitting on the Commission, six members were from the Charity Organisation Society. The Commission visited 200 unions and 400 institutions taking many witness statements. Did Cheltenham and Belper feed their board's observations into the investigation? In 1906 Belper union expressed their opinion to the Commission on the administration of the poor law. The guardians cited 'the causes of pauperism and vagrancy [as]...the continued depletion of our rural population through migration to our crowded cities or emigration abroad.' For Belper guardians there were no cases of the union paying for emigration of its paupers, unlike Cheltenham who regularly contributed to emigration of the poor to Canada. On the subject of vagrancy, Belper found the 'casual ward treatment is...neither to deter nor reclaim but rather to harden and brutalize.' On classification of inmates the suggestion was that homes should be found outside of the workhouse for the 'honest and deserving poor.' The partially able-bodied men in the workhouse with a slight physical disability were causing many problems in Belper with the guardians unable to find suitable remunerative work. No solution was offered by Belper to this problem.¹⁵ In 1907 the Cheltenham board also made representations to the Commission. This was a lengthy document, but some of the main points the union made were that the

¹⁴ L. Hollen Lees, *The Solidarities of Strangers: the English Poor Laws and the People, 1700-1948* (Cambridge, 1998), p. 327.

¹⁵ DRO, D19 C/W 6/20.

Guardians should be given larger powers with regard to the admission, detention, work and isolation of ins and outs and idle able-bodied persons...the workhouse had ceased to be deterrent to certain classes of the community. The standard of comfort of poor law institutions has steadily risen in recent years and the workhouse test is consequently weakened as the condition of the pauper is now gradually being made more eligible than that of the independent poor...greater power should be given to board of guardians for the recovery of relief from relatives.¹⁶

Dr Downes, a member of the Commission and a senior medical officer, attached a memorandum to the Report of the Commission stating that he viewed

with grave misgiving the wholesale and imminent disruption of existing agencies and the transference of work on relief to a complicated untried and I venture to think, unworkable system of machinery with manifold and inherent dangers...a proposal to sweep away all the directly elected representation in this great field of local government is so contrary to the national instinct and to our established principles and so fraught with contingent dangers as to demand the most rigid proof of the necessity. The sufficiency of such proof, either in the Majority or in the Minority Report may...be challenged and it is improbable that the picture drawn in the latter Report will be generally recognised as an accurate or an impartial presentment of the typical administration of the present day.¹⁷

After three years of investigation the commissioners failed to reach a majority decision and two reports were published.¹⁸ In the summary of the report, printed in *The Times*, it stated that:

There has been an immense and ever growing expenditure upon workhouses, poor law infirmaries, poor law schools...some 650 boards of guardians have given time and labour to their management, many of them...with admirable disinterestedness; and yet, though the mass of pauperism grows and grows, the name of 'the house' is a name of terror to the decent poor.¹⁹

Both reports were agreed that the 'old idea of the poor law as a deterrent system should be abandoned because it completely fails either to prevent by anticipation or to cure by treatment the breakdown of the wage-earning power of the individual and the family.' Following the reports, relief was to be known as public assistance, and independence and self-maintenance through voluntary charity was to be encouraged.²⁰

¹⁶ *Cheltenham Examiner*, February 1907.

¹⁷ *Cheltenham Examiner*, 18 February 1909, Memo by Dr Downes, Senior Medical Officer for Poor Law, and member of the Commission.

¹⁸ GA, G/CH 8c/14, 11 February 1907; K. Morrison, *The Workhouse: a Study of Poor-law Buildings in England* (London, 1999), p. 123.

¹⁹ DRO, D9 C/W 10/1, reprint from *The Times* of the Summary of Report, Royal Commission on Poor Law (1905-6).

²⁰ *Cheltenham Examiner*, 18 February 1909, Notes of the Week.

The Majority Report, written by Helen Bosanquet and William Smart, was strongly associated with the Charity Organisation Society (COS) and ‘seen as archetypal expression of nineteenth-century individualism.’ All agreed that the poor law should be reformed and not abolished, but ‘to widen, strengthen and humanise the poor law, so as to make it respond to a demand for a more considerate, elastic, and so far as possible, curative treatment of the able-bodied.’²¹ They referred back to the Goschen Minute of 1869 and the co-operation between the guardians and voluntary agencies and this point was to be enforced. The aim was ‘to provide help that was preventive, curative and restorative’. This was achieved through public assistance committees providing financial assistance, and for more complex social problems, through casework by the voluntary sector.²² The main recommendation was for the abolition of guardians, the transferring of all poor administration to county councils or county borough councils and the providing of unemployment and invalidity insurance.²³ The majority report was criticised for ignoring the ‘independence of character’ and the root of destitution which was a failure of will and character. It also argued that the family was breaking-up because preventative help was not available.²⁴

The Minority Report was based on the social theories of Sidney and Beatrice Webb who agreed that the poor law should be reformed and ‘argued for the creation of a register of public assistance, total break up of the 1834 model, and the establishment of a pluralistic range of committees dealing separately with different categories of destitution.’ It was signed by five people including Charles Booth. The report advocated that the able-bodied should be treated by a Ministry of Labour, and unemployment was seen as a ‘result of events totally beyond the control of the individual [and]...should not be treated as merely another aspect of poverty.’²⁵ The report also recommended that ‘the maintenance of the aged should be a public charge upon the whole community and should include a general scheme of pensions.’²⁶

²¹ Webb, *Policy*, p. 275.

²² A.W. Vincent, ‘The poor law reports of 1909 and the social theory of the Charity Organization Society’, *Victorian Studies*, 27 (1984), pp. 343, 349-51.

²³ C.L. Mowat, *The Charity Organisation Society, 1869-1913: its Ideas and Work*, (London, 1961), pp. 161-2.

²⁴ Vincent, ‘The poor law reports’, p. 348.

²⁵ Vincent, ‘The poor law reports’, p. 347.

²⁶ Mowat, *COS*, p. 141.

Apart from the submissions by the guardians at the beginning of the investigation into the 1834 act, no further comments on the commission reports were made by Belper or Cheltenham board of guardians or by the local newspapers. From Cheltenham and Belper's view it seems to be an investigation that had no outcome other than a change of name for the workhouse.

Belper and Cheltenham in the 1890s and 1900s

What was happening nationally and in Cheltenham and Belper, to social and economic conditions at this time? Rental incomes fell nationally by 26% between 1879 and 1895 and much arable land was converted to grass. As a result of the loss of arable land, the agricultural labour force in England and Wales fell by 21% between 1871 and 1911.²⁷ Was this seen in Belper and Cheltenham? In the workhouse in Belper and Cheltenham the percentage of paupers whose occupation was described as employed in agriculture remained the same in Belper, but in Cheltenham fell from 11.7% of the workhouse population in 1881 to 4.6 per cent of the workhouse population in 1901.²⁸ Despite this fall in the labour force the weekly wages of an agricultural labourer in England and Wales rose from 12s in 1860 to 17s in 1890.²⁹ At times of crisis the working population required more out-door relief but as most boards of guardians were dominated by farmers, their concern was to cut relief expenditure at a time of falling incomes. In 1894 just over half of the Belper board were farmers, while in Cheltenham only 29 per cent of the guardians were farmers. Cheltenham board was dominated by small traders, gentlemen and gentlewomen.³⁰

Table 6.1 Population of Cheltenham and Belper unions, 1891 to 1911

Year	Cheltenham Union	Percentage Increase	Belper Union	Percentage Increase	England and Wales	Percentage Increase
1891	54,786	-	61,045	-	29,002,525	-
1901	57,882	5.6%	66,809	9.4%	32,527,843	12.1%
1911	58,691	1.4%	72,612	8.7%	36,070,492	10.9%

Source: Census Populations Tables, 1891 to 1911.

²⁷ Hurren, *Protesting about Pauperism*, p. 138.

²⁸ RG12/2048, 2742; RG13/2461, 3228.

²⁹ Hurren, *Protesting about Pauperism*, pp. 137-8.

³⁰ DRO, D19 C/W 1/18, April election of guardians in Belper, 1884; GA, G/CH 8a/26, April election of guardians in Cheltenham, 1892.

The population of Belper union increased at a far greater rate between 1891 and 1911 than in Cheltenham (table 6.1). The increase in the population in Cheltenham was only small and mainly it was a change in composition of the population, with greater numbers of elderly moving to the town. There were also some boundary changes and extensions to the town in 1893. Belper's increase in population was nearer to the national population increase. One further difference between the two unions was that the rateable value for Cheltenham was considerably higher, £346,619 in 1901 compared to £264,214 in Belper in 1894.³¹ Although there were seven years between the rateable values quoted it was assumed that the Belper values would not have increased considerably as there were few high value rateable properties in the union.

The social and economic conditions of Cheltenham showed similar characteristics to other medium sized towns. Poor housing, low wages and poor sanitation were evident in these medium sized towns as well as in the large industrial towns.³² The Town Improvement Act of 1889 saw great improvements in the town of Cheltenham and the local economy revived in the last years of the century. However, there was no improvement in poverty or the conditions of the poor. In a Ministry of Health (MOH) Report for 1895, the North Ward of the town consisted of 10,000 people all 'living from hand to mouth by charring, washing, gardening and odd work.' In a previous MOH report of 1887 the cottage property was described as 'a scandal and a constant menace to the health of the town...back to back tenements where there can be no proper cross ventilation.'³³ A further report from the corporation in Cheltenham stated that the town had men who never worked if they could avoid it, preferring to live off their wives' earnings and taking 'advantage of any occasion to press their claims for relief.' Both the Cheltenham board and the corporation had difficulty selecting the deserving poor from the impostors and this was confirmed by the high number receiving out-relief in this union.³⁴ The wealthy and their requirement for servants attracted a large number of servants from the surrounding areas, and the less wealthy were also moving into Cheltenham giving rise to an increased demand

³¹ www.institutions.org.uk/workhouses/england/gloucs/cheltenham_workhouse.htm (26.5.2004); www.institutions.org.uk/workhouses/england/derby/belper_workhouse.htm (18.5.2004).

³² R. Edlin, 'Attitudes to Poverty and Social Reform in Cheltenham, 1870-1899' (unpub. M.A. thesis, University of Gloucester, 2003), p. 90.

³³ Edlin, 'Poverty and social reform', pp. 68 and 70.

³⁴ The National Archives (TNA), Public Record Office (PRO), MH 12/3950, 27 February 1895.

for suburban villas, with rents up to £50 p.a. Captain Griffith of the Health Commission for Cheltenham Corporation reported that:

‘Cheltenham was essentially residential in character, had no stable manufactures and depended for its welfare on its colleges. There were two classes of people in the town, the residential class who lived in the town for the education of their children and the working class who lived in one part of the town and were dependent on these colleges for their livelihood.’³⁵

In Belper union, the industries evident earlier in the nineteenth century, including coal, ironstone, limestone and lead mining together with stone quarrying, continued. The exception was nail-making, that had declined by the end of the nineteenth century following the development of machine-made nails. Iron foundry and large engineering works continued in Belper, Ripley and Denby areas, together with the staple trades for this union of cotton spinning and the manufacture of hosiery. The mills in Darley Abbey for the preparation of paper, corn, leather and for fulling (treatment of cloth) were sold by the Evans family in 1903. Both Ward and Brettle hosiery factories continued into the twentieth century and then started to decline. Stone quarries employed Morley men until 1917. A new dye works was established in Ambergate, just to the north of Belper town, in 1893. The Strutt family continued to build housing into the twentieth century, with those on George Street in the town of Belper built on the former potato allotments, thereby depriving those with low incomes of an opportunity to supplement their incomes.³⁶

Workhouse and Union Administration Changes

This section considers the changes to the workhouse and union administration. Were there any material changes to the workhouse accommodation in both unions? Cheltenham workhouse was reconstructed in 1887 and was then capable of holding up to 660 inmates, a number that was never reached in the period of this study. Previous to this the casual wards were built in 1883 on the St Pauls Road side of the workhouse and further minor alterations were authorised in 1890 to provide a coal shed and engineer’s workshop.³⁷ In 1901 Cheltenham again agreed changes to the classification in the workhouse. Although the workhouse accommodated 528 paupers together with tramp

³⁵ TNA, PRO, MH 12/3950, 24 May 1895.

³⁶ www.derwentvalleymills.org (30 March 2007); www.derbyphotos.co.uk/areas_a_h/darley.htm (14 June 2005).

³⁷ *Kelly’s Directory of Gloucestershire* (1890), p. 67; *20th Annual Report Local Government Board*, 1890-1 vol. XXXIII.1 [C.6460] (1891), p. 560.

wards for ten men and two women, the breakdown was to be very different. Cheltenham board re-classified all the inmates with a view to ‘affording privileges to the aged and deserving poor.’³⁸ Accommodation for the children was provided in the Elms, a separate establishment accommodating 99 children. Only 46 were in residence in 1901 and 27 children were boarded out with foster parents. At Belper workhouse the guardians borrowed £550 in February 1886 to purchase additional land adjacent to the workhouse for the erection of an infirmary, which was to cost £9,433 to complete and provide 106 beds. This was as much as the cost of building the workhouse back in 1840. Further expenditure was authorised in 1890 to purchase land for a laundry.³⁹ The children in Belper remained in the workhouse until 1909 (see discussion on children later in this chapter).

In 1893 the Local Government (District and Parish Councils) Act democratized poor law elections and the minimum qualification for guardians was reduced to an annual rateable value of £5.⁴⁰ The Local Government Act of 1894 extended the franchise, ended plural voting and the property requirement for guardians. The effect was for a greater number of those below the elite of society standing for public office. There were many long serving guardians in Belper, including the Hon. Frederick Strutt and Mr Woolley. Mr Woolley was a member of Belper board for fifty years and resigned the chairmanship as a result of an accident and failing eye sight. The acting chairman described Mr Woolley as: ‘I testify to his wide knowledge and ripe judgement...results show the prudence of his counsel...guarding the interests of the ratepayer.’ Frederick Strutt was a guardian for 32 years with vast experience on administration of the poor law and he died in 1909.⁴¹ One rule for the election of guardians was highlighted in Belper board minutes and concerned declining to accept the office of an elected guardian. Mr Herbert Strutt declined to accept the office of guardian in 1896 and tended his 1s fine to the Belper board.

³⁸ *Cheltenham Examiner*, 6 February 1895.

³⁹ TNA, PRO, MH 12/1873; *20th Annual Report, Local Government Board (1890-1)*, p. 559.

⁴⁰ Brundage, *English Poor Laws*, p. 126.

⁴¹ DRO, D19 C/W 1/26, 24 April 1909; D19 C/W 1/25, 1 April 1905.

