

**Charitable Provision for the Rural Poor: A Case Study of**  
**Policies and Attitudes in Northamptonshire in the First**  
**Half of the Nineteenth Century**

**By Bridget Lewis**

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**Charitable Provision for the Rural Poor: A Case Study of  
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**Abstract**

This thesis examines the role of private charity in the 'mixed economy of welfare' available to the rural poor in Northamptonshire in the first half of the nineteenth century. It is the first major study of this kind, as hitherto, historians of welfare have largely concentrated on the public charity of poor relief. It covers the basic needs of the poor, food, money, clothing, housing and access to land for fuel and cultivation and examines the various sources of private charity that addressed those needs. These were the endowed charities, the benevolence of individuals, mainly the major landowners and the clergy, and the establishment of the self-help charitable initiatives of allotment schemes, clothing societies and coal clubs. For each source, this thesis explores the key questions of how valuable the resource was to the poor, who were the main recipients and what factors affected the choice of recipients. Thus, it examines the gender, the stage in the life cycle and the respectability of the recipients. It also analyses the importance of residency in an 'open' or a 'close' parish in terms of the amount and quality of assistance given to the poor.

This thesis also examines the extent of changes in national attitudes to private charitable provision with an emphasis on self-help and on more discrimination in the choice of recipients, mirroring the changes in poor relief in the period. Although these changes were in their infancy in the early decades of the nineteenth century, they became prominent in rural parishes in the second half. Thus this thesis shows that the years up to 1850 were critical in that the changes in charitable provision which arose out of the pressures encountered by rural society in that period came to be widely adopted by the end of the century.

(100,247 words)

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**Abbreviations used in the thesis**

BL	The British Library
BLMD	The British Library Manuscript Department
CC	The Charity Commission
NCL	Northampton Central Library
NRO	Northamptonshire Record Office
PP	Parliamentary Papers
PRO	Public Record Office
UCL	University of Cambridge Library
WSRO	West Suffolk Record Office

## Chapter One

### Introduction

#### 1.1: The study of rural charities in context

This thesis will examine a much-neglected area in English social history of the early nineteenth century, namely the nature, extent and broader social significance of voluntary charity to the rural poor. It will evaluate the wide range of agents involved in the provision of charity - the endowed charitable trusts, individuals and subscribers to self-help societies.<sup>1</sup> It will also assess the contribution of different social groups –

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<sup>1</sup> It will, therefore, take a more holistic approach to understanding charitable provision in rural society following on from the work of John Broad. See J Broad, 'Parish Economies of Welfare 1650-1834', *The Historical Journal*, 42 (1999), pp.985-1006. Apart from this article the detailed studies of charities so far have tended to concentrate on a single agency and have not developed the combined approach that will be used in this thesis. For endowed charitable trusts see J Robin, 'The Relief of Poverty in Mid Nineteenth-Century Colyton', *Rural History*, 1 (1990), pp.193-218; B Stapleton, 'Inherited Poverty and Life-cycle Poverty: Odiham, Hampshire, 1650-1850', *Social History*, 18 (October 1993) pp.339-341; M Baker & M Collins, 'The Governance of Charitable Trusts in the Nineteenth Century: the West Riding of Yorkshire', *Social History*, 27 (May 2002), pp.162-183; S Hindle, "'Not by Bread Only"? Common Right, Parish Relief and Endowed Charity in a Forest Economy, c.1600-1800', Chapter 2 in S King & A Tomkins, *The Poor in England 1700-1850: An Economy of Makeshifts*, (forthcoming), pp.51-99. The work of the Charity Commission has been addressed by D Owen, 'The "Domesday Book" and the Charity Commission', Chapter 7 in his *English Philanthropy* (London, 1969), pp.182-208; R Tompson, *The Charity Commission and the Age of Reform* (London, 1979). For individual donors see D Roberts, 'The Patriarchy of Sussex', Chapter 4 in his *Paternalism in Early Victorian England* (London, 1979), pp.105-128; J Gerard, 'Lady Bountiful: Women of the Landed Classes and Rural Philanthropy', *Victorian Studies*, 30 (1987), pp.183-209; J Gerard, 'Country House Women', Chapter 5 in her *Country House Life* (Oxford, 1994), pp.115-141; D T Andrew, 'Noblesse Oblige Female Charity in an Age of Sentiment', Chapter 14 in J Brewer and S Staves, *Early Modern Conceptions of Property* (London, 1996), pp.275-300. For self-help charities the literature has concentrated on the allotment societies - D C Barnett, 'Allotments and the Problem of Rural Poverty, 1780-1840', in E L Jones and G E Mingay (eds.), *Land, Labour and Population in the Industrial Revolution: Essays presented to J D Chambers* (London, 1967), pp.162-183; D Crouch & C Ward, *The Allotment: its Landscape and Culture* (London, 1988) p.47; B Moselle, 'Allotments, Enclosure, and Proletarianization in Early Nineteenth-Century Southern England', *Economic History Review*, 47 (1995); J E Archer, 'The Nineteenth-Century Allotment: Half an Acre and a Row', *Economic History Review*, 50 (February 1997), pp.21-36; J Burchardt, *The Allotment Movement in England, 1793-1873* (Woodbridge, 2002). Other self-help charitable societies have been mentioned as being established in the nineteenth century, but no detailed analysis of them has yet been undertaken. See A Howkins, *Reshaping Rural England A Social History 1850-1925* (London, 1969) pp.61-92; P Horn, *Labouring Life in Victorian England* (Dublin, 1976), pp.16 & 34; W A Armstrong, 'Labour II: Food, Shelter and Self-Help, The Position of the Labourer in Rural Society', G E Mingay (ed.), *The Agrarian History of England and Wales Volume VI 1750-1850* (Cambridge, 1989), pp.729-755. Martin Gorsky has studied both the endowed charities and the voluntary and subscription societies in 19<sup>th</sup> century Bristol, M Gorsky, *Patterns of Philanthropy. Charity and Society in Nineteenth-Century Bristol* (Woodbridge, 1999)

landowners, clergy, farmers and the labouring poor. The primary focus will be the wide range of provision for the poor that assisted them in meeting their basic material needs – fuel, food, clothing, housing, pensions and casual alms payments. In the process another aim will be to uncover a potentially important aspect of the experience of being poor through a study of the complex mechanisms of charity giving and receiving. Charity has been studied more deeply in European countries<sup>2</sup> than in England where the unique importance of the poor law and the historical controversy about its reform in 1834 has resulted in an extensive literature on this subject and a consequent tendency to neglect other forms of provision.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>2</sup> For examples see K Norberg, Rich and Poor in Grenoble, 1600-1814 (Berkley, 1985); C Lis, Social Change and the Labouring Poor, Antwerp, 1770-1860 (London, 1986); S J Woolf, The Poor in Western Europe in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth centuries (London, 1986); C Jones, The Charitable Imperative: Hospitals and Nursing in Early Modern and Revolutionary France (London, 1989); M Lindemann, Patriots and Paupers: Hamburg, 1712-1830 (Oxford, 1990); S Cavallo, Systems of Charity in Turin, 1541-1789 (Cambridge, 1994); R Jütte, Poverty and Deviance in Early Modern Europe (Cambridge, 1994); C Jones, 'Some Recent Trends in the History of Charity', Chapter 3 in M Daunton (ed.), Charity, Self-Interest and Welfare in the English Past (London, 1996), pp.51-64

<sup>3</sup> There is an extensive secondary literature on the reform and implementation of the New Poor Law in 1834. Some of the major post-1970 publications which mention poor law reform in rural areas in the first half of the nineteenth century are as follows: M E Rose (ed.), The English Poor Law, 1780-1930, (London, 1971); N C Edsall, The Anti-Poor Law Movement (Manchester, 1971); A Brundage, 'The Landed Interest and the New Poor Law: A Reappraisal of the Revolution in Government', Economic History Review, 87 (1972), pp.27-48; M E Rose, The Relief of Poverty 1834-1914 (London, 1972); P Dunkley, 'The Landed Interest and the New Poor Law: A Critical Note', Historical Journal, 88, 1972, pp.836-841; D Fraser, The Evolution of the British Welfare State (London, 1973); N Longmate, The Workhouse (London, 1974); P Dunkley, 'The Hungry Forties and the New Poor Law: A Case Study', Historical Journal, 17 (1974), pp.329-46; A Digby, 'The Labour Market and the Continuity of Social Policy after 1834: The Case of the Eastern Counties', Economic History Review, 2<sup>nd</sup> series, 28 (1975), pp.69-83; D Fraser (ed.), The New Poor Law in the Nineteenth Century (London, 1976); A Brundage, The Making of the New Poor Law: The Politics of Enquiry, Enactment and Implementation, 1832-39 (London, 1978); A Digby, Pauper Palaces (London, 1978); U R Q Henriques, Before the Welfare State: Social Administration in Early Industrial Britain (London, 1979); P Dunkley, 'Paternalism, the Magistracy and Poor Relief in England', International Review of Social History, 21 (1979), pp.371-97; A Digby, The Poor Law in Nineteenth-Century England and Wales (London, 1982); P Dunkley, The Crisis of the Old Poor Law in England, 1795-1834, (London, 1982); K Snell, Annals of the Labouring Poor: Social Change in Agrarian England 1660-1900 (Cambridge, 1985); W Apfel and P Dunkley, 'English Rural Society and the New Poor Law: Bedfordshire, 1834-47', Social History, 10 (1985), pp.37-68; A Brundage, 'The Making of the New Poor Law Debate: Redivivus', Past and Present, 127 (1990), pp.183-86; G R Boyer, An Economic History of the English Poor Law, 1750-1850 (Cambridge, 1990); F Driver, Power and Pauperism: The Workhouse System 1834-1844 (Cambridge, 1993); D Eastwood, 'Rethinking the Debates on the Poor Law in Early Nineteenth Century England', Utilitas, 6 (May 1994), pp.97-16; D Eastwood, Governing Rural England. Tradition and Transformation in Local Government, 1780-1840 (London, 1994); P Thane, 'Old People and their Families in the English Past' in M Daunton (ed.), Charity, Self Interest and Welfare in the English Past (London, 1996), pp.113-38; D Englander, Poverty and Poor Law Reform in 19<sup>th</sup> Century Britain 1834-1914 – From Chadwick to Booth (Essex, 1998); L Hollen Lees, The Solidarities of Strangers. The English Poor Laws and the People, 1700-1948 (Cambridge, 1998); A Kidd, State, Society and the Poor in Nineteenth Century

This is the first major study to concentrate on the wide range of voluntary charity available to the rural poor in the first half of the nineteenth century. It, therefore, addresses three substantial gaps in the current research on voluntary charity. Firstly, the existing work tends to focus on a single type of charitable provision whereas this study will take what could be broadly termed a multi-agency approach.<sup>4</sup> Secondly, while many historians have studied charity in the urban context, particularly concentrating on major cities where charity was abundant and where substantial archives survive, the rural context has been largely neglected.<sup>5</sup> This emphasis on urban society has also resulted in a tendency to concentrate on the development and role of national philanthropic societies rather than the small-scale local initiatives which were more significant in rural areas.<sup>6</sup> Thirdly, the stress on the urban charities, together with the large range and volume of sources that survive after 1850, has resulted in a proliferation of studies which concentrate on the second half of the nineteenth century. By developing a rural county-based study which focuses on the period 1800-1850 this thesis will help to redress these imbalances.

The years 1800 to 1850 are an important period in the study of rural society. They were marked by a severe crisis in rural social relationships. The period experienced

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England (Basingstoke, 1999); B K Song, 'Continuity and Change in English Rural Society: The Formation of Poor Law Unions in Oxfordshire', *English Historical Review*, 114 (1999), pp.314-338; S King, *Poverty and Welfare in England 1700-1850. A Regional Perspective* (Manchester, 2000); A Brundage, *The English Poor Laws, 1700-1930* (Basingstoke, 2002)

<sup>4</sup> See footnote 1.

<sup>5</sup> Charity in the urban context can be found in R Smith, 'Relief of Urban Poverty Outside the Poor Law, 1800-1850: A Study of Nottingham', *Midland History*, 4 (1974), pp.215-24; F Prochaska, *Women and Philanthropy in Nineteenth-Century England* (Oxford, 1980); N McCord, 'The Poor Law and Philanthropy', D Fraser (ed.), *The New Poor Law*, pp.87-110

<sup>6</sup> The chapters in David Owen's book relating to the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries concentrate on the establishment of metropolitan and national philanthropic societies. 'Charitable Enterprise in Early Industrial Society', 'The Challenge of Urban Poverty, 1820-1860' and 'The Contours of Early Victorian Benevolence', Chapters 4, 5 & 6 in D Owen, *English Philanthropy*, pp.97-133, 134-162, 163-181.



both the boom of the French wars and the subsequent depression of the post-war years, resulting in falling rents, rising prices and the problems of unemployment and underemployment caused by a rural overpopulation. Large parts of rural England were affected by a series of rural social protests, the most notable being the Swing riots between 1829 and 1831. However, until recently, little attention has been given to how charitable provision was affected by these tensions in rural society or to the importance of its role both materially and socially to provider and recipient. Building upon recent historiography that has begun to place a greater emphasis on the role of charity<sup>7</sup> and on a broader historical analysis of early nineteenth century social relations, this detailed study of charitable provision will provide the opportunity to explore six broad themes.

Firstly, this thesis will examine the role that charity played in the 'mixed economy of welfare' and the relative importance of charity within the overall balance of the different types of welfare provision. The 'mixed economy of welfare' has been defined as the balance of options utilised by the propertied and those in positions of authority in meeting the basic material needs of the poor.<sup>8</sup> These options included public bodies providing poor relief, charitable trusts and endowments, subscription societies and the essentially private charity of individual donors providing money, clothing, food and fuel.<sup>9</sup> Current attacks on the welfare state have changed the focus

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<sup>7</sup> J Broad, 'Parish Economies of Welfare'; S King & A Tomkins (eds.), *The Poor*

<sup>8</sup> J Innes, 'The "Mixed Economy of Welfare" in Early Modern England: Assessments of the Options from Hale to Malthus (c.1683-1803)', Chapter 7 in M Daunt (ed.), *Charity*, pp.139-180

<sup>9</sup> Endowed charities were 'those which operated through the establishment of trusts, either in deed or will, by which some form of capital was bequeathed, yielding an annual return to be directed at the donor's chosen target.' Subscription charities as the name suggests relied on regular donations from a list of subscribers. In the urban context they supported institutions such as 'hospitals, dispensaries, schools and homes for orphans, prostitutes or the disabled.', M Gorsky, *Patterns of Philanthropy*, pp. 40-41 & p.17. In this study subscription charities will concentrate on allotments and clothing and coal clubs.

of historical research into the complexities of welfare provision and into the role of charity within it.<sup>10</sup> Thus, with current welfare policy now tending to upgrade the importance of non-state provision, an interest has been re-kindled in the way in which provision for the poor is viewed and, in particular, the Whig view of a progression from private to state provision has been challenged and re-evaluated.<sup>11</sup>

The balance between public and private agencies was not static in this period and was subject to many local variations. Joanna Innes in her seminal work on 'the mixed economy of welfare' pointed out that the late eighteenth century witnessed not only a rise in rate-based expenditure,<sup>12</sup> but also a re-evaluation of the options in favour of voluntary charity as opposed to public welfare.<sup>13</sup> Furthermore, the nature of charity was being examined and a new emphasis placed on the importance of fostering self-reliance.<sup>14</sup> The aim here is to build upon Innes' work. Firstly, by testing her suggestion that the late eighteenth century witnessed a move towards voluntary charity. Secondly, since her discussion finishes in 1803, by offering an evaluation of the 'mixed economy of welfare' in the half-century after her work ends. This was a vital period in which the poor law was reformed and the debates surrounding that reform gave rise to detailed discussions about the role of charity in the 'mixed

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<sup>10</sup> M Daunton (ed.), 'Introduction', *Charity*, p.1; P Johnson, 'Risk, Redistribution and Social Welfare in Britain from the Poor Law to Beveridge', Chapter 10 in *Ibid*, pp.225-254

<sup>11</sup> Examples of Whig views of progression can be found in M Bruce, *The Coming of the Welfare State* (London, 1961); B B Gilbert, *The Evolution of National Insurance in Great Britain: The Origins of the Welfare State* (London, 1966); D Fraser, *The Evolution*. For examples of challenges to this view see F Prochaska, *The Voluntary Impulse* (London, 1988); C Jones, 'Some Recent Trends', Chapter 3 in M Daunton (ed.), *Charity*; P Johnson, 'Risk, Redistribution'; P Thane, *Foundations of the Welfare State* (London, 1996); L Hollen-Lees, *The Solidarities*

<sup>12</sup> In many rural areas this was seen with the introduction of the Speenhamland scale, named after the parish of Speenhamland in Berkshire, where in 1795 the magistrates fixed the level of outdoor relief to the price of bread. This was adopted in other counties, but also included other forms of allowances-in-aid of wages. M Blaug, 'The Myth of the Old Poor Law', in M Flinn & T Smout (editors), *Essays in Social History*, (Oxford, 1974), p.123

<sup>13</sup> J Innes, 'The "Mixed Economy of Welfare"', p.169

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid*, p.164

economy of welfare.’ For example, Malthus argued in his 1803 Essay that, although private charity had a role to play in assisting genuine poverty, ‘the only difficulty would be to restrain the hand of benevolence from assisting those in distress in so liberal a manner as to encourage indolence and want of foresight in others.’ He went on to claim that large charities were as pernicious as the Poor Law in their lack of discrimination and that the ‘deserving poor were the only genuine objects of charity.’<sup>15</sup> Not surprisingly, Malthus’ opinions were reflected in the 1834 Poor Law Report:

Closely connected with the relief provided by the Poor Laws is the relief provided by charitable foundations. As to the administration and effect of those charities which are distributed among the classes who are also receivers of the poor-rate, much evidence is scattered throughout our Appendix, and it has forced on us the conviction that, as now administered, such charities are often wasted and often mischievous. In many instances being distributed on the same principle as the rates of the worst managed parishes, they are only less pernicious, because they are visibly limited in amount. The majority of them are distributed among the poor inhabitants of particular parishes or towns. The places intended to be favoured by large charities attract, therefore, an undue proportion of the poorer classes, who, in the hope of trifling benefits to be obtained without labour, often linger on in spots most unfavourable to the exercise of their industry. Poverty is thus not only collected, but created, in the very neighbourhood whence the benevolent founders have manifestly expected to make it disappear.<sup>16</sup>

This quote indicates that the ‘mixed economy of welfare’ was being re-debated extensively. The role of charity was scrutinised by Benthamite reformers who were anxious that ‘charities, in the districts where they abound, may interfere with the efficacy of the measures we have recommended.’<sup>17</sup> Early nineteenth-century commentators showed a considerable degree of ambiguity about the role that charity should play in the ‘mixed economy of welfare.’ On the one hand there was a wish to give a greater role to voluntary charity in order to relieve the pressure on poor relief.

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<sup>15</sup> Quoted in J R Poynter, Society and Pauperism, (London, 1969), pp.157-158

<sup>16</sup> S G and E O Checkland (editors), The Poor Law Report of 1834, (London, 1974), pp.497-498

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid*, p.498

On the other there was a desire that charity should have a similar discriminatory, and consequently disciplinary, agenda as that of the New Poor Law. Alongside the reform of the poor law there was a desire to reform and monitor charitable provision nationally, as exemplified by the work of the Charity Commission. This thesis will, therefore, also explore how the investigations of the Charity Commission operated either to support or to undermine this element of the 'mixed economy of welfare.' More importantly it will use a county study to build a detailed picture of the relative importance of charitable provision within the 'mixed economy of welfare' in various types of rural parishes.

Secondly, this thesis will use a detailed study of charitable provision to provide a new perspective on the debate about the 'economy of makeshifts.'<sup>18</sup> Whereas the 'mixed economy of welfare' considers the balance of options that could be imposed by the propertied, the 'economy of makeshifts' looks at how the poor utilised the various resources available to them in their day-to-day survival. The 'economy of makeshifts' was a term first used by Olwen Hufton to describe the French experience of poverty in the eighteenth century, which involved the migration of workers to find employment and localised begging by the deserving poor.<sup>19</sup> In England with its statutory poor relief and attached settlement laws, the 'economy of makeshifts' relates more centrally to the various strategies for survival that were available to the settled

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<sup>18</sup> K Snell, *Annals*; P King, 'Customary Rights and Women's Earnings; The Importance of Gleaning to the Rural Labouring Poor 1750-1850', *Economic History Review*, 44 (1991), pp.461-476; R Smith, 'Charity, Self-interest and Welfare: Reflections from Demographic and Family History', Chapter 3 in M Daunt (ed.), *Charity*, pp.23-49; J Broad, 'The Smallholder and Cottager after Disafforestation – A legacy of poverty', in J Broad & R Hoyle (eds.), *Bernwood: The Life and Afterlife of a Forest* (Preston, 1997), pp.91-107; J Broad, 'Parish Economies'; S King, *Poverty*; S King & A Tomkins, *The Poor*

<sup>19</sup> O Hufton, 'An Economy of Makeshifts, i. Migrations and 'An Economy of Makeshifts, ii The Beggars, Chapters 3 and 4 in *The Poor of Eighteenth-Century France 1750-1789* (Oxford, 1974), pp.69-106, 107-127

labouring poor – poor relief, wages (including those of women and children), common rights, charity, kinship networks, neighbourly reciprocity and illegal activity such as smuggling and poaching.<sup>20</sup> In the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries some of these elements were coming under pressure. The decline of proto-industry and the impact of enclosure in the late eighteenth century and early nineteenth century were undermining the balance in the poor's 'economy of makeshifts' in a number of ways at least in the south.<sup>21</sup> Did charitable provision fill this gap? Unfortunately charity has received limited attention in the 'economy of makeshifts' in this important period.<sup>22</sup> Moreover much of the research that has been undertaken on the role of charity has concentrated on the sources created by the propertied and those who governed local life. In particular, as the reports of the Charity Commission created an extensive and easily accessible archive, emphasis has been placed on the role of the endowed charitable trusts.<sup>23</sup> This thesis is the first empirical study of the various other charitable resources available to meet the basic needs of the poor. It addresses the experiences of the poor as recipients of charity by assessing eligibility, levels of charitable assistance, and where possible the attitudes of the poor towards such help. In the process it aims to evaluate more precisely the role that various forms of charity played in the makeshift economies of the nineteenth-century rural poor.

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<sup>20</sup> S King & A Tomkins (eds), *The Poor*, pp.14-15

<sup>21</sup> The lace industry had been depressed since the end of the Napoleonic wars and particularly so in the 1840s. Lace making had provided women and children with work in Northamptonshire, thus contributing to the family income. See K. Snell, *Annals*, p.125. Jeannette Neeson has shown that, although it was not possible to quantify the value of common rights (cow pasturing, fuel gathering, nut gathering, bird and rabbit snaring etc), these would have been significant. J M Neeson, *Commoners: Common Right, Enclosure and Social Change in England, 1700-1820* (Cambridge, 1996), p.40.

Anscomb's investigation of parliamentary enclosures in Northamptonshire in the eighteenth century shows that it was very rarely acknowledged that the poor had any rights. He quotes an example where the poor had 'been indulged' by being allowed to gather fuel, and that 'three acres were to be set aside to provide income amongst the most necessitous poor.' J W Anscomb, 'Parliamentary Enclosure in Northamptonshire: Processes and Procedures', *Northamptonshire Past Present*, 7 (1989), p.416

<sup>22</sup> S King & A Tomkins (eds.), *The Poor*, p.17

<sup>23</sup> See footnote 1 for work on the endowed charitable trusts.

Thirdly, this thesis aims to use charity as a means of exploring the complexities and nature of paternalism, from its surface character as display to its potential importance as an indicator of a deeper commitment to funding the poor amongst different sections of the propertied elite.<sup>24</sup> At the same time it enables us to test out historians' models of social change which argue that the mid-nineteenth century witnessed the coming of new forms of paternalism.<sup>25</sup> It has been argued that 'new' paternalism was characterised both by new initiatives, which aimed to fix paternal relations to institutional structures (such as allotment societies and other self-help initiatives), and by the revival of traditional handouts of clothing, fuel and food.<sup>26</sup> By looking in detail at the early nineteenth century this thesis will evaluate whether there was in fact a greater continuity than is implied by the 'new' paternalist model. Furthermore, it has been argued by those who look at the transition to 'new' paternalism that the distribution and control of charity was one of the means of re-exerting the authority of landowners which had been weakened with the introduction of the New Poor Law in 1834.<sup>27</sup> The extensive historical debate around this issue has yet to be informed either by detailed regional studies of the relationship between these poor law changes and new charitable initiatives, or by specific archival work on the extent to which the development of new charities was spurred on by landowners' fears about social

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<sup>24</sup> Roberts makes the point that paternalism is a term used by 20<sup>th</sup> century historians, not by early Victorians, although they did speak of 'patriarchal principles' or 'paternal government.' Thus paternalism 'did not exist as a set of definite, logical, and clearly defined axioms.' D Roberts, *Paternalism*, p.1

<sup>25</sup> Roberts dates a revival of paternalism at the grass roots to the 1830s and 1840s with new exhortations to landowners to become involved in charitable projects. Ibid, p.3. Howkins places the revival of a new paternalism in the 1850s. A Howkins, *Reshaping*, p.81

<sup>26</sup> D Roberts, *Paternalism*, p.132 and A Howkins, *Reshaping*, p.75

<sup>27</sup> W A Armstrong, 'Labour II', p.833. For debates on landowners' authority and the New Poor Law see A Brundage, 'The Landed Interest'; P Dunkley, 'The Landed Interest'; A Brundage, *The Making*; P Dunkley, *The Crisis*; A Brundage, 'The Making'; B K Song, 'Continuity and Change'; A Brundage, *The English Poor Laws*

unrest. For example, a theme of this thesis is whether social unrest, exemplified by the Swing disturbances, together with the coming of the New Poor Law, persuaded the propertied in rural society to alter their commitment to charitable provision at a local level. In the process of exploring these issues another aspect of the 'new' paternalist model, which emphasises the importance of the role of the 'lieutenant classes' – the land agents, the clergy and the farmers –, will be analysed.<sup>28</sup> Moreover, by using a series of specific case-studies which highlight the roles landowners or their representatives played in shaping the variety of charitable provision, the study will analyse the importance of the individual initiatives and strategies they implemented within the constraints imposed by the individual context of each parish or estate.

Fourthly, this study examines the thorny issue of social control in relation to charity in rural society. The historiography of paternalism overlaps with that of social control. This latter concept has been subject to considerable criticism. For example, as Gareth Stedman Jones comments 'there is no political or ideological institution which could not in some way be interpreted as an agency of social control.'<sup>29</sup> Nor is there any 'indication in the phrase of who the agents or instigators of social control may be' or 'of any common mechanism whereby social control is enforced.'<sup>30</sup> The detailed study of charity offered here will attempt to bring greater specificity to this term by analysing both particular sets of instigators/donors in different contexts, and the range of access criteria/social control mechanisms present in the regulations governing

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<sup>28</sup> A Howkins, *Reshaping*, p.76

<sup>29</sup> G Stedman Jones, *Languages of Class: Studies in English Working Class History 1832-1982* (Cambridge, 1983), p.80

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid*, p.80

various charities (either explicitly or implicitly).<sup>31</sup> It will also enable Donajrodski's model of change over time to be tested. Donajrodski emphasises that the entire nineteenth century witnessed a change from control activities being conducted informally, 'or if through institutions, in the context of personal relationships,' to a situation where 'control was increasingly mediated, at one remove, through institutions.'<sup>32</sup> This study will explore the extent to which such a transition occurred in rural England in the period between 1800 and 1850 and the specific types of charitable institutions within which new disciplinary agendas were most visible. Social control may, at times, be a dangerously generalised concept, but the disciplinary agendas of those who created early nineteenth-century charitable provision were often explicit, clearly targeted, and pragmatic attempts to reshape the behaviour of the labouring poor. By analysing this aspect of rural charities new perspectives on the nature of 'social control' in the countryside can, therefore, be developed.

The open/close dichotomy is undoubtedly linked to wider debates about the complex nature of social control and the role that paternalism played in rural society. In the context of this study, however, there are a number of problems with applying this

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<sup>31</sup> A large body of research exists which looks at the introduction of the new police as instigators of social control in the countryside. See R D Storch, 'The Plague of the Blue Locusts. Police Reform and Popular Resistance in Northern England, 1840-57', *International Review of Social History*, 20 (1976), pp.61-90; C Emsley, 'The Bedfordshire Police, 1840-56: A Case Study in the Working of the Rural Constabulary Act', *Midland History*, 7 (1982), pp.73-92; D Foster, 'Police Reform and Public Opinion in Rural Yorkshire', *Journal of Local Studies*, 2 (1982), pp.1-8; D Foster, 'The East Riding Constabulary in the Nineteenth Century', *Northern History*, 21 (1985), pp.193-211; J Styles, 'The Emergence of the Police. Explaining Police Reform in Eighteenth and Nineteenth Century England', *British Journal of Criminology*, 27 (Winter 1987), pp.15-22; R D Storch, 'Policing Rural Southern England Before the Police: Opinion and Practice, 1830-1856', Chapter 5 in D Hay & F Snyder (eds.), *Policing and Prosecution in Britain, 1750-1850* (Oxford, 1989), pp.211-266; D Philips, 'A New Engine of Power and Authority': The Institutionalization of Law-Enforcement in England, 1780-1830', Chapter 6 in V A C Gattrell, B Lenman & G Parker (eds.), *Crime and the Law: The Social History of Crime in Western Europe since 1500* (London, 1989), pp.155-189; C Emsley, *The English Police. A Political and Social History* (Harlow, 1991)

<sup>32</sup> A P Donajrodski, *Social Control in Nineteenth-Century Britain*, (London, 1977), pp.21-22



rather unsatisfactory concept. Firstly historians disagree as to the best way of defining and measuring what is an open/close parish. For example, while Mills' much-quoted model emphasises the concentration of landownership,<sup>33</sup> Holderness prefers to focus on labour supply and the extent to which the inhabitants of an 'open' parish provided labour for 'close' parishes that were subject to restricted settlement.<sup>34</sup> Secondly, there are practical problems in applying either of these two models to a regional study, as there are no systematic sources to give reliable and consistent data on patterns of landownership or labour supply. This makes it impossible to produce a reliable categorisation of open/close parishes. Furthermore, since the majority do not fall into either of these categories or meet the relevant criteria, applying this model empirically is very difficult.<sup>35</sup> Thirdly, the degree of social control between 'open' and 'close' parishes has been the subject of debate.<sup>36</sup> Charlesworth argues that one would expect to find a greater degree of social control in a 'close' parish, whereas Wells maintains that the same level could well be found in certain types of 'open' parish. Wells' work in particular emphasises the importance of vestry politics and the levels of control that could be exercised not only by the major landowners, but also by

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<sup>33</sup> D R Mills, 'English Villages in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries: A Sociological Approach', *Amateur Historian*, 6 (Summer 1965), pp.271-278; D R Mills, *Lord and Peasant in Nineteenth-Century Britain* (London, 1980)

<sup>34</sup> B A Holderness, 'Open' and 'Close' Parishes in England in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries', *Agricultural History Review*, 20 (1972), pp.126-139; S Banks, Nineteenth-century Scandal or Twentieth-century Model? A New Look at 'Open' and 'Close' Parishes', *Economic History Review*, 61 (1988), pp.51-73; D Spencer, 'Reformulating the Closed Parish Thesis', *Typescript Geographical Paper*, No. 123, (Department of Geography, University of Reading, May 1998) pp.1-29

<sup>35</sup> Indeed Mills' model contains a category that does not fit into either 'open' or 'close', D R Mills, 'English Villages', p.272

<sup>36</sup> R A E Wells, 'The Development of the English Rural Proletariat and Social Protest, 1700-1850', *Journal of Peasant Studies*, 6 (1978-9), pp.115-139; D R Mills, *Lord and Peasant*; A Charlesworth, 'The Development of the English Rural Proletariat and Social Protest, 1700-1850: A Comment', *Journal of Peasant Studies*, 8 (1980-1), pp.101-111; R A E Wells, 'Social Conflict and Protest in the English Countryside in the early Nineteenth Century: A Rejoinder', *Journal of Peasant Studies*, 8 (1980-1) pp.514-530; D R Mills & B Short, 'Social Change and Social Conflict in Nineteenth-Century England: The Use of the Open/closed Model' in M Reed & R A E Wells (eds.), *Class, Conflict and Protest in the English Countryside, 1700-1880*, (London, 1990), pp.90-99

other members of parish society, notably by those who ran select vestries.<sup>37</sup> A number of historians have encouraged us to move beyond these largely unhelpful dichotomies to engage more fully with the complexities of rural social relations.<sup>38</sup> The open/close paradigm, therefore, will only be used here when exploring either specific issues such as housing, where it is particularly applicable, or in the discussion of the various types of provision made in estate villages.

Fifthly, one particular aspect of the nature of social control that is central to the study of charity is that which Keith Snell has recently called 'denominational control.'<sup>39</sup> This is not a new area for research. Both Howkins and Obelkevich have argued that by the second quarter of the nineteenth century the Church of England was adopting a greater role in pastoral care and the distribution of charity as a means of combating falling church attendance.<sup>40</sup> However, Snell's detailed study of Sunday school provision, and of the strategic role that the Church of England played within it, has further highlighted the Anglican church's attempts to keep its position in the religious hierarchy through its involvement in charitable provision.<sup>41</sup> In order to offer a critique of the notion of 'denominational control' it is necessary to study a much wider range of charities than Sunday schools alone. By analysing the relative importance of the Church of England in initiating and regulating all the major forms

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<sup>37</sup> The concentration of landownership is an insufficient criterion by which to measure social relationships in the parish and issues of land occupancy and residency need to be considered. Short makes the point that 'the relationship between landownership and power should be seen as contingent: the two come together often, but either could exist independently of the other in the locality.' B Short, 'The Evolution of Contrasting Communities within Rural England', Chapter 2 in B Short (ed.), *The English Rural Community. Image and Analysis* (Cambridge, 1992), p.40

<sup>38</sup> S Banks, 'Nineteenth century Scandal'; A Howkins, 'Labour History and the Rural Poor, 1850-1980', *Rural History*, 1 (1990), p.120; M Reed & R A E Wells, 'An Agenda for Modern English Rural History', in M Reed & R A E Wells (eds.), *Class, Conflict and Protest*, p.220; D Spencer, 'Reformulating'

<sup>39</sup> K Snell, 'The Sunday-School Movement in England and Wales: Child Labour, Denominational Control and Working-Class Culture', *Past and Present*, 164 (August 1999), pp.122-168.

<sup>40</sup> J Obelkevich, *Religion and Rural Society: South Lindsey 1825-1875* (Oxford, 1976), p.166; A Howkins, *Reshaping*, p.82

of charity that gave material provision for the poor, this study can therefore make a substantial contribution to this debate about the religious dimension of social control.

Sixthly, recent work on welfare provision has stressed the importance of regional differences.<sup>42</sup> In particular Steven King has argued that in the period 1700-1850 there were 'two distinct cultures of welfare' and has contrasted a 'harsh north and west against a more relaxed and inclusive south and east.'<sup>43</sup> This notion of north-west/south-east divide is primarily based on a study of poor relief, but King also speculates that charity continued to be of considerable importance in the north and west, while the south and east 'saw the rapid dilution of charitable resources.'<sup>44</sup> His discussion of charity is brief, however, and in the conclusion to his book he pinpoints the need for more detailed local work.<sup>45</sup> It is clear, therefore, that county or sub-regional studies need to be undertaken on both sides of the divide before we can begin to understand the geographical complexities of the role played by charitable provision in the 'mixed economy of welfare.' King's most recent work on four north-western parishes (which will be published in 2003)<sup>46</sup> has started to address this issue and a case study of Northamptonshire will begin to do this for the south-eastern region, providing a comparative perspective across the north-west/south-east divide.

In summary, the widespread and diverse nature of charitable provision in early

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<sup>41</sup> Ibid

<sup>42</sup> M Daunt, 'Introduction', p.17; S King, 'Reconstructing Lives: The Poor, the Poor Law and Welfare in Calverley, *Social History*, 22 (1997), p.318; S King, *Poverty*; S King & A Tomkins, *The Poor*

<sup>43</sup> Ibid, pp.258-259

<sup>44</sup> Ibid, p.268

<sup>45</sup> Ibid p.268

<sup>46</sup> I am indebted to Steven King for his permission to quote from this book. S King, 'Making the Most of Opportunity: The Economy of Makeshifts in the Early Modern North', Chapter 8 in S King & A Tomkins, *The Poor*, pp.294-333

nineteenth-century England make it an ideal vehicle through which to understand changing attitudes and policies towards the poor. Charity is beginning to form an important part of several major historiographical debates about the nature of, and the extent of change in, rural society in this crucial period, but studies on a local and regional level are clearly required before this perspective can be developed.

### **1.2: Northamptonshire as a case study**

Northamptonshire has been chosen as a case study for several reasons. Firstly, the nature of its agriculture makes it particularly suitable for considering the problems faced by landowners, farmers and the labouring poor in the first half of the nineteenth century. Situated in the South Midlands, early nineteenth-century Northamptonshire contained several types of agricultural practice in one county – the fenlands of present-day Lincolnshire and the Soke of Peterborough, the cereal growing areas in the Nene valley, and the pasture land used for grazing on the Northampton Heights and The Wold.<sup>47</sup> Although Northamptonshire experienced the booms and slumps of the French wars and their aftermath, it has been suggested that the county was less severely affected by the Corn Laws during this period than purely arable counties, as throughout the period it was ‘largely committed to the practice of mixed farming.’<sup>48</sup> The end of the period covered by this study saw a reinvigoration of farming in Northamptonshire commencing with the repeal of the Corn Laws in 1846. However,

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<sup>47</sup> R L Greenall, A History of Northamptonshire and the Soke of Peterborough, (Northampton, 1979), p.15

<sup>48</sup> J P Dodd, ‘Aspects of the Agriculture of Northamptonshire in the first half of the nineteenth and century’, Northamptonshire Past and Present, 7 (1989), p.425

in the pastoral areas of Northamptonshire, the situation was reported in 1852 as follows:

In some grazing districts requiring but little manual labour, a system of depopulation has been very systematically carried on by the proprietors for several years. Cottages and farm premises have been pulled down, and no new buildings erected.<sup>49</sup>

Thus, even at the start of a period of increased farming prosperity, areas of the county were still affected by the perennial problems of overpopulation, unemployment and under-employment.