Figure 6.1 The board at Cheltenham workhouse in April 1898 with part of the workhouse infirmary behind them



Source: S. Blake, *Cheltenham, a Pictorial History* (Chichester, 1996), image number 132.

The first female guardian in Cheltenham was appointed to the board in 1891, and by 1913 there were four women on the board (figure 6.1). In 1895 the female board members in Belper were listed as Mrs Annie Berresford and Miss Agnes E Slack.⁴²

Recruiting staff was a major problem in both unions with many staying in post only a short while. 1899 was a particularly bad year in Cheltenham for the recruitment of officers. At Belper only one nurse was employed in 1879 but by 1909 this increased to seven paid nurses.⁴³ There were frequent resignations of nurses at both infirmaries.

A report in the local Cheltenham paper in 1910 was headed 'Principles of Out-relief: the Perfect Board.' The *Cheltenham Examiner* reported that the board had received a circular letter from the LGB on the right principles of administering out-relief. It stated 'there must be, in each case dealt with an accurate ascertainment, first, of the particular

⁴² *Derby Mercury*, 9 January 1895.

⁴³ *Derby Mercury*, 4 February 1910.

needs of the applicant, and second, of the economic, sanitary and other circumstances of the household.’⁴⁴ Mr Tinson, a member of the Cheltenham board remarked that many of the recommendations contained in the circular had been anticipated by the board and few of the suggestions were not already in practice in Cheltenham union. Mr Edwards, another member of the board, had also reached the conclusion that ‘the circular didn’t apply to us at all.’ The Vice-Chair of Cheltenham board, in his thanks to the board at the end of the year, remarked that the ‘absence of friction in the board was a point for congratulations.’ He also stated that Cheltenham guardians ‘were humane and progressive in their methods of work, as shown by the fact that recommendations from the LGB had usually been anticipated in this union.’⁴⁵ Despite their being a ‘humane’ board Cheltenham were regularly criticised for giving out-relief when the house was supposedly the correct place for that relief.

There was one link I found between the two unions and that was a Miss Barnett of Cheltenham offering to supply books for the use of the inmates at Belper workhouse, which was acknowledged with thanks by the Belper guardians.⁴⁶ There was no explanation as to why Miss Barnett was assisting Belper workhouse but one can only surmise that Cheltenham had all the help it needed and perhaps she had links with the town and villages of Belper union or the Strutt family.

Age and Sex Structure of Workhouse and Union Population

This section will consider the age and sex structure found in Cheltenham and Belper workhouses between 1891 and 1911 and whether the age of the workhouse and union population had changed significantly since 1881. There has been relatively little discussion of union and workhouse population for this period except for Crowther, Thomson and Thane’s discussion of the aged population. Booth and Hurren both found that the number of aged paupers increased over time but was this evident in Cheltenham and Belper? Hurren analysed data for Brixworth union workhouse between 1861 and 1891, and saw a considerable change in the workhouse population between 1881 and 1891. Her data showed that the percentage of under-nineteen paupers fell by 15 per cent (female) and

⁴⁴ *Cheltenham Examiner*, 24 April 1910.

⁴⁵ *Cheltenham Examiner*, 24 April 1910.

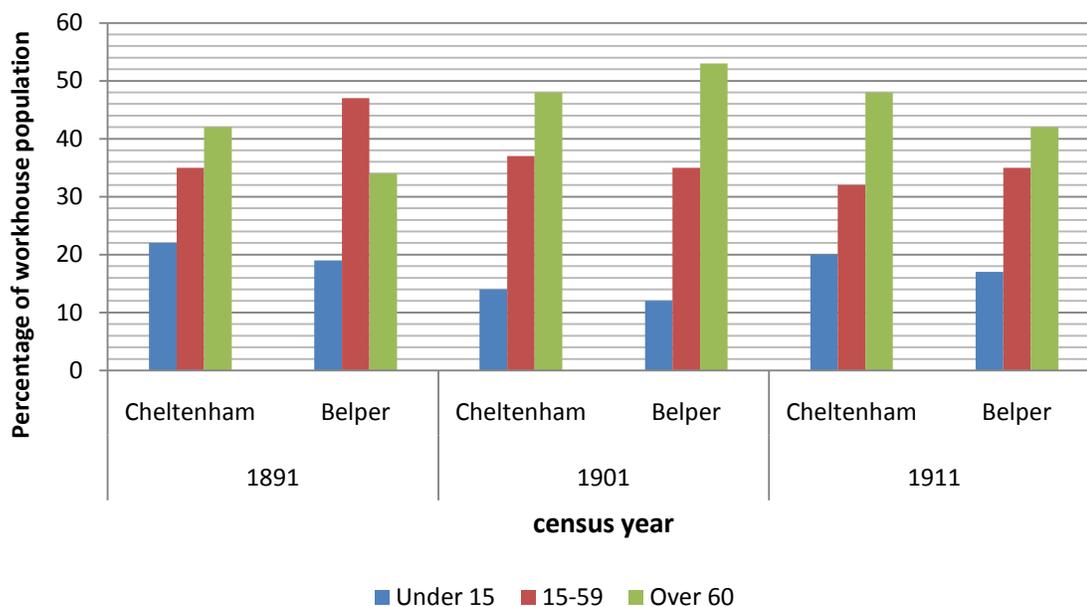
⁴⁶ DRO, D19 C/W 18, 24 April 1886.

13 per cent (male) between 1881 and 1891 but the 60+ age rose by 19 per cent (female) and 30 per cent (male) between the same years.⁴⁷ Was this change in the workhouse population evident in Cheltenham and Belper? Hurren's data was only given to 1891 so a direct comparison was not possible but as the following discussion shows the change in the workhouse population mirrored what Hurren found.

Both unions saw a decrease in the number of children in the workhouse aged under 15 between the census of 1891 and 1901, and an increase in those over-60 between the same years. The percentage change of the over-60 in Belper workhouse was 19 per cent compared to just 6 per cent in Cheltenham workhouse (figure 6.2). By 1911 the percentage of elderly in Belper workhouse had fallen from 53 per cent in 1901 to 42 per cent in 1911. Was this as a result of the aged drawing a pension? I cannot be sure as the percentage of elderly in Cheltenham workhouse had not changed, remaining at 48 per cent of the workhouse population. The reason for the difference in the percentage of paupers over 60 was seen in the able-bodied workhouse population which increased in Cheltenham workhouse from 35 to 37 per cent (1901) but decreased in Belper workhouse by 12 per cent, from 47 to 35 per cent. In 1911 the percentage of children in the workhouse had increased back to the 1891 level, with a decrease in the percentage of able-bodied paupers.

⁴⁷ Hurren, *Protesting about Pauperism*, p. 153, table 5.

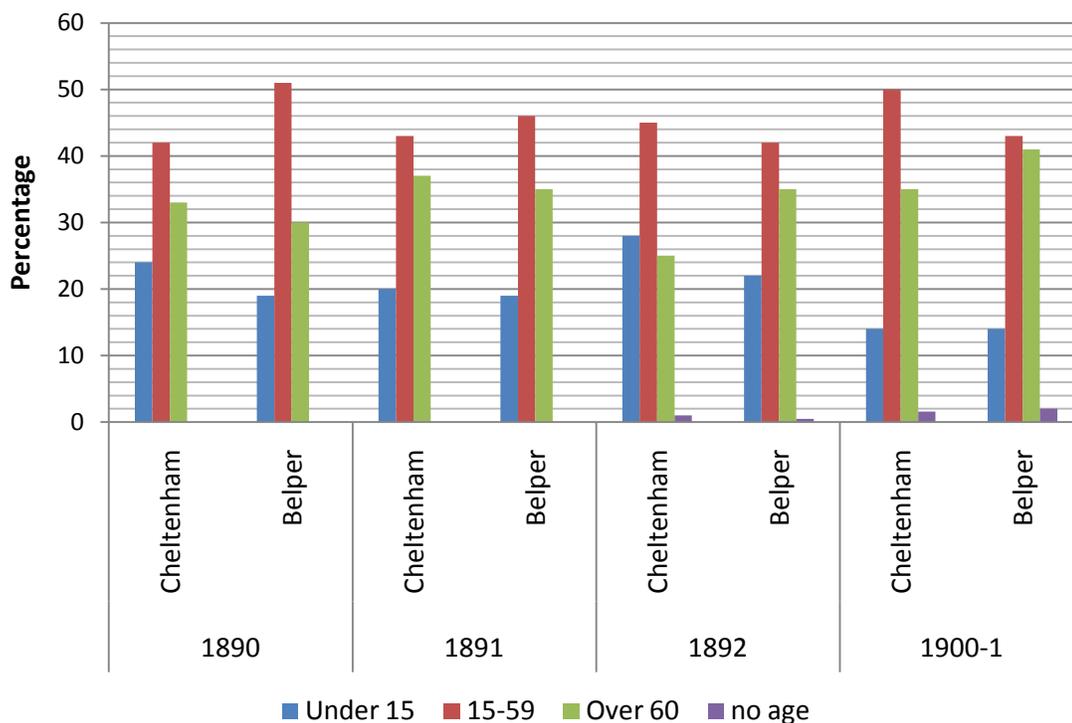
Figure 6.2 Percentage in each age group of workhouse population for 1891, 1901 and 1911 census in Belper and Cheltenham



Source: RG12/2048, 2742; RG13/2461, 3228; RG14PN20971, 15573.

Further analysis was undertaken using the admission registers. Referring to figure 6.3 the percentage of paupers aged under 15 in Cheltenham workhouse was 24 per cent in 1890, falling four per cent in 1891 and then increasing by eight per cent (on the 1891 percentage) in 1892. The next eight years saw a dramatic fall in this age group to just 14 per cent.

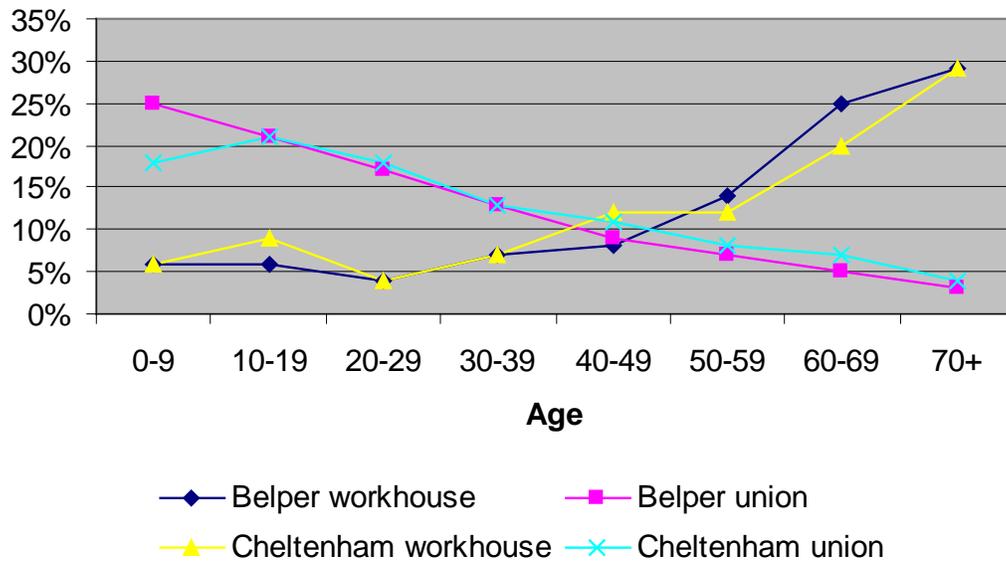
Figure 6.3 Percentage of workhouse population in each age group, 1890-2 and 1900-1 admission registers in Belper and Cheltenham



Source: GA, G/CH 60/22-3; G/CH 60/25; DRO, D3390/1/20-1; D3390/1/24-5.

Belper also saw a small increase in its under-15 age category in 1892 but that age group also fell eight per cent to the same percentage as Cheltenham. The over-60s in Cheltenham averaged 32 per cent of the workhouse population over the decade while the average in Belper was higher, at 35 per cent. The percentage of able-bodied in Belper workhouse fell over the decade from 51 per cent of workhouse population to 43 per cent. In this age group Cheltenham saw an increase from 42 per cent of workhouse population at the beginning of the decade to 50 per cent at the end of the decade, the opposite of what was happening in Belper. Although there appears to be a big increase in the percentage of able-bodied paupers in the workhouse, it must be remembered that the percentage represents all admissions during the year and there were many repeat visits of those in the able-bodied class thereby distorting the picture. The census provides a clearer picture of the workhouse population.

Figure 6.4 Percentage in each age group for Cheltenham and Belper workhouse and union population in 1901



Source: *Census of England and Wales, 1901, County of Gloucester* (HMSO, 1902), p. 54; *Census of England and Wales, 1901, County of Derbyshire* (HMSO, 1902), p. 50; Census RG13/2461, 3228.

Figure 6.4 shows the population of Cheltenham and Belper union and workhouses broken down into ten year age groupings. Both unions show similar percentages in each age grouping except for the under 10s where Cheltenham has a lower percentage. The union population is skewed to a higher percentage in the younger ages, the percentages falling away to the older age groups. The workhouse populations were the inverse of the union populations. There were minor variations between the two workhouse populations but these were not significant. Both workhouses had the same percentage for 0-9 and 70+ ages. In Brixworth union Hurren found that the percentage of indoor paupers who were elderly increased in the decade from 1881 to 1891.⁴⁸ Hurren's findings were the same as those for Belper and Cheltenham workhouses.

⁴⁸ Hurren, *Protesting about Pauperism*, p. 153.

Table 6.2 Percentage of male and female paupers in Cheltenham and Belper workhouse, 1890 - 1911

	1890 Admission registers		1891 Admission registers		1891 census		1892 Admission registers		1901 census		1900-1 Admission registers		1911 census	
	C	B	C	B	C	B	C	B	C	B	C	B	C	B
Male	65	63	56	61	57	66	55	68	52	71	55	63	55	63
Female	32	37	44	39	42	34	44	32	48	28	45	37	45	37

Source: RG12/2048, 2742; RG13/2461, 3228; Admission registers, GA, G/CH 60/22-3 and G/CH 60/25; DRO, D3390/20-1 and D3390/1/24-5; RG14PN20971, 15573.

Note: In Cheltenham in 1890 there were 3% of the workhouse paupers without a sex.

Throughout the period Belper workhouse population was dominated by male paupers, the percentage ranging from 61 per cent to 71 per cent (table 6.2). The workhouse population in Cheltenham was also dominated by males, but there was less difference between the sexes. This concurs with Booth's findings of the over-65 population in the workhouse, where the out-door paupers were dominated by females (see table 6.3).