Secondly, as Northamptonshire was a county that had experienced a rapid and extensive programme of parliamentary enclosure during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, it represents an area that was experiencing a significant change in the 'economy of makeshifts.' Two-thirds of Northamptonshire's enclosures occurred between 1750 and 1815.<sup>50</sup> By 1850 ninety-two percent of all Northamptonshire parliamentary enclosures had been carried out.<sup>51</sup> The county, therefore, offers a good opportunity to assess the impact of enclosure on charitable provision in the early nineteenth century.

Thirdly, as Northamptonshire was a county that has been shown to have had low wages and high levels of outdoor relief under the Old Poor Law, again it provides a

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<sup>49</sup> W Bearn, 'On the Farming of Northamptonshire', Journal of the Royal Agricultural Society of England, 13, 1852, p.104, quoted in J P Dodd, 'Aspects', p.431. It is clear, however, that part of Bearn's agenda was the question of the settlement laws, for he goes on to state that many arable farmers in small parishes are forced to find labourers in adjacent parishes and that this is attributable to 'the desire to relieve the estate from parochial rates.'

<sup>50</sup> J M Neeson, Commoners, p.262

<sup>51</sup> NRO, J W Anscomb, Enclosures. Notes on the Parliamentary Acts and Awards for Northamptonshire 1727 – 1901. Of the remaining sixteen awards given after 1850, seven were for the enclosure of Whittlebury Forest, (a further two were for Buckinghamshire parishes adjacent to Whittlebury Forest and were mentioned here as part of the forest enclosure) and three were in the fenland area in the hundred of Nassaburgh.

good opportunity to consider the significance of charitable provision in a not untypical county within the south and east region, as delineated by King.<sup>52</sup> Mark Blaug's data on the weekly money wages of agricultural workers by counties, placed Northamptonshire in the south midlands area as can be seen in Table 1.1. Although Northamptonshire wages in the first half of the nineteenth century were comparable with the average in the south midlands region, they were considerably less than the average in the north and the counties in the north midlands on its northern border.

**Table 1.1: Weekly money wages of agricultural workers from 1795 to 1850, by regions**

	1795	1824	1833	1837	1850
Northamptonshire	7s 0d	8s 0d	10s 3d	9s 0d	9s 0d
South Midlands Average	8s 0d	8s 4d	10s 4d	9s 3d	8s 8d
South-Eastern Average	9s 6d	10s 1d	11s 10d	10s 6d	9s 10d
Eastern Average	9s 6d	8s 11d	10s 4d	10s 4d	7s 10d
South-Western Average	7s 10d	7s 8d	8s 9d	8s 2d	8s 1d
West Midlands Average	7s 8d	8s 0d	9s 8d	9s 7d	8s 1d
North Midlands Average	9s 9d	10s 3d	12s 3d	11s 6d	10s 1d
Northern Average	10s 4d	11s 7d	11s 1d	12s 2d	12s 2d

Source M Blaug<sup>53</sup> The south midlands contained the counties of Oxford, Herts, Bucks, Northants, Beds and Cambridge (the majority of the surrounding counties). The other regions were south-east including Middlesex, Surrey, Kent, Sussex, Hants and Berks, the east region including Essex, Suffolk and Norfolk, the south-west including Wilts, Dorset, Devon, Cornwall and Somerset, the west midlands, including Gloucester, Hereford, Salop, Stafford, Worcester and Warwick, the north midlands including Leicester, Rutland, Lincoln, Notts and Derby and the north including Chester, Lancs, York, Durham, Northumberland, Cumberland and Westmorland.

<sup>52</sup> See footnote 41.

<sup>53</sup> Blaug quotes his sources as being A I Bowley, 'The Statistics of Wages in the United Kingdom During the Last Hundred Years, Agricultural Wages,' *Journal of the Royal Statistical Society* (Dec 1898). 'The 1795 figures are derived from Eden and Young; the 1824 figures come from the same committee which circulated the questionnaire on the Allowance System; the 1833 and 1837 figures rest on returns from about 1,000 parishes collected by the Poor Law Commissioners; the 1851 figures are given by Caird. All of these represent the average of summer and winter wages.' M Blaug, 'The Myth', pp.147-149

Therefore, it is not surprising that under the Old Poor Law Northamptonshire was dependent on high levels of outdoor relief in the form of income supplements.

Thus, Blaug places Northamptonshire in the category of Speenhamland counties.

Table 1.2 shows the level of poor relief per head in Northamptonshire in comparison to the average of the Speenhamland and non-Speenhamland counties.

**Table 1.2: Poor relief per Head for years 1802-1831**

	1802		1812		1821		1831	
Northamptonshire	14s	5d	19s	11d	19s	2d	16s	10d
Average for Speenhamland Counties	12s	3d	18s	8d	16s	4d	13s	8d
Average for Non-Speenhamland counties	8s	4d	11s	4d	10s	2d	8s	7d

Source M. Blaug<sup>54</sup> The Speenhamland counties included Sussex, Wilts, Berks, Suffolk, Norfolk, Dorset, Essex, Devon, Notts, and Yorks, as well as the neighbouring counties of Bucks, Beds, Cambridge, Oxford, Leicester and Warwick. The non-Speenhamland counties contained only two neighbouring counties of Lincoln and Rutland and otherwise included Kent, Hants, Surrey, Herts, Worcester, Hereford, Somerset, Gloucester, Yorks (West Riding), Stafford, Chester, Cornwall, Derby, Durham, Salop, Northumberland, Cumberland, Westmorland, Lancaster, Middlesex, Monmouth and Wales.

Northamptonshire was not only considerably more generous than non-Speenhamland counties, but its relief levels were also higher than the average for the Speenhamland counties and continued to be so until 1831 and quite possibly beyond.<sup>55</sup> If, as King and Tomkins suggest, parish officials were aware of the levels of charitable provision (particularly from endowed charities) available to their poor parishioners and fixed relief levels accordingly,<sup>56</sup> then Northamptonshire's position as a high poor relief

<sup>54</sup> M Blaug, 'The Myth', pp. 145-146. Blaug gave the average relief per head for each county. He obtained these figures by dividing the annual expenditures for the poor in annual Poor Law Returns and for 1831-1833 in PP 1835 (444), xlvii by the decennial census returns, given by J R McCulloch, *Descriptive and Statistical Account of the British Empire*, ii, p.400.

<sup>55</sup> In 1872 the Local Government Board cited the Northamptonshire Brixworth Union as being 'the worst union in almost the worst county in England', by which it meant that Brixworth was one of the most generous in the level of outdoor relief it was granting. My thanks to Elizabeth Hurren for drawing my attention to this reference which is quoted in E Hurren, 'Labourers are Revolting: Penalising the Poor and a Political Reaction in the Brixworth Union, Northamptonshire, 1875-1885', *Rural History* 11 (2000), p.40

<sup>56</sup> S King & A Tomkins, *The Poor*, p.11

county might suggest that charitable resources were relatively small. The study of Northamptonshire, therefore, provides a means of testing charity's role in an area where some current models suggest it might have been less significant. So too does the possibility that the overall absolute decline of poor relief levels in Northamptonshire may have stimulated new charitable initiatives. Both those issues will be explored in this study.

Fourthly, although Northamptonshire did not experience a large number of Swing incidents (Table 1.3), it had a particularly harsh attitude towards the sentencing of Swing offenders (Table 1.4).

**Table 1.3: Number of Swing incidents in Northamptonshire, neighbouring counties and the two counties with the highest number of incidents**

<i>County</i>	<i>Number of Incidents</i>
Warwickshire	2
Leicestershire	7
Bedfordshire	17
Cambridgeshire	17
<b>Northamptonshire</b>	<b>19</b>
Huntingdonshire	25
Lincolnshire	30
Oxfordshire	30
Buckinghamshire	39
Wiltshire	208
Hampshire	208

Source: E J Hobsbawm and G Rudé, Captain Swing<sup>57</sup>

Despite the fact that Special Commissions were set up in Wiltshire, Hampshire and Buckinghamshire to try prisoners, the percentage of those found guilty by juries and

<sup>57</sup> E J Hobsbawm & G Rudé, Captain Swing (London, 1969), pp.304-305



sentenced was higher in Northamptonshire.<sup>58</sup>

**Table 1.4: Number of Swing cases heard and the percentage of cases which incurred a sentence**

<i>County</i>	<i>No of cases heard</i>	<i>Percentage of cases which incurred a sentence</i>
Leicestershire	0	0
Lincolnshire	12	33%
Cambridgeshire	40	43%
Buckinghamshire	160	49%
Oxfordshire	75	55%
Wiltshire	339	59%
Huntingdonshire	57	61%
Hampshire	208	66%
Northamptonshire	49	73%
Bedfordshire	18	78%
Warwickshire	1	100%

Source: As Table 1.3<sup>59</sup>

This would suggest that there was considerable concern by those in authority in Northamptonshire about the spread of Swing and that there was a degree of social unrest in the county. With this degree of anxiety we would expect to find evidence of new charitable initiatives being used as part of a range of measures to help restore calm to the countryside. This provides us with the opportunity not only to see how disciplinary agendas could be attached to charity to restore and maintain social control, but also to test the motives behind the emergence of a 'new' paternalistic benevolence.

Fifthly, Northamptonshire is an ideal region in which to examine the extent of paternalist benevolence and the transition from the 'old' to the 'new' paternalism, as it was a county with a high proportion of major landed estates. Brundage estimated that

<sup>58</sup> Ibid, p.258. A Special Commission was appointed in those counties with the highest incidents of disturbance, particularly those involving machine breaking and damage to property. As well as the three counties already mentioned, Berkshire and Dorset also came under the Special Commission.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid, pp.308-309

about one hundred persons owned three-fifths of the land in the nineteenth century.<sup>60</sup>

It was also a county with a very stable landowning elite compared to other areas.

Stone, for example, has commented on the astonishingly high level of stability amongst Northamptonshire landed families at the end of the eighteenth century.<sup>61</sup>

The county also contained a substantial number of leading figures of national and local importance. In particular the third Earl Spencer was closely involved with the drafting and passage of the 1834 New Poor Law and was renowned for the keen interest that he took in welfare debates.<sup>62</sup> Other leading Northamptonshire

landowners (the Duke of Grafton, Earl Fitzwilliam and Lord Overstone) have been mentioned in passing by historians as examples of paternalists, but the nature and extent of their charitable involvement has not so far been subject to a detailed study.<sup>63</sup>

Lastly many of these major landowners were absent from their Northamptonshire estates for large parts of the year and the running of their estates were left in the hands of others. The county, therefore, offers the opportunity to examine the role of the 'lieutenant' classes in the administration and distribution of charity. Thus

Northamptonshire presents a particularly interesting county to examine the significance of charity in welfare provision. It provides a good agriculturally diverse example of both a county in the south and east region delineated by King and of an area with a particularly strong large landowning elite and, therefore, presents an

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<sup>60</sup> A Brundage, 'The Landed Interest', p.34

<sup>61</sup> L Stone, An Open Elite? England 1540-1880, Abridged Edition (Oxford 1986), p.183

<sup>62</sup> E A Wasson, 'The Third Earl Spencer and Agriculture, 1818-1845', Agricultural History Review, 24 (1976) p.90

<sup>63</sup> The Duke of Grafton in D Roberts, Paternalism, p.133; Earl Fitzwilliam in Ibid, p.184 and F M L Thompson, English Landed Society in the Nineteenth Century (London, 1963, 1971 edn.)' p.207; Lord Overstone in G E Mingay, Rural Life in Victorian England (London, 1977), p.51 and J V Beckett, The Aristocracy in England 1660-1914 (Oxford, 1986), p.355

opportunity to test the degrees of paternalistic benevolence.

### **1.3: The content and structure of the thesis**

The aim of this thesis is to examine the various types and sources of charitable provision for the poor. To this end, therefore, the study has concentrated on the provision of basic material needs such as food, clothing, fuel, land and housing and the granting of monetary aid. Although charitable giving was also concerned with education and the upkeep of church fabric, these have been excluded from this thesis. Education was aimed at the poor but does not fit the criteria of a basic material need.<sup>64</sup> As well as the traditional sources of charitable provision, charitable endowments and individual acts of charity, this thesis has looked at the development of alternative forms of charity through the formation of self-help schemes, such as coal and clothing clubs and allotments. Friendly societies have been excluded, however, because their complexity is such that they require a separate thesis to do them justice. Indeed the 1874 Royal Commission on Friendly Societies noted eleven classes of society.<sup>65</sup> Amongst these, the most relevant to this thesis would be that of the village club which might be promoted by a local landowner or clergyman, but equally could be an independent society organised by the members or a pub landlord. There are examples of such benefit clubs receiving support in the form of charitable donations from

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<sup>64</sup>For work on charity and education see M G Jones, The Charity School Movement (Cambridge, 1938) and R S, Thomson, Classics or Charity (Manchester, 1971)

<sup>65</sup> E Lord, 'The Friendly Society Movement and the Respectability of the Rural Working Class', Rural History 8 (1997), p.167

landowners.<sup>66</sup> However, generally, the surviving evidence for friendly societies in the early nineteenth century is scarce and fragmented, thus making it difficult to ascertain whether individual friendly societies were the subject of charitable provision or were worker-organised clubs, independent of middle and upper class patronage, which would not qualify as charities. Furthermore, there were limitations on membership of a friendly society that would have excluded a significant number of the poor. There has been considerable debate about the levels of wages earned and the occupational status of friendly society members.<sup>67</sup> Although membership was not determined by occupation, in village societies it was biased towards village tradesmen, farm servants and the better-paid labourers.<sup>68</sup> The subscription costs were sufficiently low so that only the poor were excluded, but several historians have stressed the importance of a weekly wage surplus as a reason for the spread of friendly societies.<sup>69</sup> Indeed Gorsky found that membership levels were lowest in the Speenhamland counties, such as Northamptonshire.<sup>70</sup> Furthermore, most societies excluded enrolment by those over forty and were aimed at fit, youthful workers.<sup>71</sup> Other self-help schemes, such as clothing and coal clubs and allotment schemes, are examined in this thesis, as they were part of a charitable initiative promoted by poor law reformers and adopted by

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<sup>66</sup> The Duke of Grafton's charity book records the payment of regular annual subscriptions of £5 to a benefit society in Hartwell (a forest village) and a one-off payment of £20 to Towcester Benefit Society in 1838. NRO, *Grafton Estate Papers*, G3939, Charity Book (1831-1891)

<sup>67</sup> E Lord, 'The Friendly Society'; M Gorsky, 'The Growth and Distribution of English Friendly Societies in the Early Nineteenth Century', *Economic History Review*, 51 (1998), pp.489-511; P J H Gosden, *The Friendly Societies in England 1815-1875* (Manchester, 1961); D Neave, *Mutual Aid in the Victorian Countryside, 1830-1914*, (Hull, 1991)

<sup>68</sup> E Lord, 'The Friendly Society', p.169; J P Huzel, 'Labour II', p.753

<sup>69</sup> E Lord, 'The Friendly Society', p.170; M Gorsky, 'The Growth', p.504

<sup>70</sup> Ibid, p.505

<sup>71</sup> E Lord, 'The Friendly Society', p.170

landowners and the clergy in the early nineteenth century.

The structure of this thesis starts with an overview of attitudes to endowed charities in Northamptonshire by examining the work of the first Charity Commission in the county and the subsequent chapters consider the provision of basic needs by various charitable sources. Each chapter deals with specific types of provision and examines the different charitable resources responsible for them. The structure of each chapter is detailed below.

Chapter Two starts by examining the historiographical debate about whether the Charity Commission was responsible for protecting endowed charities in the early nineteenth century or whether they were actually instrumental in the loss of charities. The background to the setting up of Lord Brougham's 1818 Charity Commission is considered. The Charity Commission reports for the county of Northamptonshire are then discussed and a breakdown is given of the number of charities in each of the reports. The number of charities where recommendations were made is outlined, as are those charities where problems were identified but no recommendations for solving them were made. The main focus of the chapter is to consider the problems that the Charity Commission encountered, and the recommendations that were made by them to address these issues. The chapter considers the difficulties that the Commission faced in accurately recording charities and in dealing with matters of maladministration by looking at the actual process of investigation. This is done by considering their progress through Northamptonshire and the manner in which they carried out the examinations of local charities. Lastly, the chapter examines what happened to endowed charities after they had been examined and reported on by the

Charity Commission and, in particular, looks at what subsequent redress was available to complainants. This is considered in detail by the use of a case study for the parish of Moulton where disputes over the charities resulted in a Chancery case. This chapter, therefore, gives an overview of endowed charity activities in Northamptonshire. In particular its exploration of attitudes to endowed charities will throw considerable light on rural social relationships.

Chapter Three covers the provision of food doles, monetary payments, alms and pensions.<sup>72</sup> It begins by examining the bread and monetary doles that formed the majority of endowed charitable handouts to the poor. A breakdown is given of the value of this type of charity to the individual and a profile of the most likely recipients is developed. The chapter then looks at the provision of food doles and monetary payments made by individuals, most notably the landed elites, which were shown through the public displays of the distribution of these doles. It then considers the motivation for these ceremonial occasions. This is covered extensively in a case study of Earl Spencer's distributions of food doles and the payment of pensions and alms to the inhabitants of his estate. It considers who was eligible in terms of occupation, life-cycle and gender. A database showing the ages, occupations, employers, wages and the different types of charity provided by Earl Spencer is provided in Appendix I. The chapter also analyses the level of support given to the poor on his estate and measures it against similar support from other sources such as charitable endowments and outdoor relief payments. In order to consider the typicality of his charitable endeavours, the estate records of three other landowners

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<sup>72</sup> Pension payments were made regularly to an individual for life whereas alms payments could be irregular one off payments. If alms were paid regularly (as in the case of endowed charities), the recipients were chosen at the time of distribution, therefore, an individual could not necessarily count on receiving an alms payment every time.

are also used, those of Sir James Langham, the Earl of Cardigan and the Duke of Grafton. Thus, overall the chapter provides a range of evidence in relation to the 'economy of makeshifts' of the poor and the nature and level of paternalist benevolence.

Chapter Four examines the next most popular form of endowed charity, the provision of clothing. Individual participation is again studied, particularly that of Earl Spencer, and also the involvement by members of parish society in the self-help provision of clothing societies. The background to the formation of such societies is discussed and a survey is given of the location of such societies for which there are surviving records. Amongst these is the Brington clothing society and an analysis is given of the members of the society (all women, bar one), considering occupation (mainly the occupation of their spouses), life-cycle position and the value of membership. A case study of the Farthinghoe clothing society examines both the material value of such an institution and the attendant disciplinary agenda. This particular society not only had a set of extensive rules, but also contained a founding rationale and results published three years after of the formation of the society. A breakdown of those who gave donations in support of this society is given. This chapter is particularly concerned with the development of a self-help agenda by the landed gentry and the clergy and with exploring those aspects of charity that suggest social control and 'denominational control' agendas.

Chapter Five examines the poor's access to land through charitable provision, both in terms of cultivation and of fuel gathering. It begins by looking at the extent to which endowed charity allowed access to land by the poor and whether this had diminished

since the eighteenth century, particularly with regard to parliamentary enclosure. The development of coal clubs as a replacement for customary rights of fuel gathering is considered. The chapter also discusses the historiographical debate about allotment provision, both in terms of the actual definition of the term allotment and also who provided them. However, the chapter, by including all sources of charitable provision involving access to land, considers not only land that can truly be described as allotment land, but also potato grounds and cottage gardens. The chapter examines the timing, extent and location of all of these. It looks at who the allotment providers were and also at the promoters of allotment schemes, such as the Agricultural Labourers Friend Society and the Agricultural Employment Institution. The motivation of allotment providers is considered in relationship to enclosure, poor law, rural unrest and notions of respectability. A study of the rules of several allotment societies gives details about the size of plots, cost of rents, the manner of cultivation and the desired characteristics of allotment holders. An analysis of the membership of the Kislingbury Allotment Society shows the occupation and age of the allotment holders and considers whether respectability was an issue. Lastly the value of allotments within the rural labourers' 'economy of makeshifts' is examined, as are new aspects of both paternalism and the relationship between charitable initiatives and social unrest.

Chapter Six is concerned with the extent and quality of housing provision for those termed 'the poor' and for the poorly paid agricultural labourer. Endowed charity housing, including almshouses, is examined, and particularly the problems being encountered by the Charity Commissioners in relation to its upkeep. The possible loss of some charitable housing through the large-scale sale of parish housing for the



poor under the New Poor Law is considered. The sale of parish property involved a major change in house ownership and had a potentially significant impact on the poor, depending on the new ownership. Thus a breakdown of the occupations of purchasers of parish property is given. The involvement of the landed gentry in the provision of housing for their workers is examined through the records of landowners such as Earl Spencer, Lewis Loyd Esq, Earl Fitzwilliam, the Earl of Cardigan and Robert Elwes Esq. The occupations and stages in the life-cycle of tenants are analysed. A comparison of the cost and quality of various types of housing provision is also made, while, in general, housing provides a particularly interesting case study of paternalistic attitudes and the intersecting impact of changes in poor relief and charitable policies on the material lives of the poor.

#### **1.4:Methodology**

This thesis will concentrate on the provision of charity in the voluntary or private sector. The terms charity and philanthropy are often used rather loosely by historians without attempting to define them. According to Hugh Cunningham, contemporaries ‘accorded to charity a religious inspiration and to philanthropy a more distinctly secular orientation, but it was clear that the primary concern was the problem of poverty.’<sup>73</sup> This is borne out to some extent by eighteenth-century dictionary definitions such as the following example:

CHARITY Tenderness, kindness, love, good will, benevolence; the theological virtue of universal love; liberality to the poor; alms, relief given to the poor.

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<sup>73</sup> H Cunningham, ‘Introduction’ to H Cunningham and J Innes (eds.), Charity, Philanthropy and Reform from the 1690s to 1850 (London, 1998), p.2

## PHILANTHROPY Love of mankind, good nature<sup>74</sup>

According to the dictionary philanthropy has a humanist agenda rather than a religious moral imperative. This would suggest that perhaps philanthropy is more concerned with actually improving the condition of mankind, which can be seen in the great philanthropic movements of the eighteenth to nineteenth centuries, such as prison reform and the abolition of the slave trade.<sup>75</sup> The term charity, therefore, is appropriate for this thesis which covers the giving of alms and relief to the poor, although these were not without their improving agendas. From the seventeenth to the nineteenth centuries the term charity encompassed poor relief which was sometimes called 'legal charity.' It is only the historiography of the later nineteenth and twentieth centuries which has allocated the term charity to the voluntary or private sector and this has been adhered to in this thesis.<sup>76</sup>

The method used in this thesis was to give as broad a picture as possible of the different sources of charitable provision for the poor in terms of their basic needs across the county of Northamptonshire. Thus each type of provision was considered using the same criteria. These were: what were the sources of the provision, who was responsible for administering it, who were the recipients in terms of occupation, age and gender and how generous was it as a means of assistance? Apart from the endowed charities, however, it was difficult to get a detailed picture across the county as the sources were patchy. Therefore, it was necessary in many cases to use case studies to examine in depth the level of a particular area of provision. A range of

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<sup>74</sup> T Sheridan, A Complete Dictionary of the English Language, Both with Regard to Sound and Meaning (London, 1788)

<sup>75</sup> Yet, many men and women who were described as 'philanthropists' were also concerned with institutions for alleviating poverty.

<sup>76</sup> H Cunningham, 'Introduction', p.2

sources was then used to consider the typicality of these case studies. A particular difficulty occurred when looking at the role of the individual landowner in charitable provision, as the majority of estate papers examined did not contain this information for the period under investigation, but comparisons were made as far as possible between several landowners.<sup>77</sup> Furthermore, apart from a few instances, the lack of sources has made it impossible to consider the role of women as dispensers of charity, even though this has been a subject that has attracted the attention of several historians.<sup>78</sup> The role of farmers was another area that was difficult to penetrate. Surviving farm records for this period revealed almost nothing of their participation in charity.<sup>79</sup> Another area that has been hard to access was that of the participation of the poor in neighbourly charity and reciprocal assistance, as there were no working class autobiographies available for Northamptonshire in this period. However the voice of the poor is present in this thesis in the form of letters. Sokoll has adopted a methodological approach when analysing pauper letters and this approach will be

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<sup>77</sup> Catalogues for all the major landowner estates were examined in the Northamptonshire Record Office. Evidence in the thesis came from the collections of Earl Spencer, Baron Overstone, Sir James Langham of Cottesbrooke, Earl Fitzwilliam, Buccleuch (Montagu), Duke of Grafton, Robert Elwes Esq., Temple (Stowe) and Ashley of Ashby St Ledger. Those collections in which there was no relevant evidence for this thesis in the period were Bouverie (Delapre), Brudenell, Capell (Flore), Cartwright (Aynho), Dryden (Canons Ashby), Fermor Hesketh, Finch Hatton, Gunning (Horton), Isham, Knightley, Wake (Courteenhall), and Westmorland.

<sup>78</sup> F K Prochaska, *Women and Philanthropy*; J Gerard, 'Lady Bountiful'; D T Andrew, '*Noblesse Oblige*'; J Gerard, 'Country House Women.' The charity correspondence of Countess Spencer was examined, but did not relate to the basic needs covered in this thesis. Furthermore, the majority of the correspondents were from outside Northamptonshire. NRO, *Spencer Estate Papers*, SOX 349, the correspondence of Georgiana, 1<sup>st</sup> Countess Spencer (1767-1814 & 1809-13)

<sup>79</sup> Some mention was made in the following archives: NRO, *Ashley Family of Ashby St Ledgers*, ASL1229, *Account Book of Day Labourers Wages* (1822-29); Misc. Photostat 1591/1-3, *Farm accounts of David and William Randall, Wigsthorpe* (1817-41). The only other surviving archives which were consulted but contained no record of charity were NRO, ZA 2112, *Farm account books of Henshaw family of Pytchley* (1801-50); ZA 5845, *Farm account book kept by John Whiting for Mr Dent, Milton Malsor*; ZA 2248, *Farm account book of William Ivens of Long Buckby* (1820-59) and Reading University Library, Northam P 263, 1-2, *Printed farm account books of The Farm, Mears Ashby, Northants* (1854-55); Northam 1.1, *Farm account book of a farm at Wittering, Northants* (1836-69). Northam 7.1, *Farm account book of Alderton Farm, Alderton, Northants* (1799-1850) had originally been wrongly catalogued and in fact relates to Ilderton in Northumbria.

adopted here as far as possible.<sup>80</sup> In particular, he addresses the difficulties of ascertaining the authorship of such sources and the authenticity of the grievances voiced therein. As Sokoll suggests, these can be gauged to some extent by the quality of handwriting, the level of literacy and by testing the contents against other recorded material. Therefore, in this study such material is presented with its original spelling and punctuation and, where possible, compared to printed sources such as the reports of the Charity Commission. This thesis has therefore accessed a wide range of sources to present a comprehensive overview of charitable provision in Northamptonshire in the early nineteenth century.

The endowed charities had the most consistent set of sources for a countywide survey. The printed reports of the Charity Commissioners gave details about the foundation and objectives of each of the charities in every parish examined by the Commissioners.<sup>81</sup> From these reports it was possible to extract the number of charities in different categories of provision and this information was used for each of the chapters. The 1843 Digest of these reports provided information about the amount of charitable income in each parish and, although it was not possible to assess their accuracy or to distinguish how much of this went on provision for the poor, an approximation of the level of such endowed charitable income in each parish in Northamptonshire could be made.<sup>82</sup> By using the 1841 census for Northamptonshire

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<sup>80</sup> For a full discussion of methodology relating to sources written by the poor see T Sokoll, Essex Pauper Letters 1731-1837 (Oxford, 2001), pp.44-78.

<sup>81</sup> PP 1825 XI(1); 1826 XII(1); 1830 XII(327; 1831 XII(1); 1833 XIX(1) and 1835 XXI, 13<sup>th</sup>, 14<sup>th</sup>, 23<sup>rd</sup>, 24<sup>th</sup>, 26<sup>th</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup> Further Reports of the Commissioners for Inquiring Concerning Charities (hereafter referred to as Further Reports). However, these reports are selective in that they virtually only contain reports of charities collected from Anglican clergymen and their officials. Furthermore, for the most part, due to the extent of the undertaking the Commissioners mainly relied on either written documentary evidence about each charity or hearsay evidence at meetings mainly attended by clergymen and churchwardens. Therefore, the majority of non-conformist charities were excluded.

<sup>82</sup> PP 1843 XXVI(1), XVII(1), Analytical Digest of the Reports made by the Commissioners of Inquiry into Charities (Hereafter referred to as Digest of Charity Reports).

and the criteria set out by Steven King for estimating the percentage of poor in a parish it was then possible to calculate the income per household.<sup>83</sup> Additionally the reports commented on the problems encountered by the Commissioners and the recommendations made by them. The present-day Charity Commission also allowed access to an extensive archive of correspondence between the Charity Commissioners and Northamptonshire parishes.<sup>84</sup> This archive was invaluable in understanding the struggles that occurred at local level over charities and those between the Charity Commission and local authorities. Legal documents were used in a case study that illustrated the complex and the lengthy drawn out nature of charity disputes. The process of examination was seen in the minute books of the Travelling Commissioners.<sup>85</sup> The view from above in these elite-created sources is integrated in this study with the letters of the poor in order to give a more balanced view of the work of the Commission.

The parliamentary papers relating to the poor law were another valuable source. The replies to the Poor Law Rural Queries gave details about wages, housing, rents and the provision of land (or gardens) in a small sample of Northamptonshire parishes and so were used in the chapters on housing and land as a representative sample of

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<sup>83</sup> S King, Poverty, p.115. He shows the cumulative percentage of the population of four communities ascribed as 'poor' in different sources in 1821-7. 10% were in regular receipt of outdoor relief, 20% were in receipt of outdoor relief and charity, and 30-40% were in receipt of outdoor relief, charity and low rent. J D Marshall gives an average of 11% pauper percentage of population for England and Wales in 1801, with as much as 23% in Sussex and Wiltshire. The Old Poor Law 1795-1834, (London, 1968), p.54. Thomas Sokoll's detailed analysis of Ardleigh and Braintree in Essex recorded as much as 41% of households heads receiving poor relief in 1796, a year of particular hardship and 33% in Braintree in 1821. T Sokoll, Household and family among the poor The case of two Essex communities in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries (Bochum: 1993), pp.112 & 214

<sup>84</sup> CC, Charity 2, for full details of this archive see bibliography. However, only if serious abuses were identified, did the Commissioners conduct any lengthy examination.

<sup>85</sup> CC, Charity 2. These show that they had little time to spend on investigation.

Northamptonshire parishes.<sup>86</sup> They also gave an indication of rural unrest experienced during the years 1830-31. The report of Richardson, the Assistant Commissioner for Northamptonshire, included his observations on the extent of allotments and clothing clubs and the condition of rural housing in Northamptonshire, particularly praising the efforts of the clergyman in the parish of Farthinghoe.<sup>87</sup> His comments on the extent of allotments and clothing clubs reflected the reforming agenda of the New Poor Law towards charity with its emphasis on self-help and discrimination. The 1834 Poor Law Report too was used to show the ambiguous attitudes towards charity in the period and the emphasis being placed on assisting the poor to help themselves. The 1843 Select Committee on the Labouring Poor was useful in examining the generally negative attitudes of farmers towards allotment provision.<sup>88</sup> The Annual Reports of the Poor Law Commissioners from 1838 to 1844 printed details of the parishes in which housing was sold.<sup>89</sup> In conjunction with the correspondence between the Poor Law Commissioners and the individual unions it

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<sup>86</sup> PP 1834, XXX(1), Report of the Royal Commission into the Administration and Practical Operation of the Poor Laws: Rural Queries: Appendix B.(1) Answers to Rural Queries. (Hereafter referred to as Rural Queries). However, there are problems with the use of Rural Queries. Firstly, they represent approximately 5% of all Northamptonshire parishes. Additionally, there is a considerable bias in the questions, which were selected to prove the necessity of the changes that were then implemented in the 1834 Poor Law reform Act. Interestingly the answers often did not confirm those views.

<sup>87</sup> PP 1834, XXIX(1), Report of the Royal Commission into the Administration and Practical Operation of the Poor Laws: Report of the Assistant Poor Law Commissioners of the Poor Law: Report No14 from John Joseph Richardson Esq., Northamptonshire (Hereafter referred to as Assistant Poor Law Commissioner's Report (Northamptonshire)). Richardson's report is biased towards highlighting the abuses of the old poor law, particularly the ease with which the able-bodied poor could obtain outdoor relief. Thus, he singles out Farthinghoe as a parish where the clergyman, a man known for his strict views on poor relief, has achieved a considerable cut in outrelief, which is attributable to his promotion of self-help schemes. Richardson's report is similar in tone to those of his fellow assistant commissioners in the 1834 Poor Law Report.

<sup>88</sup> PP 1843 VII(201), Report of the Select Committee to inquire into the Allotment System and the Propriety of setting apart a Portion of Waste Land for the Labouring Poor (Hereafter referred to as Report on Allotments)

<sup>89</sup> PP 1835 XXXV(107); 1837 XXXI(127); 1837-8 XXVIII(145); 1839 XX(1); 1840 XVII(397); 1841 Session 1 XI(291); 1842 XIX(1); 1843 XXI(1); 1844 (XIX(9) 2<sup>nd</sup> to 10<sup>th</sup> Annual Reports of the Poor Commissioners

was possible to illustrate the extent of this sell-off, the condition of parish housing and also the change in property ownership that occurred.<sup>90</sup>

The other printed sources that were consulted included pamphlets, local newspapers and contemporary books. There were a considerable number of pamphlets being printed in the first half of the nineteenth century concerning various aspects of charitable provision and these illustrated the attitudes of reformers towards poverty and the direction that charity should take to alleviate it. Two secretaries of the Charity Commission published pamphlets, which expressed concern about the indiscriminate nature of much charity and the danger of charity being used to supplement the poor rate.<sup>91</sup> Solutions to assisting the poor, whilst at the same time encouraging them to be independent of parish relief, were the subject of many pamphlets, particularly promoting the self-help endeavours of clothing clubs and allotments.<sup>92</sup> One such publication, regarding a clothing club, was used to illustrate a case study of both the material assistance afforded by such a club, and the reforming agenda attached to it.<sup>93</sup> The two local newspapers, the Northampton Mercury and the Northampton Herald were a good source because of their reporting on individual charitable gestures, the supply of clothing clubs and allotments, the debates raging

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<sup>90</sup> PRO, MH12. Correspondence between the Poor Law Commissioners and the Northamptonshire Unions of Brackley, Brixworth, Daventry, Hardingstone, Kettering, Northampton, Oundle, Peterborough, Potterspury, Thrapston, Towcester and Wellingborough. Full references are given in the bibliography.

<sup>91</sup> BL, 796.e.4, N Carlisle, An Historical Account of the Origin of the Commission appointed to inquire concerning Charities in England and Wales: and an illustration of Several Old Customs and Words, which occur in the Reports (London, 1828) and J Hine, Observations on the Necessity of a Legislative Measure for the Protection and Superintendence of Endowed Public Charities (London, 1842)

<sup>92</sup> These are listed in full in the bibliography, but included publications from The Labourers Friend Society and The Agricultural Employment Institution.

<sup>93</sup> BL, T.1394(36), Reverend Francis Litchfield, Three Years' Results of the Farthinghoe Clothing Society with a Few Remarks on the Policy of Encouraging Provident Habits among the Working Classes (Northampton, 1832)

over allotment provision and poor law reform, and incidents of rural unrest.<sup>94</sup>

However, both papers had their own political bias, the Northampton Herald being a Tory paper and the Northampton Mercury a Whig paper and, as with all the press, editorial decisions affected what they chose to report. Furthermore, it was difficult to access the required subject matter, as the contents of these newspapers were not catalogued, so the material was gathered by making a selection from microfilms of a sample period from 1820 to 1850. Among the most important contemporary printed books were David Davies, The Case of Labourers in Husbandry (1796), and Frederick Eden's The State of the Poor (1797), which were useful for their estimates of household expenditure and income in a few Northamptonshire parishes.<sup>95</sup> Pitt's General View of the Agriculture of the County of Northampton (1809) gave information about the early stages of land provision for labourers and the state of housing.<sup>96</sup>

Local parish records were used extensively throughout this thesis.<sup>97</sup> Vestry minutes shed light on the actual operation of provision for the poor at the local level and, at times, showed the power struggles that occurred in parish society. The rules and regulations of self-help societies reflected how far national attitudes to charitable provision had penetrated local society.<sup>98</sup> Estate records of various Northamptonshire

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<sup>94</sup> NCL, The Northampton Mercury and The Northampton Herald

<sup>95</sup> D Davies, The Case of Labourers in Husbandry Stated and Considered, in Three Parts. Part I. A View of their Distressed Condition. Part II. The Principal Cause of their Growing Distress. Part III. Means of Relief Proposed. With an Appendix; Containing a Collection of Accounts (Dublin, 1796); F M Eden, The State of the Poor (London, 1797, reprinted London, 1966)

<sup>96</sup> W Pitt, General View of the Agriculture of the County of Northampton (1809)

<sup>97</sup> These are too numerous to list here, but are given in full in the bibliography and where they occur in the relevant chapters.

<sup>98</sup> They do not however tell us much about the recipients or how far the rules were adhered to in practice.



landowners demonstrated the level of their involvement in the various types of provision discussed in this thesis. The Spencer papers, in particular, provided a detailed picture of how this operated on one large estate.<sup>99</sup> The 1841 census returns for individual parishes were used to analyse the recipients of charity on the Spencer estate, the extent of landowner provision of housing and the membership of the Kislingbury allotment society.<sup>100</sup>

Thus a large patchwork of sources have been used here to reach an understanding of the charitable policies that affected the rural poor in Northamptonshire in the years 1800-1850, and of the impact of changing charitable relations between the poor and the propertied. Once various aspects of charitable provision have been explored in detail in Chapters two to six, the conclusion will then discuss the broader significance of these findings in relation to current debates about English rural society in the early nineteenth century.

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<sup>99</sup> The difficulty with these papers is that the recording of most of the charities begins in 1841. They may be older than this and are likely to reflect the fact that his new agent John Beasley was keen to manage the estate efficiently, thus producing these records. Beasley was also Lord Overstone's agent.

<sup>100</sup> NRO, 1841 census returns for the parishes of Great Brington, Little Brington, Nobottle, Cottesbrooke, Kislingbury, Great Billing, Little Billing, Abington, Overstone, and Sywell

## Chapter Two

### The Charity Commission in Northamptonshire

#### Introduction:

The work of the first Charity Commission in recording and establishing the endowed charities of England and Wales has, so far, not been subject to a detailed evaluation. Both David Owen in English Philanthropy and R. Tompson in The Charity Commission in the Age of Reform were primarily concerned with evaluating the Charity Commission's success or failure as a body.<sup>1</sup> For Tompson the importance of the Charity Commission was that it was the prototype for later parliamentary commissions, such as the Poor Law Commission, in what he terms the age of reform. Owen's assessment of the Charity Commission was that it was 'a record of frustration and disappointment balanced by a good deal of solid achievement.'<sup>2</sup> Tompson's appraisal of the Commission's work was less critical. He wrote:

The general evaluation of the inquiry which ended in 1837 must be that it was a worthwhile and economical enterprise, which was crucial as a beginning in renovating and maintaining charitable trusts in England and Wales.<sup>3</sup>

M. Chesterman substantiates this view and estimates that nationally the Commissioners recovered information about 30,000 endowments, receiving about £1,200,000 in annual income mostly from rents, although he states that subsequent investigations found at least a further 4,000 endowments.<sup>4</sup> This would appear to be a high success rate, particularly given the limitations placed on the Commission, which are noted by Owen, Chesterman and Tompson and which will be examined in this chapter. However, the success of the Commission in actually ensuring that these recorded endowments were continued and maintained is another aspect, which this

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<sup>1</sup> D. Owen, English Philanthropy and R. Tompson, The Charity Commission

<sup>2</sup> D. Owen, English Philanthropy, p.299

<sup>3</sup> R. Tompson, The Charity Commission, p.179

<sup>4</sup> M. Chesterman, Charities, p.64

chapter will address. An alternative assessment of the work of the Commission is offered by Bushaway in, who argues that the Charity Commissioners were actually responsible for questioning the legitimacy of certain charities which were founded on custom rather than on documentary evidence.<sup>5</sup> Were the Charity Commissioners champions upholding the rights of charities for all parishioners or was it the case, as John Archer has declared, that ‘the Charity Commissioners clearly had the interests of landowners at heart?’<sup>6</sup> There is, therefore, some debate about the efficacy of the Charity Commission in protecting charities (and, by implication, the rights of the poor, who were the main beneficiaries). An examination of the reports for Northamptonshire and the correspondence between the Charity Commission and various parishes in the county will evaluate the work of the Commission. This chapter will explore both how the Charity Commission operated and how the limitations that were placed on them would have affected their investigations. It will then present case studies to illustrate the process of investigation and its efficacy.

Firstly, however, an assessment of this kind needs to place the Charity Commission in its context as the continuation of a long line of attempts dating back to the late seventeenth century to establish how much money was being expended by charity. This was usually related to making a comparison with the amount of poor relief being spent.<sup>7</sup> The enquiry most pertinent to the foundation of the Charity Commission in 1818 was the Abstract of Returns instigated as a result of Gilbert’s Act in 1782. Gilbert was primarily a poor law reformer, who campaigned for the enlargement of the basic unit of poor relief administration, but additionally he aimed to investigate charities to ensure that their funds were being well administered as he believed that mismanagement of charitable funds would be likely to discourage giving. To combat

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<sup>5</sup> B Bushaway, *By Rite: Custom, Ceremony and Community in England 1700-1880* By Rite (London, 1982), p.253

<sup>6</sup> J E Archer, ‘By a Flash and a Scare’, p.59

It must be noted, however, that this remark may be more pertinent to the permanent Charity Commission established in 1853, as the examples cited by Archer are from that period.

<sup>7</sup> J Innes, ‘The “Mixed Economy of Welfare”’, p.147

mismanagement he advocated the administration of charitable funds at a county level. In order to establish how well charitable funds were being administered, he called for a public enquiry as early as 1764, but did not succeed in persuading Parliament to adopt this measure for another twenty years.<sup>8</sup> The returns were compiled from circulars, which had been sent to all ministers and churchwardens in all the parishes of England and Wales. The compilers of these returns observed that out of the 4,065 letters sent out, 3,376 replies were received and that a reply often covered several charities. Additionally, as many of the original answers were not complete, over 4,000 supplementary inquiries were sent out. The high level of response can be accounted for, in part, by the fact that fines for non-compliance were an integral part of Gilbert's Act.<sup>9</sup> The Abstract of Returns was printed in June 1788 and then put to rest until it was reprinted in 1816 as part of a renewed effort by Lord Brougham and other reformers to enquire into the state of endowed charities.<sup>10</sup> The Abstract of Returns has largely been ignored by historians with the exception of Wilson who wrote 'its interest lies in its immense scope in time, its detail and its anticipation of the age of public enquiry and reform.'<sup>11</sup> These returns formed the starting point for Lord Brougham's Select Committee 'to inquire into the education of the lower orders of the Metropolis', soon to evolve into the 1818 Charity Commission enquiry into the state of educational charities in England and Wales. This was extended in 1819 to include all types of endowed charities. This Commission was renewed twice, until 1830 and then was followed by a third Commission lasting from 1831 to 1834 and finally a fourth Commission running from 1835 to July 1837.<sup>12</sup> The fact that the Commission did not run uninterrupted from 1818 until 1834 had an impact on its operation, which will be examined later in the chapter. Brougham's 1818 Select Committee produced a survey of educational charities, which with Gilbert's Returns

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid, p.162

<sup>9</sup> R. Tompson, The Charity Commission, p.85

<sup>10</sup> Ibid, p.93

<sup>11</sup> C. Wilson, 'Poverty and Philanthropy in Early Modern England', in T. Riis (ed.), Aspects of Poverty in Early Modern Europe (Florence, 1981), p.255

<sup>12</sup> R. Tompson, The Charity Commission, pp.98 and 117

was the starting point for initiating the procedure by which the Charity Commission conducted its enquiries and formulated its own reports. Firstly, this chapter will analyse these reports to consider what impact they may have had on the state of endowed charities. Then, by examining the actual process of investigation, the chapter will consider the limitations placed on the Commissioners in preparing their reports and how far this compromised the outcome. This chapter will concentrate on the investigations of the Commissioners across a range of endowed charities, which were under threat in some way. A more detailed evaluation of charities that relate to the providing the basic needs of the poor, monetary payments, clothing, fuel, land and housing will be discussed in the relevant chapters.

## **2.1: The Charity Commission Reports**

The most tangible outcome of the evidence collected by the Charity Commissioners was the reports issued by them. Thirty-two reports were published during the period 2 March 1819 to 30 June 1837, although they were incomplete at the expiration of the inquiry in July 1837. These reports do, however, provide a starting point for an evaluation of the work of the Commission in recording, correcting and restoring charitable endowments. The reports reflect the nature of the enquiries, which was summed up by John Wrottesley (one of the Commissioners):

Having taken the abstract of the original deed or will, the first point is to trace the legal estate into the then existing trustees, and that completes one part of the report. Then we examine into the property, the tenants, the rents at which the property is let ... and also examine the leases of the property. The next point is the application of the revenue. In this order we have usually reported.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid, p.136, PP 1835 VII(650)

Table 2.1 shows how many charities were recorded in the reports for Northamptonshire and also in how many cases any action was taken:

**Table 2.1: Charity Commission reports for Northamptonshire**

	<i>Charities Reported</i>	<i>Recommendations</i>	<i>Problems reported, but no recommendations</i>
13 <sup>th</sup> Report 22.1.1825	86	11	7
14 <sup>th</sup> Report 2.7.1825	243	16	19
23 <sup>rd</sup> Report 30.1.1830	253	33	20
24 <sup>th</sup> Report 26.6.1830	168	25	12
26 <sup>th</sup> Report 10.1.1833	3	1	1
29 <sup>th</sup> Report 19.7.1834	1	1	-
Totals for all reports	754	87	59

Source: Charity Commission reports<sup>14</sup>

For the vast majority of charities it was not thought necessary to report any recommendations. However, included in the table there were thirty-two charities, which were recorded as lost and thirty-seven where there was non-payment of charity funds.<sup>15</sup>

The reports gave details of the dates and conditions of endowments and the purposes to which the endowments should be applied. Table 2.2 gives a breakdown of the different categories of charitable endowments, but, as this thesis concentrates on rural

<sup>14</sup> PP 1825 XX(1), 1826 XII(1), 1830 XII(327), 1831 XII(1), 1833 XIX(1), 1835 XXI, 13<sup>th</sup>, 14<sup>th</sup>, 23<sup>rd</sup>, 24<sup>th</sup>, 26<sup>th</sup> & 29<sup>th</sup> Further Reports

<sup>15</sup> At times, it is difficult to distinguish between 'lost' charities and 'non-payment' of charities as obviously the latter often led to the former. Here 'lost' as been applied either to those charities actually recorded as such or those charities where non-payment had occurred for such a long period that they were effectively lost.

charities, the table excludes the charitable endowments for the towns of Northampton and Peterborough and thus the total figure is less than that in Table 2.1.

**Table 2.2: Purposes of charitable endowments in rural Northamptonshire**

<i>Purpose of charity</i>	<i>No of charities in this category</i>	<i>As a percentage of total 667 reported charitable units<sup>16</sup></i>
Other	3	>1%
Supplement to poor rates	12	2%
Land for poor to cultivate	9	1%
Housing for the poor (including poorhouses & workhouses)	33	5%
Almshouses, bedehouses and hospitals	30	4%
Lost charities	32	2%
Fuel payments	37	6%
Not paid	37	6%
Clothing payments	39	6%
Apprenticeships	40	6%
Food (bread, meat etc) payments	67	12%
Church fabric/churchwarden's accounts	68	10%
Education (schools, Sunday schools, books)	105	16%
Monetary payments	155	23%

Source: As Table 2.1

Ten percent of this income related to church maintenance and sixteen per cent to education but the majority concerned provision for the poor in the form of clothing, housing, fuel, land and alms. Endowed charities, including educational and church-related charities, were present in the majority of parishes. Of the 297 rural Northamptonshire parishes, 235 (84%) recorded some form of endowed charity. Many parishes had more than one endowed charity, but some parishes had none.

<sup>16</sup> Charitable unit refers to that part of a charity that relates to a specific type of provision, as some charities had multiple provision.

Inevitably this meant that the amount of charitable funds available varied considerably from parish to parish.

Table 2.3 estimates the amount of endowed charitable income available to the poor. This is achieved by using the same criteria for assessing poor persons in a parish as was set out in the methodology.<sup>17</sup>

**Table 2.3: Estimated amount of annual endowed charitable income per poor household**

<i>Annual charitable income per poor household</i>	<i>Number of charities at each level of income</i>	<i>As a percentage of all 297 parishes in 1843 Digest</i>
No income	64	22%
Income less than £1	125	42%
Income £1 to £1 19s 11d	57	19%
Income £2 to £2 19s 11d	21	7%
Income £3 to £3 19s 11d	13	4%
Income over £4	17	6%

Source: As Table 2.2 and 1841 census abstracts<sup>18</sup>

Barnwell St Andrew was an example of a parish with a substantial amount of endowed charitable income, which was used as follows:

1. *Latham's charities* – for the maintenance of Parson Latham's Hospital and certain stipends to the poor people in the hospital. Also 'Provision should be made for a schoolmaster in Barnwell St Andrew and for schools in Brigstock, Weekley or Warkton and Hemington or Luddington and for exhibitions for two scholars in Cambridge and for other charitable purposes.' Also rents and profits from land 'to employ the same for the yearly maintenance, repairing and amending of the common highway' and the residue for 'poor people and fatherless children.'
2. *Montagu Doles* – 'sums due on St Thomas's day are paid for the poor of the respective parishes under mentioned, by the agent of Lord Montague, as charges on some part of his Lordship's family estate, and they are distributed among the poor by some of the respective parish officers.'

<sup>17</sup> This is only a rough estimate as the 1843 digest gives the total income for each parish and sometimes this will include education and church repairs.

<sup>18</sup> PP 1842 Session 2, II(277), 1841 Census Abstracts



Barnwell St Andrew – 6s 8d, Barnwell All Saints 6s 8d, Hemington 13s 4d and Luddington 13s 4d.’<sup>19</sup>

This example of Barnwell shows how hard it was to give an accurate figure for the amount of charitable income that was actually expended on the poor. In this parish, education and highway maintenance obviously took a considerable sum, but the poor were still left with monetary payments and the possibility of housing in old age. This contrasted sharply with the sixty-four parishes listed by the Charity Commissioners as containing no charitable endowments. These represented twenty-one per cent of the total 297 parishes in the Charity Commission’s 1843 Digest.

Some of those parishes with charitable endowments may have had endowed charities which had fallen into disuse. Many ‘lost’ charities in the charity reports were merely recorded as having been in the 1786 Returns, for example a donation of £15 in the parish Farthingstone, for which the Commissioners reported that no evidence was found.<sup>20</sup> In other cases, such as The Felmersham Dole in the parish of Ringstead, the Commissioners reported ‘all attempt to recover it has long been abandoned.’<sup>21</sup>

However, in the case of The Felmersham Dole in the parish of Stanwick, which was recorded as a ‘non-payment’ case, the Commissioners reported that:

There are no documents to show how the charity originated, but the donations appear, from one of the papers above alluded to, to be ascribed to a person named Aspin. We have intimated to Mr Paine that he ought to resume the payment of these donations.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> PP 1833 XIX(1), 26<sup>th</sup> Further Report, pp.779

<sup>20</sup> PP 1826 XII(1), 14<sup>th</sup> Further Report, p.229

<sup>21</sup> PP 1830 XII(327), 23<sup>rd</sup> Further Report, p.322

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid*, p.323

Although the documents were also lost in Stanwick, there was sufficient evidence of custom for the Commissioners to make their recommendation. What is not known is whether Mr Paine undertook the resumption of payments. Several charities were reported as 'lost on death' and much of the work of the Commissioners was in examining deeds and wills for evidence of a charitable foundation. However, although they were ostensibly given powers to call for these documents, those concerned with trust estates were protected by the following clauses:

1. if the charitable trust were unknown to the purchaser of the property;
2. if there was a lien on the property, and the mortgagor was exempt under the Act;
3. in all cases of exemptions; and
4. in cases of self-incrimination.<sup>23</sup>

Thus, there were many opportunities for concealment. Charitable funds were also lost due to insolvency when they had been put out on loan and there was really little that the Commissioners could do to redeem them. Recommendations were not made in all cases of charities which had been 'lost' or where funds had not been paid and which would, therefore, come under the category of 'reported' charities. Nevertheless, there is evidence that the Commissioners undertook a considerable amount of investigation before coming to the conclusion that they could not make a recommendation. Thus, although the table shows very few recommendations, it belies the amount of investigation undertaken by the Commissioners. Additionally, although the small number of recommendations could indicate that the Commissioners were generally satisfied that Northamptonshire charities were well administered according to the terms of their endowments, there are other explanations which need to be considered. It is highly likely that in most cases suggestions were made on the spot usually to trustees and it was not considered necessary to report them. This was certainly the opinion of one of the Commissioners, Daniel Finch:

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<sup>23</sup> A lien is a right to retain possession of property until a debt due to the person detaining it is satisfied. *The Shorter Oxford English Dictionary* (Oxford, 1973)  
R. Thompson, *The Charity Commission*, p.135

I think there is hardly a parish in which we do not make some recommendation or other on the spot, in which there is not something or other to be corrected, that would be quite idle to bring before the (General) Board  
....<sup>24</sup>

On a few occasions these timely reminders were reported, such as in the case of Lelam's Gift in the parish of Brixworth:

This annuity has been in arrears since 1817, but we found no reason to doubt it would be paid, upon application to Mr Mackaness, in whose title deeds to the premises it is said to be mentioned.<sup>25</sup>

These and a few other examples have the air of a gentleman's agreement and it can be argued that the impending visit of the Commissioners was sometimes enough to ensure that maladministration was corrected. Indeed Tompson argues that the reports themselves were used to ensure action on the behalf of locals and, therefore, may not reflect the true current condition of the charity.<sup>26</sup> Furthermore, there is evidence to suggest that in some cases the conditions prevailing in the report did not continue for long after its publication. Additionally, many charities were reported as having changed in character from their original terms of reference, most frequently as the result of enclosure acts. The 1816 Returns mentioned that thirty-one charities were affected by enclosure acts. Of this number, six had no date, three are from the seventeenth century, but not surprisingly the majority of twenty-two relate to the 1750-1786 period. The effects of these acts on charities are scattered throughout the reports and are discussed in the relevant chapters. The most extreme effect was that the enclosure resulted in non-payment or the loss of the charity as in the case of Coles's Charity in the parish of Blatherwycke. 'On the enclosure of Cliffe parish, an allotment of eight poles was awarded in another part of that parish, in respect of the old men's land; but from this it does not appear they have received any annual or other

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<sup>24</sup> Ibid, p.138, PP 1835 VII(672)

<sup>25</sup> PP 1831 XII(1) 24th Further Report, p.160

<sup>26</sup> R Tompson, The Charity Commission, p.138

profit.’<sup>27</sup> This problem was just reported and no recommendation made. The same was true of the enclosure of Grafton Regis in 1727 which was reported in the 1786 Returns as having had land bequeathed to the poor, vested in the Duke of Grafton, but it was observed that it was ‘uncertain if any payment was ever made.’<sup>28</sup> A more common reason for the non-payment of charities after enclosure was due to the fact that the cost of enclosure was often defrayed by the charity itself. In some cases this was just reported, as in Dickenson’s Gift in the parish of Burton Latimer:

This fund was for some time placed out on mortgage, but has afterwards, as is represented, laid out in defraying the enclosure expenses concerning the allotments set out in lieu of some of the charity estates.<sup>29</sup>

In another case, that of the Poor’s Allotment in the parish of Cold Higham, the Commissioners reported that the charity was losing revenue because the land had not been let as directed by the enclosure acts, but was divided into small parcels to those who had fuel cutting rights on the heath. Other cases show that recommendations were made to re-establish the charity payments, such as Middleton Poor’s Land in the parish of Rockingham, where the amount due from the occupier of the land, who had previously used the rent to reimburse himself for the cost of enclosure, ‘will now be paid and distributed among poor persons.’<sup>30</sup> Similarly in the case of the Ashton Poor’s Land, although the loss of the charity payments was acknowledged as being due to the expense of enclosure, a recommendation was made to proceed with these payments when the costs have been cleared:

The rent of the poor’s land before the enclosure, and which was about 12s a year, was distributed among the poor. The rent of the allotment has hitherto been retained towards defraying the expenses of the enclosure, which were advanced by the tenant, and a small sum yet remains due to him on that

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<sup>27</sup> PP 1830 XII(327), 23rd Further Report, p.277

<sup>28</sup> PP 1816 XVI, Abstract of Returns of Charitable Donations for the Benefit of Poor Persons by Ministers and Churchwardens of Parishes in England and Wales (hereafter called Abstract of Charity Returns)

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid*, p.326

<sup>30</sup> PP 1830 XII(327), 23rd Further Report, p.294

account. It has been agreed at a vestry meeting, that the rent, when distributable, shall be given in coals.<sup>31</sup>

However, in this case the Commissioners were actually advocating a change in the nature of the payments, from monetary to fuel handouts. This was consistent with a policy of controlling the type of handouts available to the poor - fuel, bread and clothing being the most common. What is apparent from the report on the Poor's Allotments in the parish of Aldwinckle is that recommendations were also being made stipulating the type of recipient. The poor's right to cut furze was lost upon the establishment of a plantation, the profits of which were to be distributed among the poor, with 'a preference being given to such as subsist without parochial relief.'<sup>32</sup>

This desire for charity to be distributed on a more discriminatory basis (specifically to those not on parish relief) is consistent with much contemporary literature about the nature of charitable giving. Indeed James Hine, the secretary to the last Commission wrote about the dangers of indiscriminate charitable giving in his Observations on the Necessity of a Legislative Measure for the Protection and Superintendence of Endowed Public Charities, published in 1842:

We have frequently had occasion, in our reports, to make remarks on the indiscriminate distribution of charities in sums too small to confer any real benefit, and without any care in the selection of proper objects. These remarks have been usually called for with regard to Charities left for the poor of any particular district in general terms, no specific application being pointed out by the donor ... It would be of great advantage if there were some competent authority to direct the application of charities of this description to the purposes of education, or to some other substantial benefit of the poor, and, if such charities are disposed of in money or clothing, or other articles, that such poor as maintain themselves without assistance from the parish rates should be principally selected.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> PP 1826 XII(1), 14th Further Report, p.215

<sup>32</sup> PP 1831 XII(1), 24th Further Report, p.129

<sup>33</sup> BL, 1380.h.3, J Hine, Secretary to the late Commissioners for inquiring into Charities, Observations

However, this emphasis on discriminatory distribution was not a new element of endowed charities. In the 1786 Returns there were thirty-three charities recorded which stipulated that recipients should not be on parish relief.<sup>34</sup> Not surprisingly, in the reports there are several occasions where this condition was reiterated. In the case of Lucas's Charity in the parish of Hollowell, which had been distributed irregularly and indiscriminately among the poor, it was recommended that the interest of the benefaction should be given to the parish officers and the interest distributed amongst the 'most necessitous poor not maintained by the parish.'<sup>35</sup> A similar situation arose with the rent of the Poor's Land in the parish of Weedon Beck. This had occasionally been given in fuel and clothing, but had of late been distributed in money to the poor of the parish. The recommendation was made that in future it should be distributed 'exclusively or with a decided preference to such poor as are not maintained by parochial relief.'<sup>36</sup> It may well be that parishes had become less discriminate in their charity giving through necessity, that is to say that in this period of great rural hardship, it was becoming increasingly difficult to find worthy recipients who were not on parish relief. Indeed in the case of Haynes's Gift in the parish of King's Sutton it was reported that no distribution of charitable funds had been made for three years, because there were no poor in the parish who did not receive relief and so no-one was eligible according to the terms of bequest. In this instance the Commissioners 'recommended that the arrears and future payments be distributed among the most industrious and deserving poor, until a class of objects shall arise strictly entitled to receive under the terms of the gift.'<sup>37</sup> Another stipulation placed by the Commissioners in the case of Lee's Charity in the parish of Geddington was 'to give a more decided preference in the distribution to poor widows and aged and infirm persons.'<sup>38</sup> However, this too presented problems, for in the case of Trigg's Charities

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<sup>34</sup> PP 1816 XVI, Abstract of Returns

<sup>35</sup> PP 1825 XI(1), 13th Further Report, p.37

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid*, p.27

<sup>37</sup> PP 1826 XII(1), 14th Further Report, p.296

<sup>38</sup> PP 1830 XII(327), 23rd Further Report, p.290

in the parish of Irthlingborough it was reported that 'it has become impracticable to make choice of such poor widows as receive no parochial relief.'<sup>39</sup>

It is not unexpected that, at this period when most of the necessitous poor were receiving parochial relief, the funds of several charities had either been diverted to the churchwarden's general account or to supplementing, or even reducing, the parish poor rates. Nicholas Carlisle, Secretary to the Commission from 1818 to 1831, wrote of the 'dangers' of this practice:

The custom of paying able-bodied labourers a portion of their wages out of the Poor rates is monstrous ... It is a practice which puts the whole labouring Population in a state of Pauperism, and breaks down the vigorous character and manly virtues of the Peasantry by making them feel themselves degraded ... Repeated animadversions of The Commissioners will be found, on the demoralizing effects of appropriating Charities in aid of the Poor Rates, - which it is manifest, are so strongly opposed to the interests of Industry and of Virtue, and the prescribed injunctions of the Donors.<sup>40</sup>

In theory then, the Secretary to the Commission had strong views on the subject, which was not surprising, as in 1832 he became one of the Poor Law Commissioners.<sup>41</sup> However, in practice in a few cases, such as that of the Benefield Church Estate, the Commissioners recommended that the charity funds should not be used for the general churchwarden's expenses, but for repairs to the church and donations to the poor.<sup>42</sup> Yet in the majority of cases the Commissioners seem to have been prepared to let matters rest and this account of the Town Land in Slapton and Wappenham serves to illustrate why:

The rent is received by the Feoffees, and applied in the first instance towards the repairs of the church, and if any surplus remains, it is paid to the overseers of the poor. This method of usage has the sanction of long usage, and it is not known that any other mode of disposition has prevailed. A distribution of the surplus among the poor by the trustees, instead of a direct contribution to the

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<sup>39</sup> Ibid, p.330

<sup>40</sup> BL, 796.e.4, N Carlisle, An Historical Account

<sup>41</sup> The Poor Law Report of 1834 condemned the giving of charity to those on poor relief and feared that 'these charities ... may interfere with the efficacy of the measures we have recommended ...'

<sup>42</sup> PP 1830 XII(327), 23rd Further Report, p.347

funds raised by the parochial rates, would perhaps be more proper and expedient; but considering the duration of the usage, and that the land was found by the inquisition to belong to the townsmen and parishioners, it would probably be difficult to enforce a new or different scheme of application without the consent of the owners of property in the parish.<sup>43</sup>

In this case the Commissioners backed away from a situation which they perceived as too long -established and which would be difficult to enforce without the consent of the propertied in parish society. It must be remembered that the Commissioners, as well as having limited time for investigation, also had limited powers. It is evident that there was an inconsistency in the response of the Commissioners, although on the whole they seem to have adopted a pragmatic approach based on what was feasible at a local level. By considering the process of investigation, it will be possible to see how it may well have had a bearing on the outcome.

## **2.2: The process of investigation**

The procedure adopted by the Charity Commission has been well documented by Tompson, and is summarised in this chapter. Evidence relating to Northamptonshire will be used to examine how the enquiry was carried out at a local level. Firstly, the Charity Commission attempted to identify charitable trusts and potential witnesses in the county by sending circulars to clergy asking for information of charitable trusts in the shape of the following printed forms:

Sir, I am desired by the Commissioners for enquiring into Charities in England and Wales to request that you will favour them with a list of all the Charities in your parish, stating by whom and when they were founded, and for what purpose; and likewise, that you will state what persons, as trustees, or otherwise, will be best able to give information with respect to each charity.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> PP 1826 XII(1), 14th Further Report, pp.247-8

<sup>44</sup> R Tompson, The Charity Commission, p.132



It is important to state that this circular was sent to clergy of the Church of England and was not intended to be sent to dissenting ministers, as this letter from F. Hine, the Secretary of Commissioners to James Hume, dated 29 March 1836 shows:

The Commissioners have not been in the habit of taking any active steps for enquiring into the Charities of dissenters; if notice of them has reached the Commissioners they have been inquired into; and occasionally in Towns, where there was reason to expect that such things might exist, the Commissioners have asked about them, but Mr Finch thinks, as it had struck me, that it is objectionable to call on the Clergy of the Establishment to make or procure returns of such Charities.....Charities of Dissenters founded, as many are, for the mere purpose of repairing Chapels or providing stipends for Ministers and uncombined with any provision for education or otherwise for the benefit of the Poor have never been inquired into. I believe, for my own part, that unless where some dispute exists between Members of the Congregation or Members of different Sects, there is not often an inclination to have their Charities inquired into; and I rather imagine any inquiry on the part of the Clergy would be often very unpalatable.<sup>45</sup>

Although this letter dates from near the end of the first Charity Commission it intimates that this practice had been followed for some time. Indeed in the Reports for Northamptonshire only one dissenting charity was noted in the earliest report for the county, that of the 'Charities belonging to the Congregation of Protestant Dissenters in Daventry.'<sup>46</sup> Significantly, this letter also highlights the main focus of the Charity Commission's enquiries, that is education and the poor.<sup>47</sup>

The second procedure was that, once received, the replies were to be compared with the aforementioned Gilbert Returns and the Digest of Select Committee Returns of 1818. There was disagreement about the value of making a comparison with the 1816 reprint of Gilbert's Returns, with differing views about their reliability, the most obvious point being that they were thirty years out of date. The Digest of Select

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<sup>45</sup> CC, Charity 2, Box 436, Miscellaneous Correspondence of Charles Ellison, John Fellows, Richard Froward, James Hume, Robert Marsham and F Martin, Commissioners of Charities

<sup>46</sup> PP 1825 XI(1), 13th Further Report, p.17

<sup>47</sup> Gilbert's Returns of 1786 had been concerned with those charities that were directed at poor persons and in 1816 Brougham's initial thrust for setting up a Charity Commission was directed at educational charities.

Committee Returns too was of limited value as it only reported on educational charities.<sup>48</sup> However, the replies did give some idea of the scale and scope of charities within a town or an area of a county and prepared the Commissioners for the next stage of enquiry. This was the visitation of the Commissioners and they prepared for this in the following ways.

Firstly, advertisements were placed in local papers inviting witnesses. This approach was criticised on the grounds that it was not always carried out. In the correspondence between parishes and the Charity Commissioners there was very little mention of advertisements. The only mention of the possibility that an advertisement may not have appeared in the local press can be seen in this letter, dated November 1836, from A A Young of Orlingbury to one of the Travelling Commissioners, residing at the Three Crowns in the neighbouring county of Leicestershire:

As I believe no public advertisement announced the intention of the Charity Commissioners to visit this neighbourhood; I was not apprised of their having been here until Mr Munsell informed me of their departure. I had much wished to lay before them the case of ten acres of Charity Land in the Parish of Loddington ..... May I trouble you to inform me whether the Commissioners will hold any further meetings in this part of the Country, and if not whether they have any office in London where application can be made, and if so, when the Commissioners will be in attendance there?<sup>49</sup>

This letter may not be typical, however, as it was not referring to the initial investigation into Loddington charities, which was carried out in 1829 and reported on in the 23rd Report. The response of the Commissioners was not to arrange any further investigation or meeting but to send Mr Young a copy of this report. Therefore, it would seem that missing the initial investigation, as a result of failing to see it advertised, could be crucial in instigating an investigation into an alleged abuse. The only other reference to advertisements, which demonstrated that one had been

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<sup>48</sup> R. Thompson, *The Charity Commission*, pp.132-133

<sup>49</sup> CC, Charity 2, Box 205, *Counties: Papers - General Series* – Northamptonshire, Box 205, Letter from A A Young, Orlingbury to William Crown Esq, Three Crowns, Leicester (November, 1836)

placed in the press was from John Robinson of Lower Heyford, dated 12 October 1836:

An advertisement in this week's Paper solicits information respecting Charities. I beg to lay before you some particulars respecting a Charity pertaining to this Parish which I believe has not yet been investigated. As it is a charity of considerable importance I trust it will be investigated though I have no wish to appear as a complainant.<sup>50</sup>

Here again, this charity had already been reported on in the 24th Report and it may well be that, like the previous correspondent, Mr Robinson had missed the initial advertisement. Evidently he felt some concern about the continuing mismanagement of this charity, but did not want to appear to be directly involved. He responded to the advertisement in the hopes that this would once again draw the attention of the Commissioners to this particular charity. This evidence is very inconclusive about the reliability of the placing of newspaper advertisements, but the fact that parishioners from very varying social strata wrote directly to the Commissioners with concerns about their parish charities would suggest that information about the activities of the latter was widely available. As will be seen from the next procedure adopted by the Commissioners, information was sought by them from a limited section of parish society.

The next stage was that the Commissioner or his clerk would send letters to clergy and precepts to all other potential witnesses with the following form:

Sir,  
I am directed by the Commissioners appointed to inquire concerning Charities in England and Wales, to request the favour of your attendance at  
..... on  
..... at ..... o'clock in the ..... noon, respecting  
.....

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<sup>50</sup> CC Charity 2, Box 204, Counties: Papers - General Series - Northamptonshire, Letter from John Robinson, Lower Heyford, (12 October 1836)

and to desire that you will bring with you any papers from among the parish documents, or from any other source in your power, which you think may assist the Commissioners in their investigation. And also a copy of the Table of Benefactions if any.<sup>51</sup>

Although very few replies have survived, those known respondents to this form were mainly clergy and churchwardens and sometimes landowners or land occupiers. The surviving replies tend to be where the writer wished to lay a possible abuse before the Commissioners and will be examined in detail later on in the chapter. Compliance was generally good, but, although the Commission had some power to compel witnesses to appear, it had virtually none to force the production of the necessary documents.<sup>52</sup> The Commissioners would then arrange to travel either singly or in pairs to a town and set up their investigation in a local inn, to which witnesses were called.<sup>53</sup> Some minute books of these investigations survive, but there is not a complete record. Table 2.4, which is an extract from a minute book, gives some idea of the travelling commissioners' rate of progress through the county.<sup>54</sup> In just over a month the Travelling Commissioners examined an average of three parishes and eleven charities per day. However, these figures are somewhat distorted by the fact that some parishes and also some charities were examined over several days. This was particularly true of the charities in the towns such as Wellingborough, Kettering and Oundle, but also applied to a few rural parishes. Generally speaking though, with regard to the rural areas, the Travelling Commissioners managed to get through a large number of both parishes and charities during the course of one day. For example, on Monday 17 August 1829 they examined seven parishes encompassing twenty-three charities. When they examined the charities of Higham Ferrers on 26

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<sup>51</sup> R Tompson, The Charity Commission, p.134

<sup>52</sup> Ibid, p.134

<sup>53</sup> The Travelling Commissioners were, with few exceptions 'practising barristers with experience at the Chancery bar.' Ibid, p.119

<sup>54</sup> CC, Charity 2, Box 419(4), Minute Books of the Travelling Commissioners - Cambridge, Northampton and Suffolk (26 August 1828 to 5 October 1829)

August 1829 they managed to complete their investigation of that parish which boasted as many as thirteen charities.

**Table 2.4: Commissioners' progress through Northamptonshire 16 August to 5 October 1829 showing date and place of examination, the number of parishes and the number of charities covered by each investigation**

<i>Date of examination</i>	<i>Place</i>	<i>Parishes</i>	<i>Charities</i>
17 August 1829	Northampton	7	23
18 August 1829	Northampton	9	29
20 August 1829	Wellingborough	1	1
21 August 1829	Wellingborough	5	15
22 August 1829	Wellingborough	1	13
24 August 1829	Wellingborough	6	13
25 August 1829	Wellingborough	3	14
26 August 1829	Wellingborough	3	14
27 August 1829	Kettering	1	12
28 August 1829	Kettering	6	23
29 August 1829	Kettering	1	9
1 September 1829	Kettering	8	17
2 September 1829	Kettering	1	16
3 September 1829	Lamport	2	11
4 September 1829	Lamport	6	18
5 September 1829	Lamport	2	3
7 September 1829	Market Harborough	2	4
8 September 1829	Market Harborough	5	>17
			(un-named)
9 September 1829	Kettering	1	1
10 September 1829	Kettering	2	5
12 September 1829	Market Harborough	7	18
14 September 1829	Market Harborough	2	3
14 September 1829	Kettering	1	1
15 September 1829	Kettering	1	1
16 September 1829	Great Weldon	2	9
17 September 1829	Great Weldon	5	17
18 September 1829	Great Weldon	4	6
19 September 1829	Thrapston	2	5
21 September 1829	Thrapston	5	15
22 September 1829	Thrapston	3	13
23 September 1829	Oundle	1	1
24 September 1829	Oundle	6	15
25 September 1829	Oundle	1	4
26 September 1829	Oundle	2	6
Total		114	372

Source: Minute books of the Travelling Commissioners<sup>55</sup>

<sup>55</sup> Ibid

It is important to understand the speed with which the Travelling Commissioners could complete their examinations, because, of course, it would have had an impact on the depth of their reports. It may have been partly responsible for some of the problems which later arose and which will be discussed in this chapter.

The extracts from the minute books are useful in understanding another aspect of the process - the examination of witnesses. Although the minute books give no details of the evidence recorded, what they do illustrate are the typical parishioners who would be examined or present at the examination, as is shown in Table 2.5.

**Table 2.5: Occupations of persons examined or present**

<i>Occupation</i>	<i>No.</i>
Churchwardens	78
Clergymen	44
Trustees (not listed as clergy or churchwardens)	31
Overseers (not listed as Churchwarden & Overseer)	13
Gentry, or their Agents (not listed as Trustees)	13
Schoolmasters (not listed as clergy)	7
Solicitors	4
Others <sup>56</sup>	14
Name only	5

Source: As Table 2.4

The presence of churchwardens, clergymen and trustees is hardly surprising as they would have received direct notification of the visit from the Commission, as would the gentry if their land were subject to a charitable trust.<sup>57</sup> Churchwardens were particularly predominant, as often they were responsible for keeping the records of the parish charities and, as such, were the most useful witnesses, as this letter, dated 13 August 1829, from the Commission to Reverend Miller of Milton shows:

Before I had the honor to receive your letter of the 11th instant containing the account of the Charities belonging to the parish of Milton, I had written to the Acting Churchwarden to request his attendance at the George Inn on Monday

<sup>56</sup> Details of these 'others' are given on p.61.

<sup>57</sup> Schoolmasters were present as many of the charities involved education.

morning next at 11 o'clock to give the Commissioners an account of those Charities. I was then unacquainted with the names of the Trustees. Your statement is so full and explicit that I have little doubt with the assistance of the Churchwarden and the Deeds and Books he is desired to bring, the Commissioners will be able to obtain all the additional information they require without giving you or the Trustees further trouble.<sup>58</sup>

The trustees were invited to attend if they should so desire, but the minute books show that the only persons present for the parish of Milton were Mr John Cooper and Mr John Phipps, both Churchwardens.<sup>59</sup> The reliability of the churchwardens meant that the trustees were not compelled to attend even though the Commissioners had some power in this area. However, witnesses could evade the examinations through absence and the Commissioners were limited in the number of their repeat visits.<sup>60</sup> Additionally, Tompson noted 'the attendance of those giving evidence was sometimes augmented by their solicitors and others.'<sup>61</sup> In the minute book this occurred on six occasions, four of which concerned Kettering town charities when a banker John Gotch Esq was recorded as present. One of the other occasions was in the case of Marriott's charity in Sywell when a major witness, Mr Joseph Robinson, who was accused of non-payment of a charity, was absent himself from the proceedings, but was represented by his solicitor Mr Isaac Robinson. The charity was first examined on 18 August 1829, when the Churchwarden alone was present, but a 'further enquiry' was registered on 24 August 1829 when Isaac Robinson attended. Prior to their visit the Charity Commission had received a letter, dated 18 July 1829, from the Reverend Knight, concerning the non-payment of this charity by Mr Joseph Robinson since his purchase of the land in 1825. Mr Joseph Robinson was aware of a possible loophole in the terms of the original will and was refusing to pay on those grounds. After the second examination the Charity Commissioners evidently hoped that this

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<sup>58</sup> CC, Charity 2, Box 432, Letter Book of Commissioners, Letter to Rev G O Miller, Milton, Near Northampton, (13 August 1829)

<sup>59</sup> CC, Charity 2, Box 419, Counties

<sup>60</sup> R. Tompson, The Charity Commission, pp.134-135

<sup>61</sup> Ibid, p.137

was not the case and that the matter could be settled quickly and easily by writing to the solicitor, Mr Isaac Robinson on 25 August 1829, informing him that:

The Commissioners will consider it their duty to certify the particulars of this charity to the Attorney General with a view to an injunction being filed for recovering payments of the arrears and annuity, unless they shall hear from you on or before the 16th November that Mr J Robinson has paid the sum of £8 to the Churchwardens of Sywell for the poor....<sup>62</sup>

This charity was then recorded in the 23rd Report, where the Commissioners noted:

Mr Robinson being prevented by illness from attending us in person, his solicitor appeared for him, and suggested, as reasons to justify the refusal to pay the annuity, that it did not appear by the court-rolls that Ambrose Marriott had surrendered his estate to the use of his will, and that Thomas Marriott had been admitted as heir, and not devisee.