The data from figure 6.4 was further broken down into male and female for each age category in workhouse and union. Table 6.3 shows the enhanced data and as with the graph (figure 6.4) the skew in percentages shows the same low percentage in younger ages rising to higher percentages in the older ages in the workhouse, and the reverse for the union.

Table 6.3 Percentage of males and females in each age group in Cheltenham and Belper workhouse population and union population in 1901

	0-9	10-19	20-29	30-39	40-49	50-59	60-69	70+
Males								
Belper Workhouse	5	6	2	5	8	14	25	33
Cheltenham workhouse	7	8	3	5	9	13	25	29
Belper union	24	21	17	13	9	7	5	3
Cheltenham union	21	23	15	13	10	7	7	4
Females								
Belper workhouse	8	6	9	11	9	15	25	17
Cheltenham workhouse	6	10	6	9	15	11	14	29
Belper union	25	20	17	13	9	7	5	3
Cheltenham union	15	20	19	14	11	9	7	4

Source: *Census of England and Wales, 1901, County of Gloucester* (HMSO, 1902), p. 54; *Census of England and Wales, 1901, County of Derbyshire* (HMSO, 1902), p. 50; Census RG13/2461, 3228.

The percentage of males 60-69 was the same for both workhouses, but there was an 11 per cent difference between the females in the same age group, Belper workhouse having the higher percentage. The reverse happened in the 70+ age group where there were a greater percentage of females in Cheltenham workhouse compared to Belper workhouse (29 per cent Cheltenham to 17 per cent Belper). The data for workhouse populations in both houses matched findings from Hurren's data that the workhouse population changed at the end of the nineteenth century. The workhouse population changed as a result of the increasing admittance of the elderly. The data has also confirmed that the composition of the workhouse population had changed from 1881. The percentage of children in Belper workhouse had declined by 1911 with a subsequent increase in the elderly. The percentage change in Cheltenham was not so noticeable.

Relief Expenditure and Admissions to the Workhouse

Relief expenditure will be the main discussion in this section. Did the cost of relief increase or decrease between the late 1880s and 1914? The elderly were the main category dependent on relief in old age, whether in the workhouse or out-doors, and David Thomson argues that the poor law was their main source of financial support and only minimal help

was given by relatives or family.⁴⁹ Pat Thane challenges this argument and argues that the family provided support but, in most cases, the support was not quantified.⁵⁰ This was true for both Cheltenham and Belper and no records were found showing family support except the occasional reference in board minutes, when a son was issued with an order compelling him to contribute to his mother or father's relief.

In response to an enquiry by the LGB in 1900 the Cheltenham board responded that 'every case is most carefully enquired into by the whole board and dealt with as liberally as possible, each case being considered separately and dealt with on its own merits.'⁵¹

Changes to relief provision were issued regularly by the central board including a standing order for administration of out-door relief, issued in 1902 and stating that a revision of the out-door poor was to be held once a year. The order confirmed that:

Out-door relief shall not be granted...to able-bodied men on account of temporary illness of themselves, wives or families...to wives deserted by their husbands...to wives and families of convicted prisoners...to wives and families of militia men on duty...to persons not resident in union. The rate for each adult is not to exceed 3s. Each child under 16 living at home, not to exceed 1s and 1 loaf. Orphans boarded out, outfit and 3s 6d and 10s quarterly for clothing.⁵²

Further information on the conditions under which out-relief may be given was contained in the *Cheltenham Examiner* in 1910:

There must be, in each case dealt with, an accurate ascertainment, first, of the particular needs of the applicant, and second, of the economic, sanitary and other circumstances of the household...The practical object of the circular is to insist upon the efficiency of the machinery for obtaining information...The first requisite is a 'case paper' system, by which everything known about any applicant is recorded and remains readily accessible on any subsequent occasion...close co-operation should be established between the sanitary and poor law authorities in order that no relief should enable persons to exist in insanitary conditions which are a menace to the health of the neighbourhood.⁵³

The references in this quotation to public health and sanitary conditions were new language and confirm that sanitary conditions damaged the health of not only the pauper but the road or street as well. Belper union set down the requirements for relief of able-bodied men under the Relief Regulation Order of 1911, which was approved by the LGB on 2 April

⁴⁹ A. Kidd, *State, Society and the Poor* (Basingstoke, 1999), p. 39

⁵⁰ Kidd, *State, Society*, p. 39.

⁵¹ GA, G/CH 8a/34, 14 February 1901.

⁵² GA, G/CH 8a/35, 11 December 1902, Extract from the Report of the Poor Law Commissioners on Amendment of the Poor Law from *Regulations for Administration of Out-door Relief*, p. 8.

⁵³ *Cheltenham Examiner*, 24 April 1910.

1912. Able-bodied men were to be set to work at the workhouse between 8am and 4pm and paid 4d per hour. The men were to work a minimum of five days on ‘cultivation of land, chopping of 250 bundles of firewood, with another sawing 10 railway sleepers into lengths of six inches each.’ Those men who were not physically capable of undertaking the work were excused the full amount of work.⁵⁴

Brundage argues that between 1870 and 1906 the amount spent per pauper had doubled.⁵⁵ According to the Royal Commission report of 1909, expenditure was £8 million in 1871-2 but had increased to £14 million by 1905-6.⁵⁶ Despite the increase in expenditure the total number of paupers decreased by 3.9 per cent between the 1870s and beginning of the twentieth century, but at the same time there was a large increase in male pauperism and an 18 per cent decrease in the number of children. The number of women paupers fell by 2 per cent. The statistics also show an increase in the number of able-bodied (15-59 age) paupers in England and Wales. Indoor able-bodied paupers increased by 21 per cent and out-door paupers by 49 per cent between 1906 and 1908. Despite the increase in expenditure the relief payments were meager and caused great suffering to many, with some alleged to have just 6d a week to live on after rent was paid.⁵⁷ Anne Crowther’s data does not match Brundage or the Royal Commission summary. Her statistics show that the proportion spent on relief fell from a peak in 1896 of 26 per cent, to 22 per cent in 1910, and, following the introduction of old age pensions, fell further to 16 per cent in 1912.⁵⁸ Crowther also states there were twice the number of outdoor as indoor paupers, but was this confirmed in Belper and Cheltenham? Table 6.4 shows this to be clearly the case in the under 16 and 16 to 65 categories in both unions.⁵⁹ In the over 65s the male paupers in Cheltenham on out-door relief were almost three times that of the

⁵⁴ DRO, D19 C/W 6/25, statement dated 2 April 1912.

⁵⁵ Brundage, *English Poor Laws*, p. 133.

⁵⁶ DRO, D19 C/W 10/1. Reprint from *The Times (n.d.) of Summary of Report of Royal Commission on Poor Law (1905-6)*. All figures following come from the same report.

⁵⁷ DRO, D19 C/W 10/1, Reprint from *The Times (n.d.) of Summary of Report of Royal Commission on Poor Law (1905-6)*. Some of the worst cases of paupers were described in the Summary including a single woman who lived with her sister and her husband in one room. She received 4s 6d a week out-relief. It was a mystery where the single woman slept as there was only one room and one bed. She made her living by making scones under filthy conditions which were then sold.

⁵⁸ Crowther, ‘Later years’, p. 38.

⁵⁹ Crowther, ‘Later years’, p. 45. The Royal Commission reported in 1906 that 46 per cent of paupers relieved were over 60 and of these, 50 per cent were relieved in the workhouse. The chances of falling into poverty increased with age and in 1890, for every 1000 people aged 65 to 70, 68 were workhouse paupers and 125 were on out-door relief.

indoor paupers and the females were four times the indoor percentage of paupers. In Belper the out-door male paupers were double the percentage of indoor paupers and the female out-door paupers were nine times the percentage of indoor paupers. Once again there were wide variations between the unions.

Table 6.4 Poor law expenditure and the rate of pauperism in the 1890s in Belper and Cheltenham union

Poor Law Expenditure per head of population			Percentage of Population relieved at each age in 12 months, 1891-2			
			U16	16-65	Males over 65	Females over 65
Cheltenham	Indoor	1s 2d	1	1	7	3
	Out-door	2s 3d	2.4	3	20	16
	General/medical	2s 8d	0.4	0.2	1	1.2
	Total	6s 1d	4	4	27	20
Belper	Indoor	10d	0.5	0.8	6	2
	Out-door	1s 5d	2	1.0	11	18
	General/medical	2s 1d	0.3	0.3	0.4	0.8
	Total	4s 4d	2.6	2.1	17.6	21.3

Source: Booth, *The Aged*, pp. 466 and 477, Appendix A.

What was very evident when looking at Booth's statistics on poor law expenditure (table 6.4) was the vast difference between the two unions. Cheltenham spent a much higher amount per head of population on poor law expenditure, 6s 1d compared to just 4s 4d for Belper. In percentage terms this equates to 71 per cent higher expenditure in Cheltenham than Belper. Female paupers aged over 65 in Cheltenham did not dominate out-relief as happened in Belper. Therefore Belper fits with Booth's findings for England and Wales.

The *Cheltenham Examiner* reports of 1885 and 1887 demonstrate why relief expenditure was so much higher in Cheltenham than Belper. In 1885 the *Cheltenham Examiner* reported 'large bodies of men, as many as two hundred at one time, perambulating the streets seeking relief.'⁶⁰ By 1887 the poor of Cheltenham demonstrated following a reduction in the amount paid to men in the stone yard. At the same time, contributions to the distress fund in the town also fell.⁶¹ The weather had a dramatic effect on the number seeking relief and the numbers in the workhouse. The *Cheltenham*

⁶⁰ *Cheltenham Examiner*, 21 January 1885.

⁶¹ *Cheltenham Examiner*, 12 January 1887.

Examiner reported in January 1887 on the opening of the stone yard when large numbers were unemployed in Cheltenham. In preparation for opening the stone yard, fifty men were set to work preparing the yard for the admission of the unemployed. An ex-police superintendent named Day acted as foreman of the yard and before any man was put to work, Day made enquiries into his character. With pressure on the unemployed poor relief fund it was decided by the committee to reduce cash payment to 1s per day for married men and 9d per day for single men. Bread was also given proportioned according to the number of children. The unemployed men declined to work at lower wages and less hours and took their complaints to the Mayor's parlour. A deputation of men met with the mayor stating that neighbouring towns were paying 2s per day but they were seeking a rate of 1s 6d for married men and 1s for single men. One man in the deputation stated he had a wife and nine children, seven of which were under age 14. After a number of meetings the old rate was reinstated with preference given to employing married men in the stone yard.⁶²

Cheltenham experienced bad weather again in 1891 with sixty days of frost, and this was described as 'a period of unmitigated misery to the poor and outcast.' The repercussions might have been far worse had it not been for a 'considerable revival of national prosperity, the suffering, great that it had been, might have led to social disturbances more sinister and alarming than the unemployed riots of a few years ago.'⁶³ The problem of hard frost and lack of employment in Cheltenham surfaced again in February 1895. The Cheltenham board reported to the LGB that a great many men had been thrown out of work as a result of the cold weather, including labourers and men connected with the building trade. It was fortunate that Cheltenham corporation employed 370 in the week ending 16 February on a number of tasks from repairing footpaths, sewerage mains and drainage of sewerage farm, costing the corporation £312 10s for the week. The men were paid a fair wage of 3s per day ensuring that they valued the employment given to them, and worked hard. The men also knew if they did not work properly they would immediately be replaced by 'one more worthy', but the work was only suitable for men used to labouring.⁶⁴ Little is written in the correspondence files of a similar relief committee assisting the out-of-work in Belper union but as that union did not

⁶² *Cheltenham Examiner*, 12 January 1887.

⁶³ *Cheltenham Examiner*, 28 January 1891.

⁶⁴ TNA, PRO, MH 12/3950, 27 February 1895.

have the quantity of building workers that Cheltenham had, this would explain the high unemployment, in times of bad weather, found in Cheltenham. Cheltenham also gave extra out-relief when the price of coal increased in January 1900, recommending that all out-door paupers in the union (723 in January 1900) received an extra allowance of 6d per week for a period of four weeks from 25 January 1900.⁶⁵

In Cheltenham union the number and composition of workhouse inmates together with the number relieved out-doors was recorded in great detail in the local newspapers. The non-able-bodied paupers in the workhouse formed almost two-thirds of the total in the workhouse and children almost a quarter (table 6.5). Numbers in the workhouse remained constant throughout the period. There were few able-bodied paupers in the workhouse, just eight per cent on average of the workhouse population.

Table 6.5 Average numbers relieved in Cheltenham workhouse and out-doors for one week in January, 1884 to 1891

	Total In house	Not Able-bodied	Able-bodied	Children	
In relief January 1884-1891	424	280	35	109	
	Total Relieved	Not Able-bodied	Able-bodied	Children	Total Expenditure
Out-relief January 1885-1891	1,535	969	105	461	£132 7s

Source: *Cheltenham Examiner*, various dates 1884 to 1891

The detailed information contained in the Cheltenham newspapers was not found in Belper papers. Instead the *Derby Mercury* provided information on expenditure on the poor of Belper union in 1879 and 1909.

Table 6.6 A comparison of expenditure on the poor in 1879 and 1909 in Belper union

	1879	1909
Population	52,826	66,809
N. Receiving out-relief	1,877	1,032
Total Out-relief expended	£6,031	£5,305
Out-door recipients per 1000 population	28	64

Source: *Derby Mercury*, 4 February 1910.

⁶⁵ GA, G/CH 8a/33, 25 January 1900.

The population of Belper union increased by 13,983 or 26 per cent over the thirty years while the number receiving out-relief declined by just over 800 paupers (45%). Out-relief expenditure reduced by £726 (12%) (table 6.6). The number of out-door recipients per 1000 population more than doubled, despite the fact that the newspaper report stated ‘the guardians had contributed more generously to the relief of out-door recipients.’⁶⁶ No comparable figures were available for Cheltenham union.

Table 6.7 Total admissions to Belper and Cheltenham workhouse per quarter, between 1890 and 1901

Admission Year	March quarter	June quarter	September quarter	December quarter	Total Admissions
Belper					
1890	76	62	73	88	299
1891	99	84	101	106	390
1892	88	99	86	107	380
1900/1	79 (1901)			100 (1900)	179
Cheltenham					
1890	97	86	69	87	339
1891	93	117	80	94	384
1892	122	108	125	129	484
1900/1	128 (1901)			122 (1900)	250

Source: GA G/CH 60/22-3; G/CH 60/25; DRO D3390/20-1; D3390/1/24-5. The data for 1900-1 was for six months only. Cheltenham admission register was missing for the remainder of 1901.