Unless it is to be considered that the land purchased by Mr Robinson has not been effectually charged with the annual sum of 40s. a year to the poor of Sywell, we are of opinion that proceedings in equity should be instituted in this case for recovering the arrears and for establishing and securing the charity.<sup>63</sup>

Obviously there was some doubt about the validity of the will, but the Commissioners were clearly trying to avoid having to refer the case to the Court of Chancery.

However, evidently nothing happened, because the Commissioners wrote again to Isaac Robinson on 5 January 1830 requesting a reply to their previous letter.<sup>64</sup> This still did not have any effect, as Reverend Knight wrote again to Charles Ellison, one of the Commissioners, on 2 February:

I beg leave to inform you that Mr J Robinson appears totally regardless of the notice you gave him when in this County last Autumn, as the Churchwardens of Sywell have neither seen him nor heard anything from him respecting the charity left by Ambrose Marriott. The charity tho' small, I hope will not be lost to the poor of Sywell.<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> CC, Charity 2, Box 207, Counties: Papers - General Series - Northamptonshire, Copy of letter from Commissioners to Mr Isaac Robinson, Wellingborough, (25 August 1829)

<sup>63</sup> PP 1830 XII(327), 23rd Further Report, p.303

<sup>64</sup> CC, Charity 2, Box 432, Counties, Copy of letter to I Robinson, Solicitor, Wellingborough (5 January 1830)

<sup>65</sup> CC, Charity 2, Box 209, Counties: Papers - General Series - Northamptonshire, Letter from Rev R H Knight, Overstone to Charles Ellison (2 February 1830)



Charles Ellison replied promptly on 5 February 1830 accounting for the delay on the grounds of Mr Robinson's health being in 'a very doubtful state' and that he was not 'capable at present of attending to matters of business.' Therefore, 'it was considered proper that the Certificate should be stayed for a time', but if Mr Knight could 'obtain any such intelligence respecting Mr Robinson's state' that he shall let the Commissioners know. Mr Knight evidently heeded this advice, for he wrote to Charles Ellison again on 10 March 1830 saying:

I have learnt from a neighbouring Clergyman (a Magistrate in the Wellingborough Division), that Mr Robinson a few weeks back attended one of their meetings, and on inquiring if his health appeared good, he assured me that he was quite equal to any business he chose to undertake.<sup>66</sup>

However, the Commissioners do not appear to have acted swiftly on this information, because the Reverend Knight had to write again on 23 October 1830, pleading for some action to be taken and stating that Mr Robinson's 'only infirmities are those of old age.'<sup>67</sup> Eventually the Commissioners were able to give Reverend Knight assurance that action had been taken when they wrote to him on 9 November 1830, informing him that:

A Certificate of the Case of Ambrose Marriott's Charity was sent some time ago to the Attorney General ..... an Information has been filed by the Attorney General against Mr Robinson to compel payment of the Charity, and that it is expected Mr Robinson will settle the business in the course of a few days, or otherwise the suit will be immediately proceeded in.<sup>68</sup>

This case of Marriott's Charity in Sywell illustrates both how a witness could evade the examination and what a drawn-out process it could be to try and re-establish a charity. Also it demonstrates that the Commissioners were cautious in the amount of pressure they brought to bear on a witness, in this case a landowner, giving him plenty

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<sup>66</sup> CC, Charity 2, Box 209, Counties, Letter from Rev R H Knight to Charles Ellison, dated 10 March 1830

<sup>67</sup> CC, Charity 2, Box 209, Counties, Letter from Rev R H Knight, Overstone to Charles Ellison, dated 23 October 1830

<sup>68</sup> CC, Charity 2, Box 432, Letter Book

of time to respond, obviously to the frustration of the Reverend Knight. It would appear to have worked, because this charity was listed in the 1891 Digest of Endowed Charities in Northamptonshire.<sup>69</sup> This might seem to support John Archer's opinion that the Commission often maintained the landowner's interests. However, although the matters proceeded slowly, the Commission did continue to pursue the issue. The problem was that the process of examination could take considerable time.

Subsequently, the lack of continuity caused by there being several separate commissions rather than one permanent body, could have serious consequences on certain charities.

The last point to make about the process of examination is to consider the category of witness entitled 'other.' Six of them were described in the following manner:

Thomas Darcon, an old inhabitant; James Halford, Farmer, an Inhabitant (all present at the examination of the charities in the parish of Walgrave); and George Gill, John Bates, John Strange, William Simcoe, inhabitants and complainants in Kettering in the case of the Free or Grammar School.<sup>70</sup>

Unfortunately, there are very few cases where the hand-written reports of the travelling commissioners directly record the questioning of witnesses, as early attempts to produce a verbatim record were soon abandoned.<sup>71</sup> One such case, where a verbatim record was kept, comes from a relatively early investigation made in October 1824 concerning the 'Poor's and Cow Common' in the parish of Preston Capes. In this instance it may be that witnesses were called due to the exertions of a local man of some substance, Zachariah Stilgoe Esq. of Maidford Grange near Towcester, who elsewhere described himself as a freeholder and occupier of land.<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>69</sup> PP 1890-1 LX(939), Digest of Endowed Charities in the County of Northampton, the Particulars of which are Recorded in the Books of the Charity Commissioners for England and Wales, but not in the General Digest of Endowed Charities (Northamptonshire) (in continuation of PP 1873 XXV(1))

<sup>70</sup> CC, Charity 2, Box 419, Minute Books

<sup>71</sup> R Tompson, The Charity Commission, p.136

<sup>72</sup> CC, Charity 2, Box 206, Counties: Papers - General Series - Northamptonshire, Letter from Z Stilgoe, Maidford Grange to Commissioners, Towcester (29 March 1824)

Mr Stilgoe, according to a letter dated 9 May 1822 to the Commissioners from a Mr R. Cruse (probably a solicitor), had already researched this charity for:

Said Stilgoe took a journey to Town some time since to wait on Mr Brougham on the subject and after staying in Town 3 days for that purpose was at last disappointed. He has already spent in his researches for the Donor the person who left the houses to the 20 poor people and the plot of ground for the Cows more than £100 and is still ready to expend more.<sup>73</sup>

Stilgoe himself wrote to the Commissioners when they were in Daventry on 24 October 1824 stating that 'the business cannot be settled without the examination of Richard Stratford on Account of his having once a document showing the measurement of the whole parish.'<sup>74</sup> He was also anxious to trace the whereabouts of a will relating to the charity. Mr Richard Stratford a seventy-seven year-old native of Preston Capes however denied this when questioned, saying:

I never in my life had any survey and old Book Map or Plan of or respecting the lands in the parish of Preston. I cannot say but once at a Public House I mentioned to several persons in the room, Thomas Quincy, John Short and some other that I had a survey of the Lands in this parish. I was wrong in saying for in fact I never had one and I never saw any survey than that I had probably been drinking. It is about 10 years ago since the conversation took place, it was before Sir Charles Knightly had begun to interfere or require the Cottages to give up their lets.<sup>75</sup>

Either he genuinely had made a drunken boast or it is possible that he thought it expedient to deny knowledge which would put him into conflict with Sir Charles Knightly, a prominent local landowner, and the evidence of the other witness shows why he was hesitant to do so. This other witness, one Thomas Quincy, was more forthcoming. Quincy described himself as a former occupier of Poor's Cottages and Cow Common, as had been his father, grandfather and great grandfather, the latter

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<sup>73</sup> CC, Charity 2, Box 207, Counties: Papers - General Series - Northamptonshire, Letter from R Cruse, 11 Temple Place, Ferry Road to N Carlisle, Secretary to Commissioners (9 May 1822)

<sup>74</sup> CC, Charity 2, Box 207, Counties, Letter from Z Stilgoe, Maidford to The Gentlemen Commissioners, Daventry (24 October 1824)

<sup>75</sup> Ibid, Notes of Evidence - Commissioners Report, Mr Richard Stratford

before the enclosure of the cow common. Quinney denied any knowledge of a will or deeds to prove the rights of the cottagers, but did give evidence against Sir Charles:

The inhabitants enjoyed the privileges already mentioned until 1813 at which time Sir Charles Knightley proposed to the occupiers to give each of them £10 a year during their lives on condition of their giving up the cow common and the 2 allotments. The cottagers were most of them disinclined to accept the terms proposed but as they would be turned out in case of refusal they all submitted to the terms proposed. Sir Charles Knightley paid the cottagers £10 a piece for 2 years deducting these from the cottage rents. Some of the cottagers took legal advice on the subject of their right to retain the cottages and in consequence of hearing of such proceedings, Sir Charles stopped the payments, varied the rents of the cottages, and afterwards brought an ejectment to recover some of them which he succeeded in consequence of his Agent being able to prove that this title of Landlord was acknowledged by payment of rent.<sup>76</sup>

The charities of Preston Capes were then duly presented in the 13th Further Report, but interestingly no mention was made of this dispute and no recommendations made. Not surprisingly then, Zachariah Stilgoe felt compelled to write again to the Commissioners on 2 May 1826 expressing his dissatisfaction with the proceedings:

At the particular desire of the poor inhabitants of the parish of Preston Capes I have written to you, to ask you what you have done in the Charity business belonging in Preston Capes. You must remember when you was sitting in Towcester that you showed me the will you found in the Commons. And you also know well that the several charities mentioned in it are not received by the Poor ... I must confess I am surprised that you should have performed your promise long before this time - That is you said you would send to me or to Mr Covell your Report to say what you have done and what you would do but your long silence does surprise me for such donations are the very thing the Act of Parlement was past to make good.<sup>77</sup>

There was no recorded response to Mr Stilgoe's letter, so it must be assumed that there the matter rested and the evidence of the witnesses did not appear to have affected the outcome.

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<sup>76</sup> Ibid, Notes of Evidence - Commissioners Report, Mr Thomas Quinney

<sup>77</sup> CC, Charity 2, Box 209, Counties, Letter from Zachariah Stilgoe, Maidford Grange to Charity Commissioners (2 May 1826)

As already stated, the verbatim record was soon abandoned anyway and it is evident that the number of witnesses present at these examinations was limited, for although in theory they were open to all, in practice they were semi-private affairs, rarely attracting large crowds.<sup>78</sup> Certainly in this fragment from the minute books the number of inhabitants present (apart from the clergy and churchwardens) was small in number. This may have been due to a lack of awareness that the examination was taking place, as already discussed, or that the poorer sections of parish society just did not have the opportunity to attend as the meetings were held on working days. It could also be due to the hesitance of witnesses to appear to give evidence against parish notables. In the case of one charity, the Moulton Town Lands, which attracted a great deal of attention in the parish, and is discussed later as a case study of a charity with multiple abuses, one inhabitant who did make it to the examination found it a costly exercise, as this unsigned letter, franked 28 April 1825 indicates:

Since the appearance of the Overseer and some of the Poor Men of the parish of Moulton, Northamptonshire before you at the George Inn, Northampton, Thomas Tressler the Overseer has evinced some degree of spite or displeasure upon the subject towards one Robert Gross by selling his Goods, turning him out of his house and putting the family into the Workhouse. The man is of good character, and only wishes for a home and would use every effort to pay the rent and support his family. Knowing that it is not the wish of the 'Commissioners of Charities' that any spite should be shown on either side the Poor Man flatters himself, that a few lines from them to the Overseers would induce them to alter their conduct towards the Poor, (as this is not the only instance of the kind), and to assist them with a few household goods, and to allow them to start afresh for themselves, as they dislike the idea of the workhouse.<sup>79</sup>

It is not possible to determine whether there were other cases of intimidation, but it does seem that a safer course of action for the poor to pursue was to write to the Commissioners anonymously about any abuses. Although there is evidence that the poor of only nine parishes among the General Series for Northamptonshire did so,

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<sup>78</sup> R. Thompson, *The Charity Commission*, p.137

<sup>79</sup> CC, Charity 2, Box 205, Counties, Unsigned letter to Dr Burnaby, Doctors Commons, Commission of Charities (28 April 1825)

these examples do provide an insight into how the role of the Charity Commissioners was perceived by the poor. This view is consistent with that expressed by G C Smith who, when writing of correspondence between the poor and the Poor Law Commissioners, speaks of 'the poor's desperate belief in the paternalism of king and parliament.'<sup>80</sup> This letter, dated 17 June 1825, from an inhabitant of the parish of Pattishall, writing about the Foxley Charity, which was the subject also of a petition from the parish of Blakesley, expressed this perception of the Charity Commissioners:

In Relating to you our present Distress of mind Concerning the Charity that has Been Left for the Suport and Comfort of us Poor Individuals when his Majesty and his Noble Gentlemen was pleased to send Commissioners to see to the rights of the Poor It made the hearts of many to Sing for Joy.... If we have Done wrong in Percevering in it we Humbly Solicit your Pardon And If not Dear Honoured sir Have Compassion on us and Help us.... the Humble Petition of the writer of these Lines A Poor man with A small Family Pattishall parish.<sup>81</sup>

However, it has to be said that the petitions from the poor mainly came from the period of the Commission's first two investigations in Northamptonshire and that this view of them may not have persisted beyond that. The petitions were mainly from parishes clustered together geographically, such as Boughton, Spratton, East Haddon, Moulton and Harlestone, just to the North of Northampton and Pattishall and Blakesley, which were both close to Towcester. The other two parishes involved were Nether Heyford and Lower Heyford. This would suggest a liaison between neighbouring parishes or at least a knock-on effect as is shown in this letter from the parish of Moulton, dated 2 April 1825:

The parish of Moulton has several charities, which have not been properly distributed of late and the Poor People having heard that the 'Commissioners

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<sup>80</sup> G C Smith, 'The Poor in Blindness': Letters from Mildenhall, Wiltshire, 1835-6' in T Hitchcock, P King, P Sharpe (eds.), Chronicling Poverty, The Voices and Strategies of the English Poor, 1640-1840, (London, 1997), p.229

<sup>81</sup> CC, Charity 2, Box 206, Counties, From the Inhabitants of Pattishall Parish in the County of Northampton (17 June 1825)

of Charities' have recovered the rights of the Poor of the Parish of Boughton feel desirous that the Commissioners would investigate theirs also.<sup>82</sup>

This letter was of a higher level of literacy than most of the petitions received from the poor and suggests that it may have been written on behalf of the poor rather than from them directly. However, the standard of literacy in most of the correspondence from the poor would indicate that the letters were penned by the less educated members of parish society. This additional anonymous letter from the 'Moulton Poore' was a typical example:

The prenteses are all loost and the free scool is loost. So gentlemen I hope you will be our frends and see us rited in all richens and land wee all hope Gentlemen will tell our farmers to render no spite for the thretness all and wey so wee want nothing but our ties. I hope wee shall ave the same resen to Bless you all as Boughton.<sup>83</sup>

In this letter there is a hint of the intimidation also experienced in Boughton. By referring to Boughton where the Commission appeared to have helped the poor, the Moulton poor expressed a desire that the Commission would do the same for them.<sup>84</sup>

In 1825, it appeared that the poor in Boughton had won a considerable victory due in part to their direct correspondence with the Charity Commission, but a closer examination of the Boughton case presents a far more complex state of affairs. The Boughton poor wrote to the Commission in an undated letter, voicing their complaints thus:

Gentlemen, We the poor perishoners in the parish of Boughton in the County of Northampton have taken the liberty to send you a few lines concerning some land lying the parrish of pittsford belonging to Boughton poor ... sometimes it is called poor's land in Charity and the Charity sees but we never receive one half penny out of it and they say it is for them to do as they like with we have no Coals laid in for us as they have in other parishes we are at

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<sup>82</sup> CC, Charity 2, Box 209, Counties, Unsigned letter, Moulton, Northants brought by Carter to Commissioners (2 April 1825)

<sup>83</sup> CC, Charity 2, Box 209, Counties, Letter to Commissioners from Moulton poor (undated)

<sup>84</sup> This is similar to the letters written by labourers to the New Poor Law Commissioners prior to the implementation of the 1834 Poor Law Reform Act, as can be found in G C Smith, 'The Poor.'

this time obliged to give one shilling and eight pence for coals poor men with their families have 8 shillings per week where there is four and five children and no allowance the whole of the land and dwelling houses the rent amounts to one hundred and seventy pounds per year. We think it hard to have nothing out of it they say it is to pay paupers with if you gentlemen can make it out for us as we have been informed you can we should be very much obliged to you...<sup>85</sup>

This was evidently a case where the charity money was supplementing poor relief rather than being distributed amongst the poor, many of them having the additional grievance of not being paid poor relief.<sup>86</sup> A similarly worded letter was sent by the poor of Boughton on 28 February 1823, this time requesting a reply and offering to appear as witnesses:

I hope if you can do us any good you will send us a few lines or if you cannot if you desire it we will appear personly if you send .... Gentlemen if you can do us any good you will send us word by the return of post and wether you wish any of us to come please to direct for Thomas Harper, Boughton near Northampton and [paper torn]... will keep it to the poor safe.<sup>87</sup>

Having received no reply the Boughton poor wrote again on 15 September 1823, enclosing their letter with one from the Spratton poor:

Gentlemen, we the poor of this parish have taken the liberty to put in a few lines with Spratton as we are all in Dispair concerning the poors land for those gentlemen told us that they would come and seen us have our right for the farmers use us worse than ever.<sup>88</sup>

The Commissioners do not appear to have replied directly to the poor, but mention of the discontent was at least recorded in the report concerning Boughton. Both

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<sup>85</sup> CC Charity 2, Box 202, Counties: Papers - General Series - Northamptonshire

<sup>86</sup> It may have been that petitioners hoped that the intervention of the Commissioners would also improve their right to poor relief. In a letter from 82-year old James Vaughan of Eastcote to the Commission, dated 30 October 1825, asked Dr Burnaby (one of the Commissioners) to intercede on his behalf by writing to the Overseer of the Poor, and 'requesting that I may have sufficient support' as he had received 'no more than three shillings per week to support my wife and myself for the last seven weeks.' CC, Charity 2, Box 209, Counties (30 October 1825)

<sup>87</sup> CC Charity 2, Box 202, Counties, Letter to Commissioners of the Charity Office (15 September 1823)

<sup>88</sup> CC, Charity 2, Box 207, Counties, Letter from Boughton poor (15 September 1823)



Boughton and Spratton appeared in the 13th Further Report. The report for Boughton was as follows:

A great deal of clamour has been raised, and much discontent has prevailed among the poorer class of parishioners, respecting the application of the charity funds, which seems to have originated partly from misconception of the nature of the charity. To remove this erroneous impression, an extract of the will contained in the inquisition of 1637, has been lately put up on a tablet in the church. Other topics of complaint appear to be, that the part of the money distributed has been disposed of among a small class of poor persons only, instead of being more generally distributed or divided. We have found it extremely difficult to estimate the degree of weight due to these complaints, or to suggest any course of proceedings likely to remove them effectually. It does not appear to us that the trustees have wilfully misapplied the funds, or that they have applied them directly at least, in such a way as to exonerate the more substantial class of inhabitants from the degree of liability they are under by law to provide for the maintenance of the parochial poor. It seems to us to be the duty of the trustees to avoid the application of the funds in such a manner as to make them operate merely as a substitution in part of the poor's rates ... but with qualification we apprehend that the trustees are the only proper and competent judges of the proportions or method in which the rents should be applied ...and that it is for them to determine, in the exercise of a sound and impartial discretion, what persons are to be considered impotent poor, and the amount of what should be given by way of relief to such individuals.<sup>89</sup>

Was this then the success that the Moulton poor had written about? From a further letter written to the Charity Commissioners in 1825, this time from 'the Industrious poor of Boughton', it would initially appear so, for they wrote:

We the poor parishioners of Boughton return you all our most dutiful and sincere thanks for the favour you have done us in rendering us your assistance to procure us our rights, which probably we should not have gained had it not been for your exertions.

However, they then go on to say:

They gave away the sum of Twenty pounds sixteen shillings. They have stated to us their intention of distributing it to us twice a year. The gift amounted to six shillings a family, they have given it to paupers, industrious poor, trades people and independent gentlemen. We wish to know whether it is given in a proper manner.

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<sup>89</sup> PP 1830 XII(327), 23rd Further Report, p.45

From the following list that they gave of the recipients, it is clear that they did not think so:

William Francis, Income £52 a year  
 Sam Dickins, Income £15 a year  
 David Butlin, Master Shoemaker  
 Richard Smith, 2 houses of his own & money at use  
 Ann Campion & Brother, single people, 2 houses of their own  
 Nathaniel Brien, a house of his own & money out  
 John Sears, rents a little land & pays levies  
 George Fleishs, Master Blacksmith, single man  
 Thomas Hollis, Legacy £10 a year  
 Mrs Russell Grove, a house of her own  
 Thomas Sears, Carpenter  
 Charles Goodman, Master taylor  
 Samuel Adams, £50 at use & good house of his own  
 Jane Wright, single woman in the Almshouse at Northampton.

The number of paupers are twelve and where there are three in one house they given eighteen shillings worth of coal. Where there are a man, his wife & eight children they give no more than six shillings to the whole family & where there is only one pauper they give six shillings. There are forty six industrious poor industrious labouring people. Gentlemen we wish to know whether the money is given away correct and agreeable to your approbation; if not hope you advice them how to proceed.<sup>90</sup>

The industrious poor evidently felt that the charity was being distributed unequally, Firstly, they felt that this charity was being given to those who clearly were not the most needy in the parish. Secondly, they believed that there was an unfair distribution amongst the paupers, where a single man was given as much as one with a large family.<sup>91</sup> Lastly, they were incensed that the industrious labouring poor were not getting a share of this charity. The Commissioners did in fact write to Mr Richard Redgrave of Boughton, one of the trustees, in an undated letter, informing him that they had received a letter from the Boughton poor complaining of an unequal distribution of funds. They recommended that 'you ought to act in the application and

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<sup>90</sup> CC, Charity 2, Box 209, Counties, Letter from The Industrious poor of Boughton to the Charity Commissioners (1825)

<sup>91</sup> Of course the single man could well have been aged and indigent.

distribution of this Charity with the advice and concurrence of the other Trustees, if you do not do so at present, which the letter insinuates.'<sup>92</sup> They also sent him a copy of their report. However, as was seen in the report, the fact that they left the matter of distribution to the discretion of the very same people whom the poor were complaining about, meant that the poor were unlikely to experience any lasting success, as this letter dated 9 November 1829 shows:

Gentlemen, we are rote to you Commissioners Richard Humfrey Charetey bean Gave a way for we was to ave it a few times but for most year now the gave nuthing it is in the hands of Mr Richard Redgrave he is the truesee now were are asked him to give us all som think but he sais he wount for he will give to the paupers that receve releaf weekly that is not what we call Charetey Gentelmn ... we are badley delt with we onley want it to be ekell diveid to us as work and for our fameles. but it is like to cas a great Distorbans in our town but we shall weat for a hanser.... Wee beg for amedeat anser and wether you will rite to him. he is a bad Man to the pore.<sup>93</sup>

The poor's last appeal to the Charity Commissioners was dated 6 December 1829 when they state that 'we cannot hear that there is anything to be given us this Christmas nor any time else.'<sup>94</sup> After this date the only correspondence was in 1835 between the churchwarden and the Commission about the terms of letting the land, to which the Commissioners responded by saying:

I have received as secretary to the late Commission ... the letters you addressed to them on the 13th instant. The Commission under which they acted was of limited duration and expired on 15th August last; it has not been hitherto renewed: there is not at present therefore any Board to which your letters can be submitted. I inclose an extract from their 13th Report .... which will probably afford you some useful information....<sup>95</sup>

At this point then the Commission accepted no responsibility for the correct management of the charity and, as discussed earlier, this was a problem created by

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<sup>92</sup> CC, Charity 2, Box 209, Counties, Copy Letter from Commission to Mr Richard Redgrave, Boughton (undated)

<sup>93</sup> Ibid, Letter from humball servants the poor all to Commission (9 November 1829)

<sup>94</sup> Ibid, Letter to Dr Burnaby, Commissioners of Charity (6 December 1829)

<sup>95</sup> Ibid, Copy letter to Churchwardens & Overseers, Boughton from the Secretary (15 January 1835)

there being a number of separate Commissions throughout this period. So much then for the success of the Charity Commissioners in restoring this charity to the poor, but was this a typical case? A similar set of correspondence was sent from the Spratton poor at roughly the same time.

The correspondence from the Spratton poor shows that a considerable degree of liaison was occurring between these two parishes. The Spratton poor too sent several petitions to the Charity Commission, the first petition being undated. On the bottom of the Spratton letter is an added memorandum, dated 6 January 1823, 'people to attend, incl. Thomas Richardson, informing you that Commissioners intended to enquire into Poors Land and other Charities at Spratton on Tuesday next 13th at George Inn, Northampton.' and requesting 'your attendance at 12 with one or two Inhabitants of Spratton as in letter to Mr Butler.'<sup>96</sup> However, it seems likely that either the poor were not made aware of this meeting or they were unable to attend, for on 12 May 1823 they wrote:

Gentlemen, We are the Poor of Spratton Beg leve to ask the faver of you to send us anser wether you will look up or Charetey wen you com in Northamptonshire. Sir we ask the faver of a few lins from your hands to satisfy the poor for the wont beleve till you do. there is more parishers would send but the wet till we ave anser from you wether you will take our parish wen you com round.. these are the names of the pepel Gentlemen we beg your parden for maken so free plesse to Direct for Mr Tomas Richardson to be left at Mr Thomas Butler, Boughton.<sup>97</sup>

Having received no reply, they, along with the Boughton poor as previously mentioned, wrote again on 15 September 1823:

Gentlemen we are the poor people of Spratton ave taken the liberty of riten to you as we receved a leter from you sain that the Commissioners would com in the summer and as the are not we all are verrey dissatisfy...<sup>98</sup>

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<sup>96</sup> CC, Charity 2, Box 207, Counties, Memorandum - people to attend including Tomas Richardson (6 January 1823)

<sup>97</sup> Ibid, Petition (12 May 1823)

<sup>98</sup> Ibid, Letter from Spratton Poor (15 September 1823)

The case of the Spratton charity was also taken up by two other residents. The first Thomas Butler, who was the go-between for the poor's correspondence with the Commissioners, wrote on 1 November 1824 asking for advice about the future application of the charity funds, which had been promised him after a meeting with the Commissioners in January. The second letter was from the Curate of Spratton, Thomas Jones, who wrote on 1 December 1824 complaining:

... You have also, after appointing a portion of Charities for the repairs of the Church and Roads, put all the remainder in the power of the Overseers of the poor to be distributed. The sure consequence will be, the reverting of this money to its former channel. The guard you have pointed out will not prevent this. If not in direct opposition to the wording of the Deeds, I beg that this money may be put in the power of the Minister and Churchwardens for the time being to distribute, instead of the Overseers. Without this alteration, the rights of the poor are not protected.<sup>99</sup>

The Commissioners replied promptly on 4 December 1824 that:

It was .... from a desire to adhere to the directions of the decree that the Commissioners did not think themselves warranted in recommending that the funds should be distributed by the Vicar and Churchwardens which they should otherwise willingly have done. It will be a matter of regret to those who have attended to this subject to find your foundations verified if the money reverts to its former channel, but if it is found necessary to introduce a course of management and application inconsistent with the terms of the decree, application must be made to the Court of Chancery for that purpose...<sup>100</sup>

The report for Spratton, published in January 1825, however, did not make this recommendation, but did give an intimation of how the funds should be distributed:

That the portion of rent applicable to the relief of the poor should be distributed, among the poor inhabitants of the parish in proportion to their families and necessities, and that such distribution should be made by the overseers, so long as they act properly in the distribution of the money. It appears to us that the persons who have the principal claim to partake of the money distributed are the industrious poor not supported by the parish, and

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<sup>99</sup> CC, Charity 2, Box 209, Counties, Letter from Thomas Jones, Curate of Spratton to Charity Commissioners (1 December 1824)

<sup>100</sup> Ibid, Copy Letter to Rev Thomas Jones, Spratton from N Carlisle (4 December 1824)

that if other poor persons are admitted to share in the distribution, the money given them should not in any degree be a substitution for the relief or provision afforded under the poor laws.<sup>101</sup>

Certainly after the publication of the report, the Spratton Charity Account Book for 1825-1844 records regular yearly payments of £15 on average, although the distribution lists do not reveal whether the beneficiaries were recipients of relief or not. As the matter was taken no further, it is hard to assess how successful the poor had been.<sup>102</sup>

In some cases the poor were supported in their claims by other members of parish society and it is worth considering whether this led to greater success. With regard to the Foxley Charity, several representations were made to the Commissioners, from those of a higher social standing. Zachariah Stilgoe of Maidford Grange, the man who had intervened in the case of Preston Capes, wrote on 29 March 1824 with respect to the Foxley Charity in Blakesley that ‘the Parish are guilty in not seeing the Poor have their right.’<sup>103</sup> Joshua Scrivener of Seywell Grounds also wrote to the Commissioners concerning the Foxley Charity in Blakesley on 21 October 1825. He too described himself as ‘the second (largest) occupier of Land in the Parish.’ He wrote to apprise the Commissioners of his ‘anxious thoughts respecting the use and the abuse’ of the charity and of his elation ‘when I first learnt that the Commissioners were coming to investigate into things.’ He did, however, go on to express some of the criticisms that had been levelled against the Commissioners:

It is said by some people that you pass your decision as soon as you had taken down all the information you could meet with (at the time), but that is not my opinion, and I often get into a little altercation, because I will not agree in

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<sup>101</sup> PP 1825 XI(1), 13th Further Report, p.48

<sup>102</sup> NRO, Spratton Parish Records, 295p/32, Charity Account Book (1825-1844) Unfortunately there were no surviving poor relief records for this parish in that period so it was not possible to ascertain whether the practice of giving charity to paupers was continued or not.

<sup>103</sup> CC, Charity 2, Box 206, Counties. It may be that Zachariah Stilgoe had a more personal motive for complaining of abuse, because, as a former tenant of the charity land, he had been paying a higher rent than was being charged to the present occupier.

thinking, that as not anything of consequence has yet been done nothing will be done and it is even said that your investigations are a mere form.<sup>104</sup>

He then went on to request that the Commissioners should pay another visit to either Northampton or Towcester or for them 'to come upon the spot.' However, the Commissioners did not have the resources to make repeated visits or to continue their investigations after the reports were published. Yet another correspondent, Joseph Waters of Eastcote, wrote repeatedly to the Commissioners from 5 July 1825 until 4 January 1826, claiming that the poor were pressing him for a solution. On 4 January 1826 he wrote:

And the poor are now in deep distress and ready to cast reflections upon me that I do not perceive in the affair. I have to inform you that our minister appears to set his face against the poor.... He declares he will do nothing to assist the poor in this cause whatever.... Our Parish Gentlemen have never come forward to distribute either money or coals to the relief of the distressed poor and they are bold to say they will never part from the charity money untill they are brought under obligations...<sup>105</sup>

The Commissioners did write to the minister, the Reverend F. H. White, on 11 February 1828, forwarding him a copy of their report on the Foxley Charity and requesting that he would make known its contents to the parish officers. They wrote to him again on 25 February 1830 urging him to include the hamlet of Woodend in the distribution of the charity money and reiterated that request in a letter dated 28 May 1830. In his reply to this letter the Reverend White gave a graphic account of why he was not prepared to do so:

I told them that I considered we were bound in future to deliver the Bread accordingly this immediately produced a very strong sensation amongst the Bread receivers of Blakesley and I found from good Authority that if we had given a portion of the Bread to the Poor of Woodend an attempt would have been made to have it from them by force. I heard also from the same Authority that some of the People of Woodend were preparing their Knives to defend their Bread.... My first recommendation was to suspend the distribution

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<sup>104</sup> Ibid, Letter from Joshua Scrivener, Seywell Grounds, near Towcester to Dr Burnaby & Mr Mathews (21 October 1825)

<sup>105</sup> CC, Charity 2, Box 209, Counties, Letter from Joseph Waters to Dr Burnaby (4 January 1826)

of the Remainder of the Bread Money for the present but at the request of the Church Wardens and Overseers of Blakesley I allowed it to be distributed as before. In fact I find the Poor of Blakesley so strongly possessed with the notion of their own right which they say they have enjoyed for more than 150 years and the Parish Officers and Farmers seem so fully persuaded that it is their duty if they can to support them that they will not give the Matter except upon Compulsion.<sup>106</sup>

It is clear that the Reverend White was not prepared to tackle the farmers and overseers in his parish, who were happy to maintain the status quo and not prepared to alter their old habits unless forced to do so by the Charity Commission. One last attempt was made to give the poor of Woodend their rights in November 1836 when a J M Cooke of Towcester wrote to the Commissioners on their behalf:

...Notwithstanding the opinion expressed by the late Charity Commissioners in their letter of the 25th of February 1830, the poor of Woodend have not been allowed to participate in the benefits of the charity...<sup>107</sup>

The Commissioners' response, dated 29 November 1836, was similar to that in the case of Boughton and indeed of other cases:

The charities of that parish were investigated under a former Commission and an account of them is contained in the 14th Report of the Commissioners p.247 &c. The present Commissioners who are appointed for the specific purpose of completing by a limited period the enquiry into districts as were not examined by their Predecessors have no authority to interfere in any manner as to the charities of the above parish and they have not any power vested in them to give a direction of the nature mentioned in your letter.<sup>108</sup>

Thus, it is evident that the Charity Commission did not have the powers to compel compliance with the terms laid down in their reports and that the interference of interested persons of substance was not enough to break the stranglehold of those in authority in certain parishes. Not all clergymen were as obstructive as the Reverend

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<sup>106</sup> Ibid, Reply from Rev F H White (1830)

<sup>107</sup> CC, Charity 2, Box 440, Correspondence of J Hine, Secretary to the Commissioners Letter from J M Cooke, Towcester (November 1836)

<sup>108</sup> Ibid, Copy letter from J Hine to John Cooke Esq. Towcester (29 November 1836)



White. Many letters were received by the Commissioners from clergymen who were concerned at the mismanagement of charities in their parishes, usually by the parish officers and farmers. They hoped that the Commission would be able to remonstrate with this powerful section of parish society, as they were often unable to do so on their own. This example from C Cary, resident curate in the parish of Glinton, dated 26 December 1828 is a typical example:

There is a good deal of abuse and mismanagement in both the Charities in this Parish. Knowing this, the Rector and myself have for several years looked forward with hope to a visit from the Commissioners of Charities.<sup>109</sup>

Mr Cary wrote again on the 26 December 1828 about one particular charity where, 'the Churchwarden lets the land, and receives the rent, which is applied to all the purposes for which Church-rates are usually raised, so that such rates are not levied in the Parish.'<sup>110</sup> However, yet again the publication of the Commissioners' report failed to stop this particular abuse, because on 8 April 1836, the then Curate, J T Pedley wrote to the Commissioners about the same problem:

... Certain persons of the name of Webster, Giles and others are anxious to apply the monies arising out of the rent of lands, commonly called Church Lands ... to other parochial purposes, just as they please - for the payment of Poor and highway rates etc. - and I have thought proper to resist their Plan. These lands are alluded to in the Commissioners Report - County of Northampton page 175... How am I to act under the above circumstances and what would the Commissioners recommend me to do - in a business which is turning out very unpleasant - and may impede my exertions in the moral and religious culture of the parishioners...<sup>111</sup>

Unfortunately for Mr Pedley he received little assistance. The Commissioners replied on 7 May 1836 that, 'the Charities of the parishes of Glinton and Peakirk having been inquired into and reported under former Commissioners which have expired, the

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<sup>109</sup> CC, Charity 2, Box 204, Counties, Letter from C Cary, Resident Curate to Richard Troward, 13 Great George Street, Westminster (26 September 1828)

<sup>110</sup> Ibid, Letter from C Cary, Resident Curate, Peakirk near Peterborough, to Richard Troward, Commission (26 December 1828)

<sup>111</sup> CC, Charity 2, Box 209, Counties, Letter from J T Pedley, Curate to Commissioners (8 April 1836)

present Commissioners have no authority to interfere or give any directions with regard to them.' However, the writer of this letter does go on to offer a personal opinion:

If the income of the Peakirk Church Estate has been, as I presume is the case, for a long time applied to the repairs of the Church and other purposes usually provided for by a church rate, I think it ought not, and that the Court of Chancery if appealed to would not allow it to be directed to other purposes...<sup>112</sup>

Thus it would seem that the only real recourse in many cases was to the Court of Chancery. Yet, this was a costly and lengthy procedure and to be avoided if possible. Indeed very few cases appear to have taken this route. Of 711 informations and petitions presented to the Attorney General by the Charity Commission from 1841 to 1852 only fourteen concerned Northamptonshire charities. This represents 2% of all 754 reported Northamptonshire charities, including Peterborough and Northampton. Indeed of the fourteen petitions, four related to Northampton Town charities. The other cases are shown in Table 2.6. Significantly, seven of these petitions were related to schooling. This may explain why it was these cases that were selected by the Charity Commission to be entered into the Court of Chancery, as their original remit and interest had been in educational charities. Of the remaining three, one is unknown and the other two had multiple purposes but included Sunday schooling. None of these had been taken to the Attorney General because they were lost or unpaid charities that were in need of redemption. The next part of the chapter, which looks at the case of the Moulton Town and Poor's Estate, gives an indication of the type of problems which the Charity Commission was trying to address through the Court of Chancery.