Admissions to the workhouses peaked in Belper in 1891 with a total of 390 inmates admitted during the year. In Cheltenham admissions peaked in 1892 with 484 admitted during the year. In both unions the admission registers were missing between January and September in 1900 and from April 1901 onwards. Based on the figures available for both unions, it was estimated that 1900/1 admissions could be far higher than those earlier in the 1890s (table 6.7). There were many cases of frequent admissions to the workhouses and at Cheltenham William Dollings, a 58 year old printer, was first admitted to Cheltenham workhouse via a removal order from Holborn on 17 January 1891. He appears on the admission registers on a further three occasions during 1891 and on five occasions in 1892.⁶⁷ At the same time in Belper there was a similar case of frequent admissions by an able-bodied pauper. William Sadler, a 31 year old labourer, was admitted to Belper workhouse on six occasions in 1890 and was in the workhouse at the beginning of January

⁶⁶ *Derby Mercury*, 4 February 1910.

⁶⁷ GA, G/CH 60/23, admission registers, 1891-2.

1891. He refused to work and was discharged to hard labour two days later. He returns to the workhouse in the middle of February and a further entry in May stated he had absconded and returned drunk and was in custody at the beginning of June. There were two further admissions to the workhouse in 1891. By 1892 this pauper was sent to prison for 14 days in March and in April. In 1891, Sadler refused to work again and was sent for a further 14 days hard labour. There were six further admissions of Sadler to the workhouse during 1892 but he seems to have behaved himself as no further action was taken against him. These two cases illustrate that able-bodied paupers were being admitted to the workhouse and not given out-relief and that the guardians were adhering to the 1834 Poor Law Amendment Act by admitting this group of paupers.

The Aged Paupers

The aged increasingly formed the highest number of paupers in the workhouse. Although the crusade against out-relief confirmed that all poor relief was to be given in the workhouse, in the late nineteenth century the LGB allowed out-door relief to be paid to the respectable aged paupers. Charles Booth's discussion of the aged population in 1894 found that the aged poor in the countryside (rural and semi-urban) were much better off than those in a totally urban environment, despite the higher wages paid in the towns. Why was this? Booth considered various reasons including rents being lower, less competition for employment among the old, the cost of living was less, men could be thrown out of employment in urban towns when not capable of carrying on the industrial trade, but men were able to continue into old age in rural areas.⁶⁸ Manual workers, labourers and other low paid were likely to remain in their occupation well past retiring age as they could not afford to do otherwise. For most, poor relief was only acceptable as a last resort and very much depended on local practices as to whether relief would be in the workhouse or as out-door relief.⁶⁹ What opportunities were there in both unions for the aged to supplement their income through employment? The opportunities open to Belper union paupers were described by Booth as:

Very poor, depending on parish relief, Companies' Field Clubs' pensions or relatives. In all branches of labour, old men are being ruthlessly pushed aside. Ripley and Alfreton are the most thriving districts, but pauperism is less in all coal districts. Trades are worn out.

⁶⁸ Booth, *The Aged Poor*, p. 328.

⁶⁹ Thane, *Ageing and Economy*, p. 10.

Wirksworth is decaying, the lead mines being worked out. Crich is extremely poor, machinery taking the place of hand work. Men have to travel to Derby for work. Described as generally, most thriftless.⁷⁰

Booth described the opportunities for Cheltenham union paupers :

Not satisfactory [with] a very large majority dependent on out-relief or on doles from the charitable. Out-relief is readily granted in all needy cases (COS). No settled or definite employment. For men, occasional work in market and other gardens or odd jobs; for women, charring, needlework or looking after neighbour's children. Average earnings not more than 4s or 5s a week [for available employments]. In all parishes doles are regularly given from church alms to the sick and aged...The COS pensions [were] 1s or 6d weekly, to supplement other sources of income (church, organized charity).⁷¹

We can see from Booth's description of paupers in both unions that there were opportunities of employment in the coal mining areas of Belper union, but were the old men capable of this type of work? There was little opportunity of employment for the aged in Cheltenham town.

In 1893 the Royal Commission on the Aged Poor was set up, chaired by Lord Aberdare and including Albert Pell from The Charity Organisation Society and Charles Booth. In 1895 the LGB had issued a circular to various unions regarding the treatment of paupers in the workhouse, but did Cheltenham and Belper comply and embody the circular's statements? Guardians were reminded that married couples could be provided with separate rooms, that the aged were allowed out to visit friends or attend their own church and that there should be a separate day room for those of good character away from the bad paupers.⁷² Booth and the Royal Commission both argued that the 'greatest hardships [for the aged] were the compulsory herding of the respectable with the depraved in the workhouse.'⁷³ The Cheltenham board had anticipated the circular's suggestions, particularly with reference to married couples and the deserving poor. Cheltenham experimented with separate accommodation for married couples but this was a failure. 'The old men preferred the day room to being bottled up with their wives and probably the old women had a precisely similar preference.'⁷⁴ No married couples' accommodation was provided at Cheltenham and previously only one application had been received for such

⁷⁰ Booth, *The Aged*, pp. 190-191.

⁷¹ Booth, *The Aged*, p. 206.

⁷² Webb, *Poor Law Policy*, p. 240.

⁷³ Crowther, 'The later years', p. 45.

⁷⁴ *Cheltenham Examiner*, 6 February 1895.

accommodation. There was no reference in Belper minutes to accommodation for aged married couples or to the circular.

Thane, together with Williams and Townsend found that the elderly in institutional care were mainly those without close kin.⁷⁵ This was confirmed when a case study of a single woman pauper was investigated further. Hannah Seal was born in 1805 to William and Elizabeth Seal of Belper. By the 1871 census her parents were dead and Hannah was found lodging with a Mr and Mrs Nightingale (both aged 69). Hannah was then aged 66, unmarried and a cotton factory worker at Strutt's mills. On the 5 January 1878, a Saturday, Hannah was admitted to Belper workhouse, where her religion was described as Methodist and number 45 was affixed to her clothes. She was only to live in the workhouse for a further six months, dying on 14 July of the same year, age 73. The case illustrates how an unmarried lady aged over 65, with no close family to look after her, spent her last days in the workhouse.⁷⁶

Booth gathered data to assess the aged poor in England and Wales. Table 6.8 shows that the indoor paupers in England and Wales workhouses were dominated by male paupers but the percentage of out-door female paupers was more than double the percentage of male paupers. How do the number of indoor and out-door paupers in Belper and Cheltenham compare to the number in England and Wales? Belper's out-door female paupers were not quite double the number of males, but Cheltenham's female out-door paupers were more than double the number of males (table 6.8). Using the data found for Cheltenham and Belper the trend for a higher number of paupers and higher expenditure in Cheltenham continued throughout this period. There was a greater difference in the total number of old persons in the union population, with almost double the number of old paupers in Cheltenham union (4,031) than in Belper union (2,974) (table 6.8).⁷⁷ A large

⁷⁵ Thane, *Ageing and Economy*, p. 10; E.H. Hunt, 'Paupers and pensioners: past and present', *Ageing and Society*, 9 (1990), p. 408.

⁷⁶ DRO, D3390/1/14, admission register; D3390/3/1, death register; 1871 census RG10/3582.

⁷⁷ The percentage of aged paupers compared to the aged in the union in the surrounding unions to Cheltenham was similar. The percentage of aged paupers compared to the aged paupers in Tewkesbury and Winchcombe unions was 24 per cent. The variation in the surrounding unions to Belper showed that whereas Belper union had just 20% of aged paupers in the union, and Bakewell union even less over 65s (17%), the percentage of aged paupers in Chesterfield compared to the union population was much higher (30%). The aged paupers in Chesterfield were described by Booth: 'Their condition is about as bad as it can well be. Nothing is left for them beyond work at the pits, but the parish or the workhouse.' Booth, *The Aged*, p. 158.

number of civil service, ex-military and East India company people retired to Cheltenham and this influx of retired could explain the higher numbers of aged in Cheltenham.

Table 6.8 Number of paupers over 65 years of age in Belper and Cheltenham unions

	Cheltenham Union			Belper Union		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
Paupers over 65						
Indoor	124 (55%)	100 (45%)	224	85 (73%)	31 (27%)	116
Out-door	258 (29%)	631 (91%)	889	163 (37%)	279 (63%)	442
Medical only	32	24	56	7	15	22
Total Paupers	414	755	1,169	255	325	580
Percentage male to female paupers	35%	65%		44%	56%	
Union population over 65	1,500	2,531	4,031	1,452	1,522	2,974
Percentage of male to female over 65 in union population	37%	63%		49%	51%	
Percentage of paupers aged over 65 to union population aged over 65			29%			20%

Source: C. Booth, *The Aged Poor in England and Wales* (London, 1894), pp. 190 and 206; C. Booth, *Pauperism, a Picture and Endowment of Old Age* (London, 1892), p. 52.

Why was the number of paupers so much lower in Belper than Cheltenham? Were Belper union paupers finding other strategies to manage financially? The board of guardian minutes were silent on this but, despite Booth stating there were few opportunities for employment of the aged in Belper, there was a greater range of employment in industry than that found in Cheltenham. In Cheltenham, 29 per cent of its aged union population were paupers compared to 20 per cent of aged union population in Belper (table 6.8).

In February 1910 there were 498 paupers in the Cheltenham workhouse and 135 paupers (27%) were over 70 years of age, composed of 81 men and 54 women. Of the paupers over 70, 32 per cent could not take care of themselves owing to mental or physical infirmity. The number of pensionable age receiving out-door relief in the union was 376 and they cost an average of £62 per week.⁷⁸ A further report on the aged appeared in the same newspaper a year later. The report stated that the number of men and women aged over 60 in England and Wales in 1906, and dependent on the poor law was 379,902. This

⁷⁸ *Cheltenham Examiner*, 3 February 1910.

indicates that 15 out of every 100 people aged over 60 were receiving some form of public relief. Of that number over 60, 61 per cent were female and 39 per cent male and they were given relief in their own home or in the workhouse.⁷⁹ Although the number of women assisted was far greater there were actually more men in the workhouse than women. This was true for Belper where those over seventy in the workhouse on 1 July 1910 totalled 57 men and 20 women. The number of women receiving out-relief in Belper was almost double the number of men (95 men and 172 women). What was the reason why more women received out-relief than men in Belper? By keeping women in the community, they could be of more use to their family by looking after children or undertaking household tasks.⁸⁰ The reason for this does not seem to be that men were more infirm or liable to illness, but the census does show that the excess of men was in the ordinary wards and not the sick wards. 'The explanation seems to be that the old man is less able to look after himself than the old woman, and guardians recognise the fact.'⁸¹ In many institutions the aged and infirm, other than those who were chronically sick, were not separate from the able-bodied, although entirely different treatment was required for the old man only capable of light work, and the able-bodied man who needed discipline and training. The treatment that was suitable for the one must be either harsh or demoralising for the other.

Where all sorts are herded together the decent old people suffer. They keep out of the house as long as they can and often much longer than they should because they dread and dislike the company that they know they will have to associate with there...Old persons suffering from disease are living under insanitary and improper conditions and the relief is often insufficient in amount.⁸²

By 1908, pensions were provided under the Old Age Pensions Act for all those over 70, but this was subject to a means test and precluded any pauper who had received poor relief. By 1910 the aged who had received poor relief were no longer disqualified from receiving a pension.⁸³

⁷⁹ Hurren, *Protesting about Pauperism*, p. 154; The percentage of women over 60 in the workhouse had increased by 19% for the 10 years from 1881 in Brixworth union. Thomson's study of Bedfordshire shows similar increases in elderly after 1880 and one in three workhouse inmates were elderly, i.e. over 65 in 1891.

⁸⁰ DRO, D10 C/W 6/23; Booth, *The Aged*, p. 322.

⁸¹ *Cheltenham Examiner*, 16 February 1911.

⁸² *Cheltenham Examiner*, 16 February 1911, Notes – Existing Defects.

⁸³ Mowat, *COS*, p. 158.

Children in the Union

In the 1890s there were several changes to the management of children. In 1894 the LGB approved the erection of cottage homes. The homes shared common facilities, and housed 25-30 children in each home. The cottage homes 'permitted children to be housed in an environment which was considered more natural than workhouse or barrack schools, but which was still overwhelmingly institutional.'⁸⁴

The Royal Commission was in favour of removing children from the workhouse and recommending that maintaining children in the workhouse was no longer the best way to deal with them. The statistics show that 254,411 children were in receipt of relief on 1 January 1910 in England and Wales, with 15,834 in ordinary wards of workhouses, 35,557 were in cottage, separate schools or other establishments separate from the workhouse and 6,890 were boarded out.⁸⁵ Cheltenham moved the children out of the workhouse in 1882 and into a separate building called The Elms but did not adopt the cottage home model. In Belper, in order to begin removing the children from the workhouse in 1905, the guardians rented a house for two years, at a rental of £23 p.a. This was to accommodate 15 boys and a foster mother.⁸⁶ Belper's children remained in the workhouse until land was purchased on the south side of Bargate Road to erect homes for the children. The homes cost £1,209 to build and the children were moved into cottage homes in 1909.⁸⁷

⁸⁴Morrison, *Study of Poor Law Buildings*, p. 131; *35th Annual Report Local Government Board* (1905-6), p. cxxxxi.

⁸⁵ DRO, D19 C/W 6/23, Circular, *Children Under the Poor Law* (June, 1910).

⁸⁶ DRO, D19 C/W 1/25, 21 January 1905.

⁸⁷ DRO, D19 C/W 1/26, 12 September 1908.

Figure 6.5 Pauper boys at The Elms c 1890



Source: S. Blake, *Cheltenham, A Pictorial History* (Chichester, 1996); The image of the pauper boys was taken by the Rev. J G Derrick, the chaplain to the workhouse.

Compulsory school education after 1880 became a problem for poorer families as this removed children from employment thereby increasing poverty of the family. School fees were paid by parents until 1902 adding a further burden to the expenditure of the family. A circular relating to children, issued by the LGB in 1910 stressed that the primary object was ‘their education to independence of character and habits of industry.’ The rules that applied to adults were not applicable to children and the LGB attributed children’s pauperism to misfortune. In 1899 the poor law schools inspector for Cheltenham reported that he was not happy with the amount of instruction the children were receiving from the industrial trainers. The inspector recommended that children under age 11 should not receive instruction or perform industrial work for more than an hour a day, and those attending school half time should not do so for longer than five hours a day. The LGB followed up the report and demanded assurances from the guardians in Cheltenham that the recommendations were carried out.⁸⁸ In Cheltenham, as an encouragement to perform well in their school work, the girls of The Elms were presented with prizes from the board of

⁸⁸ GA, G/CH 8a/32, 25 May 1899.

guardians.⁸⁹ This action by the guardians in Cheltenham, to reward the children, was not undertaken in Belper.

There were a number of references in the Cheltenham board minutes to the maintenance and care of children and apprentices. One case refers to Joseph Clarke, age 15 in 1899. His parents were described by the board as having vicious habits and unfit to have control of the child. Using the Board of Children in Unions Order of 1899 (section 1, sub-section 2) the guardians agreed to assume rights and powers for the child until he was aged 18. The vice chairman made arrangements for the workhouse baker, Mr Wright, to take the boy as a boarded-out baker's apprentice. Mr Wright was allowed 7s per week to cover maintenance and lodging for Joseph.⁹⁰ A further case reported in the minutes related to William Hall who was removed from his father 'on account of his mode of life'. He was to be under the charge of the guardians until age 18 but arrangements were made in January 1901 for him to be boarded out with a Mrs Keen of Croft Street, Leckhampton.⁹¹ There was occasional mention of further children coming under the control of the guardians. In July 1897 it was reported that Ernest Curtis, then aged 14, had been deserted by his father eight years ago. His mother had recently been convicted of neglecting the child and the guardians assumed responsibility for Ernest until he was sixteen years old.⁹² The Cheltenham board noted that rules governing payments to foster parents changed in December 1896. Foster parents had previously received 4s a week and this was changed to 3s 6d per week plus 10s a quarter for clothes.⁹³

Belper looked at alternative options for apprenticing boys, one being a placement on the training ship the Exmouth. Places for boys from extra-metropolitan unions were only admitted to the ship by formal agreement, under seal, and the union would be charged 9s per week per boy. The Metropolitan Asylums Board, in a communication with Belper, confirmed that the training ship was for boys of good character and any boys 'guilty of vicious or criminal offences' would not be admitted. In a further letter to the LGB, Belper guardians confirmed that the union was submitting the names of two boys for a place on the Exmouth. Benjamin Irvine, age 13, was described by the medical officer as sound in

⁸⁹ *Cheltenham Examiner*, 10 June 1891.

⁹⁰ GA, G/CH 8a/33, 30 November 1899.

⁹¹ GA, G/CH 8a/33-4, 18 January 1900 and 31 January 1901.

⁹² GA, G/CH 8a/30, 22 July 1897; 52 and 53 Vict.c. 56, section 1.

⁹³ GA, G/CH 8a/30, 17 December 1896.

every respect. Benjamin's mother had died and the whereabouts of the father was not known. The other boy was William Martin whose mother was present in the workhouse, and again the medical officer described William as sound except for vision which had been remedied by glasses.⁹⁴ This alternative to apprenticing the boys locally was not used by Cheltenham union.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have discussed the populations of unions and workhouses from the mid-1880s to the First World War, and the provision of relief for the elderly and children. The discussion has shown that Belper's industries of coal mining, cotton mills and quarrying continued into the twentieth century and then started to decline. The population of Belper union continued to increase at a faster rate between 1891 and 1911, compared to Cheltenham. Cheltenham saw little increase in union population, but a major change in the composition of that population. There was an increased demand for servants in Cheltenham to service the educational establishments and wealthy residents.

The age structure of the workhouse population in both unions changed between 1861 and 1891 and as a consequence, the number of elderly in the workhouse increased. The census data showed that Cheltenham workhouse population was dominated by the over 60s in 1891, 1901 and 1911, whereas in Belper workhouse the population was dominated by the able-bodied in 1891 and by the over 60s in 1901 and 1911 (figure 6.2). However, if the admission registers were used to analyse the workhouse population, did the population remain the same or show a different profile? The admission registers show the same age profile over the decade 1890 to 1901 as the census records do. Both workhouses saw a decrease in the percentage of children over the period 1890 to 1901 but an increase in the percentage of children in 1911. When comparing the union population to the workhouse population in 1901 ten year age groupings were used. Both unions showed a similar union and workhouse population profile, with the workhouse population skewed to the elderly and the union population skewed to the younger age. Using Booth's data and the discussion on the aged in both unions, it was shown that the elderly workhouse population

⁹⁴ DRO, D19 C/W 6/25, March and April 1912.

increased at the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century. The number of paupers aged over 65 in Belper (580) was half that of Cheltenham (1,169).

Crowther found that there were at least double the number of paupers relieved outdoors as indoors and this was confirmed by both Cheltenham and Belper. I have shown that there were considerable differences between the two unions in poor relief expenditure and the percentage of the population relieved. Cheltenham spent 71 per cent more on poor law expenditure than Belper. The *Cheltenham Examiner* reports demonstrated why relief expenditure was so much higher in this union. Large numbers in the building trades were affected by harsh weather and expenditure on relief for those in the stone yards increased the amount of relief paid out. No reference was found to Belper using stone yards, or other means of alternative employment when unemployment was high, but as Belper's industry was not 'building-based' this may explain why this option was not used in Belper union.

Belper workhouse had a ladies visiting committee set up under an order of 1893 but none was evident in Cheltenham. Retaining staff in the workhouse became a major problem for both unions and there were frequent references in the minutes to advertisements placed for staff. Cheltenham preferred to move the children into one big house, located in the grounds of the workhouse, accommodating 100 children and the industrial trainers. This was achieved back in 1882, while Belper's children remained in the workhouse until 1909 when they were moved into purpose-built cottage homes.

Cheltenham, in its correspondence with the Royal Commission in 1906 highlighted that the workhouse was no longer a deterrent to certain classes in the town. Conditions in the workhouse had improved substantially since the Poor Law Amendment Act laid down the requirements for the workhouse building. Cheltenham and Belper made recommendations to the Royal Commission on the Poor Laws but their observations little influenced the final report. The Unemployed Workman's Act and Pensions Act became law in 1907 and 1908 respectively, while the National Insurance Act became law in 1911 but was limited to just the employed person with no assistance provided to the casual employee or dependents. All this legislation was very restricted and only assisted a small part of the population at this time.

In conclusion, I have shown that in terms of the workhouse population, Cheltenham and Belper were similar in 1901, but in terms of relief expenditure Cheltenham spent

considerably more on relief than Belper. In some areas, notably the number of paupers indoors and out, there was similarity to the findings of Crowther.

The concluding chapter will take the discussion forward to the reforms post-1914 and look back on the changes that occurred in the unions and to the provision of relief from the eighteenth century.

Conclusion

*'I have passed, said he, my life when trade was bad under severe privation, vainly striving to avoid getting into debt. What has been termed Prosperity brought me no relaxation from toil or relief from care...from early day into the night my workshop has been my prison.'*¹

The aim of the thesis was to look at changes in poor relief provision from the late eighteenth century, to the Poor Law Amendment Act of 1834, through to the First World War. This thesis is unique in considering two unions from different parts of England, looking at the picture of relief provision and workhouse populations across more than a century. The thesis is based on an interpretation of data on relief and population, backed up with discussions on categories of paupers and the means open to them to receive assistance. The micro study looked at the 'local' detail and tried to avoid the generalisations of national poor law history. Limited information in the sources on individual paupers has meant observing the management of the poor from the view of the local board of guardians and other union and workhouse officers has only been partially possible. The thesis has omitted discussions on lunacy and medical relief. Most studies have concentrated on just workhouse population or relief practices, but this analysis helps to show the wider picture of management of the poor.

There were few local studies, of a comparative nature, encompassing unions in different regions of the country. I used the unions of Belper and Cheltenham to compare poor relief and workhouse populations, and further to relate these to other union or regional studies. Investigations of the provision of relief and workhouse population in the past looked at short periods of time in the nineteenth century, in just one union or compared unions in one county. Others have concentrated on policy and poor law practices over a wide period.²

¹ This quote appeared on a sheet in the St Mary Parish archive in Cheltenham, Gloucestershire Archives (GA), P78/1 VE 2/4 papers. It was headed up "My Good Friends" and signed "your faithful Friend T Clutton Salt". The history of this life was told to him by a 'skilful, frugal and industrious Mechanic' and explains what the man went through to avoid asking for poor relief. The document was not dated.

² For studies covering short periods in the nineteenth century see Goose (1999) and Jackson (2005). See Hurren (2001), and Thomas (1992) for studies on one union. See Jackson (2002) and Hinde and Turnbull (1998) for poor law studies on a county. Studies on poor law practices and policy include Brundage (2002), Crowther (1953), Englander (1998) and Williams (1981).

The main question addressed in the thesis has been whether Cheltenham and Belper were different in their management of the poor between 1770 and 1914 and, secondly, how poor relief and welfare in Belper and Cheltenham unions conformed to, or differed from, the expectations of the 1834 Act. Were there wide ranging local practices adopted by the board of guardians? In most elements of the 1834 Poor Law Amendment Act Cheltenham and Belper complied with the requirements for managing the poor, but Cheltenham was regularly criticised by the central body for not accommodating the able-bodied poor in the workhouse. Instead the union provided schemes of employment, either in the stone yards or working on footpaths and other town facilities, to manage the unemployed in times of bad weather. The nearest Cheltenham came to filling the maximum capacity of its workhouse was in 1851, when 525 paupers were recorded in the workhouse. The population of Cheltenham workhouse varied considerably between the census, from a low of under 200 in 1841, to over 400 paupers in the workhouse in 1911, while the population in Belper workhouse rose steadily from just over 100 paupers in 1841 to over 300 inmates in 1911. Both unions dithered in building workhouses, and on a couple of occasions the Poor Law Commission (PLC) was near to forcing the guardians to close the pre-1834 workhouses and complete the new ones.

The thesis has discussed the social and economic situation in both unions and shown them to be very different, with one union composed of a semi-urban town surrounded by villages (Cheltenham) and the other union comprising four towns and a large number of parishes (Belper). Cheltenham was a fashionable spa town with little industry and was almost wholly reliant on the service and leisure occupations for employment. Belper was a union with an industrial base including the cotton mills, coal mines, hosiery, farming, and quarries. The acreage of each union was vastly different and although the population of each union was similar at the beginning of the nineteenth century it increased at a higher rate in Belper than Cheltenham. The composition of the boards of guardians was very different with the Belper board controlled by farmers and the Cheltenham board by tradespeople, gentlemen landowners and farmers. Guardians elected in Cheltenham were required to have a property qualification of at least £40 compared to the £30 required for Belper union.

Chapter 1 discussed provision for the poor between the late eighteenth century and before the Poor Law Amendment Act of 1834. The population of both communities grew substantially during the period, particularly with the development of Strutt's cotton mills in Belper union and the increase in building employment in Cheltenham. The new buildings in Cheltenham provided accommodation for the many visitors to the town. Gilbert unions were formed in Cheltenham town and Wirksworth (Belper) but as little written evidence was found, only brief information explains how these parishes managed their paupers before 1834. In-maintenance was only provided in one parish in Cheltenham and in four parishes in Belper, but these workhouses only accommodated a small number of paupers. Only Cheltenham parish 'farmed' out its poor, and Crich was the only parish in the two unions that had a subscription workhouse.

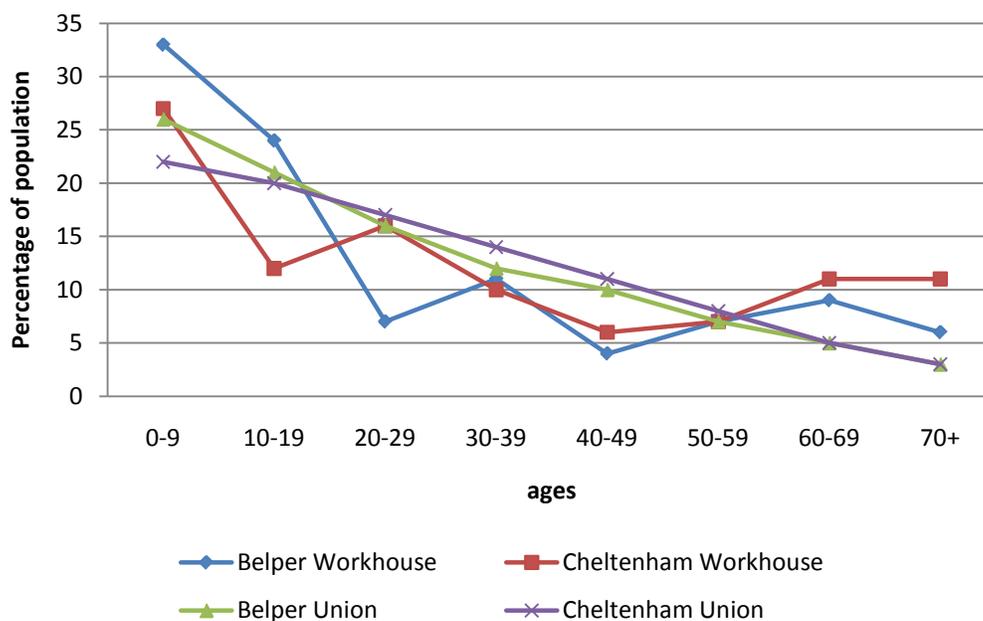
The discussion in chapter 2 focused on the introduction of the 1834 Act and the formation of both unions. The timescale for the formation of each union was relatively quick compared to King's investigation of parishes around England. King found wide variations in the time from formation of the union by the assistant commissioner, to the guardians taking control, but both Belper and Cheltenham were formed within four months. There was little opposition to the union formation, except from Wirksworth parish, who felt they should form a union based on *their parish*, but their opposition was quickly quashed by the assistant commissioner. Both unions had workhouse accommodation available but this was considered inadequate and the unions were advised to build new workhouses to accommodate all classes of pauper. Up to 1840 the classes of paupers were split between various workhouses in both unions.

With the census and poor law reports available from the 1840s, chapters 3, 4 and 6 included analysis of age, sex and occupation of workhouses and union populations. Analysis of the workhouse population in Cheltenham showed that in 1851 the 15-59 age group dominated the workhouse. The percentage of children in Belper workhouse was high in 1851 (51%) but had fallen to 40 per cent by 1861. By 1881 Cheltenham workhouse population was dominated by the over-60s and Belper's workhouse population by the under-15 age group. Cheltenham and Belper, therefore, had different age structures in their workhouse population up to 1881. In 1901 and 1911 both workhouse populations

comprised a majority of aged paupers (chapter 6, figure 6.2). When comparison was made with Brixworth workhouse the discussion in chapter 6 showed the change in the workhouse population mirrored that found by Hurren.³ The composition of the workhouse population in Belper was similar to Jackson’s study of Kent and Medway. The percentage of aged in both workhouses rose each year, peaking at 49-54 per cent in 1901.

The union and workhouse populations were compared in 1851 and 1901. Figure 7.1 shows that there was a higher percentage of children in both union and workhouse in 1851. Over half of the workhouse population was under-15 in Belper compared to just a third of Cheltenham workhouse population in the same age group.