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<sup>112</sup> Ibid, Copy Letter from Commissioners to Pedley (7 May 1836)

**Table 2.6: Informations and petitions relating to Northamptonshire charities**

<i>Parish</i>	<i>Name of charity</i>	<i>Nature of charity</i>
Finedon	Charity School	Education
Guilsborough	The Free Grammar School	Education
Moulton	The Town and Poor's Charities	Sunday school, bread, clothing, coals
Oundle	Sir William Laxton's Grammar School & Almshouse	Education & almshouse
Barnwell St Andrews & Oundle	William Bigley's Charity	Education
Blakesley	Grammar School	Education
Little Bowden	The Town Estate	Unknown
Daventry	The Independent Meeting House & gifts	Education
Oundle	Jemima Creed's Charity	Education
Tansor	Town Lands Charity	Sunday school, coals & clothing

Source: Returns of Informations filed in Courts of Equity<sup>113</sup>

### **2.3: Case study of a Chancery suit – Moulton Town and Poor's Estates**

The first item of interest about the Moulton Town and Poor's Estates is that, unlike many of the cases quoted above, the investigation into and correction of this charity did not end with the publication of the Commissioners' Report. As has been illustrated earlier, this charity was first examined by the Commissioners in April 1825. It is evident that the parishioners must have felt some concern about the administration of this charity to have both written directly to the Commissioners and to have presented themselves as witnesses. It is also apparent from the evidence that at least one of the Trustees, Mr Thomas Tressler, took action against one of these witnesses, either as revenge or possibly in order to discourage other witnesses from

<sup>113</sup> PP 1852 XXXVIII, Return of Informations filed in Courts of Equity at Instance of Charity Commissioners, pp.288-385

coming forward. Nevertheless, there was no hint of any disagreement or mismanagement in the Commissioners' Report of this charity, which was not published until 26 June 1830. The report concluded:

The rents of the above-mentioned lands are received by the churchwardens, and are applied in the reparation of the different buildings, and payment of outgoing, the reparation of the parish church, and payment of other expenses of the churchwardens' office, and also for the following charitable uses; viz. providing bread, distributed among the poor at Easter and Christmas, to the amount of about £7 a year; and clothing about £15 a year, and coals, about £7 a year, given from time to time among the poor; and the payment of salaries of £7 or £8 a year, to the teachers of a Sunday School. The accounts are exhibited annually at a parish meeting. The same or a like course of application as that which now prevails has long been followed; and we find no means of determining what proportion of the rents is strictly applicable exclusively to the benefit of poor persons in the way of charity.<sup>114</sup>

Thus the report would indicate that, although some doubt was expressed by the Commissioners about whether the poor were really receiving their share of the charity funds, no recommendation was made about its operation. This was due to the fact that there was a long-established practice of running this charity and to a lack of documentary evidence. However, unlike the cases reported on above, the publication of the report was not the end of the story for this charity in Moulton. Yet it was not the actions of the Charity Commissioners that furthered the cause of this charity, as can be seen from this letter, dated 8 December 1835, from John Nethercoat of Moulton Grange, one of the Trustees, to William Grant:

As I believe you are one of the Charity Commissioners lately appointed, I take the liberty to write to you to request you would point out some way by which the rents and profits arising from an Estate in this Parish left for pious and charitable uses from being eaten up by the Court of Chancery! One of the greatest rascals in the Parish has filed a bill against myself and the other Feoffees, for not, as he sets forth in his information, laying out the rents as ought to do. The late Commissioners investigated this Charity and made their report, that the Trustees had from time immemorial laid out the rents and profits in repairing the church and other uses for relieving the poor and that they had no means of ascertaining but that they had done properly. If you

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<sup>114</sup> PP 1831 XII(1), 24th Further Report, p.194

could point out any way to save the Charity funds or stop proceedings in the Court of Chancery, I shall be much obliged to you to communicate your opinion and advise for me. From the word pious being used in the old Deeds prior to Charles the 1st, it has always been inferred that repairs of the church was meant!<sup>115</sup>

Unfortunately there is no record of a response to this letter, but as the case did proceed in the Court of Chancery, it must be assumed that the Commissioners declined to assist John Nethercoat. In fact he was being economical with the truth when he wrote that the case was being brought on the grounds that the rents were being used inappropriately. It is possible that he felt he could appeal to the Commissioners about this issue, because their examination had not been able to discover sufficient documentary evidence to establish the correct distribution of the rents. Testimony cited in the chancery case suggested that this may not have been just due to chance:

Britten further stated to me that many of the writings belonging to the Charity had been taken out of the Parish chest kept in the church and had not been returned (the oldest deed one of the Trust Deeds in particular) ...<sup>116</sup>

However, as will be seen, the chancery case cited multiple examples of the mismanagement of this charity, the distribution of rents being just one instance. The identity of 'one of the greatest rascals in the Parish' is not known, but the complainants in the chancery suit consisted of four yeomen, one farmer and eight labourers.<sup>117</sup> Clearly these were mainly men from a humble background, particularly when contrasted with the standing of the defendants, John Nethercoat, Clark Hillyard,

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<sup>115</sup> CC, Charity 2, Box 438, 1835 Nov - Dec Correspondence of J Hine, Secretary to Commissioners, Letter from John Nethercoat, Moulton Grange to William Grant (8 December 1835)

<sup>116</sup> PRO, Division III C13 3038 1, Attorney General versus Nethercoat, Supplementary (1844). This testimony was given by the curate Samuel Hornbuckle and the Mr Britten he referred to was the parish clerk of Moulton. Mr Britten did, however, have a personal grievance against the trustees, because he had been promised a salary increase paid from the charity funds when the debt incurred by the trustees had been repaid, but, as they had borrowed more money, there was no probability of that happening.

<sup>117</sup> PRO, Division III C13 1889 9, Attorney General v. Nethercoat (1837) & NRO, Whellan's Commercial Directory (1849)

William Barber, Thomas Tressler, John Aspinall, Edward Bull and Bartlett Miller.<sup>118</sup>

It is surprising, therefore, that the complainants felt able to tackle the trustees of the charity, particularly given the failure of the earlier attempts in 1825.<sup>119</sup> From the evidence, however, clearly a number of parishioners were concerned about the state of this charity, and, although their names did not appear in the list of complainants, they did give evidence against the defendants. Most of this evidence was presented at a hearing held locally at the house of George Pell, 'The Buttocks Booth' an inn in Weston Favell from 8 to 18 October 1838.<sup>120</sup>

The Moulton case is of particular interest, because the dispute about the application of the charity recorded the tensions within parish society, which are often not available to the historian. Also this case brought forth multiple accusations of mismanagement and serves as an example of most of the abuses that concerned the Charity Commissioners. As has been shown, the accusation, referred to by John Nethercoat, about the distribution of the rents, was a common cause of complaint and one that the Commissioners had felt unable to tackle without the necessary documentary evidence. The defendants claimed that the trustees had:

Wilfully and wrongfully permitted the yearly income of the said Charity lands to be misapplied and perverted ... only a very small part of the said income in each and every year applied in or towards the benefit of the poor ... that is to

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<sup>118</sup> Of the defendants, three were the principal proprietors in the parish and two were owner/occupiers. Furthermore, John Nethercoat and Clark Hillyard were men of considerable standing. John Nethercoat was a magistrate and was also appointed as Senior Vice Chairman of the Board of Guardians of the Brixworth Union in July 1835 and Clark Hillyard Esq was the President of the Farming and Grazing Society of the County of Northampton, farming 200 acres at Thorpeland, Moulton. Although four of the complainants are listed as yeomen, only one was recorded as an occupier of land in the land tax assessments. See NRO, LTA, Land Tax Assessment for the parish of Moulton (1832), Whellans Commercial Directory (1849), PL/2/1, Brixworth Union Minutes (10 July 1835), PP 1834 XXX(1) Rural Queries and R L Greenall, 'Three 19th Century Northamptonshire Agriculturalists', Northamptonshire Past and Present, 7, (1989)

<sup>119</sup> However, Moulton did have a history of action by labourers. It was one of only a handful of parishes in Northamptonshire, where a 'Captain Swing' incident (machine-breaking) was reported in the local paper, NCL, Northampton Mercury (8 January 1831) and which is also listed in Rudé G & Hobsbawm E, Captain Swing.

<sup>120</sup> PRO, Division III C13 3038 1

say the sum of £7 in fuel for the use of the poor of the said parish and the sum of £5 in bread given to the poor ... and that the residue of the said yearly income after certain payments made to a School Master and a School Mistress for teaching at a Sunday School... and for the repairs of the said poor house and the other Cottages and buildings of the said Charity ... has been applied by the Churchwardens ... not in any manner whatsoever for the benefit of the poor ... but wrongfully in the first place towards the satisfaction of the said sums of monies so wrongfully raised and borrowed as aforesaid ... and afterwards in discharge of the general expenses of and incident to the Office of Churchwarden and for the repairs of the Church ... and otherwise to such general parochial purposes as would be otherwise supplied by a Church or some other Parish rate.<sup>121</sup>

Clearly there were a number of complaints here that need to be examined, but firstly it does show that there were concerns that the charity funds were being used at least to supplement parish rates. In the case of the poor rates, this accusation was brought by the complainants, who claimed that the trustees had:

... Used and applied or otherwise permitted and suffered the messuage called the Town Hall and other buildings ... to be used and applied as a Workhouse for the relief of poor persons of the said parish entitled to receive and receiving relief from the Parish without any rent or other compensation having been made ... out of the Parish rates to the said Charity ... and these expenses of keeping said house and buildings in repair ... paid and defrayed not by or at the expense of the said Parish but by and out of the rents of the said Charity Estates ... and complaints have been made to them ...<sup>122</sup>

The defendants claimed that to use the rents in this manner and for 'the clothing of the said Poor persons in the Parish workhouse was an application of the Funds of the said Charity expressly within the intent and meaning of the Trusts thereof.'<sup>123</sup>

Unfortunately, there are no surviving overseers' accounts for Moulton to show how the poor relief system operated in the parish. However, it would seem that the provision of clothing to the workhouse inmates may well have replaced the £15 a year cited by the Commissioners for the distribution of clothing. Certainly the record of

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<sup>121</sup> PRO, Division III C13 1889 9

<sup>122</sup> Ibid

<sup>123</sup> PRO, Division III C13 1878 10 Attorney General v. Nethercoat (1836)

charity payments for the years 1828 to 1835 did not mention the distribution of clothing at all. The charity accounts do show that just over £7 a year was paid to distribute coals, just over £8 a year for bread and £4 a year as salaries for a Sunday schoolmaster and mistress.<sup>124</sup> Additionally, the cost of poor relief was defrayed by the charity land by the placing of able-bodied labourers, in receipt of relief, in various cottages belonging to the charity. These occupants paid no rent, but had a shilling deducted from their weekly allowance. According to the Reverend Samuel Hornbuckle, the curate of Moulton from 1830-1836, some of them had stated to him 'that they were able to pay rent and should have done so had the one shilling a week not been stopped from their relief.'<sup>125</sup> Thus the charity lost any revenue from rent but the amount of poor relief could be kept down.<sup>126</sup>

As well as reducing the poor rates, there is substantial evidence to show that the charity funds were also used to offset the costs of the church rate. Firstly these charity payments were recorded amongst the general churchwardens accounts until 1836, when they were kept separately, although still in the same book. Furthermore, the churchwarden's account book recorded a church rate of 6d being raised in 1778-79, another one in 1784-85 and, thereafter none recorded until 1836 on the division of the churchwarden's and charity accounts.<sup>127</sup> This intermingling of the accounts was made possible due to the fact that invariably one of the trustees was appointed as churchwarden and was thus responsible for recording both.

There was a considerable battle waged in the vestry over the appointment of the churchwarden, one of the chief protagonists being the Reverend Samuel Hornbuckle. In 1833 Mr Hornbuckle nominated a Mr Lewis Pell to stand as churchwarden, but Mr

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<sup>124</sup> NRO, Moulton Parish Records, 214p/5, Churchwardens Account Book (1778-1901)

<sup>125</sup> PRO, Division III C13 30381 1

<sup>126</sup> Rural Queries shows that John Nethercoat and Clark Hillyard, the respondents, had reported that the rates had increased. The amount of relief paid was 10s a week to a married man and 7s to a single man.

<sup>127</sup> NRO, Moulton, 214p/5



Pell declined and gave his reason as being the mismanagement of the charity lands. Mr Hornbuckle then claimed that John Nethercoat had approached him at a vestry meeting asking him to appoint Mr Clark Hillyard as the Minister's churchwarden. This Mr Hornbuckle refused to do on the grounds that, as Mr Hillyard was also a trustee, he was 'an unfit person to act in both capacities.'<sup>128</sup> On this occasion Mr Nethercoat then applied to the rector, Mr John Stanton, who 'came over from a distant parish for the purpose of appointing some other parishioner.'<sup>129</sup> However, Mr Nethercoat was persistent for another such attempt was made in 1834 for the purpose, expressed by Mr Hornbuckle, of 'getting the management of the said Charity Estates under their own control and to the exclusion of the other Parishioners.' This time Mr Stanton acquiesced and wrote to Mr Hornbuckle:

Mr Nethercoat has again requested me to appoint Mr Hillyard my churchwarden saying that he shall consider the appointment as a personal favour to himself. My objection to the appointment on a former occasion was that it might give offence to the Farmers, but as they themselves have subsequently elected him to the office of Churchwarden that objection seems to be no longer in force. I have therefore to request that you will appoint Mr Hillyard to be the Clergyman's Churchwarden for the ensuing year ...<sup>130</sup>

However, although the farmers had appointed Clark Hillyard, could this pressure to appoint him as the clergyman's churchwarden be an indication that the feoffees were keen to not leave anything to chance and that they were experiencing some opposition within the parish? There is evidence to suggest that pressure was brought to bear on other possible candidates not to stand. In 1834 Mr Hornbuckle disregarded Mr Stanton's letter and expressed his intention of appointing his own nominee, Mr Thomas Pell. However, Mr Pell declined, because he claimed that Mr Nethercoat had called on him and said that 'if he did act as churchwarden it might be the means of preventing him becoming tenant to the charity land which the said Thomas Pell was

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<sup>128</sup> PRO, Division III C13 3038 1 1

<sup>129</sup> Ibid

<sup>130</sup> Ibid, Evidence of Samuel Hornbuckle

then anxious to rent.’<sup>131</sup> Mr Hornbuckle did admit that this information was known only to himself and never aired openly in vestry. Indeed, none of these disputes are recorded at all in the vestry minutes for Moulton and so would not have come to light without a chancery case. The vestry minutes do show the stranglehold on the charity accounts in the entry for 26 January 1832 when ‘it was resolved that John Nethercoat and Clark Hillyard Esquires be appointed the two Feoffees to act with the Parish Churchwarden in all matters and accounts concerning the Feoffees Land.’<sup>132</sup> Thus it was possible for Clark Hillyard in particular to keep a tight control on the accounts, even excluding his fellow churchwarden, Samuel Marsh, a trustee and ‘one of the Defendants to the original and amended information and Bill of Complaint.’<sup>133</sup> When giving evidence Marsh stated that he had never had any ‘books of or belonging to the churchwardens of the parish of Moulton’ and that he believed them to be in ‘the custody or possession of Clark Hillyard ... who keeps the accounts relating to the said parish.’<sup>134</sup> It was equally difficult for other parishioners to gain access to the accounts. In theory the charity accounts had to be produced in vestry once a year and signed by the feoffees and other parishioners. Yet, according to the testimony of the Reverend Hornbuckle, the accounts had not been regularly submitted for inspection and signed until 1832 when they were dealt with as follows:

... 1832 [produced and signed] by three of the Trustees and one other parishioner ... 1833 they were signed by one trustee and one other parishioner ... in the years 1834 and 1835 the accounts were produced at the meeting ... but that in the year 1834 they were signed by three trustees alone and in 1835 by five trustees alone. In 1836 the accounts were signed at a meeting for the purpose by three trustees, two parishioners and one stranger at which said last mentioned meeting five of the parishioners who were present namely Samuel Marsh, William Painter, William Hunt, Thomas Pell and myself refused to sign the same ...<sup>135</sup>

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<sup>131</sup> Ibid, Evidence of Samuel Hornbuckle

<sup>132</sup> NRO, Moulton, 214P/121, Vestry Minute Book (1831-1889)

<sup>133</sup> PRO, Division III C13 1878 10

<sup>134</sup> PRO, Division III C13 3038 1

<sup>135</sup> Ibid

The defendants did admit that there had been some refusal to sign the accounts, but that Mr Hornbuckle 'had in former years signed and allowed similar accounts.'<sup>136</sup> It was this refusal to sign the accounts which brought the charity to court, for 'the aid and interference of a Court of Equity has become necessary to correct and redress such gross breaches of Trust.'<sup>137</sup>

However, another complaint that led to a number of parishioners giving evidence against the defendants was the letting of the charity land to one of the trustees at a rent that was considered lower than the fair market price. This land had been let to Mr William Barber, a churchwarden on many occasions and one of the feoffees of the charity, at a rent of £57 8s a year from 1830 to 1835. The previous tenant, Mr William Lowick, had rented the land 'under a lease for 14 years from 1805 at the expiration of which he continued as Tenant from year to year at the yearly rent of £85 a year.' On his being declared bankrupt in 1828, a Mr John Pell took over the tenancy for the next two years.<sup>138</sup> Mr Pell also paid a yearly rent of £85 and was keen to continue the tenancy, but was given notice to quit. He gave evidence in the chancery case stating that he 'would submit to any price a respectable valuer would put' upon the land and even that he 'would give one shilling an acre more than any other man.'<sup>139</sup> Mr Pell made considerable efforts to gain the tenancy, answering an advertisement for the land and then attending a meeting that he supposed was to consider his tender. However, the meeting was postponed and his brother-in-law Thomas Barber, 'a rate payer and occupier of land in the parish' attended a further meeting with instructions about how much to offer.<sup>140</sup> At this meeting Thomas Barber claimed:

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<sup>136</sup> PRO, Division III C13 1878 10

<sup>137</sup> NRO, Moulton, 214P/135, Copy of Summary of Moulton Chancery Case (undated)

<sup>138</sup> PRO, Division III C13 1878 10

<sup>139</sup> PRO, Division III C13 3038 1

<sup>140</sup> John Pell was a farmer residing in the parish of Cogenhoe, not Moulton.

... that I did by the direction and at the desire of the said Clark Hillyard ... leave the said meeting ... that a private communication took place between the said Clark Hillyard and William Barber previous to such direction or desire expressed ... I waited ... about a quarter of an hour or twenty minutes at the end of which time the said Clark Hillyard ... stated to me in the hearing of all of them that no business would be done that day. That ... I was in such manner prevented from making any offer ... that there never was any other meeting that I know or ever heard of ever afterwards held for that purpose ...<sup>141</sup>

Thus, according to John Pell and Thomas Barber, a conspiracy was formed amongst the trustees to ensure that it was let to one of their kind and not at a competitive rate and their evidence was corroborated by a Mr Lewis Pell of Moulton, a farmer and grazier. The trustees justified their actions by asserting that John Pell was a poor tenant, who had left the land in such an 'impoverished state' that it was worth considerably less than previously. John Pell strongly denied this accusation and so did his brother in law. To establish the validity of the trustees' accusation referees were appointed by them and by Mr Pell. According to Mr Pell the referees came to the conclusion that 'no damage or other dilapidation or injury had been done by me to such land', but that the trustees then threatened that they would 'commence proceedings at law against me for damages' if Pell did not agree to certain repairs and the giving up of the value of grass seeds and, although aggrieved, he consented.<sup>142</sup> Once the trustees had been successful in letting the land to a fellow trustee William Barber, they further incensed certain parishioners by allowing a barn on that land to be pulled down and rebuilt at the expense of charity, by raising a mortgage on the charity lands and paying the interest out of charity funds.<sup>143</sup>

A further example of how the charity was manipulated by these people is illustrated in this, the last of the complaints of abuse and one that involved the clergy as well. Mr George Pell Senior of Buttocks Booth, farmer and innkeeper gave evidence that an

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<sup>141</sup> PRO, Division III C13 3038 1

<sup>142</sup> Ibid

<sup>143</sup> NRO, Moulton, 214P/135, Chancery Case

exchange of land had taken place between the Reverend William Stanton (the father of the aforementioned Reverend John Stanton and former Vicar of Moulton, but now deceased) and the charity trustees. The Reverend Stanton arranged the exchange of a piece of his land, which was claimed to be of poor quality, on which there were two cottages in a dilapidated state, for a piece of charity land adjacent to the vicarage. Furthermore the charity land was claimed to be of a superior quality to that of Mr Stanton's and also the cottages thereon. These cottages were subsequently pulled down. Mr Pell's evidence was corroborated by John Turnbull, a Surveyor of Moulton, who stated that the exchange 'was not beneficial but prejudicial to a considerable extent ... £60.' He then speculated on the reason for the exchange, saying 'whether they made the same for the accommodation of or out of favour to the said Reverend William Stanton I do not know otherwise than the relative value of each property would induce me to say so.'<sup>144</sup> The Attorney General agreed with the poor quality of the exchange and called for it to be rescinded and the land to be returned to the charity, although, inevitably, the houses and their rents were lost to the charity.<sup>145</sup>

Thus the multiple abuses in the Moulton Town and Poor's Land chancery case were as follows: the use of charity funds to defray parish expenses, both poor rates and church rates; an inability to produce a true record of accounts; the letting of charity land to a feoffee and defrauding the charity of a proper rate of rent; and an exchange of land that was detrimental to the charity. As we have seen the charges of abuse were upheld by the Attorney General and consequently he recommended that:

... the said several before mentioned defendants may be removed and displaced from being the Trustees of the said Charity Estates and that some fit and proper persons may be appointed to the Trustees and that the said Defendants may be ordered to join and concur in conveying the said Estates to such new Trustees.<sup>146</sup>

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<sup>144</sup> PRO, Division III C13 3038, 1 Evidence of John Turnbull, Surveyor, aged 40 (18 October 1844)

<sup>145</sup> NRO, Moulton, 214P/135, Chancery Case

<sup>146</sup> *Ibid*, p.63

It is evident that the Attorney General believed that a serious breach of Trust had occurred and he made the following judgements for each of the individual abuses:

1. ... that the application of the rents and profits ought to be made available exclusively to Charitable uses and purposes and so not in any manner to be applied in aid or alleviation of the Church or any other parochial Rents or Assessments whatsoever.
2. ... that the letting of the Charity land to the Defendant William Barber so being one of the Trustees was wrongful and a breach of trust on the parts of the defendants ... that full compensation ought to be made to the said Charity in respect of the under value of the said rent ...  
... that it may be referred to the Master [of this Honourable Court] to enquire whether the erection of the new Barn and buildings was fit and proper ... and whether any and what sum of money ought to be allowed to the Defendants in respect of the Erection thereof ...
3. ... that the said Alienation of the said Cottage and piece of land belonging to the said Charity by way of pretended exchange was wrongful and that it may referred to the said Master whether it will be fit and proper ... that any and what proceedings ought to be taken ... for any recovery of the same and the said Defendants ... may be decreed to make good ... the loss or damage occasioned thereby and in particular to restore the said cottage ...<sup>147</sup>

Thus the Attorney General made a damning indictment against the actions of the trustees and suggested that considerable reparation be made to the charity. However, several matters were left to the Master of the court to determine and there is little record of what actually happened in those instances. The final word on the Moulton Town and Poor's Land comes from Northamptonshire Endowed Charities which has the following entry:

This Charity no longer exists ... By a decree of the Court of Chancery of 29th January 1841, authority was given to mortgage the Charity estates to pay the costs of the suit to that date; and the estates were accordingly mortgaged for a sum of £2,000 at 4 1/2 per cent interest by Indenture dated 1st July 1843. On the 18th July 1845 the Court made a decree establishing a scheme for the future administration of the Foundation. The balance of the costs of the suit, amounting to about £1,700, was paid by the Trustees. By a scheme of the Charity Commissioners dated 5th April, 1876, provision was made for the future administration of the Foundation. The scheme provided that one-fourth of the income of the Charity should be applied to educational purposes ... In consequence of the depression in the value of agricultural land, the income of

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<sup>147</sup> Ibid, pp.63-64

the Charity became in 1882 insufficient to pay the interest on the mortgage ... and foreclosure decree was made on 30th of June, 1883 ...<sup>148</sup>

It would seem that the Moulton charity paid a heavy price for going to Chancery, for the need to take out a mortgage to cover costs led to the eventual loss of this charity. It was just this possibility that the Commissioners had tried to avoid when making their recommendations, even though it was the only recommendation that truly carried the weight of the law with it. As has been shown, without this, the Commissioners, as in many cases, were dependent upon the goodwill of those in authority in the parish to carry out any necessary reforms. In the case of Moulton that authority was in the hands of the major ratepayers, who manipulated the terms of the charity to their advantage. It was only possible to challenge them by taking action, which was often to the detriment of the charity, because of the costs involved. This then was the dilemma facing the Commissioners and one that had a significant impact on the outcome of their work.

### **Conclusion:**

The aims of the Charity Commission had been to create an imperishable record of charitable endowments, to correct abuses and, in line with the policies pursued by poor law reformers, to encourage greater discrimination in the choice of recipients. James Hine's assessment of the Charity Commission's work shows that by and large the first aim had been achieved:

In their reports, the commissioners have established an imperishable record of charities, by which thousands will be preserved, which, otherwise, by the decay or dispersion of documents, would in time have been annihilated.<sup>149</sup>

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<sup>148</sup> PP 1890-1 LX(939), Digest of Endowed Charities

<sup>149</sup> BL, 1380.h., J Hine, Observations, p.5

Nevertheless, the operation of the Charity Commission in Northamptonshire was hindered in several ways that affected its ability to achieve its other aims. The most significant problem encountered by the Commission was that of the limited powers invested in them by parliament, as lamented by James Hine:

The powers of the Commissioners did not enable them, in the majority of instances, to supply what was defective, or to correct what was amiss; they might offer suggestions for altering or improving the management of charities, but they could give to such suggestions no authoritative sanction, nor effectually protect from subsequent question those who might be willing to adopt them.<sup>150</sup>

In particular, as a result of their being unable to either compel witnesses to give evidence or to produce the necessary legal documents, there was ample opportunity for concealment and for avoidance of payments. However, the Commissioners early on realised that suspected abuses of trust were scarce and over ninety percent of trusts nation-wide were considered satisfactory.<sup>151</sup> Undoubtedly, the Commission did undertake a large amount of investigation on behalf of endowed charities and considerable time and energy were expended in trying to establish their documentary foundation. Furthermore, they also listed many charities which had been established by custom, but for which they were unable to discover any documentary evidence. It is difficult to evaluate Bushaway's suggestion that the Commissioners questioned the legitimacy of these charities<sup>152</sup>, but it is apparent that they sometimes used the lack of documentation to justify making no further effort. However, some charities affected by enclosure did suffer as a consequence. Enclosure could either result in the loss of income in order to defray the cost of enclosure or in some cases was used by the propertied to replace a customary right with either charitable handouts or self-help initiatives. The survival of many customary charities in the first half of the nineteenth century was mainly dependent on whether those holding authority in the parish were

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<sup>150</sup> BL, 1380.h., J. Hine, *Observations*, p.5

<sup>151</sup> R. Tompson, *The Charity Commission*, p.197

<sup>152</sup> B. Bushaway, *By Rite*, p.253



prepared to continue them, rather than any action on the part of the Charity Commission.<sup>153</sup> The cases cited in this chapter show that the Commissioners time and again came up against those in authority in parish society and, where that group was determined not to change customary practice, the commissioners had no option but to back down.

Indeed, the interaction between the Charity Commission and various sections of parish society offers a number of insights into the nature of social relationships in early nineteenth century Northamptonshire and the attitudes of different groups towards charity. The battle over charitable endowments, however, was of a complex nature. Rather than a strict alliance between the interests of the Charity Commission and the landowners, the work of the Charity Commission revealed a variety of allegiances and disputes between different interest groups within parish society.

The aims of the Charity Commission were often at odds with the pragmatic administration of charity at parish level. The concerns of parish authorities were to alleviate the problem of poverty whilst at the same time keeping poor rates as low as possible. Not surprisingly, therefore, they were sometimes unable to resist the temptation to intermingle charity funds with poor rates. Although the Charity Commission recognised that this was often a diversion from the original intent of a charity, they were usually reluctant to enter into confrontation with trustees. Many trustees found that in practice they could not discriminate against those in receipt of relief as the original benefactors had intended, because anyone poor enough to be

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<sup>153</sup> Indeed it is more feasible, as suggested by Tompson, that the work of the inquiry may have made trust deeds more durable than before 1818. R Tompson, *The Charity Commission*, p.197. Furthermore, according to David Owen, the permanent Charity Commission established in 1860 were responsible for recovering legal documents relating to charity and sometimes saving them from being destroyed only just in time. D Owen, *English Philanthropy*, p.318

deemed in need of charity was usually (at least occasionally) on poor relief as well. Thus, as John Broad has found, the value of endowed charities became diluted in the late eighteenth century when less discrimination was enforced in the choice of recipients as the proportion of parishioners needing assistance rose.<sup>154</sup> A concern about this trend was voiced in several of the letters from poor parishioners who labelled themselves 'industrious poor' and their complaint was that the charity was going to poor relief recipients rather than to them. This shows a rift amongst the poor with some sectors of the working population believing that more discrimination in charity giving would be to their advantage. In this respect they were echoing the ideology of the Charity Commission. However, on the whole the Charity Commission continued to allow the practices of those in charge of endowed charity administration.

For the propertied in the parish, charity (along with poor relief) provided an opportunity to exert social control over the poor. The endowed charities were often administered by the same body of men who controlled poor relief and employment within the parish.<sup>155</sup> The ability to choose who should be the recipients of charity gave the propertied yet another opportunity of exercising power over the labouring class. There is little evidence to show exactly how the trustees decided who should be recipients of, and who should be excluded from, charity distributions. The petitions from the poor show that in some cases the petitioners believed that it was the farmers who were not operating fairly in this matter. Furthermore, the Moulton case shows that the trustees were administering the charity to their advantage. Indeed that dispute

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<sup>154</sup> J Broad, 'Parish Economies', pp.1004-1006

<sup>155</sup> In larger parishes other ratepayers would have included artisans and tradesmen.

reveals yet another aspect of social relations. In this 'open' parish with a select vestry, it was evident that a battle was being waged between the larger ratepayers (an alliance of squires and major farmers) and the less wealthy ratepayers, aided and abetted by the curate. It was the intervention of the lesser ratepayers rather than that of the Charity Commissioners which resulted in the charity becoming the focus of a chancery case in an effort to redress the manipulation of the charity by the wealthier ratepayers.

Furthermore, the correspondence of the Charity Commission offers a rare opportunity to view the reactions of the poor to the social control exercised by those administering the endowed charities. The investigation carried out by the Charity Commission was one occasion when the poor felt that they could slightly change this balance of power by appealing directly to the Commission. In some cases they felt empowered enough to actually sign their letters in a demonstration of overt action against the parish authorities. However, as the Moulton case demonstrated, action might well be taken against those who were seen to be appealing to the Charity Commission.

Furthermore, the mistaken belief of the poor in the paternalistic protection of a parliamentary body was quickly dispelled, as the Charity Commission took little notice of letters and evidence from the poor. While John Archer rightly states that the Charity Commission on the whole upheld the interests of the propertied, individual cases show that the situation could be much more complex.<sup>156</sup> Those who benefited most from the Commission's inability to enforce recommendations were the middling sort. Even in the few cases where an individual paternalistic landowner or clergymen intervened, their complaints were ignored and the poor still lost out. Neither they nor

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<sup>156</sup> J E Archer, 'By a Flash and a Scare', p.59

the Charity Commission were effective in coming to the aid of the poor to uphold their rights and redress their grievances. Furthermore, there were only a handful of cases where paternalist intervention was apparent. As will be seen in the following chapters the role of landowners varied considerably, from the intervention mentioned above to indifference and, in some cases, to neglect and obstruction.

Lastly, as will be seen in consequent chapters, the reports showed that, far from the Charity Commission uncovering large untapped funds, most endowed charities had insufficient resources to make a substantial contribution to combating the problems of poverty in the countryside. It had become apparent that other measures were needed and, in terms of charity, these could encompass the virtues of discrimination and self-help, promoted by the poor law reformers.

## Chapter Three

### Food and Monetary Charity

#### Introduction:

This chapter explores the charitable handouts of money and food (particularly bread which was the staple diet of the poor) that made important contributions to the poor's 'economy of makeshifts.' The chapter will analyse the nature and level of such charity as supplied by endowed trusts and by individuals - landowners, the clergy and farmers - to ascertain how extensive it was but also how effective. The surviving evidence of individual involvement for early nineteenth-century Northamptonshire is patchy and it is not always clear whether this may be accounted for by the non-survival of records or by the spasmodic nature of charity giving of this group.<sup>1</sup> Thus, it is hard to calculate the precise extent of charitable involvement by individuals, as much of it was on a random basis and went unrecorded unless given in specific annual sums for particular purposes.<sup>2</sup> However, estate papers of local landowners and the local newspapers will be analysed to determine the nature and extent of food and monetary payments by individuals, with particular emphasis on a case study of Earl Spencer's estate where the records are comprehensive. This case study will contain an analysis of the recipients of charity in those parishes in his sphere of influence, thereby contributing to an understanding of the experience of the poor in the 'economy of makeshifts.' The case study will also test the depth of paternalist benevolence on this estate and make some comparison with other major landowners.

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<sup>1</sup> 'The 'patchy' nature of landowner involvement was remarked upon by F M L Thompson, English Landed Society, pp 209-210

<sup>2</sup> J V Beckett, The Aristocracy, p.354

The major part of this chapter will, therefore, concentrate on the gifts of food and money made by individuals, particularly major landowners.

### **3.1: Food and monetary payments made by endowed charities**

How important were the bread and monetary payments made by endowed charities to the poor and what were the age and gender profiles of the recipients? There were sixty-seven charities concerned with the distribution of food and this was the second most popular form of charitable provision found in the Charity Commission reports. Ninety-four per cent of food provision was in the form of bread handouts, with only five charities providing meat. Furthermore, only two of the meat charities were provided annually - one was given 'from time to time' and the frequency of the remaining two were not specified. As these were not a significant part of the food charities, the rest of the section will concentrate on bread charities alone. There were sixty-three bread charities recorded by the Commissioners, thus approximately twenty-one percent of all 297 Northamptonshire parishes had this form of provision. A breakdown of the frequency of the bread charities is given in Table 3.1. Most bread payments were given annually. These gave the opportunity for a customary visible display of the benefactor's endowment to the poor but were of limited assistance on a day-to-day basis. Obviously, the most effective form of bread payment was a weekly distribution and a quarter of bread payments fitted that category. Those who were fortunate enough to receive a weekly bread payment, therefore, gained a useful contribution to the household economy. Even those who benefited from fortnightly and monthly handouts received a considerable boost to the household economy.

**Table 3.1: Frequency of bread payments from endowed charities**

<i>Frequency</i>	<i>No of bread payments in each frequency</i>	<i>As a percentage of all 63 bread payments</i>
Less than once a year	1	2%
Annually	25	40%
More than once a year but less than monthly	6	10%
Monthly	2	3%
Fortnightly	2	3%
Weekly	16	25%
Not specified	11	17%

Source: Charity Commission Reports<sup>3</sup>

Therefore, in at least seven percent of Northamptonshire parishes the staple diet of the poor was being regularly supplemented by endowed charities. This percentage may have been higher if the number of unspecified distributions are taken into consideration. However, it may be that a weekly payment of bread was not sufficient to last the whole week. It was possible only to calculate how many loaves of bread per week were given to each recipient in a few cases.<sup>4</sup> Two charities gave one loaf worth 2d, four gave one 3d loaf, one gave 1s worth of bread and three gave 2s worth of bread per week. The estimates of household accounts given by Davies for Great Brington and Castor show that the average weekly cost of bread and flour was six shillings, representing sixty percent of the average weekly household income of ten shillings.<sup>5</sup> However, Davies's estimates were based on a highly vulnerable subsection of families (mainly those with large families) in a year of high bread prices. In Eden's estimate of the household expenditure of a labourer in Roade, the cost of

<sup>3</sup> PP 1825 XI(1); 1826 XII(1); 1830 XII(327) and 1831 XII(1), 13<sup>th</sup>, 14<sup>th</sup>, 23<sup>rd</sup>, and 24<sup>th</sup> Further Reports

<sup>4</sup> With some charities bread was given per person rather than per household, so some families received more than one loaf.

<sup>5</sup> D Davies, *The Case of the Labourers*, p.174

bread was reported as being 'at present, 7s or 8s a week; it formerly cost 5s.'<sup>6</sup>

Estimates for a labourer with two children in Essex in the period 1805 to 1815 show the price of flour to have been 5s 4d for a labourer with two children, but this only represented twenty-seven percent of his weekly income.<sup>7</sup> However, his income was being supplemented by three shillings per week in Speenhamland relief. Although Northamptonshire was a Speenhamland county, Eden and Davies did not record payments of this type for parishes in this county. The more valuable bread charities were a significant contribution to a household economy. Those of smaller value would not have been of such usefulness to large households, but for single householders they were probably sufficient for most of the weekly requirement. What type of householders received these bread payments?

**Table 3.2: Recipients of bread payments from endowed charities**

<i>Type of recipient</i>	<i>No of bread payments in each recipient type</i>	<i>As a % of all 63 bread payments</i>
Widows	7	11%
Those not on poor relief	2	3%
Poor generally	47	75%
Church attendees	7	11%

Source: As Table 3.1

The charity reports give very little detail of the recipients, the majority being classified as 'the poor.' Some bread payments were specifically targeted at church attendees. In a few cases those who were the best church attendees were to be recipients. In addition to the stipulation of church attendance, sixteen payments were handed out at church after divine service, the implication being that recipients would have been church goers. Many churches had spaces set aside for bread for the poor.

<sup>6</sup> F M Eden, *The State of the Poor*, p.547. Interestingly in this case Eden also showed the value of gleaning where 'several families will gather as much wheat as will serve them for bread the whole year.'

<sup>7</sup> Brown, A F J, *Essex at Work 1700-1815* (Chelmsford, 1969), p.134



Often it was up to the clergy or churchwardens to make out the list of recipients and distribute the bread. Also several annual, bi-annual and tri-annual payments were presented on religious days such as Christmas, St Thomas's Day and Good Friday. It is clear that those most likely to receive the bread payments were church attendees. This is not surprising as the Charity Commission focussed on endowed charities administered by the Church of England.

The only other specific categories of recipients were widows and those poor parishioners not in receipt of poor relief. Only two bread payments specified that recipients should not be in receipt of poor relief. Although widows were singled out in only seven bread payments, several bread payments stipulated 'widows and others'; thereby indicating that they were a separate category of poor, who were deemed to be particularly deserving of this type of charity. On the whole, it would appear that the bread payment was mostly aimed at an undifferentiated poor. The infrequency with which it was generally given shows it to have been more of a token customary payment than one designed to effectively subsidise the household economy of the poor. The exception was in those seven percent of parishes where significant amounts were given to a broad group of families.

What were the levels of monetary payments? One hundred and fifty-five endowed charities were concerned with monetary payments and these were by far the most popular provision given to the poor. However, the annual amounts of the monetary payments varied significantly as can be seen in Table 3.3. The majority of monetary payments from individual charities were worth under £10 per annum. To understand the actual worth of these monetary payments, however, it is necessary to analyse them in further detail.

**Table 3.3: Amounts of monetary payments from endowed charities**

<i>Amounts</i>	<i>No of payments</i>	<i>% of total</i>
Unspecified amount	23	15%
Under £1	22	14%
£1 to £9 19/11d	69	45%
£10 to £19 19/11d	20	13%
£20 to £29 19/11d	9	6%
£30 to £39 19/11d	8	5%
£40 to £49 19/11d	3	2%
£50 plus	1	>1%

Source: As Table 3.1

Table 3.4 shows an approximation of the amount of monetary payments received by the poor. These figures have been achieved by dividing the amount of monetary payments in each parish by the number of household heads in the 1841 census for each parish. Lastly, the amount for each poor person has been reached by assuming that roughly a third of the population could be termed as poor, either in receipt of regular relief or charity or some assistance with housing.<sup>8</sup>

**Table 3.4: Amounts of monetary payments for 'poor' household per annum from endowed charities**

<i>Amounts</i>	<i>No of charities</i>	<i>% of total</i>
Unknown	23	15%
Under 1/- per annum	34	22%
1/- to 9/11d per annum	76	49%
10/- to 19/11d per annum	17	11%
£1 plus	5	3%

Sources: Charity Commission reports and 1841 census abstracts for Northamptonshire<sup>9</sup>

The survey of the earnings and expenses of labourers carried out by the Reverend David Davies in 1795 recorded that the average deficiency between annual earnings and expenditure for nine labouring households in Great Brington and Castor,

<sup>8</sup> The method for assessing the number of poor persons in a parish is given in the methodology.

<sup>9</sup> PP 1842 Session 2 II(277); 1841 Census Abstracts

Northamptonshire was £7 7s.<sup>10</sup> However, Davies based his research on families in crisis in a year of dearth and so this is an inflated figure. All the labourers quoted in Davies were family men with relatively large numbers of children below working age, but most households would have been smaller than this. Thus, as the vast majority of payments were under ten shillings per annum, this form of charity on its own represented a small contribution towards the living expenses of the poor in the majority of parishes. Nevertheless, in at least seven percent of parishes the payment of ten shillings to one pound per year would have been a valuable contribution to more typical labouring households in normal years and considerable assistance to elderly couples.

Who was helped by these monetary payments? In several cases the monetary payments were recorded as being specifically intended for certain sections of parish society and Table 3.5 gives a breakdown of these recipients.

**Table 3.5: Recipients of monetary payments from endowed charities**

<i>Type of recipient</i>	<i>No of monetary payments</i>	<i>% of total</i>
Widows	30	19%
Widowers	3	2%
Aged generally	3	2%
Almspeople	5	3%
Poor generally	99	64%
Not on poor relief	15	10%

Source: As Table 3.1

Over half the monetary payments were either not specified or were a mixture of the other categories. Of the specified payments, most were aimed at assisting those in old age. Indeed the figure is higher than that shown here as those charities which nominated 'widows and other poor' have been included as 'poor generally.' It may also be that the intention of some of these monetary payments was to assist the working man to bridge the deficiency cited in Davies and keep him off poor relief, as

<sup>10</sup> D Davies, *The Case of the Labourers*, pp.174 and 176

fifteen monetary payments barred poor relief recipients. As has been shown though the amounts were generally small. The stipulation about poor relief may have been a way of ensuring that the charity was received only by the 'deserving' poor. Thus for certain sub-groups of the poor, particularly the elderly and those labouring families able to stay off poor relief, endowed charities could provide significant help in a small number of parishes.

### **3.2 Food & monetary payments made by individuals**

The estate records of four prominent Northamptonshire landowners, Earl Spencer, Sir James Langham of Cottesbrooke, the Duke of Grafton and the Earl of Cardigan provide some insight into the level and nature of charitable giving by these individuals. From these records, the types and level of charity on offer and the social profile of the recipients can be analysed, the aim being to answer a central set of questions – how significant was the support of a local landowner to the poor and how did it compare and interact with other levels of welfare support, most notably poor relief and charitable endowments? Given that the only full sets of charitable records are those of Earl Spencer, a case study of these will be an important part of this analysis.

Looking at landowner records alone might give a distorted emphasis on provision by major landowners and so this section will start by looking at newspaper sources to give some sense of a broader spectrum of individual involvement. The local newspapers, the Northampton Mercury and the Northampton Herald quite regularly gave accounts of monetary and food payments, usually in the winter months. It has not been possible to determine who was responsible for the selection for publication

of these donations. It may have been as a result of an editorial decision to send reporters to cover these events or that these reports were sent in by the charity-givers as an act of self-publicity. The practical application of benevolence was displayed by the giving of charity in the form of handouts of clothes, fuel and food. The examples given here relate to food and monetary donations alone, as gifts of clothing and fuel are shown in the relevant chapters. Many of these payments were annual events rather than one-off occasions as is shown in the following example:

The Right Hon. Lord Sondes, with his accustomed liberality, gave an ox, weighing 77 stone, and a quantity of wood and coal, to be distributed, on 24<sup>th</sup> ult. amongst the needy families in Rockingham.<sup>11</sup>

The majority of such donations were given around Christmas time. Other major landowners whose benevolence was regularly reported in the press were Lord and Lady Southampton, the Earl of Cardigan and Lord Lilford.<sup>12</sup> Furthermore, this was a tradition that could be carried on from father to son as is shown in the following example:

We have great pleasure in stating that the much-lamented and charitable nobleman, the late Marquis of Northampton, directed in his will that a memorial of him should be given to the poor on the estates in this county and Warwickshire, which was by direction of the Dowager Marchioness, made last week, in bread, in proportion to the number of individuals in each family.<sup>13</sup>

Other donations were recorded as either being given in proportion to family size or given to individual members of a household and these were also made by the gentry and the clergy. For example in 1839 the Reverend Litchfield gave 3lbs of beef to 'each person, man, woman and child.'<sup>14</sup> He was also engaged in a more long-term

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<sup>11</sup> NCL, Northampton Mercury (1 January 1831)

<sup>12</sup> Ibid – Lord Lilford (12 January 1839), Northampton Herald – Lord & Lady Southampton (16 January 1836), Earl of Cardigan (19 January 1850)

<sup>13</sup> NCL, Northampton Mercury (10 January 1829)

<sup>14</sup> NCL, Northampton Herald (28 December 1839)

distribution of food in 1847 when he supplied 200 poor with soup once a week for twenty weeks, presumably because this was a particularly harsh winter.<sup>15</sup>

The distribution of food also served to mark moments of celebration among the landowners as can be seen in these examples.

Our readers will be glad to hear that the poor of Welford and Sibbertoft, in this county, and of Dunton Basset, in Leicestershire, have been most kindly relieved by the bounty and liberality of George Payne, Esq. Of Sulby Hall, on his coming of age. The festivities at Sulby Hall commenced on Monday the 4<sup>th</sup> inst. But on the proceeding Saturday a thousand poor persons belonging to Welford, Sibbertoft, and the adjacent villages, were made happy in receiving beef, bread and good ale on the joyous occasion.<sup>16</sup>

Yesterday week, the little village of Dallington near this town, was the scene of unusual festivity, on occasion of the owner of the property paying her first visit to it. The day was most propitious, and nearly 400 persons were regaled with an excellent dinner of Old England's best cheer, beef and plum pudding – flanked with as many pints of ale as it was computed each person according to his age could comfortably drink...<sup>17</sup>

E P Thompson describes these celebrations as 'occasions for an enlarged ceremonial, which had wholly paternalist functions,' and were more concerned with gesture than content.<sup>18</sup> Certainly this largesse had the intention not only of distributing charity but also of promoting harmony amongst the different sections of society within the landowner's domain in order to create a sense of 'family', as is demonstrated by the comments of the Northampton Mercury on the Dallington celebration:

It was remarked by all, how very active the tenants were in forwarding the praiseworthy object of their landlady ... in short, there was that temporary amalgamation of the different ranks in society, which is at once so pleasing and so beneficial to all...<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Ibid (6 March 1847)

<sup>16</sup> NCL, Northampton Mercury (16 April 1825)

<sup>17</sup> Ibid (16 July 1830)

<sup>18</sup> E P Thompson, 'Patrician Society, Plebeian Culture', Chapter 2 in his Customs in Common (London, 1991) p.45

<sup>19</sup> NCL, Northampton Mercury (16 July 1830)

Yet, there is some evidence to suggest that these face-to-face displays of paternalism were not commonplace. In 1832 a gentry wedding was solemnised in Farthinghoe much to the delight of the Northampton Mercury, which believed the holding of such weddings in the countryside were all too rare. Regret was expressed at the practice of ‘the nobles and gentry of this country solemnising the matrimonial contract within the walls of an artificial, unheeding and heartless metropolis.’ The newspaper article then commented that it would ‘almost tolerate an act that should compel the proprietors of estates to be married in the midst of what may be termed their own rural population.’ It considered that ‘rendering the humbler classes sharers of joy in common with their richer neighbours upon such occasions’ was ‘of the greatest service in binding the several orders of society in good will to each other.’ It saw such occasions as ‘easy means by which the hearts of the labouring poor may be won.’<sup>20</sup> Implicit in this statement was the assumption that these occasions could instil gratitude in the hearts of the poor and consequently reinforce deference. When the Northampton Mercury recorded the distribution of beef and clothing to poor families on 24 December 1835, it also commented that ‘it is very pleasing to add that the recipients of these bounties are really grateful for them, and fully appreciate their advantages.’<sup>21</sup>

Acts of charity by landowners could be used as a means of distinguishing and dividing the poor into the respectable, who would be beneficiaries of the landowner’s charity, and those who were considered ‘undeserving’, and therefore not deemed to be worthy to be recipients. The Northampton Mercury reported on a scheme in Brigstock, designed to give monetary rewards over a period of five years to those ‘who have large families, support themselves without parochial aid, keep their

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<sup>20</sup> NCL, Northampton Mercury (18 August 1832)

<sup>21</sup> Ibid (23 January 1836)

children and houses neat and clean, and bring up their offspring in a proper manner, and who attend a place of worship.’<sup>22</sup> It was expected that at the end of the term they would ‘ever after be inured to habits of sobriety, industry, and cleanliness; and require no other incitement but the love of virtue itself, and the fear of God above all things, to lead them to do that which is right.’ The distribution of money in Brigstock was given out on the basis of ‘respect being invariably had to the most industrious and deserving objects.’ In the same report the following observation was made:

Thus whilst every encouragement is held out to the persons who behave themselves properly, those who do not conduct themselves aright, find out that they become marked characters, and that their evil practices will be brought to light, and punished in every possible way.

There was definitely a social control agenda attached to this scheme and it presents a clear example of a ‘carrot and stick’ approach.<sup>23</sup>

Thus, the distribution of charity was seen as a useful means of discouraging anti-social behaviour. During the Swing riots of the early 1830s, the Northampton Mercury published the following report:

In the last week’s Mercury we noticed that it was the intention of the Rev. C. Williams, of Barby, to distribute a cow amongst his poor parishioners. We are happy to state the subsequent liberal and spirited conduct of the gentlemen and farmers in that village rendered this benevolent act unnecessary, as they have subscribed a sufficient sum to purchase two cows, which were given away on Thursday last. If such highly praiseworthy examples were to be generally imitated, we should be under no apprehension of rioting and disturbance among the labouring classes.<sup>24</sup>

The connection between the Swing disturbances and charity will be developed in the

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<sup>22</sup> Ibid (31 December 1825). Unfortunately the paper does not say how this scheme was meant to work.

<sup>23</sup> A Howkins, Reshaping, p.65

<sup>24</sup> Ibid (1 January 1831)



study of Sir James Langham's charity in this chapter and in subsequent chapters.

The local press was a means by which landowners, gentry, and occasionally farmers could make a very public display of charity, designed to reinforce their position in society, but it was also the site of a contest between different groups. These acts of public charity were not without their critics. In March 1830, a correspondent called 'Amicus' wrote:

It is gratifying to see the very praiseworthy desire of contributing to the relief and comfort of the poor during the late inclement season, of which so many instances have been enumerated in your paper. Let it not, however, be supposed that these were exceptions: in fact, I scarcely know a parish where the same, or still greater exertions than you have instanced, might not be brought forward, the only object of which was to do good, without any regard to the publicity of the case. After all, the best charity is to find labour for the poor.<sup>25</sup>

The suggestion here was that not only was much being done without publicity but that the farmers were really the ones responsible for the well-being of the poor, by providing employment.

What then was the involvement of the farmers? Their role in the poor law involved them in three forms of expenditure - paying for poor relief for the unemployed, providing parish employment for the poor and taking on surplus labour. This argument was put even more forcefully in the following letter to the editor of the Northampton Mercury:

... Mr. F. reminds us, that the whole of the poor laws is a system of charity; 'Charity was the basis, charity the means, and charity the end.' Then, Mr. Editor, publish no more the charitable deeds of noblemen and gentlemen, who give coals and clothing, &c to the poor; but inform the world of a certain class of persons called *tenants*, who contribute to charitable purposes, in some parishes, from £400 to £600, in others from £600 to £800, and in others from

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<sup>25</sup> Ibid (6 March 1830)

£800 to £1,000 per annum!!! But, sir, we detest hypocrisy, and therefore deprecate the idea of applying parochial assessments to acts of charity. Is that charity which is *compulsory*? Is it charity to demand of the honest and *industrious farmer* a part of his earnings, and *pass* by his opulent neighbour, who lives in *ease* and *luxury*? That farmers are *charitable*, I do not deny, but through the *oppressive burdens of parochial assessments, their charity is greatly limited*. Yours, &C. A FARMER<sup>26</sup>

This farmer clearly thought that the burden of poor rates far outweighed the sums expended by landowners in these public displays of charity. However, there is some surviving evidence to show the involvement of farmers in the charitable distribution of food and money. In December 1839 the Northampton Herald recorded that ‘a liberal farmer – Mr Bradshaw of Hardwick, last week gave his annual present of a fat sheep of the parish.’<sup>27</sup> Bradshaw was carrying on a family custom with the donation that his father had distributed for forty years previously. Both the Northampton Mercury and the Northampton Herald regularly recorded the charitable donation of another farmer. This example was published a week after the report on Mr Bradshaw:

Another Liberal Farmer. We have the pleasure to record another act of charity towards the poor of West Haddon. Mr John Gulliver of that place, on the 24<sup>th</sup> of December last, very generously distributed twelve sheep to his poor neighbours, to whom such a present was most acceptable, and also pleasing to the donor. A bright example to others to do likewise.<sup>28</sup>

These were the only two examples of reports of farmers in Northamptonshire making such donations for the period 1829 to 1850. The lack of advertisement on behalf of the farmers may have been an editorial decision to concentrate on donations made by landowners. The appeal by the Northampton Herald that others might follow the example of Mr Gulliver suggests that farmers rarely made donations of this type, or at least that they did not advertise such gifts. Furthermore, it is certain that more charity

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<sup>26</sup> Ibid (20 February 1830)

<sup>27</sup> NCL, Northampton Herald (28 December 1839)

<sup>28</sup> Ibid (4 January 1840)

of this type was distributed without being advertised in the papers. The estate papers of the Ashley family of Ashby St Ledgers, which recorded the family's distribution of meat and bread to the poor, showed that in 1828 and 1829 three farmers donated two raw pigs while eight farmers gave one.<sup>29</sup> Furthermore, farmers were engaged in raising subscriptions to purchase bread and meat. In Moulton in 1841 a subscription of £34 was raised by the 'voluntary contributions of the owners and occupiers of land in the parish' which was used to give 4lbs of meat or bread of an equal value to families with four children under sixteen.<sup>30</sup> Subscriptions were often raised in response to harsh weather, as can be seen in the following example:

Harlestone – We are happy to hear that the farmers of Harlestone, taking into consideration the inclement state of the weather, have liberally subscribed to provide every poor family in the parish with a quantity of bread, proportionate to the size of each family.<sup>31</sup>

The farm account books of David and William Randall showed that they gave subscriptions on a regular basis to schools and bible and missionary societies. Additionally, in April 1839 they gave a subscription of fifteen pounds 'to show gratitude' (although for what and to whom is not recorded) and ten shillings for the poor of Warmington. These may have been payments made in response to Swing disturbances as other evidence in this account book showed that these farmers were fearful of arson attacks in the same year (this will be discussed further in Chapter 5).<sup>32</sup> Other subscriptions mentioned in the press were raised by those described as 'principal inhabitants', which may well have included farmers. Farmers were also

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<sup>29</sup> NRO, Ashley Family of Ashby St Ledgers, ASL1229, Account Book of Day Labourers Wages (1822-29)

<sup>30</sup> Ibid (6 February 1841)

<sup>31</sup> Ibid (16 January 1841)

<sup>32</sup> NRO, Misc. Photostat 1591/1-3, Farm accounts of David and William Randall, Wigthorpe (1817-41)

engaged in giving monetary assistance, which strictly speaking was credit rather than charity as the following example shows:

Labourers in North Northamptonshire – We are informed that several of the farmers in this neighbourhood have advanced the wages of their labourers, to enable them to meet the high price of provisions, without any diminution of their comforts.<sup>33</sup>

Labourers were able to effectively borrow money from their employers, which they would have been able to pay back from their harvest wages. Whether these kinds of donation were exceptional or typical it is impossible to ascertain from existing records. Unfortunately there is an absence of any other surviving wages books recording charitable payments with which to measure farmers' contributions, but it seems likely that large landowners got a proportionally larger press coverage than did farmers. Those farmers' records that have been studied did not show food and monetary payments.<sup>34</sup> This may mean that either they did not make these kinds of payments or that they did, but without recording them. In contrast the bailiffs and agents of major landowners did record such payments. In particular Earl Spencer's agent kept an accurate account of all charitable donations and this allows to us to use Earl Spencer as a case study of landowner involvement.

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<sup>33</sup> NCL, *Northampton Herald* (15 May 1847)

<sup>34</sup> NRO, ZA 2112, *Farm account books of Henshaw family of Pytchley* (1801-50), ZA 5845, *Farm account book kept by John Whiting for Mr Dent, Milton Malsor*, ZA 2248, *Farm account book of William Ivens of Long Buckby* (1820-59) Reading University Library, Northam P 263, 1-2, *Printed farm account books of The Farm, Mears Ashby, Northants* (1854-55), Northam 1.1, *Farm account book of a farm at Wittering, Northants* (1836-69). Northam 7.1, *Farm account book of Alderton Farm, Alderton, Northants* (1799-1850) had originally been wrongly catalogued and in fact relates to Ilderton in Northumbria.

### **3.3: Case study of Earl Spencer's estate**

A case study of the very full records of Earl Spencer's estate villages of Great Brington, Little Brington and Nobottle (hereafter referred to collectively as the Bringtons), in which he was the sole proprietor, offers an opportunity to assess the relative significance of his charity and of the poor relief system. Appendix I shows the full extent of his charity giving (the clothing charities are discussed in Chapter 4) and who the recipients were in terms of age, size of family, occupation and employers. To a lesser extent, this can also be tested in the records of Sir James Langham, the Duke of Grafton and the Earl of Cardigan (See Section 3.4).

The records of Earl Spencer's estate in the Bringtons contain books concerned with a bread and meat charity, pensions, alms, a shoe charity, infirmary subscriptions and a clothing club.<sup>35</sup> From these sources, it has been possible to understand how charity worked on a major estate in a small rural area and to consider the following questions. What sections of parish society were most likely to be recipients of charity? What types of charity were available to various categories of recipients? How much was the charity worth to the poor and what was the cost to Earl Spencer? And lastly how did this charity fit into the 'economy of makeshifts?'

The main charity record was a series of books drawn up by John Beasley, Earl Spencer's agent. These books ran between the years 1845-1864 and gave detailed notes on all the labourers in the above-mentioned villages, giving their age, size of family, occupation, employer and what charity they were given (bread and meat, alms

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<sup>35</sup> The clothing club will be discussed in Chapter 4.

and pensions).<sup>36</sup> The case study has concentrated on the book for the year 1845 (hereafter referred to as the charity book), so that use could be made of the 1841 census.<sup>37</sup> The charity book lists 183 adults (156 males and twenty-seven females) with their occupations and wages, but of those only 125 adults were actually shown as receiving some form of charity. It may have been that John Beasley was merely making an informal census of householders in the Bringtons, excluding the farmers and professionals, or that he included all those who might be eligible for charity at some stage in their lives. In order to understand the way in which charity was distributed by Earl Spencer, an examination will be made of the occupations and ages of a sample of 149 male and female householder recipients (listed in the charity book and traced as householders in the 1841 census). The wages and employers of the male householder recipients will be examined. Those householders in the charity book who did not receive charity will also be analysed. This examination will start by discussing Earl Spencer's bread and meat charity and then his alms, pensions, and infirmary letters.

### The bread and meat charity

Earl Spencer's bread and meat charity consisted of a handout of meat and bread, usually for four weeks just after Christmas, but the amount was not specified. Although this charity was recorded in the charity book for the Bringtons from 1845, other estate records show that bread and meat was distributed at least from the year 1841 and to the parishes of Chapel and Church Brampton and Harlestone as well.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> NRO, Spencer Estate Papers, 7f5, Names of the Poor and Working Class People in Brington Parish with their families, Occupations, Wages, Employer (1845-1864)

<sup>37</sup> NRO, Census returns for the parish of the Bringtons (1841)

<sup>38</sup> NRO, Spencer, SOX 76, Brampton, Harlestone & Brington Poor appointed to Earl Spencer's Gift of Bread & Meat at Christmas (1841)

However, there is evidence that this charity was much older than the documents in the estate papers would suggest. The estimates of household accounts made by the Reverend David Davies in 1797 show that labourers in Brington were receiving 'an allowance of a twelve-penny loaf and 8lbs of beef, for four weeks at Christmas' from Earl Spencer.<sup>39</sup> In 1845 bread and meat was given to one hundred and six inhabitants of the parishes, twenty-three were females and eighty-three were males.

What were the significant factors in choosing the female recipients? Nearly all the female householders listed in the charity book were recipients of the bread and meat charity. They were all widows, either those with dependent children or those in old age.<sup>40</sup> Eleven female recipients of the bread and meat charity were under sixty, eight of these had children under fourteen to support. Twelve female recipients were aged sixty and above. However, the charity book also listed three females who did not receive the bread and meat charity, but two of these received either alms or pensions. The only woman who did not receive any form of charity was the widow of a publican.

How were men selected for the bread and meat charity? There were eighty-three males listed as being in receipt of the bread and meat charity and thirty-seven who were listed but did not receive this charity. In some cases it was obvious that, as with the females, old age was the determining factor. Nine male recipients of the bread and meat charity were labelled as 'infirm – past work' in the charity book. Six of them had been recorded as labourers in the 1841 census, one of them had been a

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<sup>39</sup> D Davies, *The Case of the Labourers*, p.175. The majority of male and female recipients received meat and bread for four weeks after Christmas, but one received it for three weeks and four received it for one week only.

<sup>40</sup> Women were either labelled as 'widow' in the charity book or 'indigent' in the census.

shoemaker and the occupations of two were not noted. Additionally two labourer recipients were recorded as being 'ill at home' in the charity book.

What criteria were used to select which of the working male householders (ie excluding the infirm) should be recipients of the bread and meat charity? The occupations of all 109 working male householders in the 1845 charity book have been categorised either as labourer or artisan.<sup>41</sup> There were seventy-six labourers in the charity book of which sixty-six (87%) received the bread and meat charity and thirty-three artisans, of whom six (18%) were charity recipients. It is not surprising that labourers outnumbered artisans as recipients as the wages of artisans were considerably higher than that of labourers. Of the thirty-three artisans listed in the charity book six received weekly wages in the 12s to 15s lld range, eight in the 16s to 19s lld range, while five earned a pound or more. The wages of fourteen were unrecorded, as many of them were on contract work. Those whose wages were unknown were described as being employed in 'various places.'

Why were six artisans included as recipients of the bread and meat charity? As the sample of artisan recipients is small, it is possible to examine their individual circumstances to ascertain why they might have been selected for the bread and meat charity. Their details are shown in Table 3.6.

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<sup>41</sup> The term labourer also includes the occupations of groom, gardener, watchman, postman and servant (not specified). The term artisan applies to the occupations of mason, carpenter, brickmaker, sawyer, blacksmith, whitesmith and also encompasses the occupations of butcher and carrier.



**Table 3.6: Artisan recipients of the bread and meat charity in 1845**

<i>Name</i>	<i>Occupation</i>	<i>Age</i>	<i>No of children</i>	<i>Weekly wage</i>	<i>Employer</i>
William Worley	Mason	50	4	12/	Earl Spencer
George Judge	Sawyer	30	4	£1	Earl Spencer
John Beard	Shoemaker	50	4	Unrecorded	Unrecorded
William Newton	Brickmaker	25	3	15/-	Earl Spencer
Edward Stow	Carrier	30	3	Unrecorded	Unrecorded
Robert Capell	Shoemaker	25	2	Unrecorded	Unrecorded

Source: Spencer Estate Papers and 1841 census<sup>42</sup>

All the artisan recipients were family men with children under working age. Two of those with recorded wages were in the lower end of the artisan wage scale. George Judge, however, was a highly paid worker, although his weekly wages were given in the charity book as an estimate of his contract work. He only received one week's bread and meat and this suggests, therefore, that it was given as short-term assistance, possibly as a result of a period of unemployment or of illness. There were, however, four artisans who did not receive this charity who would have fitted the criteria of lower wages, but the difference was that they had few or no family dependants. It is clear therefore that those most in need in the artisan class were selected for the bread and meat charity, but the bulk of this charity was aimed at the labourers.

How were the sixty-six labouring recipients selected? An examination of wages, employer and family size of labourer recipients reveals how decisions about the distribution of the bread and meat charity were made. When it came to wages the labourers were in a less fortunate position than the artisans (Table 3.7).

<sup>42</sup> NRO, Spencer Estate Papers, 7f5 (1845) and Census Returns (1841)

**Table 3.7: Weekly wages of labourer recipients in 1845**

	<i>7/- to 8/11</i>	<i>9/- to 10/11</i>	<i>11/- plus</i>	<i>Unrecorded</i>
No of labourer recipients	5	45	13	3
% of total 66 labourer recipients	8%	68%	20%	4%

Source: As Table 3.6

Wages on Earl Spencer's estate were generally above the average weekly wage of nine shillings for Northamptonshire at this time.<sup>43</sup> However, amongst the labourers, the bread and meat charity was not just focussed on those with the lowest wages.

Were labourers more likely to be included in the bread and meat charity if they were employees of Earl Spencer? An examination of the employers of labourer recipients is shown in Table 3.8.

**Table 3.8: Employers of labourer recipients in 1845**

	<i>Earl Spencer</i>	<i>Others</i>
No of labourer recipients	38	28
% of total 66 labourer recipients	58%	42%

Source: As Table 3.6

The percentage of labourer recipients employed by Spencer was higher than that of their counterparts employed by others. The artisans employed by Spencer were receiving higher than average wages and the majority of them were not included in the bread and meat charity. Were the labourer recipients employed by Spencer given the bread and meat charity because their wages were no higher than those of the labourer recipients employed by others?

The wages of both those employed by Spencer and by others are given in the charity

<sup>43</sup> See Table 1.1 in the Introduction.

book. (Table 3.9).

**Table 3.9: Weekly wages of labourer recipients employed by Earl Spencer and employed by others in 1845**

	<i>7/- to 8/11</i>	<i>9/- to 10/11</i>	<i>11/- plus</i>	<i>Unrecorded</i>
Wages of labourer recipients employed by Earl Spencer	4	20	13	1
As % of all 38 labourer recipients employed by Earl Spencer	10%	53%	34%	3%
Wages of labourer recipients employed by others	1	26	0	1
As % of all 28 labourer recipients employed by others	4%	93%	0	3%

Source: As Table 3.6

Nearly all the labourers employed by others were earning from nine shillings to ten shillings and eleven pence whereas around half of Spencer's labourers were in this wage category. Indeed a third of Spencer's labourers were earning eleven shillings plus and within that category three men earned twelve shillings, two, fourteen shillings and two, fifteen shillings, comparable wages to some of the artisans. Those earning fourteen and fifteen shillings were labourers with specific jobs such as groom, waggoner, shepherd and watchman. Thus, as with the artisan group, being an employee of Earl Spencer's was a distinct advantage in terms of wages, but it did not exclude them from the bread and meat charity.

Lastly, it has to be considered whether the right to the bread and meat charity was something that came with age. The ages of the labourer recipients and non-recipients are shown in Table 3.10.

**Table 3.10: Ages of labour recipients and as a percentage of all labourers of same age in 1845**

	20-29	30-39	40-49	50-59	60 <i>plus</i>
No of labourer recipients of bread and meat	10	15	21	12	8
Total no of labourers in charity book	14	15	21	16	10
%	71%	100%	100%	75%	80%

Source: As Table 3.6

The evidence shows that the bread and meat charity was received by all the labourers in their thirties and forties. Was this solely because these age groups contained those men most likely to have dependent families to support? The evidence shows that forty-five labourer recipients had families, representing sixty-eight percent of all labourer recipients, but were these all concentrated in the thirties and forties age groups? Table 3.11 gives a breakdown of the number of recipients with families in each age group.

**Table 3.11: Labourer recipients with dependent children in 1845**

	20-29	30-39	40-49	50-59	60 <i>plus</i>
No. of recipients in each age group with children	7	12	15	8	3
As % of all recipients in each age group	70%	80%	71%	67%	38%

Sources: As Table 3.6

In all age groups the percentage of labourer recipients with families was higher than of those without, most notably in the thirties and forties age group. However, not having dependent children did not necessarily exclude labourers in any age group from the charity. In particular there were four men in their twenties who did not have any children. Three were single and were employed by various farmers other than Spencer on wages of ten shillings a week. One of these three was recorded as being in receipt of poor relief. The remaining childless twenty-year old was employed by Earl Spencer at a wage of eleven shillings a week as a watchman and was a married

man. The evidence shows that the vast majority of labourers in the Bringtons were selected for the bread and meat charity, with little discrimination being made between different wage categories and employment by Spencer or by others. There is some evidence to show that family men were more likely to be selected. There remains the question as to why there were a small number of labourers listed in the charity book for 1845 who appear to have been excluded from the bread and meat handout.

There were ten labourers who were listed in the charity book but did not receive the bread and meat charity for the year 1845 and they are shown in Table 3.12.

**Table 3.12: Labourers who did not receive the bread and meat charity in 1845**

<i>Name</i>	<i>Age</i>	<i>No of children</i>	<i>Weekly wages</i>	<i>Employer</i>
Bott Henry	50	3	10/-	Other
Butlin Lucas	50	0	6/- & board	Other
Dunkley Thomas	60	1	10/-	Earl Spencer
Manning Edward	20	0	10/-	Other
Marriott Nathaniel	60	0	7/-	Other
Taylor George	50	0	8/-	Earl Spencer
Rolfe John	25	0	10/-	Other
Dunkley William	50	0	10/-	Earl Spencer
Redley Charles	20	0	10/-	Other
Jordan William	25	1	10/-	Earl Spencer

Sources: As table 3.6

This small sample shows that high wages were not the reason for their exclusion.

There is the possibility that these individuals had displeased Earl Spencer or his agent in some way, although the fact that four of them were employed by him belies this. It is most likely that they were excluded because the majority of them did not have children to support. Yet, some recipients too had not been family men. Furthermore why were the three family men excluded from the bread and meat charity? If we take the case of one of them, Henry Bott, we see that he was a fifty year-old father of

three, earning ten shillings and employed by someone other than Earl Spencer. The 1845 charity book recorded that he had been 'formerly out of employ' and the outdoor poor relief figures for 1845 showed Henry Bott as being in receipt of outdoor relief for that year.<sup>44</sup> We can only speculate as to why Henry Bott was unable to find regular employment. However, the records of infirmary letters which formed part of Earl Spencer's estate papers show that he was admitted as an out-patient to Northampton Infirmary five times during the period 1846-50.<sup>45</sup> This would suggest that his irregular employment was a result of poor health and, consequently that he was a needy candidate for the bread and meat charity. It may be that he was receiving other charitable benefits from Earl Spencer that were not recorded and were more beneficial than this annual handout. There is no further evidence to show why this particular individual was not selected for the bread and meat dole that was distributed to the majority of labourers in the Bringtons. Thus in this case and for other labourers listed as non-recipients there was little to show why they had been excluded for that year, other than the fact that the majority of them did not have families to support.

### Alms and pensions

The charity book also recorded payments to individuals described as 'needing alms' and pensions, both of which had a much narrower distribution than the bread and meat charity. The alms payments all amounted to an annual payment of one pound six shillings. This payment was limited to only fourteen inhabitants of the Bringtons, seven males and seven females. Of the seven females, two were in their forties, two

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<sup>44</sup> NRO, PL2/337, Brixworth Union - Western District Outdoor Relief Lists (September to March 1845-6)

<sup>45</sup> NRO, Spencer, SOX 76, Infirmary Letters given out (1 August 1846 to 31 July 1850). 'His Lordship is entitled to recommend 20 in and 40 out patients upon his subscription of thirty guineas being one in and two out for every guinea and a half subscribed.'

in their fifties and three were sixty and over. All the women in their forties and fifties were widows with children under fourteen, three of them were indigent and one was the schoolmistress.

**Table 3.13: Ages of alms recipients in 1845 charity book**

	<i>40s</i>	<i>50s</i>	<i>60s plus</i>
All recipients of alms	3	2	9
As a percentage of all recipients of alms	22%	14%	64%
Male recipients of alms	2	0	5
As a percentage of all male recipients of alms	29%	0	71%
Female recipients of alms	1	2	4
As a percentage of all female recipients of alms	14%	29%	57

Sources: As Table 3.6

Two men in their forties received alms. One was a labourer with four children and earning only eight shillings a week, therefore in need of a supplement to his wages. The other labourer in his forties had three children and was earning twelve shillings a week. The rest of the men receiving alms were aged sixty and over, with three of them being described as infirm. Two in the sixty plus age group, however, were working men – one a labourer ‘on the roads’ earning ten shillings a week and the other a mason employed by Earl Spencer at twelve shillings a week. It is clear that the former would have been a needy case, being employed by the parish and that the alms were part of his ‘economy of makeshifts.’ There is no way of telling why the mason received alms but it may have been due to illness in that year (he was aged sixty-five). Male alms recipients were often selected on grounds of need, usually as a result of ill health. Five alms recipients were also given a pension.

Pensions were paid weekly and varied in amount. There were eighteen pensioners listed in the charity book, of which only six were males. Three were in their sixties

and three were over seventy. The 1841 census shows that labourers continued working well into their sixties. The small number of male pensioners were no longer able to work and were indeed described as ‘infirm and past work.’ As the widows in receipt of a pension were all recorded as having been married to employees of Earl Spencer, it is highly probable that the male pensioners were also ex-employees of Earl Spencer. The females were more evenly spread over the age groups. All the females except one were described as indigent. The exception was the widow of a shoemaker. The youngest pensioners were two women in their forties, both with children. Of the four women in their fifties, two had children. There was one woman in her sixties, but the largest group was that of the five who were over seventy. Thus, in both male and female recipients it can be seen that the pension was meant to ease the discomfort of old age, but for the females it was also used to assist widows in dire straits. Seven of the widows were described as having had husbands that had been employed by Earl Spencer. The extent to which these pensioners were assisted can be seen in Table 3.14.

**Table 3.14: Amount of weekly pensions in 1845 charity book**

	1/- to 1/11	2/- to 2/11	3/- to 3/11	4/- to 4/11	5/- to 5/11	6/- to 6/11	7/- to 7/11	Over 8/-
Male pensioners	1	3	2	0	0	0	0	0
As % of all 6 male pensioners	17%	50%	33%	0	0	0	0	0
Female pensioners	1	5	2	1	0	1	1	1
As % all 12 female pensioners	8%	43%	17%	8%	0	8%	8%	8%

Source: As Table 3.6

Generally, these pensions were small with 72% of all pensions (male and female) being less than four shillings per week. There is a discrepancy between male and female pensions as no male pensioner received more than four shillings a week, whereas 32% of females received more than this amount and three (24%) received



pensions of over six shillings per week. In fact, the highest pension paid out was thirty pounds per annum, which went to a forty-year-old female with three children. There is no evidence to show why she should have received such a large amount. Thus, on the whole, pensions were given to support widows of men who had been employed by Earl Spencer. A small number of men, probably ex-employees who survived into old age, but were no longer able to work, also received pensions. The pensions were the most valuable contribution made by Earl Spencer to the mixed economy of welfare of his parishioners. For some people this was further boosted by alms payments and outdoor relief payments.

#### Outdoor relief and charity

An examination of the outdoor relief lists for the Bringtons, which were within the Brixworth Union, showed that forty-two inhabitants were in receipt of some outdoor relief for the half-year from September 1844 to March 1845.<sup>46</sup> Seven recipients of outdoor relief were children under the age of twenty. Of the adult recipients, twenty were females, two of whom were recorded as being non-resident in the Bringtons.

Who then was considered eligible for outdoor relief? The occupations of the adult males on outdoor relief were twelve labourers, one artisan and two unknowns.<sup>47</sup>

None of the able bodied men on outdoor relief were employed by Earl Spencer. Four labourers were infirm and one was described as 'ill at home.' The only artisan was an infirm weaver. Of the unrecorded occupations, one male was described as infirm and the other was aged seventy. This indicates that just over half of the men on poor relief were not fit to work. If, as Anne Digby found in the eastern counties, relief in aid of

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<sup>46</sup> Where a husband and wife are listed, the husband is counted as the amount of relief he received was for the couple and she did not receive any in her own right.