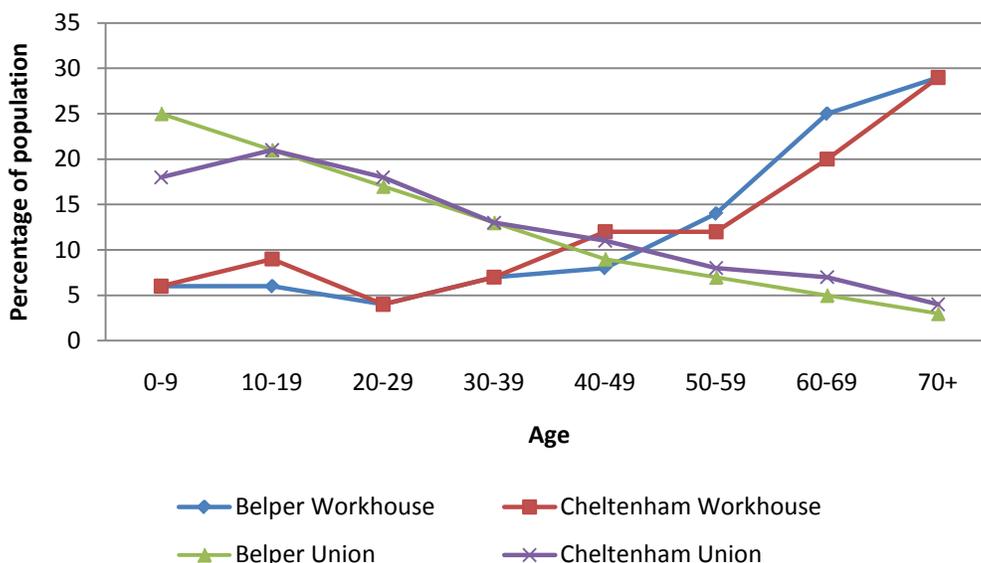
Figure 7.1 Percentage of population in each age group for union and workhouse in Cheltenham and Belper, 1851



Source: *BPP 1851 Census of Great Britain, Population 8, Volume 1*, pp. 425, 534; CEB, HO107/1973 and 2144.

³ E.T. Hurren, *Protesting about Pauperism: Poverty, Politics and Poor Relief in late Victorian England, 1870-1900* (Woodbridge, 2007), pp. 143-4. Hurren’s data showed that the percentage of paupers aged 19 and under fell between 1881 and 1891 but the percentage over age 60 rose between the same years.

Figure 7.2 Percentage of population in age group for union and workhouse in Cheltenham and Belper, 1901



Source: Census of England and Wales, 1901, County of Gloucester (HMSO, 1902), p. 54; Census of England and Wales, 1901, County of Derbyshire (HMSO, 1902), p. 50; Census RG13/2461, 3228.

By 1901 the population of both unions showed a similar profile but the workhouse population had completely changed. Both union populations show similar percentages in each age group except for the under 10s, where Cheltenham has a lower percentage. The workhouse populations were the inverse of the union populations. Both unions showed a decrease from the 1851 percentage of children under 15 in the workhouse and an increase from the 1851 percentage in the over 60 age group (figure 7.2).

To confirm whether Cheltenham and Belper had a ‘typical’ workhouse population, comparison was made with Goose’s Hertfordshire study, with studies of Medway, Kent, Leicester, and with Hinde and the two Hampshire workhouses. How do we know what is a typical workhouse population? We can only compare the findings of historians with our research but it then needs to be set against the local economy. Comparisons with workhouse populations in other unions provide a fuller picture of workhouse population and relief practices. The conclusion drawn from the discussions and data was that the able-bodied population in Belper was similar to that of Basingstoke and Hertfordshire while that of Cheltenham was nearer to Winchester. Both Belper and Basingstoke had a similar

percentage of inmates who were children in their workhouses. The workhouse population in Belper was found to have a similar profile in 1881 to that of Leicester, Medway and Kent. I have concluded that Belper's workhouse population was much closer to the 'typical' workhouse population than Cheltenham.

The discussion on emigration policy showed that only Cheltenham used emigration as a means to reduce pauper numbers with application from paupers in Belper being refused. The first major recording of emigration applications was in 1850 and further applications to emigrate appeared in the board minutes in the 1870s, mainly of children and those under twenty, who were sent out in small batches to Quebec. This was one aspect where the policies of Cheltenham and Belper boards differed.

The focus in the 1870s was around the 'crusade' against out-relief. At the start of the crusade there was a reduction in the number of paupers receiving relief but in the long run the statistics show that, nationally, the number of paupers was not reduced. Out-relief expenditure as a percentage of total expenditure on relief fell in Cheltenham, and the surrounding unions showed a fall between 1865 and 1878 (chapter 4, table 4.9), indicating that the crusade against out-relief had its effect, but in Belper the ratio of out-relief expenditure to indoor relief actually rose slightly during this period. Although the population of Cheltenham and Belper unions were similar, Cheltenham's expenditure on relief was considerably greater and the pattern of relief expenditure was very different in each union.

It was shown that relief expenditure later in the nineteenth century was greater in Cheltenham than Belper, but before the 1834 Act Belper parish expended more on out-relief than Cheltenham parish. The abstract and returns of 1804 showed that Cheltenham relieved a greater number of paupers on less money. Relief costs rose in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century with expenditure on the poor doubling between the 1780s and 1802-3. Only small numbers of paupers received relief in the workhouse, the majority receiving out-relief. The number of indoor paupers in Cheltenham increased in the late 1830s and 1840s, as did the number of paupers on out-relief, and it was the same for the amount spent on relief (chapter 2, table 2.6). No comparable figures were found for Belper. By the 1860s the number of paupers receiving relief in Cheltenham was double the number receiving out-relief in Belper. The amount of out-relief paid in Cheltenham

was also double that of Belper despite the unions containing similar-sized populations. How do my cases fit into the national pattern of relief expenditure and numbers of paupers? The national statistics show that paupers in England and Wales receiving out-relief as a percentage of total relief fell from 88 per cent in 1851 to 57 per cent in 1911. The pattern in Cheltenham showed that paupers receiving out-relief as a percentage of total relief was much higher than England and Wales but this fell substantially to almost the national percentage in 1911. The pattern in Belper was not the same as the national pattern with a fall of just 15 per cent between 1851 and 1911, compared to a fall of 30 per cent on the national pattern. Paupers in England and Wales as a percentage of total population fell from 5 per cent to 2 per cent as did the percentage of paupers in Belper union. The percentage of paupers remained high in Cheltenham in 1861 and 1871 but fell to the national percentage in 1911 (table 7.1).

Crowther had found that by the 1890s there were twice the number of out-door as indoor paupers, but was this the case in Belper and Cheltenham? Table 6.4 (chapter 6) showed this to be the case in both unions for the under 16s and 16 to 65 age categories. In the 1890s Cheltenham spent a higher amount per head of population on poor law expenditure, 6s 1d compared to just 4s 4d for Belper.

Table 7.1 Paupers in England and Wales, Belper and Cheltenham as a percentage of total population, and paupers receiving out-relief as a percentage of total relief in England and Wales, Belper and Cheltenham

Year	Paupers in England and Wales as a percentage of total population	Paupers in union as a percentage of total union population		Paupers receiving out-relief as a percentage of total relief in England and Wales	Paupers receiving out-relief as a percentage of total relief in union	
		Cheltenham	Belper		Cheltenham	Belper
1851	5%		4%	88%		86%
1861	4%	6%	3%	80%	87%	86%
1871/2	5%	6%	3%	81%	92%	88%
1881	3%		3%	71%	84%	
1891	3%	4%		68%	78%	
1901	2%		2%	63%		80%
1911	2%	2%	2%	57%	55%	71%

Source: Tables 3.8 to 3.11; 4.1; 6.1; 6.5; DRO, D19 C/W 6/24; *Second Annual Report of the Local Government Board, 1872-3*, vol. XXIX.1 [C.748] (1873); K. Williams, *From Pauperism to Poverty* (London, 1981), table 4.5, pp. 158-162.

Investigations of admissions to the workhouse, using the admission registers show that the peak periods for workhouse admissions during the year were different, reflecting the occupations and economy in each union. Previously, each chapter (3, 4 and 6) considered admissions for just one census or groups of years. Table 7.2 shows the admissions to Cheltenham and Belper workhouse from 1858 to 1901 enabling the wider picture to be seen.

Table 7.2 Quarterly admissions to Belper and Cheltenham workhouse, 1858 to 1901

	Quarter ending 31 March	Quarter ending 30 June	Quarter ending 30 Sept.	Quarter ending 31 Dec.	Total N. admitted to workhouse during year
Belper					
1858	137	120	77	99	433
1867	88	84	92	82	346
1868	93	85	91	110	379
1869	105	98	103	113	419
1870	79	69	83	62	293 lowest
1880	105	116	131	112	464 highest
1890	76	62	73	88	299
1891	99	84	101	106	390
1892	88	99	86	107	380
1900/1	79 (1901)			100 (1900)	179
Cheltenham					
1858	127	113	124	159	523
1867	160	147	145	164	616 highest
1868	133	129	168	147	577
1869	135	127	163	175	600
1870	138	101	90	174	503
1880	67	122	95	106	390
1890	97	86	69	87	339 lowest
1891	93	117	80	94	384
1892	122	108	125	129	484
1900/1	128 (1901)			122 (1900)	250

Source: Tables 3.6 and 6.7; Figure 4.4.

Note: figures in red represent the highest number admitted in one quarter in that year.

There was no consistency to the numbers admitted quarterly to the workhouses. In the earlier years Cheltenham admitted the highest number in the December quarter while Belper admissions, in the main, were at their highest in the March quarter. If Jackson's findings on admissions to Kent and Medway workhouses in 1881 were typical of the rest of England then Belper and Cheltenham were not typical in their admissions to the workhouse, or in the peaks and troughs of the yearly admissions.

The main discussion in chapter 5 was whether the management and availability of charity in these two unions was similar or very different, and the role the 'economy of makeshifts' played in assisting the poor to remain at home. There was greater charitable provision in Cheltenham than Belper, and the availability of charity and charitable institutions in Cheltenham fits in with the prosperity of the union population, with greater assistance to its elderly poor. Belper union benefitted from the philanthropy of its mill

owners, mainly from the Strutt and Evans family, who provided housing, schools and shops for their workers. Temporary charity was of major importance in times of high unemployment or bad weather, and churches and relief committees in both unions established soup kitchens at various times of crisis. Cheltenham and Belper had few almshouse places and the unions differed to what was available in the rest of England and Wales.

What happened to Poor Law Provision after 1914?

The central body administering the poor law changed in 1919 from the Local Government Board to the Ministry of Health (MH). With local government reorganisation in 1929 the problems of the workhouse did not disappear. Economy and efficiency were two reasons for the new poor law Act,

in the hope that...they would secure a better value in the future for the money of the ratepayers...[than] they had in the past...In our existing health services...[there was] waste and inefficiency...because they had two different bodies charged with the function of treating numerous cases which required specialised treatment.

Under the 1929 Act it was hoped that there would be great improvement in the management of the poor and the infirmaries by concentrating the functions under one authority.⁴ The new Act transferred poor law work to local authorities including management of indoor and out-door relief, domiciliary medical treatment and control of vagrancy. Two committees managed administration of the new Act, the public assistance committee of the County Council to administer the general poor law in the county and the guardians' committee, composed of urban and rural council members, to function much as they did in the unions.⁵ The *Gloucestershire Echo's* lengthy report considered that it was the

black sheep among the boards which largely influenced the Conservative Ministry of Health to abolish the 1834 system in favour of one merging the poor law in the wide county administration. It remains to be seen whether the recipients of poor relief will be in any way benefited. One thing is tolerably certain – the cost to the ratepayers will be more.⁶

⁴ *The Times*, 28 March 1929, issue 45163, p. 16.

⁵ *The Belper News*, 21 March 1930, p. 2.

⁶ *Gloucestershire Echo*, 27 March 1930.

The Act recommended that the 'local authorities should secure the advantages of the ripe experience possessed by many guardians of the poor.'⁷ For example, Mr Lynam, a guardian in the Belper union, was appointed to the area guardians' committee for mid-Derbyshire and was aware of current cases given relief in Belper.⁸

The workhouse test and the name 'pauper' disappeared but poverty remained. Although the general mixed workhouse was to disappear, in-house care was still required for the sick and elderly and this was provided through specialist institutions provided by the county councils.⁹ It wasn't until 1930 that the poor law unions and the boards of guardians were abolished. Provision for the poor was then administered by public assistance committees of the county and county borough councils, overseen by the Ministry of Health. Applicants for assistance were still scrutinized. Workhouses, infirmaries and children's homes were managed by the local authority and out-relief was the responsibility of the unemployment assistance committee.¹⁰ As Crowther stated:

The Local Government Act of 1929 was intended to phase out the general mixed workhouse and place inmates in specialised institutions under county control, but the Act was not innovatory either in its principles or its effects.¹¹

The *Gloucestershire Echo* reported on the last meeting of the Cheltenham board of guardians, 94 years after its founding. Cheltenham had just six chairmen of the board, Mr William Frederick Hicks-Beach serving for 39 years from 1884 to 1923. The reporter commented that this was a small number of chairmen. The number of guardians attending board meetings was considerably higher in the 1920s than in the nineteenth century. In Belper there was an average of 37 guardians attending board meetings in 1928, including six women.¹² At the penultimate meeting of the Belper board the indoor workhouse staff delivered

a united expression of our cordial thanks and deep appreciation for the very kindly and considerate manner you have treated each officer...memory of many happy years under your control...and the great experience thus gained by members of your staff will greatly help them in the new conditions of service.¹³

⁷ *The Times*, 'The Reform of Local Government, The New Act', 11 April 1929, issue 45174, p. 8.

⁸ DRO, D19 C/W 1/31, 29 March 1930.

⁹ M. Crowther, 'The later years of the workhouse, 1890 – 1929' in P. Thane (ed.), *The Origins of British Social Policy* (London, 1978), p. 37.

¹⁰ S. Fowler, *Workhouse, the People, the Places, the Life behind Doors* (Kew, 2007), pp. 214-5.

¹¹ Crowther, 'Later years', p. 37.

¹² DRO, D19 C/W 1/31, minutes of board 1928.

¹³ DRO, D19 C/W 1/31, 15 March 1930.