<sup>47</sup> NRO, 1841 Bringtons Census and PL2/337, Brixworth Union

sickness was a way of circumventing the intention of the New Poor Law to prohibit the use of outdoor relief to the able-bodied, then some of these men may have been labelled as infirm when they were not.<sup>48</sup> However, this still left seven men on the outdoor relief lists who did not fit the category 'deserving' and confirms her findings that outdoor relief continued after 1834 to be given to able-bodied men.<sup>49</sup> Of the eighteen resident adult females, two were servants, thirteen were classified as indigent and the status of the remaining three is unknown.

Was outdoor relief more likely to be granted to the elderly? Table 3.15 shows the ages at which males and females received relief.

**Table 3.15: Ages of adult males and females on outdoor relief, Brixworth Union, September 1845 to March 1846**

	20-29	30-39	40-49	50-59	60 plus
No. of males on outdoor relief	1	3	2	2	7
Each age group as % of total 15 males on outdoor relief	7%	20%	13%	13%	47%
No of adult females on outdoor relief	1	3	1	3	12
Each age group as % of total 20 females on outdoor relief	5%	15%	5%	15%	60%

Sources: 1841 census for the Bringtons and outdoor relief lists for Brixworth Union<sup>50</sup>

Sixty percent of females were in old age (i.e. sixty and over) whereas only forty-seven percent of male recipients fell into this age category. Apart from old age the percentage of both men and women receiving relief was highest in their thirties, when they would be most likely to have young families to support.

What were the levels of relief and did they vary across the age groups (Table 3.16)?

<sup>48</sup> A Digby, 'The Labour Market', p.72

<sup>49</sup> Ibid, p.69

<sup>50</sup> NRO 1841 Brington Census and PL2/337, Brixworth Union

**Table 3.16: Levels of outdoor relief, Brixworth Union, September 1845 to March 1846**

	<i>Not regular</i>	<i>1/- to 1/11</i>	<i>2/- to 2/11</i>	<i>3/- to 3/11</i>	<i>4/- to 4/11</i>	<i>5/- plus</i>
No. of males on outdoor relief	5	2	1	4	0	3
No. of females on outdoor relief	3	5	6	5	1	0
Males and females on each level of outdoor relief as % of total adults	23%	20%	20%	26%	3%	9%

Source: As Table 3.15

The levels of outdoor relief were generally very low. The three recipients who received over five shillings were all infirm men, aged over seventy and with wives to support. The highest level of outdoor relief paid to a woman, amounting to four shillings and nine pence, was to the widow of a shoemaker in her thirties, who had two children. However, she was not in receipt of a pension or any alms. Those in the younger age groups were less likely to be in receipt of regular weekly relief. All the males under sixty were labourers, but only three of them were in receipt of relief for the whole quarter. Two labourers received regular weekly sums of money. Their incomes of ten shillings per week were regularly supplemented by outdoor relief, making them up to eleven shillings and nine pence and eleven shillings and seven pence respectively. The other labourer in receipt of relief for the whole half-year was Thomas Stow, whose relief was given in varying amounts of money and kind as is shown in Table 3.17.

**Table 3.17: Outdoor relief payments to Thomas Stow, Brixworth Union, September 1845 to March 1846**

	<i>Money</i>	<i>In Kind</i>	<i>Total</i>
1 <sup>st</sup> week	15s	3s 6d	18s 6d
2 <sup>nd</sup> week	6s	1s 2d	7s 2d
3 <sup>rd</sup> week	7s	1s 2d	8s 2d
4 <sup>th</sup> week	4s	1s 2d	5s 2d
5 <sup>th</sup> week	6s	1s 2d	7s 1d
Rest of quarter	5s	1s 2d	6s 2d

Source: as Table 3.15

Thomas Stow was a labourer who only earned seven shillings a week on the roads. He received a large first payment in January, a period of particular hardship and suggests that he was in considerable distress. After that, although his relief was reduced, it did provide a supplement to his wages that made them comparable with the majority of the other labourers. Of the remaining four labourers, two were given relief for three weeks and two for one week only. Three of these were given relief in money and kind, but James Crutchley, a mason labourer was given the relatively large sum of five shillings and nine pence for one week. The granting of short-term relief helped the able-bodied in times of crisis, such as temporary unemployment or sickness. The amount of outdoor relief granted was determined by circumstances such as age, marital status and dependent children and was given in some cases in addition to pensions and/or alms granted by Earl Spencer. To what extent did the pensions and alms given by Earl Spencer contribute to an 'economy of makeshifts' for those poor on outdoor relief?

There were thirteen recipients of outdoor relief who received either pensions and/or alms; eleven of them were widows. Table 3.18 shows charitable payments of alms and pensions as a percentage of all their income derived from both charity and outdoor relief for the year 1845.

**Table 3.18: Charity as % of all relief in 1845**

<i>%</i>	<i>Number</i>
0-20	1
21-40	6
41-60	3
61-80	3

Source: As Table 3.6 and 3.15

Charity then was a substantial part of the ‘economy of makeshifts’, contributing at least a quarter of all relief income in all but one instance. For half the sample charitable payments represented around a half to three-quarters of their welfare payments. The lowest percentage of charitable income came from alms payments made to three widows. The two males, both in their seventies, received thirty percent and forty-nine percent of their income from pensions. The individual with the highest income was a widow in her fifties with two children to support. She received £15 18s 2d a year, seventy four percent coming from a pension and alms. The pensions in particular made a valuable contribution to the ‘economy of makeshifts’ of the most vulnerable in society, the aged and the widowed with dependent children. Those employed by Spencer therefore had a distinct advantage in old age as they could expect to receive a pension for themselves or for their widows. Furthermore, as none of Earl Spencer’s employees were on the outdoor relief lists, being directly employed by him offered a greater stability of employment. However, the number of those who received a pension was small, suggesting either that only certain labourers were selected for a pension, or more probably that they died whilst still working. The next section looks at the medical assistance given to his parishioners by Earl Spencer.

### Earl Spencer's infirmary letters

Earl Spencer was a regular subscriber to Northampton General Infirmary. A book entitled Infirmary letters given out from 1<sup>st</sup> August 1846 recorded all those who had been granted a letter of admittance to the hospital from 1846 to 1855.<sup>51</sup> A letter on the front page of the book showed how this worked. It stated that 'His Lordship is entitled to recommend twenty in and forty out patients upon his subscription of thirty guineas being one in and two out for every guinea and a half subscribed.' The book listed names of patients, their place of residence and whether they were in or out patients. The ratio of two out-patients to one in-patient was rarely achieved, with the percentage of out patients consistently exceeding this. The patients mostly came from a number of parishes in and around Northampton, including the Bringtons. In the year August 1846 to July 1847, thirteen out of thirty-nine patients (33%) were from the aforementioned parishes and from August 1847 to July 1848 there were twenty-five out of forty-eight (52%). In the Bringtons there were thirty-four beneficiaries of infirmary letters for the period August 1846 to July 1850, of whom nineteen were males and fifteen were females and Table 3.19 shows the occupations of the male beneficiaries.

**Table 3.19: Occupations of beneficiaries of infirmary letters in the Bringtons 1846-50**

	<i>Labourers</i>	<i>Artisans</i>
No of beneficiaries	16	3
As a percentage of all beneficiaries	84%	16%
As a percentage of householders of same occupation in 1841 Bringtons census	22%	7%

Source: Spencer Estate Papers, Infirmary Letters given out from 1<sup>st</sup> August 1846 to 31<sup>st</sup> July 1850<sup>52</sup> and 1841 census for the Bringtons

<sup>51</sup> NRO, Spencer, SOX 76, Infirmary Letters given out from 1<sup>st</sup> August 1846 to 31<sup>st</sup> July 1850

<sup>52</sup> Ibid

The labourers were again the best represented group, but as can be seen, this charity was only available to a small percentage of the labouring and artisan population. However, hospitals themselves had admissions policies which determined who would be accepted as patients, even when the hurdle of finding a subscriber had been overcome. Apart from the prospective patient needing to be a bona fide charity case, certain categories were often excluded, including servants, apprentices and paupers.<sup>53</sup> Furthermore, patients with certain types of ailments could be excluded as is shown by the following Rules and Orders from the Leeds Infirmary of 1777 quoted by

Woodward:

That no Woman big with child, no Child under Six Years of Age, (except in extraordinary Cases, as Fractures or where Cutting for the Stone, or any other Operation is required) no Person disordered in their Senses, suspected to have the Small-Pox, Venereal Disease, Itch or Infectious Disstemper; no Persons apprehended to be in a dying condition or incurable, be admitted as In-Patients, or if inadvertently admitted be suffered to continue.<sup>54</sup>

The female beneficiaries were mainly wives of labourers (nine) and artisans (three), with one indigent widow and two whose status was unknown. Amongst the males, only one was infirm, the others were all working men. As with Spencer's other charities around a half of the male beneficiaries worked for him, as did the husbands of the female beneficiaries. Was this charity then aimed at those of working age and their wives? The ages of male and female beneficiaries are shown in Table 3.20.

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<sup>53</sup> J Woodward, To do the sick no harm. A study of the British voluntary hospital system to 1875 (London, 1974), p.40

<sup>54</sup> Ibid, p.45. However, Woodward also quotes from Dr Doddridge who, when preaching on behalf of Northampton General Hospital in 1745, commented that several hospitals had treated some of the aforementioned afflictions.

**Table 3.20: Ages of Brington male and female beneficiaries as a percentage of all beneficiaries of Earl Spencer's infirmary letters**

	20-29	30-39	40-49	50-59	60-69	Over 70
Brington Males	1	1	3	11	3	0
As a % of all male beneficiaries	5%	5%	16%	58%	16%	0
Brington Females	1	5	4	2	3	1
As a % of all female beneficiaries	7%	33%	27%	13%	20%	7%

Source: As Table 3.20

The majority of men were admitted in their fifties, probably due to deteriorating health associated with a hard working life and the onset of old age. Although there were three men in the sixty plus age group, they could still have been working, as the census showed that many labourers were still working in their sixties and none of these three men was over seventy. The women were being admitted at younger ages, the greatest number in their thirties, followed by the forties. This was when they were still of childbearing age and, although the admission policy did not allow pregnant women, it is probable that they suffered with medical problems associated with childbearing. In both male and females this was not charity that was targeted at extreme old age as the pensions and alms had been. In the 1840s those who were too infirm to remain at home could have been provided for in the union workhouse. This was a charity that was targeted at the working man and his family, but was open to both Earl Spencer's employees and to parishioners employed by others. It was part of the substantial package available to parishioners in the Bringtons. How generous a contribution did Earl Spencer make to charity?

In total Earl Spencer paid out one hundred and eighty-seven pounds and six shillings in pensions per annum and fifteen pounds, twelve shillings in alms, making a grand total of two hundred and two pounds, eighteen shillings per annum. It has not been



possible to calculate the amount spent on the bread and meat charity. The total cost of outdoor relief to the Brixworth Union for inhabitants of the Brixworths in the half-year from September 1844 to March 1845 was seventy-six pounds sixteen shillings and two pence. If this was a typical half-year, this would make the annual bill come to £159, twelve shillings and four pence. Thus Earl Spencer contributed more than the poor relief system in that year. Therefore, the complaint of the farmer in the Northampton Mercury in February 1830 that the charitable deeds of noblemen and gentlemen was not matched by the amount paid out by tenants in poor relief was not completely justified in this case. Indeed in the Brixworths charity had a greater significance than outrelief. How typical was the level and type of charity dispensed by Earl Spencer? The estate records of Sir James Langham, the Duke of Grafton and the Earl of Cardigan, although much less detailed, give some idea of the operation of charity on their estates.

#### **3.4: Charitable payments of food and money given by three other major Northamptonshire landowners, Sir James Langham, the Duke of Grafton and the Earl of Cardigan**

The evidence in the Langham estate papers is far more fragmentary than the Spencer papers and therefore can only give a partial picture of the operation of charity in Cottesbrooke. This parish contained sixty-nine houses and Sir James was the sole proprietor. Abstracted Cottesbrooke money accounts record disbursements for the Poor from Ladyday 1827 to Ladyday 1828. The amounts paid were three hundred and forty-four pounds, eighteen shillings and for the following year as two hundred pounds, one shilling and one pence and included payments to an endowed clothing

charity, Miss Langham's Charity, which is discussed in Chapter 4.<sup>55</sup> In these Cottesbrooke accounts there was also a list entitled 'Payments to Charities and Institutions made by Dean', totalling one hundred and sixty-three pounds, fourteen shillings and fourpence. Dean was Sir James's agent. A summary of these payments is shown in Table 3.21.

**Table 3.21: Sir James Langham's payments to charities and institutions**

	<i>Schools</i>	<i>Societies</i>	<i>Medical</i>	<i>Individuals</i>	<i>Endowed Charities</i>	<i>Other</i>
Amount to nearest £	£34	£50	£20	£18	£7	£34
As a percentage of total £163	21%	31%	12%	11%	4%	21%

Source: Langham of Cottesbrooke Estate Papers<sup>56</sup>

However, the largest single payment of thirty pounds and fifteen shillings to the County Fire Insurance Office can hardly be considered charity, but was a means of securing his property. This subscription of the County Fire Insurance Office was made in 1829 to 1830 when the Swing Riots produced considerable fear of the possibility of arson. This fear was strongly expressed in the correspondence between Sir James and his agent. At this period in the 1830s the estate correspondence shows several references to the fear of riot and this was used by three Cottesbrooke tenants as a bargaining point with Sir James. On 6 December 1830 they sent him a Petition in which they stated that they 'view with great concern and alarm the disaffection which has prevailed in other parts of the Country, and now is rapidly approaching towards our own Parish.' They emphasised the danger by saying 'fires have taken place, threatening letters been received, and illegal bodies of men have assembled at no great

<sup>55</sup> NRO, Langham of Cottesbrooke Estate Papers, L(C) 1687, Abstracted Cottesbrooke Money Accounts (1827 to 1829)

<sup>56</sup> Ibid

distance from us.’ They then ‘humbly beg that you will afford us some assistance, to enable us at this alarming crisis to give full employment to the labourers, or in case this cannot be done, to increase the parish allowance.’<sup>57</sup> Sir James’s solution, or rather that recommended by his agent, was the implementation or financial support of self-help schemes rather than the more costly and much needed provision of housing and regular employment. This is discussed in more detail in Chapters four, five and six.

The second largest donation was of thirty pounds to three societies in Raunds, though they were unnamed and the third was a sum of twenty-one pounds to Walgrave. In all Sir James gave donations to four schools, reflecting a national trend of encouraging schools for the rural poor. There were three named individuals listed, two of whom actually received a donation of five pounds each, but it has not been possible to trace any of the names in the 1841 census, probably due to the time lapse. The other individual donation was of eight pounds to ‘two soldiers and sailors.’ However, it can be seen that Sir James Langham favoured donations to organised charities, such as schools, medical institutions and societies rather than those that gave directly to the poor. Certainly the amount expended in charity to the poor was low. The records allow us to calculate what percentage of his income this was. His notebook of expenditure for 1829-30 recorded that his total income for 1829 to 1830 was fourteen thousand, two hundred and ninety-six pounds.<sup>58</sup> This meant that he spent only one percent of his income on charity in Cottesbrooke in the same year and there is no

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<sup>57</sup> NRO, Langham, L[C]1181, Petition of Tenants, Cottesbrooke to Sir James Langham (6 December 1830)

<sup>58</sup> NRO, Langham, L(C) 356, Notebook of Expenditure including Charity belonging to Sir James Langham (1829-30)

evidence to suggest that he provided the same level of charitable resources as was seen on Spencer's estate.

The records for the Duke of Grafton's Northamptonshire estate contain a volume entitled Charity Book which covers the years 1831 to 1891, but this thesis concentrates on the period from 1831 to 1843.<sup>59</sup> The entries in this book were made by the Duke's agents and contain mainly monetary payments either in the form of alms or regular pensions. The Duke of Grafton was the major proprietor in a number of villages mentioned in the charity book and the sole proprietor in the parish of Potterspury, which lay at the heart of his estate. One-off payments were paid to various people in the charity book, and can be categorised as alms for those in need and payments to cover loss. There were various alms payments to relieve individuals. Several alms payments were made to one 'Old Ratlidge, of two shillings a time, but ranging from a month to five months between payments. These payments were referred to in various ways, either as 'in charity', or 'an encouragement' or 'in need', but these were discontinued after 1836. Other alms payments were less regular. In April 1837 a payment of £1 6s 3d was made for 'meat, His Grace's charity to Francis Cooke.' This was followed by one more payment in September 1837 of 7s 6d. The remaining alms payments were all one-off payments. Three widows at Grafton received 14d each in June 1831 'at the time of Your Grace's Court is held there.' Widow Kingston of Grafton received six shillings in December 1832 because she was in 'great need' and in September 1832 five shillings was paid to Thomas Hillyer of Hartwell and to Sarah Goodridge, aged eighty 'in illness.' However, the other single payments were considerably more generous. In April 1837 George Osborne's family

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<sup>59</sup> NRO, Grafton Estate Papers, G3930, Charity Book (1831-1891)

of Paulerspury were given £2 13s 3d and in March 1832 Mr Gardner of Greens Norton was given £5 'to make up his salary with other assistances to Lady Day 1832.' There was no record of who Mr Gardner was or of his occupation. However, the same amount was also given to Mrs White in August 1833, who was described as 'widow of the late keeper at Briary Lodge.' Presumably, Mr Gardner was in a similar category of being a valued employee of the Duke. His solicitude to those he employed as skilled artisans was also shown in the form of payments made to those employees who had suffered accidents whilst working for him. There would appear to have been a spate of accidents in 1839, as three payments of this kind were made then. In June 1839 William Linnell received half pay as a carpenter for six weeks and four days, amounting to £5 in total 'on account of having a serious accident at Mr William Barford's Foscote, while working for his Grace.' The Duke also paid £4 7s 6d to a surgeon for attending on William Linnell in July 1839. Another carpenter, William Telly received the same payment for his accident at the same place in July 1839 and was attended by the surgeon in May 1840. A smaller payment of one pound was made in September 1840 to John Garlick 'whose health much impaired by sinking a well for His Grace in Greens Norton.' These donations were an early form of accident and sickness pay, but appear only to have been paid to a few and, in particular, to the more highly skilled workers on his estate. The Duke also made donations to two individuals to cover the costs of damages caused by fires. He paid £5 each to William James in May 1838 'for the relief of the sufferers of the fire at Hartwell' and to 'James Bryant in January 1839 to fund for assisting him for the loss he sustained at the fire in Potterspury.' Payments were also made in two cases of monetary loss. Thomas Watson of Ashton received £4 'towards his loss of bill of labour to Marriott who became insolvent' and 10s to Thomas Webb 'on account of his

being robbed of his and other labourers' share of bark peeling money.' The charity book also recorded monetary payments in the form of rewards given to various individuals. In October 1833 George Carter, described as the 'assistant to Clarke of Wakefield Lawn' was awarded two pounds for 'meretricious conduct.' Other rewards were recorded in the charity book that could not strictly be considered as charity, but as incentives to those who had pleased the Duke with various services.<sup>60</sup>

The charity book showed that regular 'allowances' were made to various persons and these were similar to the pensions made by Earl Spencer and are shown in Table 3.22.

**Table 3.22: Regular pensions paid by Duke of Grafton 1831-1843**

<i>Name</i>	<i>Occupation</i>	<i>Weekly allowance</i>	<i>Length of time paid</i>
Thomas Robinson	Postman	2s 6d	1831-32 until death
George Woodward	Unknown	3s	1831-36
Widow Henson	Widow	1s	1831-36
Widow Hedge	Widow	1s	1832-40
Old Bailey & wife	Unknown	5s	1832-40
Thomas Rose	Late huntsman	9s 6d	1831-35
Richard Lyman's 2 children		4s	1836-43
Daniel Woodward	Unknown	3s	1831-32

Source: Grafton Estate Papers<sup>61</sup>

The size of the pensions was on a par with those in the Bringtons with the majority being under four shillings a week and widows receiving the most meagre pensions.

<sup>60</sup> In February 1838 William Ford was granted a gratuity of one pound 'for successfully treating a sheep with a broken leg' and in January 1836 ten shillings was awarded 'for the men who put out the fire in Potterspury.' Other rewards were made to informers and apprehenders. Thus a pound was given in November 1832 to 'Mr Clarke's man for apprehending John Webster' and a pound given in December 1833 to 'Joseph Gears for giving information and evidence which convicted Crossley of carrying away posts and nails from fence dividing the occupations of Druce and His Grace.' These two payments were untypical and may have reflected the tensions of unrest at the time. There were no further payments of this kind. A final reward that was recorded was of five pounds ten shillings, which was to 'Your Grace's Tenants who attended the County Election on behalf of Lord Althorp.' They had obviously done what was required, as the Poll Book of 1831 shows that in all the parishes where the Duke of Grafton had considerable landholding, his tenant farmers all voted for Viscount Althorp. NRO, *Poll Taken at Northampton for the Election of Knights of the Shire* (1831)

<sup>61</sup> NRO, *Grafton*, G3930, Charity Book

There is little evidence to show whether these people were past employees of the Duke of Grafton, apart from an entry for Thomas Rose, which recorded 'Thomas Rose (the late Huntsman), your Grace's Annual Allowance being an old servant.' However, as these pensioners were so small in number, it is likely that they had been selected as past employees of the Duke or their widows and children.

After 1843 the charity book concentrated on payments of regular subscriptions to various charitable institutions, although the change in the nature of the Duke's charity from a very personal involvement with various individuals to the more detached assistance given through societies was detected earlier. The Duke gave an annual subscription of twenty-six pounds to the Northampton Infirmary. As with Spencer, this would have allowed the Duke to select a certain number of in and out patients to attend the hospital. Most of the subscriptions were for local societies in those parishes where the Duke had a major landholding and will be discussed in the subsequent relevant chapters. There were also subscriptions to benefit societies with one payment of twenty pounds in 1838 to Towcester Benefit Society and regular donations of five pounds per annum to Hartwell Benefit Society, which attracted the praise of the Northampton Mercury on 3 June 1837 as follows:

A Friendly Society for the parishes of Hartwell, Ashton, Roade, and Courteenhall, has been established, called the Hartwell Friendly Society... It is but justice to add, that the liberality of the free subscribers of the several parishes connected with this society is above all praise, their united subscriptions amounting to the sum of thirty pounds and upwards, not including the subscriptions of some of the principal gentry of the neighbourhood, who have kindly consented to come forward on this occasion. The amount of these contributions cannot at present be ascertained.<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> NCL, Northampton Herald, (3 June 1837)

The Duke's subscription represented one-fifth of this subscription, but he was the major landowner in the first three of these parishes. As the charity book progressed towards 1841 the number of individual donations decreased at the same time as the subscriptions increased.

The level of payments for a 1831 to 1841 are given below:

1831-32	£240 12s 6d
1832-33	£213 17s 10d
1833-34	£173 19s 6d
1834-35	£169 12s 0d
1835-36	£124 1s 1d
1836-37 <sup>63</sup>	£ 66 4s 0d
1837-38	£225 10s 6d
1838-39	£497 11s 2d
1839-40	£385 14s 9d
1840-41	£481 6s 5d

The level of charity in 1841 was double that in 1831, but two hundred pounds of the 1841 figure was a donation towards repairing Grafton church and a further donation of thirty one pounds towards erecting a new bridge in Potterspury. Likewise, although the two previous periods 1838-39 and 1839-40 recorded large donations, these included the payments for the entertainments celebrating the Queen's accession to the throne and her marriage. For the latter occasion the Northampton Mercury reported that the Duke of Grafton distributed bread in the parishes of Potterspury, Yardley Gobion, Grafton Regis, Alderton, Hartwell, Ashton, Stoke Bruerne, Shutlanger, Blisworth, Greens Norton, Cold Higham, Abthorpe and Paulerspury.<sup>64</sup> The average spent on the various 'charitable' activities recorded in the charity book for 1831-41 was about £257. From 1841 to 1851 the average increased to around £347. It may be that, as with the other landowners, much charity was either

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<sup>63</sup> This figure is for a part year running from July 1835 to December 1836. Subsequently the following year's figure is distorted by back-payments

<sup>64</sup> NCL, Northampton Mercury (22 February 1840)



unrecorded or the records have not survived. However, receipts in the Grafton estate records tally with the charity book, so it is likely that this book does reflect the level of charitable payments on this estate. Concern about the condition of the poor was expressed by the Earl of Euston, later to become the 5<sup>th</sup> Duke of Grafton, when he wrote to his wife reminding her of the importance of attending to the poor:

You need not go to Salcey but I must perform my duties there – as an example to the children among other reasons ... You are younger than I and do not know the needs of poor ... you must be guided by me... I can not and will not be forgetful of the poor.<sup>65</sup>

The Duke of Grafton's charity book showed that on this estate the way to increase assistance to the poor, however, was through the 'new' paternalist methods of giving assistance to self-help clubs across a range of parishes. This will be explored further in subsequent chapters.

Accounts from the Earl of Cardigan's estate papers show an account that contained references to charity for the year 1818. In August, £6 17s 8d was supplied for ale for the Glapthorn poor, presumably for the end of harvest.<sup>66</sup> However, the majority of payments were concerned with the payment of pensions, which were referred to as 'bounties.' Some of these were considerable sums of money. In October, Francis was given half a year's bounty which, with a 'present from Lord Cardigan' of £5, came to £12 10s in total. Similarly, William Rollins was given half a year's bounty of £9 2s. There was no evidence to show who these men were, but presumably, as with the Grafton charity, they were valued old retainers. Other bounties were considerably

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<sup>65</sup> WSRO, HA51/3/6/231, Euston Estate Papers, Letter from 5<sup>th</sup> Duke of Grafton to his wife Mary Caroline (10 February 1833). His wife was resident at the Grafton estate in Suffolk and wished to live in London instead of joining him in Northamptonshire.

<sup>66</sup> NRO, Earl of Cardigan's Estate Papers, ASR 20, The Earl of Cardigan's separate account to October 1818

smaller. Bounties were paid in June and August to Sarah Chambers who received bounties of 13s a quarter and to John Langley who received £1 12s 6d a quarter. A bounty of the same amount as that of John Langley's was also paid to Widow Knowles. The first payment in May was paid to Robert Knowles for Widow Knowles. However in August she received her bounty and one for Robert amounting to £6 3s 6d. It is safe to assume that this extra bounty was paid to Robert Knowles because of extreme illness as in September he was given one month's bounty of £1 8s 'till the time of his death.' Thereafter Widow Knowles received her quarter's bounty of £1 12s and 6d in August. This example shows that the level of charity extended to this family was considerable, but the smaller bounties were of a similar value to those paid out by Grafton and Spencer and again appear to have been paid to only a few parishioners. This sample was too small to give a true indication of the level of charitable expenditure made by the Earl of Cardigan.

These case studies have illustrated that the nature and depth of charitable resources varied across major landed estates, ranging from the limited involvement of Sir James Langham to the wide range of charity dispensed in the Bringtons. However, whatever the level of charitable involvement it is clear that landowners understood the importance of the public face of charity, as was seen in the various newspaper reports, and that it was part of their duties.

## **Conclusion:**

Access to food and money was an essential part of the poor's 'economy of makeshifts'. This chapter has shown that approximately a quarter of all Northamptonshire parishes contained endowed charities that distributed bread and that approximately a half gave out monetary doles. The usefulness of such provision ranged from a token annual handout to a regular supply of these doles throughout the year. The latter made up a valuable part of the average labouring family budget in at least seven percent of all parishes. The most substantial monetary payments of one pound were comparable to the alms dispensed by the major landowners. Even small amounts of assistance were enough to stave off starvation and, furthermore, charity of this type proved a psychological boost to the poor in times of dearth. The annual handouts of individual landowners, the clergy and occasionally the farmers, which were often advertised in the local newspapers, performed the same function, assisting the poor in the difficult winter months when employment was scarce and food stored from the summer was dwindling. In addition, these public acts of charity were a demonstration of paternalist benevolence. They represented an old style of paternalism involving a face-to-face relationship with the recipients. Such occasions were considered to play an important part in instilling gratitude and deference in the poor, although there is no way of testing to what extent they were effective.

The detailed case study of the Spencer estate showed a continuation of 'old' paternalism in the distribution of long-established charities such as the bread and meat charity, alms and pensions. An analysis of the recipients of these Spencer charities revealed that the bread and meat charity was distributed to virtually all the labouring

householders (particularly those with families) in the Bringtons with little distinction between Spencer's employees and those employed by others. However, Spencer's most valuable contribution to the 'economy of makeshifts' of his labouring employees was not charity, but the level of wages that they received from him. Furthermore, being an employee of Spencer's granted the possibility of security in old age and provision for one's widow and children. The widows of non-employees and the elderly were also able to access alms payments made by him. These were very significant contributions, as alms payments and pensions accounted for at least a quarter and as much as three-quarters of the income individuals derived from both charity and poor relief. In total Earl Spencer's charitable provision represented at least fifty-six percent of the combined welfare available (both poor relief and Spencer's pensions and alms payments) and more if we add in the bread and meat charity and other resources that will be discussed in subsequent chapters. The records of the Duke of Grafton and the Earl of Cardigan also revealed that pensions and alms payments could be a generous resource in the 'economy of makeshifts', but these contributions only seem to have been made available to a limited number of parishioners.

Therefore, to live in the orbit of a major landowner with an interest in paternalist benevolence could result in access to a greater range of resources than was available to those who either lived in parishes with no major landowner or where he was uninterested in the plight of his parishioners. However, the evidence from Spencer's estate shows the considerable hold he had over his parishioners as dismissal would have resulted in the loss of above-average wages and security of employment, as well as access to charitable payments in old age and for one's widow and children. The

access criteria for Spencer's charity showed no explicit discrimination, but his influence on the life chances of the poor demonstrated an implicit social control. Furthermore, the meticulous care that his land agent took in recording the names, the occupations and the size of families of the working men in the Bringtons shows that the agent had an intimate awareness of their lives and selected recipients accordingly. Although the evidence shows that the needs of family men was the main criteria, nevertheless such knowledge could also be used as a means of social control, discriminating between those deemed worthy because they were perceived as honest, hardworking, sober and deferential, and those who were felt to belong to the disreputable elements of parish society.<sup>67</sup> However, as the evidence in Chapter 2 demonstrated, access to charity and its use as a means of social control was not confined to those parishes with a dominant landowner and could be found in a range of parishes and across a wide spectrum of charitable resources. The themes of social and 'denominational' control will be developed further in subsequent chapters, particularly with regard to self-help initiatives.

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<sup>67</sup> As John Archer points out to be married or widowed were considered 'hallmarks of respectability.' J E Archer, 'By a Flash', p.47

## Chapter Four

### The Provision of Clothing

#### Introduction:

The supply of clothing was an important element of charity-giving both by endowed charities and by individuals in the county.<sup>1</sup> Amongst endowed charities clothing was the third most common form of provision for the basic needs of the poor. These sources, as well as clothes given by poor relief officials, were the traditional forms of providing clothing for the poor. However, due to a number of problems which will be explored, the propertied in rural society began to develop alternative ways of supplying the poor with clothing that did not rely solely on endowed charity payments and poor relief. To achieve this they turned to a new initiative, clothing societies.

The early nineteenth century, therefore, is an important period in the history of charitable clothing as it witnessed a transition from the traditional forms of charitable clothing provision to the development of new self-help initiatives - clothing societies. The chapter will consider whether this change in models of provision can be seen as a response to the broader problems faced by rural society in the period, for example the Captain Swing crisis. It will explore the concerns of poor law reformers to make charity, as well as poor relief, more discriminating and to 'improve' the labourer by promoting thrift and independence and 'respectability' in his appearance and conduct.

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<sup>1</sup> Steven King has demonstrated the importance of clothing for poor law officials when 'clothing the poor 'well' became one of the basic tasks of the communal welfare system between 1750 and 1840.', S King, *Reclothing the English Poor, 1750-1840*, *Textile History*, 33 (1) (2002), p.38

This implies that the move to this form of self-help society contained a deeper agenda of social discipline and this will be discussed, both in terms of ‘social control’ and ‘denominational control.’

This chapter will begin by looking at the value of the endowed clothing charities and at who were eligible to be recipients. It will also consider the role of individuals, chiefly the major landowners in providing clothing, again estimating the value of such a gift and assessing who this charity was extended to. Finally it will examine the role of clothing societies in rural Northamptonshire, by using case studies and in particular it will assess their value to the poor and also who the recipients were, particularly focussing on the rules of such clubs with their various exclusions.

#### **4.1: Endowed clothing charities**

There were thirty-nine charities in the reports of the Charity Commission for Northamptonshire, which specifically mentioned clothing. It is difficult to assess the actual value of most endowed clothing charities to an individual, as often it was not given or it was included in the distribution of other doles such as money or fuel. Furthermore, the number of recipients was rarely mentioned. Therefore, it has only been possible to give the value to the individual for five clothing charities. Table 4.1 shows the amount of annual payment for each charity, the number of recipients and the value of clothing per person.

**Table 4.1: The value of annual clothing payment and the value of clothing per person from endowed charities**

<i>Name of charity</i>	<i>Annual value of charity</i>	<i>The number of recipients</i>	<i>Value of clothing per person</i>
Ecton	£ 1 17s	2	18s 6d
Earls Barton	£ 5 2s	6	17s
Barnack	£11 1s	18	12s 4d
Oundle	£33	7	£5 14s 3d
Higham Ferrers	£ 2 2s	4	10s 6d

Source: 1843 Digest of Endowed Charities<sup>2</sup>

The value of clothing was mainly in the range from 10s to £1 with the exception being the very generous allowance to the almshouse inhabitants in Oundle. The cost of clothing assessed by Eden for a labourer and his family in the parish of Roade, Northamptonshire was 25s for shoes, 12s for shirts and other cloths about 10s, totalling £2 7s per annum.<sup>3</sup> Therefore, access to a clothing charity (which the Roade labourer did not have) could have contributed from a quarter to a half of his total clothing bill. It could have at least covered a considerable proportion of the cost of shirts and cloths. Shoes were expensive and were only mentioned as being distributed in two charities, the Town Estate in Tansor where they were distributed among the poor generally and Byam's Charity in Whittlebury where they were given to four poor widows.<sup>4</sup> The majority of endowed clothing charities were not specific about the type of clothing and referred to the handouts as 'cloths' or 'clothing.' Four charities gave coats and cloaks, three gave gowns and one gave stockings. Blankets, flannel and linen were also mentioned in six charities.

<sup>2</sup> PP 1843 XVI(1), XVII(1), *Digest of Charity Reports*

<sup>3</sup> F M Eden, *The State of the Poor*, p.547

<sup>4</sup> PP 1831 XII(1), *24<sup>th</sup> Further Report*, p.212 and 1826 XII(1), *14<sup>th</sup> Further Report*, p.251



The majority of clothing charities were not overtly discriminatory in choosing the recipients. Twenty-five charities were aimed at 'the poor' generally. Ten of the clothing charities were aimed at the aged, four for widows, two for men, two for both elderly men and women and two for almshouse occupants. In some cases terms such as 'most deserving' and 'most necessitous' were added. In only two cases was it specified that the recipients should not be in receipt of poor relief. The Town Estate in Chipping Warden gave clothing to those 'endeavouring to subsist without parochial relief.'<sup>5</sup> In Brigstock Palmer's Charity gave coats and cloaks to 'such sober, decent and ancient poor men and women, who 'should regularly attended public worship and the communion' and 'who should not receive alms or other pecuniary relief from the parish officers attending church.'<sup>6</sup> By contrast The Burghley Charities in Stamford specified that clothing should be given to all poor persons who were 'proper objects of charity' and was 'to be an addition to and not a substitution for relief.'<sup>7</sup> As can be seen from the Brigstock charity, church attendance could be a condition, although this was the only clothing charity for adults that specifically mentioned this. However, of the three charities for children two contained some element of 'denominational control.' The Sunday school at Sudborough reported that clothing was being used as a reward 'for the two children of each sex who are best approved for proficiency in learning.'<sup>8</sup> Garnett's Charity was given to children who attended a charity school in the parish. This charity had originally been endowed to provide money or books of piety and clothes to be distributed among the poor people of the parish 'at the discretion of the rector.'<sup>9</sup> However, in 1839 the clergyman responsible for

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<sup>5</sup> PP 1830 XII(327), 23<sup>rd</sup> Further Report, p.274

<sup>6</sup> Ibid, p.283

<sup>7</sup> PP 1831 XII(1), 24<sup>th</sup> Further Report, p.144

<sup>8</sup> PP 1830 XII(327), 23<sup>rd</sup> Further Report, p.333

<sup>9</sup> PP 1826 XII(1), 14<sup>th</sup> Further Report, p.295

distributing the Garnett's Clothing Charity in Middleton Cheney, established in 1771, had placed a further stipulation on eligibility. The Reverend Samuel Hall made the following comment in the account book of this charity:

I would here mention for my Successors information, that when I first came into the Parish I made no distinction between Churchman and Dissenter in the distribution, but in the course of a year or two, I discovered, that there was left to the Baptist Chapel an annual sum of twenty pounds, four guineas of which were for the Minister, and the remainder to be divided exclusively among the regular frequenters of that Chapel. Since this discovery therefore I have thought it just to exclude the Baptists from any participation in the Garnett's Charity.<sup>10</sup>

Presumably the Charity Commission were quite content with these changes, as they made no comments or recommendations about them. Certainly, as was seen in Chapter two, they were not concerned with reporting on dissenting charities. As with other endowed charities, it was not unusual for church attendance to either be an explicit or an implicit condition, as much of the administration was carried out by the clergy and the church officials.

It has been possible to carry out an occupational and age analysis of the recipients of an endowed charity, Miss Langham's Charity in Cottesbrooke by using the 1841 census and the estate papers of Sir James Langham. Miss Langham's charity was described as follows:

The sum of £100 was left by Miss Langham in the year 1809 to the poor of the parish of Cottesbrooke, the annual interest of which in the five per cent, being £4 8s 4d, according to the terms of the Trust Deed is to be laid out in the purchase of coals, bed furniture or wearing apparel, and to be distributed to those most deserving of relief.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> NRO, Middleton Cheney Parish Records, 211p/415, The Account Book for the Garnett's Clothing Charity in the Parish of Middleton Cheney (1771-1853)

<sup>11</sup> NRO, Langham, L (C)1694, Miss Langham's Charity (1810-1872)

An abstract of Sir James Langham's Cottesbrooke Money accounts for the years 1827 to 1830 showed that he gave £7 a year to this charity and this amount formed part of his annual payments to charities and institutions made by his agent William Dean.<sup>12</sup> A study of ten years of this charity from 1830-1840 showed that there were forty recipients during that period that could be traced in the 1841 census.<sup>13</sup> There were twenty-nine adult males over the age of twenty who benefited from this charity and they represented 45% of the adult male population. The twenty-three adult female recipients aged over twenty were all single (i.e. either unmarried or widowed) and made up 30% of the adult female population. There were a considerable number that could not be traced, but that was not surprising over this time span. Additionally there were a small number of non-residents listed for each year. It has been possible to categorise the identified recipients by occupation and age, but there were no details of salaries and employers. Table 4.2 shows the occupations of adult male recipients and the percentage of each occupation category in the 1841 census.