The master and matron at Belper workhouse (Mr and Mrs Grattan) were congratulated on their long service to the inmates, 25 years in post, and Mr Gee, the chairman of the board, noted that ‘the attitude of the master and matron to the inmates was not in the form of master and servant, but friends and comrades.’¹⁴

The thought of entering an institution that was the same as hitherto, except in name, still gave rise to fear and dread, particularly among the elderly. Richard Hefford died in Boundary House, Derby in June 1929, and to look at the house name it appeared just to be a nursing home. In fact this old people’s home was previously the Derby workhouse. Richard spent his last days in the former workhouse having survived most of his life without assistance from poor relief.¹⁵

Workhouse numbers rose after the end of the First World War when soldiers returned seeking work, but were not to reach the pre-war total until the 1930s. By 1927 the amount paid in out-relief was three times the pre-war amount.¹⁶ By 1920 the number of applicants for poor relief nationally had reached 516,418, rising to over one million by 1921, and at the time of the general strike in 1926 to nearly two million.¹⁷ High unemployment after the First World War, particularly in the industrial cities of the north and Midlands, and London’s East End, led to one in eight of the working population being out of work by 1926.¹⁸ We can see the effects of unemployment in both unions. In Cheltenham the newspaper reported in February 1920 that the manager of the employment exchange stated that approximately 1,100 were receiving unemployment grants totalling in all between £1,200 and £1,300 per week. Many of the people receiving assistance were demobilised men who had not found work. These were men who before the war were employed as domestic servants. Their former employers (middle and upper class) had fallen on hard times and had to reduce their expenditure and as the newspaper commented: ‘these are...the once comparatively well-to-do whose incomes have not expanded in

¹⁴ *The Belper News*, 4 April 1930, p. 2.

¹⁵ Derbyshire Record Office (DRO), Burial record index no. 4038, Nottingham Road Cemetery, Derby.

¹⁶ Crowther, ‘Later years’, p. 48.

¹⁷ K. Morrison, *The Workhouse: a Study of Poor Law Buildings in England* (London, 1999), p. 189.

¹⁸ Fowler, *Workhouse*, p. 215.

sympathy with the decreased purchasing power of the pound sterling.’¹⁹ In Belper the union population was hit by the coal crisis and the board granted relief in kind to miners’ wives and children. Each applicant was required to sign an agreement that this was a loan and would be repaid by a deduction from wages once circumstances improved. These payments stopped in October 1926.²⁰

The Importance of Cheltenham and Belper research

What contribution has studying this type of community made to our understanding of the new poor law? Why is the comparison of relief in Belper and Cheltenham useful to poor law studies? Having studied relief in two poor law unions from different parts of England it is beneficial to be able to show union and regional variations in the management of the poor. The different economic and social circumstances affect management of the poor, as does opposition by the board of guardians to central policies. All affect how the new poor law was experienced and the impact the 1834 Act had on a community. As Hallas demonstrated in his study of Upland areas of Northern England, ‘an assessment of poverty and poor relief in England cannot be based on southern evidence alone. For a proper understanding of the issues, scholars must draw on the experience of other regions.’²¹ The thesis has not drawn its evidence on a region but on two unions from different regions. Unlike Brundage’s and Williams’ study of poor relief in England and Wales and the generalisation they found, this thesis has shown the specific reaction of two unions to the central body. Both unions managed their paupers in their own way, but there were similarities between the two unions, notably in the composition of the workhouse population in 1901 and 1911.

King and Gritt argue for regional variations or variations within a county. Was it down to the system adopted by the local administration, the overseers or elites, or was poor relief seen as a short term measure.²² We cannot prove or disprove this argument based on a few regional analyses. Only by a detailed study of a wide range of areas and regions can

¹⁹ *The Cheltenham and County Looker-On*, No. 4374, ‘Eleven Hundred Unemployed’, 7 February 1920, p. 10.

²⁰ DRO, D19 C/W 1/31, board of guardian minutes, 15 May and 2 October 1926.

²¹ C.S. Hallas, ‘Poverty and pragmatism in the northern uplands of England: the North Yorkshire Pennines c1770-1900’, *Social History*, 25 (2000), p. 84.

²² A. Kidd, *State, Society and the Poor* (Basingstoke, 1999), p. 32.

we hope to draw a conclusion. Cheltenham and Belper studies have gone some way to starting this process of analysis of poor relief practices.

The new poor law was brought in to solve the problems of poverty in southern agricultural counties, to admit able-bodied poor seeking relief to the workhouse only and to stop out-relief, except to certain categories of poor. The Cheltenham and Belper study has shown that few able-bodied were in the workhouse. Can we prove that the Cheltenham and Belper findings were the 'norm' by studying a different community? The central body believed that the new poor law would bring uniformity to the provision of relief and the management of the poor. The 1834 Act failed to 'regularize local poor relief practices' and therefore there was variation between regions, between urban and rural, and between unions.²³ The Cheltenham and Belper study has shown this to be the case but also sets the basis for future studies of relief practices. By studying this type of community will it show if this is the reality or the central body's ideal?

The study has made extensive use of the census in the analysis of workhouse population for a period of 60 years. This has enabled a picture of the changes to the workhouse population to be seen. Other unions discussed by various historians have not seen the changing picture of workhouse population as only one or may be two census years have been analysed.²⁴ This thesis has used the 1911 census data for the first time in a study of unions and workhouse population and provides the basis for other studies to make a comparison of the composition of populations and the changes over time. Using this data further studies in other communities could offer an alternative view to the change to workhouse population.

It has been easier to compare Cheltenham and Belper to Goose's Hertfordshire study given the nature of the unions but, as with a number of studies, Goose has only provided analysis for a brief period of poor law history. A county analysis leads to a general assumption while taking the analysis to the level of a union shows the effect of welfare policies on a community. This shows that the analysis of Cheltenham and Belper

²³ D. Englander, *Poverty and Poor Law Reform in Nineteenth Century Britain, 1834-1914: from Chadwick to Booth* (London, 1998), p. 84.

²⁴ These include N. Goose, 'Workhouse populations in the mid-nineteenth century: the case of Hertfordshire', *Local Populations Studies*, 62 (1999), pp. 52-69; D.J. Jackson, 'Kent workhouse populations in 1881: a study based on the census enumerators' books', *Local Population Studies*, 69 (2002), pp. 51-66; Hurren, *Protesting about Pauperism*; J. Robin, 'The relief of poverty in mid-nineteenth century Colyton', *Rural History*, 1 (1990), pp. 193-218.

poor is unique in covering a wide timeframe, two unions in different regions (south-west and Midlands), and two unions with vastly different economies. Although King covered the two different unions of Bolton and the New Forest, both in terms of their population size and their economy, it was only for a brief period in their history.

Other areas of the research, including vagrancy, emigration and children, have provided an opportunity for an extended study of the way these three areas of the pauper population have been managed in other unions in local or regional research.

Is there an opportunity for a qualitative analysis of a region or county using admission or discharge registers which can provide details of physical or moral condition of the inmates? With a good survival of these registers then this is a possibility, but as stated in the introduction chapter, the survival of these registers is not good. Chapter 3 has shown the use of these registers in the qualitative analysis of Harriet Toplis and her experience of relief. Harriet was described in the register in 1843 as “a common prostitute and destitute” and in 1844 as “a very bad character”.²⁵

Little has been written on relief of the poor in Derbyshire; it is a neglected county as far as poor law studies are concerned. It would be interesting to set the findings on Belper in the context of the management of the poor in Derbyshire as a whole, and the findings on Cheltenham in the context of the management of the poor in ‘Spa’ unions. For example, one might compare Harrogate, Leamington, Bath, Tunbridge Wells, Buxton, Matlock Bath and other spa unions in England and Wales to the findings on workhouse population and relief practices in Cheltenham. Further research would look in greater detail at medical services in both unions, especially the extended infirmary provision from the mid-1880s and again in the 1920s and 1930s when hospital care was increased substantially and more nursing staff employed. A comparison would then be made to medical services in the other unions in Gloucestershire and Derbyshire to establish whether these services were administered along the lines set by the central body.

²⁵ DRO, D3390/1/2-4, admission registers 1843 and 1844.

Cheltenham and Belper provide a basis to study relief practices, management of the poor, charity and workhouse populations across the country over a wider timeframe.

The Passing of the Guardians

The board of guardians in the 649 Poor Law Unions of England and Wales are on the 31st inst. ceasing to function as an official part of local government. They made a gallant fight for their preservation believing that the principle they embodied – that of direct election by, and direct responsibility to, the ratepayers in respect of poor-relief expenditure, is the sound one. That view has been overborne by Parliament, and henceforth public assistance is to be vested in the County Authorities.²⁶

²⁶ *Gloucestershire Echo*, 27 March 1930.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Primary Sources

- Derbyshire Record Office**
D19 C/W 1/1-26 Minutes, Board of Guardians
D19 C/W 6/4-26 Belper Guardians, correspondence
D3390/1/2-25 Admission and Discharge Registers
D19 C/W 10/1 Summary of Report of Royal Commission on Poor Law (1905-6), reprint from *The Times*
D19 C/W 6/23 Circular, *Children under the Poor Law* (1910)
Q/AR 4/3 Annual Expenditure on Poor
Q/AR 4/1 (3272/4) Abstract and Returns relative to the Expenses and Maintenance of the Poor
D3390/3/1-2 Birth and Death Registers
- Crich parish
D1428 A/PO 145 Inventory of Crich workhouse goods
D2365 A/PO 13/2 Crich pensions
- Wirksworth parish
D2372 A/PO1 Cash book
- St Peter's parish, Belper
D2609 A/PF 1/7 Charity Commissioner papers
D2609 A/PI 16/1 papers relating to St Peters Parish
- Gloucestershire Archives**
G/CH 8a/1-37 Minutes, Board of Guardians
G/CH 60/1-35 Admission and Discharge Registers
G/CH 57/4 Cheltenham union correspondence with Local Government Board
G/CH 8L Vagrancy Committee papers
D2465 1/25 Caseworker papers for Charity Organisation Society
- Cheltenham parish
P78/1 SC 1/5/1 Cheltenham Old Charity School 1853-63
P78/1 CH 6/4 Almshouse recommendations
P78/1 OV 2/1-3; 9/2 overseer papers
P78 VE 2/1, 2/4 accounts
- Prestbury parish
P78/1 VE2/2 Notice of Gilberts Act
P254 CH/7 charity papers
P254 OV 2/1 and VE 2/2 overseer and accounts
P76 Inventory of workhouse contents
- Badgeworth parish
P31 OV 3/3 Settlement certificates and removal orders
- Leckhampton parish
P198a OV 2/2 & 8/2 quarterly accounts
P198/1 OV 8/2 overseer accounts
P198a OV 3/4 settlement examinations
D269 B/F 97 and DC/E 88/31 parish papers
P105 OV 2/1 overseer accounts 1798-1836
CBR C3/3/5/1/2 Deed of Trust Pates Almshouses
Q/RSf1 Cheltenham Loan Fund Society
- Derbyshire Local Studies**
GF900 BEL exerts from Derby Mercury

**The National Archives,
Public Record Office** MH 12/1840-1880 Correspondence files, Belper
MH 12/3912-3952 Correspondence files, Cheltenham
MH 9/2 and 9/4 Officers of the Unions
MH 32 Poor Law Inspectors
HLG 66/2 Register of Orders

**The National Monuments
Record** NBR o:100618, Report of St. Paul's Hospital formerly
Cheltenham Union Workhouse (1993)

Census Enumerator Books HO107/1973, 2144; HO107 1974, 1968, 2149, 2147
RG9/2509, 1303
RG10/2675, 3584
RG11/2577, 3413
RG11/2564, 2578, 3433, 3446
RG12/2048, 2742
RG13/2461, 3228

Directory of Derbyshire, 1829.

Kelly's Directory of Gloucestershire, 1842, 1851, 1856, and 1890.

Kelly's Directory of the Counties of Derby, Nottingham, Leicester and Rutland, 1891.

Kelly's Directory of Derbyshire, 1895.

P.O. Directory of Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire, 1855.

White's Directory of Derbyshire, 1857 on www.belper-research.com/places/belper/white1857.html

Newspapers and Leaflets

Cheltenham Chronicle

Cheltenham Examiner

Cheltenham Free Press

Derby and Chesterfield Reporter

Derby Mercury

Gloucestershire Echo

The Belper News

The Cheltenham and County Looker-On

The Times, www.timesonline.co.uk.

Amber Valley Visitor Centre leaflets: *Belper Nailers* (No. 6); *Belper Knitters* (No. 5).

Cheltenham Museum Art Gallery.

Official Publications

Abstract and Returns relative to the Expense and Maintenance of the Poor (1804).

Annual Reports of the Poor Law Commission, Poor Law Board and Local Government Board.

BPP, Population 3, 1841 census.

Census of Great Britain, 1851, Vol. I (1852).

Digest of the English Census of 1871 (London, 1873).

Census of England and Wales, 1881, Vol. II (1883).

Census of England and Wales, 1901, County of Gloucester and County of Derbyshire (1902).
Census of England and Wales, 1911, Vol. II (1912).
Report from the Select Committee on the Poor Law with the Minutes of Evidence taken before the Committee (1817).
Royal Commission of Inquiry into Administration and Practical Operation of Poor Laws, Tenth Volume, Appendix (A), Reports of Assistant Commissioners, Part I (Vol. XXVIII – sess. 1834).
The Report of the Commissioners to enquire concerning charities in England and Wales relating to the County of Gloucester, 1819-1837 (1890).

Secondary Sources (The place of publication is London unless otherwise stated)

Books

A. Barrass, *Belper looking into the Past* (Belper, 1994).
 Belper Historical Society, *Belper, a study of its History based on Visual Evidence* (Belper, 1981).
 S. Blake, *Cheltenham, a Pictorial History* (Chichester, 1996).
 S. Blake and R. Beacham, *The Book of Cheltenham* (Buckingham, 1982).
 C. Booth, *The Aged Poor in England and Wales* (1894).
 C. Booth, *Pauperism, a Picture and Endowment of Old Age* (1892).
 H. Bosanquet, *The Poor Law Report of 1909* (1909).
 A. Brundage, *The English Poor Laws, 1700-1930* (Basingstoke, 2002).
 Charity Organisation Society, *Charity Organisation Work in Cheltenham: Appeal for Help* (1894).
 S.G. and E.O.A.C. Checkland (eds.), *The Poor Law Report of 1834* (1974).
 G. Dawes, *Tale of Crich* (Fritchley, 1988).
 M.A. Crowther, *The Workhouse System 1834-1929: the History of an English Social Institution* (1983).
 F. Driver, *Power and Pauperism: the workhouse system, 1834-1884* (Cambridge, 1993).
 F. Eden, *The State of the Poor: a History of the Labouring Classes in England, II* (1797), in Eighteenth Century Collections Online (ECCO), (7.3.2008).
 C.R. Elrington (ed.), *VCH Gloucestershire 7* (1981).
 C.R. Elrington (ed.), *VCH Gloucestershire 8* (1968).
 D. Englander, *Poverty and Poor Law Reform in Nineteenth Century Britain, 1834-1914: from Chadwick to Booth* (1998).
 S. Fowler, *Philanthropy and the Poor Law in Richmond, 1836-1871* (Richmond, 1991).
 S. Fowler, *Workhouse, the People, the Places, the Life Behind Doors* (Kew, 2007).
 D. Fraser (ed.), *The New Poor Law in the Nineteenth Century* (1976).
 D. Fraser, *The Evolution of the British Welfare State: a History of Social Policy since the Industrial Revolution* (2003).
 J. Goding, *Norman's History of Cheltenham* (1863).
 D.R. Green, *From Artisans to Paupers: Economic Change and Poverty in London, 1790-1870* (Aldershot, 1995).
 A. Hallett, *Almshouses* (Princes Risborough, 2004).
 G. Hart, *A History of Cheltenham* (Leicester, 1965).

- G. Hickling, *Duffield in Appletree* (St. Albans, n.d.).
- O. Hill, *The Work of volunteers in the Organisation of Charity in Victorian London – Homes of the London Poor* from www.victorianlondon.org/publications/homesofthepoor-4.htm.
- D.H. Hufton, *The Poor in Eighteenth-century France, 1750-1789* (Oxford, 1974).
- R. Humphreys, *Sin, Organized Charity and the Poor Law in Victorian England* (Basingstoke, 1995).
- E. Hurren, *Protesting about Pauperism: Poverty, Politics and Poor Relief in late-Victorian England, 1870-1900* (Woodbridge, 2007).
- R. Johnson, *A History of Alfreton* (Alfreton, 1969).
- A. Kidd, *State, Society and the Poor* (Basingstoke, 1999).
- S. King, *Poverty and Welfare in England, 1700-1850: a Regional Perspective* (Manchester, 2000).
- S. King and A. Tomkins (eds.), *The Poor in England, 1700-1850: an economy of Makeshifts* (Manchester, 2003).
- N. Land, *Victorian Workhouse: a study of the Bromsgrove Union Workhouse* (Studley, 1990).
- N. Longmate, *The Workhouse: a Social History* (2003).
- L. Hollen Lees, *The Solidarities of Strangers: the English Poor Laws and the People, 1700-1948* (Cambridge, 1998).
- E.C. Midwinter, *Social Administration in Lancashire, 1830-1860: Poor Law, Public Health and Police* (Manchester, 1969).
- W.J. Mommsen and W. Mock (eds.), *The Emergence of the Welfare State in Britain and Germany* (1981).
- K. Morrison, *The Workhouse: a Study of Poor Law Buildings in England* (1999).
- C.L. Mowat, *The Charity Organisation Society, 1869-1913: its Ideas and Work* (1961).
- P. Naylor (ed.), *An Illustrated History of Belper and its Environs* (Belper, 2000).
- S.G. Nicholls, *A History of the English Poor Law, Vol. II, 1714-1853* (1904).
- T. Novak, *Poverty and the State: an Historical Sociology* (Milton Keynes, 1988).
- S.R. Ottaway, *The Decline of Life: Old Age in Eighteenth-Century England* (Cambridge, 2004).
- W. Page (ed.), *VCH Derbyshire 2* (1907).
- M. Paget (ed.), *A History of Charlton Kings* (Gloucester, 1988).
- E. Pankhurst, *My Own Story*, www.spartacus.schoolnet.co.uk/Lpoor1834.htm.
- J.R. Poynter, *Society and Pauperism: English Ideas on Poor Relief, 1795-1834* (1969).
- M.E. Rose, *The Relief of Poverty, 1834-1914* (1972, 1986 edition).
- K.D.M. Snell, *Annals of the Labouring Poor: Social Change and Agrarian England, 1660-1900* (Cambridge, 1985).
- K.D.M. Snell, *Parish and Belonging: Community, Identity and Welfare in England and Wales, 1700-1950* (Cambridge, 2006).
- P. Thane, *Ageing and Economy: Historical Issues* (1934).
- T. Thomas, *Poor Relief in Merthyr Tydfil Union in Victorian Times* (Glamorgan, 1992).
- W.R. Watson, *The Illustrated History of Duffield* (Derby, 1986).
- S. Webb and B. Webb, *English Poor Law Policy* (London, 1910).
- S. Webb and B. Webb, *English Poor Law History, Part II: the Last Hundred Years, Vol. 1* (1929, London, 1963).

- K. Williams, *From Pauperism to Poverty* (1981).
 C. Willott, *Belper and its People* (Belper, 1894).
 P. Wood, *Poverty and the Workhouse in Victorian Britain* (Stroud, 1991).

Journal Articles and Chapters in Books

- W. Apfel and P. Dunkley, 'English rural society and the new poor law: Bedfordshire 1834-47', *Social History*, 10 (1985), pp. 37-68.
 D. Ashforth, 'Urban poor law' in D. Fraser (ed.) *The New Poor Law in the Nineteenth Century* (London, 1976), pp. 128-148.
 R. Beamish, 'Statistical notice of the town and parish of Cheltenham', *Journal of the Statistical Society of London*, 20 (1857), pp. 397-423.
 A.L. Bowley, 'The statistics of wages in the United Kingdom during the last hundred years (Part I) agricultural wages', *Journal of the Royal Statistical Society*, 61 (1898), pp. 702-22.
 J. Broad, 'Parish economies of welfare, 1650-1834', *The Historical Journal*, 42 (1999), pp. 985-1006.
 A. Brundage, 'Private charity and the 1834 poor law', www.class.csupomona.edu/his/Tonyart.htm (5.2.2007).
 R. Burlison, 'Acts of charity', *Ancestors* (June 2006).
 Rev. W.E. Chadwick, 'The relief of the deserving poor', *Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge* (1898).
 M.A. Crowther, 'The later years of the workhouse, 1890-1929' in P. Thane (ed.), *The Origins of British Social Policy* (1978).
 C. Dickens, 'A walk in a workhouse' from *Household Words* (25 May 1850), www.readbookonline.net/read/Online/2523 (8.7.2007).
 A. Digby, 'The labour market and the continuity of social policy after 1834: the case of the eastern counties', *Economic History Review*, 28 (1975), pp. 69-83.
 A. Digby, 'The rural poor law' in D. Fraser (ed.), *The New Poor Law in the Nineteenth Century* (1976).
 P. Dunkley, 'The hungry forties and the new poor law: a case study', *The Historical Journal*, 17 (1974), pp. 329-46.
 R. Dyson, 'The experience of poverty in a rural community: Broughton, north Lincolnshire, 1760-1835', *Local Population Studies*, 70 (2003), pp. 11-28.
 S. Fowler, 'Vagrancy in mid-Victorian Richmond, Surrey', *Local Historian*, 21 (1991), pp. 66-9.
 D. Fraser, 'The English poor laws and the origins of the British welfare state' in W.J. Mommsen and W. Mock (eds), *The Emergence of the Welfare State in Britain and Germany* (London, 1981).
 N. Goose, 'Workhouse populations in the mid-nineteenth century: the case of Hertfordshire', *Local Population Studies*, 62 (1999), pp. 52-69.
 N. Goose, 'Poverty, old age and gender in nineteenth century England: the case of Hertfordshire', *Continuity and Change*, 20 (2005), pp. 351-84.
 N. Goose, Summary of 'Importance of the English almshouse as part of the mixed economy of welfare', Family and Community Historical Research Society (FACHRS), *FACHRS Newsletter*, 9 (July 2008).
 D.R. Green, 'Pauper protests: power and resistance in early nineteenth-century London workhouses', *Social History*, 31 (2006), pp. 137-159.

- C.S. Hallas, 'Poverty and pragmatism in the northern uplands of England: the north Yorkshire Pennines, c.1770-1900', *Social History*, 25 (2000), pp. 67-84.
- M. Hanly, 'The economy of makeshifts and the role of the poor law: a game of chance' in S. King and A. Tomkins (eds), *The Poor in England, 1700-1850: an Economy of Makeshifts* (Manchester, 2003), pp. 76-99.
- B. Harrison, 'Philanthropy and the Victorians', *Victorian Studies*, 9 (1966), pp. 353-74.
- J. Hill, 'The Dorking emigration scheme of 1832', *Family and Community History*, 7 (2004), pp. 115-28.
- A. Hinde and F. Turnbull, 'The populations of two Hampshire workhouses, 1851-1861', *Local Population Studies*, 61 (1998), pp. 38-53.
- S. Horrell and J. Humphries, 'Old questions, new data and alternative perspectives: families' living standards in the industrial revolution', *Journal of Economic History*, 52 (1992), pp. 849-80.
- G. Howells, 'On account of their disreputable characters: parish assisted emigration from rural England, 1834-1860', *History*, 292 (2003), pp. 587-605.
- E.H. Hunt, 'Paupers and pensioners: past and present', *Ageing and Society*, 9 (1990), pp. 407-430.
- D. Hunter, 'Vagrancy in the east and west Ridings of Yorkshire during the late Victorian period', *Local Historian*, 36 (2006), pp. 185-94.
- E. Hurren, 'Agricultural trade unionism and the crusade against outdoor relief: poor law politics in the Brixworth union, Northamptonshire, 1870-75', *Agricultural History Review*, 48 (2000), pp. 200-222.
- E. Hurren, 'Welfare-to-work schemes and a crusade against outdoor relief in the Brixworth union, Northamptonshire, in the 1880s', *Family and Community History*, 4 (2001), pp. 19-30.
- E. Hurren, 'A radical historian's pursuit of rural history: the political career and contribution of Reverend Dr John Charles Cox, c.1844 to 1919', *Rural History*, 19 (2008), pp. 81-103.
- D.J. Jackson, 'Kent workhouse populations in 1881: a study based on the census enumerators' books', *Local Population Studies*, 69 (2002), pp. 51-66.
- D.J. Jackson, 'The Medway union workhouse, 1876-1881: a study based on the admission and discharge registers and the census enumerators' books', *Local Population Studies*, 75 (2005), pp. 11-32.
- S. King, 'Reconstructing lives: the poor, the poor law and welfare in Calverley, 1650-1820', *Social History*, 22 (1997), pp. 318-38.
- S. Lloyd, 'Agents in their own concerns? Charity and the economy of makeshifts in eighteenth century Britain' in S. King and A. Tomkins (eds), *The Poor in England, 1700-1850: an Economy of Makeshifts* (Manchester, 2003), pp. 100-136.
- M. Mackinnon, 'English poor law policy and the crusade against outrelief', *Journal of Economic History*, 47 (1987), pp. 603-25.
- G. Matthews, 'The search for a cure for vagrancy in Worcestershire', *Midland History*, 11 (1986), pp. 110-6.
- N. McCord, 'The poor law and philanthropy' in D. Fraser (ed.), *The New Poor Law in the Nineteenth Century* (London, 1976).
- N. McCord, 'The implementation of the 1834 Poor Law Amendment Act on Tyneside', *International Review of Social History*, XIV (1969), pp. 90-108.

- H. Osborn, 'In darkest London', *Ancestors* (March 2008), pp. 26-30.
- S. Page, 'Pauperism and the Leicester Workhouse in 1881', *Transactions of the Leicestershire Archaeological and Historical Society*, 63 (1989), pp. 85-95.
- M.E. Roberts, 'Head versus heart? Voluntary associations and charity organization in England, c.1700-1850', in H. Cunningham and J. Innes (eds.), *Charity, Philanthropy and Reform: from the 1690s to 1850* (Basingstoke, 1998).
- J. Robin, 'The relief of poverty in mid-nineteenth century Colyton', *Rural History*, 1 (1990), pp. 193-218.
- M.E. Rose, 'The allowance system under the new poor law', *Economic History Review*, 19 (1966), pp. 607-20.
- M.E. Rose, 'The crisis of poor relief in England, 1860-1890' in W.J. Mommsen and W. Mock (eds.), *The Emergency of the Welfare State in Britain and Germany* (London, 1981).
- P. Searby, 'The relief of the poor in Coventry, 1830-1863', *Historical Journal*, 20 (1977), pp. 345-61.
- E. Smith, *Provisional Workhouses*, appendix to report (London, 1867-8), <http://parlipapers.chadwyck.co.uk> (5.1.2009).
- K.D.M. Snell, 'Settlement, poor law and the rural historian: new approaches and opportunities', *Rural History*, 3 (1992), pp. 145-72.
- B.K. Song, 'Landed interest, local government and the labour market in England', *Economic History Review*, 51 (1998), pp. 465-88.
- B.K. Song, 'Continuity and change in English rural society: the formation of poor law unions in Oxfordshire', *English Historical Review*, 114 (1999), pp. 314-38.
- S. Taylor, *Education in Crich – a brief history* in <http://freepages.genealogy.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~dlhdby> (29.8.2008).
- P. Thane, 'Women and the poor law in Victorian and Edwardian England', *History Workshop*, 6 (1978), pp. 30-51.
- P. Thane, 'The working class and state welfare in Britain, 1880-1914', *The Historical Journal*, 27 (1984), pp. 877-900.
- A. Tomkins, 'Almshouse versus workhouse: residential welfare in eighteenth century Oxford', *Family and Community History*, 7 (2004), pp. 45-58.
- A.W. Vincent, 'The poor law reports of 1909 and the social theory of the Charity Organisation Society', *Victorian Studies*, 27 (1984), pp. 343-63.
- R. Vorspan, 'Vagrancy and the new poor law in late-Victorian and Edwardian England', *English Historical Review*, 92 (1977), pp. 59-81.

Unpublished

- R. Edlin, 'Attitudes to poverty and social reform in Cheltenham, 1870-1899' (unpublished MA thesis, University of Gloucester, 2003).

Electronic Sources

- www.visionofbritain.org.uk
- www.derbyphotos.co.uk/areas_a_h/darley.htm
- www.derwentvalleymills.org
- Mrs D.M. Howarth of Alderwasley,
<http://freepages.genealogy.rootsweb.com/~dlhdby/framework.htm>.
<http://users.ox.ac.uk/~peter/wh/Cheltenham/Chelt.shtml>.

<http://users.ox.ac.uk/~peter/wh/Belper/Belper.html>.
www.ihbc.org.uk/context_archives/58/titus/workhouse.html.
<http://www.workhouses.org.uk>.
www.sochealth.co.uk/history/poorlaw.htm.
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Poor_law.
www2.rgu.ac.uk/publicpolicy/introduction/history.htm.
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sunday_School.
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ragged_schools.