**Table 4.2: Occupations of all adult males in 1841 census for Cottesbrooke and recipients of Miss Langham's charity**

	<i>Labourers</i>	<i>Servants</i>	<i>Artisans &amp; Tradesmen</i>	<i>Farmers, Graziers &amp; Professionals</i>	<i>Almshouse Occupants</i>	<i>Unrecorded</i>
No. in 1841 census	34	3	12	8	3	4
No of recipients in each category	17	1	6	0	3	2
As a % of same category in census	50%	33%	50%	0	100%	50%

Source: Langham of Cottesbrooke Estate Papers, and 1841 census returns for Cottesbrooke<sup>14</sup>

<sup>12</sup> NRO, Langham, L(C) 1687, Abstracted Cottesbrooke Money Accounts (1827-30)

<sup>13</sup> NRO, Census Returns for the parish of Cottesbrooke (1841)

<sup>14</sup> NRO, Langham, L(C) 1687, Abstracted Cottesbrooke Money Accounts and Census Returns

Half of all labourers and of all artisans in the parish aged over twenty were in receipt of this charity. The ages of male recipients can be seen in Table 4.3.

**Table 4.3: Ages of all Adult males aged 20 and over in 1841 census for Cottesbrooke and recipients of Miss Langham's charity**

	<i>20s</i>	<i>30s</i>	<i>40s</i>	<i>50s</i>	<i>60s</i>	<i>70 plus</i>
No in census	18	10	11	7	10	8
Recipients	2	6	5	3	8	5
As a percentage of each age group in census	11%	60%	45%	43%	80%	63%

Source: As Table 4.2

The best-represented age groups in the charity were the sixties and seventies, so the needs of the elderly were an important factor in choosing charity recipients. Amongst the other age groups, men in their thirties were significantly better represented than the forty and fifty year olds. This would suggest that those with young families to support were the most likely to be selected. Indeed, of all the twenty-year old males in the 1841 census, the only two with children were identified as recipients. In the census there were two men in their thirties with children who were not recipients and as their occupations were butcher and smith respectively, they were unlikely to have been as needy. The only labourer with children who was excluded from the list was a James Bosworth, aged forty with three children and there are no clues as to why he was excluded.

Eleven adult single females were also in receipt of Miss Langham's charity representing 30% of the adult single female population in the 1841 census for Cottesbrooke. It is problematic to assess female recipients by occupation, as nearly half of the females in the census had no recorded occupation or status. Amongst the female charity recipients there were two servants, two almshouse occupants, two widows and five with unknown status or occupations. No single females in their

twenties were in receipt of this charity. The majority of females received this charity when in old age with eight in the sixty to seventy-plus age groups. There was only one recipient within each of the thirty to fifty age groups, but as can be seen there were few single females in these age groups in the census. Most women of this age would have been married. Of those single women in their fifties who were not in receipt of charity, two were farmers, one a gardener, one a nurse and the other two had no recorded occupation. One can presume that the farmers at least were not in need of charity. Of the three recipients in the thirty to fifty age groups, two were the aforementioned widows with children and one was a washerwoman, also with children. Therefore, with female recipients it would appear that the needs of widows and the elderly determined eligibility. All the adults on the outdoor relief list for Cottesbrooke were recipients of this charity. The assistance from this charity was only part of the 'mixed economy of welfare' that helped them to survive.

#### **4.2: The provision of clothing by individuals**

As with most charitable provision it has not been possible to discover the level of assistance that the poor gave to each other. However, the following extract from Eden of a labourer in Roade, Northamptonshire does indicate that neighbourly generosity did exist:

This man does not receive any parochial assistance; but his neighbours, who know him to be industrious and careful, are very kind to him, and give him old cloaths, &c<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> F M Eden, The State of the Poor, p.547

By contrast, the charitable donations of clothing given by several landowners were advertised in the local newspapers of which the following is a typical example:

The Ladies Fitzpatrick, whose benevolence is indeed proverbial, and who are in every sense of the word practical Moralists, have, during this season of severity, with more than common kindness expended upon the poor of Brigstock not less than £100, in furnishing them with a variety of warm clothing.<sup>16</sup>

Brigstock had a population of 263 households and many proprietors. If the poor are estimated to be about one third of the population (see introduction) then roughly eighty-seven households received approximately £1 2s each. This was higher than most of the endowed charitable doles. However, it is not apparent whether this payment was a one-off or a regular annual payment. It was noted in the Northampton Mercury that the Marquis of Northampton, on the death of his father, had ‘directed his Agent to continue to them [the poor on his estates in Northamptonshire and Warwickshire] the very liberal Christmas donations of jackets, gowns, flannel, and fire wood.’<sup>17</sup> Other major landowners whose charitable gifts were noted in the local press were Lord and Lady Southampton, the Honourable Captain Frederic and Lady Elizabeth Villiers, the Earl of Cardigan and Lord Lilford.<sup>18</sup> The gifts of the gentry in the parishes of Norton, Pitsford, Brixworth, Easton Neston were also reported as were those of the clergy in Hardingstone, King’s Cliffe and Little Bowden.<sup>19</sup> The distribution of blankets made by the Reverend Ward of Little Bowden was used by the Northampton Herald to defend the clergy for ‘no class of men is more vilified and

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<sup>16</sup> NCL, Northampton Mercury (15 January 1825)

<sup>17</sup> NCL, Northampton Mercury (10 January 1829)

<sup>18</sup> NCL, Northampton Herald – Lord & Lady Southampton (16 January 1836), Hon Captain Frederic & Lady Elizabeth Villiers (26 December 1846), Northampton Mercury – Lord Lilford (12 January 1839), Earl of Cardigan (10 January 1846)

<sup>19</sup> NCL, Northampton Herald – Norton (23 January 1836), Pitsford (28 December 1839), Little Bowden (4 January 1840), Hardingstone (16 January 1841), King’s Cliffe (28 December 1844), Brixworth (13 January 1849), Northampton Mercury – Easton Neston (10 January 1846)

abused than the charitable ministers of the Church of England.’<sup>20</sup> This was the only instance where a clear indication was given of what motivated the editor of a newspaper to record an individual donation. Inevitably other gifts were made that were not recorded in the newspapers. Some evidence of these were found in the estate papers of individual landowners.

In Brington, the estate papers of Earl Spencer contained records of two shoe charities known as the Shoe Charity and the Garden Shoe Charity.<sup>21</sup> As was seen in the household budgets in Eden, the cost of footwear was about half the annual clothing bill for a family, so this charity was potentially very helpful. However shoes were provided to individuals only once every four years. The Garden Shoe Charity provided only two shillings and sixpence towards the cost of a pair of shoes and was supposed to be for the four oldest men in the parish. Recipients of the other shoe charity were all adult males, which suggests that it was a work-related perquisite and not available to families in general. Table 4.4 shows the occupations of those in receipt of this charity.

**Table 4.4: Occupations of recipients of Earl Spencer’s shoe charity**

	<i>Labourers</i>	<i>Artisans</i>	<i>Infirm</i>
Recipients of shoe charity	53	1	1
As a percentage of 55 recipients	96%	2%	2%
As a percentage of householders of same occupation in 1841 census	72%	2%	33%

Source: Spencer Estate Papers and 1841 census for the Bringtons<sup>22</sup>

It can be seen that nearly three-quarters of householder labourers in the Bringtons

<sup>20</sup> NCL, *Northampton Herald* (4 January 1840)

<sup>21</sup> NRO, *Spencer*, 7f5, Gift of Shoes (1836-46)

<sup>22</sup> NRO, *Spencer*, 7F5 Gift of Shoes (1845-51)

received this charity. Of these fifty-three percent were employed by Earl Spencer, thirty-four percent by other employers and thirteen percent were recorded as infirm. As six of the infirm recipients listed in the charity book were in receipt of pensions, it is likely that they were ex-employees of Earl Spencer. From the records which show handouts from 1836 to 1846, it can be seen that two labourers who became infirm during that period continued to receive shoes in 1846. Of the remaining four infirm recipients only Richard Dunkley, an infirm weaver, was passed on to the Garden Shoe Charity and given two shillings and sixpence for a pair of shoes. Dunkley must have been a special case because he was not one of the four oldest men in the parish, being only sixty-five. There were men in their eighties recorded in the 1841 census who did not receive this charity. For these aged men their entitlement stopped before 1846, suggesting that it ended when they were no longer working. Further evidence of the Spencer family's involvement in the provision of clothing was recorded by the Reverend David Davies in his investigation into the living standards of the poor. For the parish of Brington he recorded that the average labourer had to spend about £2 on clothing and that 'the clothing is generally bought second-hand; and a great many gowns, petticoats, and shifts, are annually distributed by the Countess Spencer to the poor families.'<sup>23</sup> The Spencer estate records contain the record of a distribution of charity clothes in 1827, which was probably a continuation of the charity that Davies mentioned. In 1827 clothes were given to 112 families, although the parish of residence is not specified. If the parish was the Bringtons then that meant that 64% of families received this charity.<sup>24</sup> However, forty-one families who were listed in the charity records did not receive anything for this year. It is possible that they were

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<sup>23</sup> D Davies, *The Case of the Labourers*

<sup>24</sup> This figure is based on the 174 families that were recorded in Brington in the 1821 census.



included in other years. The number of articles of each type of clothing that were given away is shown in Table 4.5.

**Table 4.5: Articles of Countess Spencer's charity clothes given to men and women**

	<i>Shoes</i>	<i>Shirts</i>	<i>Petticoats</i>	<i>Flannel waistcoats</i>	<i>Shifts</i>	<i>Sheets</i>
Men	14	20	-	14	-	-
Women	9	-	19	-	18	5

Source: Spencer Estate Papers<sup>25</sup>

Unfortunately, the evidence for individual landowner involvement in the provision of gifts of clothing is patchy. The Duke of Grafton's records show a limited number of payments made with respect to clothing. In September 1832 he gave donations of £10, £5 and £1 each to widows Green and Wesley, aged ninety and eighty-five respectively and to 'Old Bailey' to buy blankets.<sup>26</sup> The only other mention of a clothing handout was in May 1831 when he gave 13s 6d to George Henson for 'one pair of highshoes who had his torn off by an accident with a horse.'<sup>27</sup> The remaining clothing references in the Duke's charity book relate to clothing societies.

Thus, the involvement of individuals, particularly major landowners, showed a wide spectrum of commitment from occasional handouts in the winter months as recorded in the local press to regular gifts to labourers, as seen in Earl Spencer's estate papers. It can be argued that his shoe charity was not strictly speaking charity, but really a wages supplement, except when it was given to a few old men past working age. As well as these more traditional forms of charitable handouts landowners in this period

<sup>25</sup> NRO, Spencer, SOX 76, Clothing Charity (1827)

<sup>26</sup> NRO, Grafton Estate Records, G3930, Charity Book

<sup>27</sup> Ibid

became involved in contributing to the new form of clothing provision - clothing societies - which will be discussed next.

### **4.3: Clothing societies**

In the poor law report for Northamptonshire Assistant Commissioner Richardson had noted that in Northamptonshire 'clothing societies, or church clubs, as the labourers generally call them, I found everywhere.'<sup>28</sup> The spread of such societies was also echoed in other parts of the country. The report from the Assistant Commissioner for Dorset commented on the increase of penny clubs for clothing in the West of England.<sup>29</sup> It was possible to discover evidence for thirty-nine clothing societies covering forty-four parishes in Northamptonshire between 1800 and 1850 (representing 15% of all 297 Northamptonshire parishes) and these are listed in Table 4.6. Given the fragility of the survival of such records, however, this does not necessarily undermine Richardson's assertion.

David Roberts discusses the relationship of clothing societies with the revival of paternalism. For the landowners, clothing societies were an inexpensive form of charity, as the poor also were contributors. Roberts argues that the formation of such societies was spurred on not only by the Captain Swing riots and Corn Law agitation but by the poverty and destitution in parts of rural England, particularly when advertised in the 1843 Annual Report of the Poor Law Commission.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> PP 1834 XXIX(1), Assistant Poor Law Commissioner's Report (Northamptonshire), p.407

<sup>29</sup> PP 1834 XXIX(1), Report of the Assistant Poor Law Commissioners, Appendix to the First Report of the Assistant Poor Law Commissioners, Report from Dorset from D O Okendon Esq (30 November 1832)

<sup>30</sup> D Roberts, Paternalism, p.131

**Table 4.6: Clothing clubs in Northamptonshire 1800-1850**

<i>Parish</i>	<i>Earliest date mentioned</i>
Creaton & Spratton	1817
Broughton	1825
Farthinghoe	1829
Cottesbrooke	1830
Deene & Deenethorpe	1830
Alderton	1831
Grafton Regis	1831
Potterspury & Yardley Gobion	1831
Greens Norton	1832
Stoke Bruerne with Shutlanger	1832
Brington	1833
Chipping Warden	1833
Abthorpe	1834
Brackley	1834
Helmdon	1835
Byfield	1836
Horton & Piddington	1836
Norton	1836
Weedon by Weston	1836
Eydon	1837
Irthlingborough	1837
King's Cliffe	1838
Glington	1840
Yelvertoft	1840
Barby	1841
Lilbourne	1841
Lilford	1841
Welton	1841
Kislingbury	1843
Boddington	1844
Hinton	1844
Long Buckby	1844
Thedingworth	1844
Watford	1844
Old	1848
Corby	1850
Glaphthorne	1850
Stanion	1850
Duston	1851

Sources: See footnote<sup>31</sup> on this and following page.

<sup>31</sup>NRO, Glington Parish Records, 136P/25/4, Notebooks of the Rev James T Pedley (1831-50); Duston Parish Records, 109P.218, Duston Clothing Club Accounts (1851-55); Chipping Warden Parish Records, 66P/67, Rules for the Provident Clothing Society at Chipping Warden in the County of Northampton (1833); Helmdon Parish Records, 162P.370, Clothing Club Collecting Book with Rules and Collections (1835); G390, Grafton, Charity Book – Abthorpe (14 April 1834), Alderton (16 November 1831), Grafton Regis (16 November 1831), Greens Norton (26 March 1832), Potterspury (11 August 1831), Stoke Bruerne with Shutlanger (18 August 1832); Spencer, 7d3, An Abstract of the

The frequency with which clothing societies were reported on in the local newspapers during the 1830s and 40s would suggest that this was the case, although it has not been possible to determine the actual date of formation in many cases. The parish of Eydon (whose clothing society was first mentioned in 1837) had experienced an arson incident in 1831.<sup>32</sup> A direct connection between Swing and a clothing club in Cottesbrooke will be examined later in the chapter.

However, the formation of clothing societies was being promoted at least as early as 1811, when the first volume of a pamphlet entitled The Philanthropist was published, thus pre-dating both Swing and the New Poor Law. This volume published plans of penny clubs in Woodford and Stoke Newington, described as villages in the neighbourhood of London. Both these clubs were intended 'to assist the deserving poor in providing clothing for their children.'<sup>33</sup> The children were to pay one penny per week, which was then either matched by one subscriber or increased by several subscribers. By 1819 The Philanthropist was advertising the work of 'The Society for Clothing the Indigent in Peckham' which had been established in 1816 to provide

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Expenses of Building commenced in 1844 and completed in 1852 -Bodington, Hinton, Long Buckby, Thedingworth and Watford; Spencer 7f5, Sundry Articles of Clothing and Wearing Apparel sold to the Poor of Brington Clothing Society (1833-39); Langham, L[C]1187 (Cottesbrooke), Letter from Sir James Langham to W Dean (11 December 1830); BL, 8285.bbb.35, Reverend Thomas Jones, Curate of Creaton, Northamptonshire, Clothing Societies, Upon a Good Plan, And Well Managed, Would, Of All Institutions Prove the Most Beneficial to the Poor, And Ought to be Establisht in all Parts of the Kingdom: A Specimen of one tried for years, is here exhibited (1822); BL, T.1394 (36), Reverend Francis Litchfield, Three Years' Results of the Farthinghoe Clothing Society With a Few Remarks on the Policy of Encouraging Provident Habits Among the Working Classes (Northampton, 1834); NCL, Northampton Herald – Brackley (6 December 1834), Byfield (15 January 1836), Corby (19 January 1850), Eydon (7 January 1837), Glapthorne (19 January 1850), Horton & Piddington (31 December 1836), Irthlingborough (14 January 1837), Kislingbury (14 January 1843), Norton (23 January 1836), Old (30 December 1848), Stanion (19 January 1850); NCL, Northampton Mercury – Barby (2 January 1841), Deene & Deenethorpe (27 October 1830), King's Cliffe (6 January 1838), Lilbourne (23 January 1841), Lilford (2 January 1841), Weedon by Weston (13 August 1836), Welton (16 January 1841) and Yelvertoft (18 January 1841)

<sup>32</sup> NCL, Northampton Herald (3 December, 1831)

<sup>33</sup> U[niversity] L[ibrary] C[ambridge], The Philanthropist: or Repository for Hints and Suggestions calculated to promote the Comfort and Happiness of Man, (London, 1811), Volume I

clothing for the whole family.<sup>34</sup> It would appear, though that it took the crisis of Swing for clothing societies to become established in rural Northamptonshire, as only two were established before 1829. Richardson, the Assistant Poor Law Commissioner for Northamptonshire, showed his support for clothing societies in his report. In this report he lauded the success of the Reverend Francis Litchfield's clothing society in the parish of Farthinghoe, a parish singled out by him for being particularly worthy of praise in its management of pauperism:

Farthinghoe, a village lying between the towns of Brackley and Banbury, is the most striking place in the county of Northampton for an inquirer of the Poor Laws to visit, as that parish has been brought from a bad moral state of apparently inveterate pauperism into a sound and wholesome condition, by the inveterate energy of one man, Mr Litchfield, the curate.<sup>35</sup>

According to the Poor Law Report, prior to Litchfield's reforms, the character of Farthinghoe was such that 'the cottages of the poor were neglected and dilapidated, their clothing scant and filthy.' Furthermore that 'the character of the people was worse than in most of the neighbouring parishes, with particular reference to the vices of drunkenness, poaching and bastardy.'<sup>36</sup> However, as with much Poor Law reporting, there was no body of evidence to support this claim. The most likely source was Litchfield's own assessment of the parish. Although Richardson praised a variety of Litchfield's methods of reducing pauperism, particular mention was made of the clothing society:

There is also a clothing-club under regulations, tending to ensure not only regularity in the contributions, but a certain moral conduct in those who contribute, framed by Mr. Litchfield, which the parishes are adopting in various parts of the country.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> ULC, *The Philanthropist: or Repository for Hints and Suggestions calculated to promote the Comfort and Happiness of Man* (London, 1819), Volume VII

<sup>35</sup> PP 1834 XXIX(1), *Assistant Poor Law Commissioner's Report (Northamptonshire)*, p.408

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid*, p.408

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid*, p.408

Yet the 1834 Poor Law Report made no specific recommendation for the establishment of clothing societies, as it did for allotments and friendly societies. It was left to contemporary commentators such as Lord Sidney Godolphin Osborne in his Hints to the Charitable, published in 1838, to plead with property owners to set up clothing clubs amongst other initiatives.<sup>38</sup> However, only the clothing societies in Corby, Deene, Deenthorpe, Glapthorne and Stanion were reported in the Northampton Herald and the Northampton Mercury as having been established by major landowners, the Earl and Countess of Cardigan, and it is likely that they were administered by others, particularly the clergy. Nevertheless, the aristocracy and the gentry were involved with clothing societies in the role of major donors and this will be examined in further detail in the chapter. It has been argued that the inauguration of clothing societies (amongst other local societies) was part of a missionary zeal adopted by the established church in competition with the non-conformist concept of a church concerned with pastoral activities.<sup>39</sup> Four Northamptonshire clothing societies -Farthinghoe, Creaton with Spratton, Broughton and Irthlingborough- were known to have definitely been initiated by clergymen. The Glinton clothing society was also likely to have been started by the Reverend Pedley, as the records for this society were amongst his personal papers and show that he was the major subscriber. The majority of the clothing societies in the Duke of Grafton's charity book (Alderton, Grafton Regis, Potterspury, Stoke Bruerne) were at least administered by clergymen as the Duke's donations were paid to them. The rules of the Helmdon clothing society show that the manager was the resident clergyman.

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<sup>38</sup> D Roberts, *Paternalism*, p.131

<sup>39</sup> N Yates, R Hume and P Hastings, Religion and Society in Kent, 1640-1914 (Woodbridge, 1994), pp.84-85

The clergy were also active in promoting clothing societies by extolling their virtues from the pulpit. This can be seen in the following example by the Reverend John Barlow of Uckfield in Sussex in his sermon preached on Advent Sunday 1828 and entitled ‘The probable Effects of Clothing Societies in Improving the Habits and Principles of the Poor’:

Now, my brethren, since in the whole tenor of the New Testament we recognise a most solemn obligation to minister unto the necessities of indigence; we may surely hope, that when our mode of doing this tends to eradicate the very source and origin of those necessities; and when, by making the poor man’s duty identical with his interest we place him in the way of becoming independent and happy; we are fulfilling the intentions of our beloved Master.<sup>40</sup>

Thus clothing societies were seen as not only giving assistance to the poor, but as tackling the very source of their poverty by encouraging habits of frugality and independence. The majority of clothing societies relied substantially on charitable donations, in the form of subscriptions, but also required the recipients to be members, paying a weekly deposit of about threepence at most. Once a year, usually at Christmas the subscription fund was divided amongst the members in amounts relative to the size of their deposits. With this money they were able to purchase clothing for the year and were thus encouraged in habits of frugality. To encourage depositors, many clothing societies had rules through which the poor could be ‘improved’ and these will be examined in detail next in the case studies of two clothing societies in Farthinghoe and Creaton.

The Creaton clothing society was the earliest recorded clothing society in Northamptonshire. It was the subject of a pamphlet, published in 1822, which

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<sup>40</sup> BL, T.1257 (2), Reverend John Barlow, Uckfield, The Probable Effects of Clothing Societies in improving the habits and principles of the Poor. A Sermon (London, 1828)

described a clothing society established by the Reverend Thomas Jones of Creaton in 1817. Jones acknowledged the earlier existence of such clubs when he wrote:

Clothing Societies, in some form or another, are no new things in our land though ours may claim something of novelty as to its construction, and the manner it is conducted.<sup>41</sup>

A very similar claim was made for the Farthinghoe Provident Clothing Society, by the Reverend Francis Litchfield in his pamphlet published in 1832 and entitled Three Years' Results of the Farthinghoe Provident Clothing Society:

In giving an account of the Farthinghoe Provident Clothing Society I claim for it no character for originality in principle. To encourage provident habits among the Poor, by means of benevolent contributions from the Rich, is no new attempt. My aim however has been to extend the principle, to connect charity, industry, prudence and morality more intimately together, and to convince the Poor, that good conduct is in all respects their best policy.<sup>42</sup>

However, although he too acknowledged their prior existence, Litchfield considered he had brought a new dimension to clothing societies. Litchfield's intentions would appear to have struck a chord with others for, as a response to interest in his clothing society, Francis Litchfield decided to publish his pamphlet:

Having had frequent occasion to give away copies of the Rules of my Clothing Society, and being often asked to accompany them with explanations, I have determined to save myself future trouble and expense by publishing 'Three Years' Results'.<sup>43</sup>

This pamphlet provides much valuable information about the administration, impact and ideology of a clothing society as it contained results, the rules of the society, a section headed 'Remarks and References, explanatory of the Rules' and the three years' results. From this pamphlet it is possible to estimate the value of this clothing society and compare it to others, particularly Jones's Creaton society. Before

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<sup>41</sup> BL, 8285.bbb.35, Clothing Societies

<sup>42</sup> BL, T.1394 (36), Three Years' Results

<sup>43</sup> Ibid, Introduction



continuing with an examination of the value and nature of clothing societies, let us consider some background information on the managers of the Farthinghoe society and the Creaton society and the type of parishes in which they established these societies, as this illuminates the agendas behind both societies.

In his pamphlet Litchfield described Farthinghoe in the following terms:

The land in Farthinghoe is chiefly pasture, the population is greater than is required for the cultivation of the soil with reference to the capital of the farmer, the chief owner of the property is non-resident, there is but one gentleman's residence in addition to my own in the parish, and I am possessed of very limited pecuniary means. Besides this, the condition of the parish when I undertook it in 1826, by mixing up with all the its vestry concerns, was distinguished by as much lawlessness, drunkenness, turbulence, pauperism, poaching, and profligacy, as is often to be met with.<sup>44</sup>

Litchfield described the parish in these terms to show that the results of the Farthinghoe system were not attributable to particularly favourable circumstances in the parish, although he did acknowledge that his 'proprietorship' of the parish had enabled him to show a firm hand.<sup>45</sup> Farthinghoe was a parish of eighty-two households in 1831 with three major landowners, one of whom non-resident. Furthermore the rector Edmund Milward was described as a recluse.<sup>46</sup> This left Litchfield in a position of authority within the parish, both with regard to poor relief administration and to the establishment and maintenance of a clothing society. He was not only chairman of the select vestry and manager of the clothing society, but he was also a magistrate. Therefore, in this parish he undertook the paternalist role,

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<sup>44</sup> Ibid, Remarks. However in an article on the Rev. F Litchfield, R Greenall points out that Farthinghoe in the 1820s 'was an unlikely place for such a serious poor law crisis ... It appears a classic 'close' parish...three-fourths of the lordship was permanent pasture ... the population was very small (476 in 1821).' R L Greenall, 'Parson as a Man of Affairs: the Rev. Francis Litchfield of Farthinghoe, (1792-1876), Northamptonshire Past and Present, VIII, 2 (1990-91) p.134

<sup>45</sup> Ibid, p.135

<sup>46</sup> Ibid, p.125

vacated by the landowner, by being effectively in charge of all forms of provision for the poor in Farthinghoe, although he did need the co-operation of his fellow select vestry members, mainly the farmers.<sup>47</sup> Furthermore there were no recorded endowed charities for this parish in the 1816 Abstract of Returns or the 1843 Digest of Charity Reports.<sup>48</sup> These factors may well have affected the success of his club and in fact Litchfield himself admitted, 'I know not whether too much has been attributed to the clothing society, in the statement of the results which has been given.'<sup>49</sup> An examination of the select vestry minutes shows how the results were also connected with select vestry resolutions and Litchfield's role in this. Lastly, although Litchfield was a High Church Tory Clergyman, he came from a non-aristocratic background, being the son of a Northampton physician.<sup>50</sup> He described himself as being of 'limited pecuniary means.'<sup>51</sup> The lack of a personal income to exert influence in the parish may well be one of the reasons that Litchfield became so active both in poor law matters and the clothing society.

Jones, the curate of Creaton and Spratton was also a man of 'very limited income', being the son of a Welsh farmer.<sup>52</sup> When he first became Curate of Creaton he had been responsible for establishing a sick club in 1788 and 'performing the various offices of a baker, butcher, miller and soup-maker', preferring to sell articles to the

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<sup>47</sup> There is some evidence in the vestry minutes to show that he was sometimes at loggerheads with the farmers.

<sup>48</sup> PP 1816 XVI Abstract of Charity Returns and PP 1843 XVI(1), XVII(1) Digest of Charity Reports. However, Steven King states that the eighteenth-century charitable resources in Farthinghoe were substantial, yielding 40% of communal expenditure on poverty before the 1770s. As already stated, the Charity Commission did miss some charities, or these charities may have been gifts that were not subject to endowed trusts. S King, Poverty, p.173

<sup>49</sup> BL, T.1394 (36), Three Years' Results, Remarks

<sup>50</sup> R Greenall, 'Parson as a Man of Affairs', p.121.

<sup>51</sup> BL, T.1394 (36), Three Years' Results, Remarks

<sup>52</sup> Obelkevich observed that pluralism resulted in many parishes being served by curates with limited incomes. J Obelkevich, Religion, p.166

poor at reduced prices, rather than giving 'a small quantity gratis.'<sup>53</sup> However, although he advocated the self-help ideal of poor law reformers, unlike Litchfield, there is no evidence to suggest that he was involved in poor law matters.<sup>54</sup> Instead Jones devoted much of his time and energy to philanthropic enterprises, for, according to his biographer, he was associated with the Society for the Relief of Poor Pious Clergymen and The Clerical and Education Societies. He was also a founding member of both The British and Foreign Bible Society and The Church Missionary Society.<sup>55</sup> He turned his attention to the matter of a clothing society when he additionally became Curate of Spratton in 1810 a position which he held until 1828, for:

When I had the whole care of both the parishes of Creaton and Spratton, I was much concerned to see so many of the poor so much in want of clothing, and that their beds had nothing on but dirty rags. I thought it necessary to make some attempt and devise some means to better their condition in this respect.<sup>56</sup>

The parishes of which he was curate were Great Creaton, which had a population of 113 households in 1831 and two major proprietors and Spratton with Little Creaton which had 231 households and six major proprietors.<sup>57</sup>

The amount available to the poor to be spent on clothing varied considerably in each case according to the level of funding received by each society. Although the clothing societies depended for funds on the deposits of their members, they also relied on charitable subscriptions from the wealthier members of parish society to

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<sup>53</sup> NRO, LBY 386 K5, J Owen, Memoir of the Reverend Thomas Jones (London, 1851), pp.126-131

<sup>54</sup> The Spratton vestry minutes contain no mention of his name during the term of his curacy and the surviving Creaton vestry minutes date from after his curacy, NRO, Spratton 295p/220, Vestry minute book (1824)

<sup>55</sup> NRO, LBY 386 K5, Memoir, pp.188-189, 198 & 202-203

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid*, p.128

<sup>57</sup> A population enquiry for Spratton in 1811 showed the existence of a considerable number of workers engaged in proto-industry, namely weaving and shoemaking.  
NRO, Bosworth of Highgrove House Records, Population Enquiry for the Parish of Spratton (1811)

boost the amount that could be distributed to members. In Farthinghoe, although the major landowner of Farthinghoe, George Rush Esq. was non-resident, Litchfield was still able to call upon his monetary support for the clothing society and on the subscriptions of others from many walks of life. Litchfield's results list the names and occupations of those who contributed and the amounts of their contributions. Of the fifty-two subscribers in 1829, nine could be described as major landowners or gentry, although only George Rush was an owner/occupier and Earl Spencer and the Reverend Milward were owners.<sup>58</sup> Their subscription of £24 17s 6d was the major part of the subscription fund. The remaining subscriptions were significantly smaller amounts ranging from five shillings to three pence. These came from the middling sort and a few working inhabitants of the parish; nine farmers and their families, one schoolmaster, one carpenter, two bakers, one butcher, one brewer, one publican, one carrier, one sempstress and five servants, with only a slight variation over the period.<sup>59</sup> Farmers and their families represented twenty-three percent of subscribers, contributing seven percent of all subscriptions and tradesmen and artisans made up eleven percent of subscribers, giving two percent of subscriptions. Litchfield claimed that the clothing society had become popular with the farmer, 'as he had begun to perceive the difference between the independent provident poor, and pauper wasting poor.'<sup>60</sup>

There were no surviving subscription lists for the Creaton and Spratton clothing societies, but the donations from the wealthier inhabitants of Creaton and Spratton amounted to £32 17s 0d in 1821, a similar amount to that raised in Farthinghoe in

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<sup>58</sup> NRO, LTA, Land Tax Assessment for the Parish of Farthinghoe (1831)

<sup>59</sup> BL, T.1394 (36), Three Years' Results, Result 17

<sup>60</sup> Ibid, Remarks & References – Rule 1

1831, being £35 12s 8d. Litchfield's and Jones's societies seem to have been well supported by donations when compared to other clothing societies. The Glinton club in 1840 recorded a total donation of £11 17s which was distributed amongst fifty-four claimants<sup>61</sup> and the Duston clothing club in 1851 recorded a total donation of £15 17s 6d for a membership of seventy-nine members.<sup>62</sup> The Duke of Grafton's charity book recorded regular donations from him of between £1 10s and £5 in several parishes in which he was a major landowner.<sup>63</sup> Sir Robert Gunning gave a 'contribution of upwards of £40' to the Horton and Piddington clothing society.<sup>64</sup> Although there is no surviving list of subscribers for the Brington clothing society, it is likely that Earl Spencer was on it, as it was reported in the Northampton Mercury that in the parish of Norton, near Daventry, 'a clothing society has also been instituted, to which the Earl Spencer contributes a handsome annual subscription'.<sup>65</sup> His estate records show that he subscribed three guineas to this club. Other societies to which he gave subscriptions were Thedingworth £3, Long Buckby £5, Watford £2, Boddington £2, Hinton £3 and £3 to Litchfield's clothing society in Farthinghoe.<sup>66</sup> Furthermore, records of the Brington society were found in a book entitled Sundry Articles of Clothing and Wearing Apparel sold to the Poor of Brington Clothing Society, Patronised by the Honourable Mrs Spencer, from February 19<sup>th</sup> 1833.<sup>67</sup> The aim of this society was as follows:

Articles of clothing, and wearing apparel sold to the contributors of the Brington Clothing Society, at a reduced price, made up free of any cost or expense, the prime cost of goods to be made up by free subscription for the

<sup>61</sup> NRO, Glinton Parish Records, 136P/25/4, Notebooks of the Rev James T Pedley (1831-50)

<sup>62</sup> NRO, Duston Parish Records, 109P.218, Duston Clothing Club Accounts (1851-55)

<sup>63</sup> NRO, G390, Grafton, Charity Book

<sup>64</sup> NCL, Northampton Herald (31 December 1836)

<sup>65</sup> NCL, Northampton Mercury (23 January 1836)

<sup>66</sup> NRO, Spencer, 7d3, An Abstract of the Expenses of Building commenced in 1844 and completed in 1852

<sup>67</sup> NRO, Spencer 7f5, Sundry Articles of Clothing and Wearing Apparel sold to the Poor of Brington Clothing Society (1833-39)

encouragement and benefit of the industrious poor, patronised by the Honourable Mrs Spencer.<sup>68</sup>

In fact in the records the words 'free subscription' had been crossed out and substituted with 'Earl Spencer', indicating that he had become directly involved as the main if not the sole subscriber.

In the Farthinghoe clothing society the depositors were in fact responsible for an equal amount of the funds. The results show that, although deposits in 1829 were less than the amount of the subscription fund, by 1831 the deposits had increased to the extent that they exceeded the subscriptions. This had been achieved by an increase of fifty in the number of depositors over the three years.<sup>69</sup> Thus the total funds available for the purchase of clothing rose from £62 17s 4d in 1829 to £99 17s 5d in 1831.

However, as the subscription fund did not increase correspondingly there was a decrease in the addition to the depositors' fund.<sup>70</sup> Rule 21 set out the way in which the subscription fund was to be distributed:

At the end of the Year the Manager will add such a proportion of the Subscription Fund as he may think advisable to the deposits, at the equal rate of so much for every shilling, any surplus remaining to be carried to the account of the Following Year.<sup>71</sup>

Litchfield explained the division of the subscription by adding thirteenths, 'each thirteenth being equal to four weeks' depositing.' With regard to the results, he commented that 'although I doubled the deposits the first year, I never intend doing so again, as I prefer keeping a sum in hand for any future deficiencies.' In fact his

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<sup>68</sup> Ibid

<sup>69</sup> BL, T.1394 (36), Three Years' Results, Results 1 & 2

<sup>70</sup> Ibid, Result 5

<sup>71</sup> Ibid, Rule 21

balance in hand rose from £10 4s 4d in 1829 to £14 17s 11d in 1831.<sup>72</sup> However, he had another purpose for changing the division of the subscription fund, for in the same paragraph he remarked:

Besides, it is better to add by fractions, which vary from year to year, than to teach the depositors to fix their minds upon any one sum. The uncertainty of the amount excites a useful degree of anxiety at the close of each year, and the power of diminishing it acts as an encouragement to the poor, to observe good behaviour towards the subscribers.<sup>73</sup>

It is not surprising that Litchfield, an ardent advocate of poor law reform was keen to stop the poor from considering the handouts from the clothing society as a customary right, but that it had to be earned.<sup>74</sup> In Creaton and Spratton, Jones set no upper limit on the size of the deposit, unlike the considerable set of rules that Litchfield attached to the level of deposits, which will be discussed later in the chapter. Jones considered it necessary to limit the addition from the subscription fund 'to prevent those who can best afford to subscribe the larger sums, from receiving an undue share of the donations of the rich.'<sup>75</sup> This limitation was also applied to servants, both male and female, who, although allowed to become subscribers, were permitted 'to receive their own money only, and not to partake with the poor of the donations of the rich.' Jones gave his reasons for including them as follows:

Finding that many servants at the time they enter on housekeeping have made no provision for clothing their beds and have not then the means of doing it, but too soon call on their parishes to furnish them what they have neglected to provide - with these we also class all single persons, and likewise married people that are in somewhat better circumstances than quite the lowest classes of the poor.<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>72</sup> Ibid, Result 7

<sup>73</sup> Ibid, Remarks & References – Rule 21

<sup>74</sup> R L Greenall, 'Parson as a Man of Affairs' This article shows Litchfield to have been a keen correspondent on poor law reform in the local newspapers.

<sup>75</sup> BL, 8285.bbb.34, Clothing Societies

<sup>76</sup> Ibid

Thus, the clothing society operated a form of means test on its members and was seen by Jones as an insurance against hard times and hopefully to reduce the number of parishioners who would be dependent upon the parish for clothing. However, if their subscriptions fell short on the day of reckoning Jones was prepared to allow credit until the day of the distribution.

The value of the subscriptions to society members was highest in Farthinghoe where the amount of annual deposit was matched by the subscription (one hundred percent) in 1829 and 1830. Even when reduced in 1831 the depositors of 1d and 2d a week received a share of the subscription that represented ninety-two percent of their annual deposit and for the depositors of 3d a week this was eighty-five percent. By contrast in the Creaton and Spratton Society in 1821 the depositors only received twenty-three percent of their annual deposit as a donation. The Brington clothing society worked in a different way where the members made purchases at reduced costs and the balance was made up by donations. Table 4.7 shows the value of these donations as a percentage of the total amount of sales to the clothing society members. The total sales for each ranged from £14 1s 7d in 1833 and £22 8s in 1834, with a considerable drop in 1836. The donations for the first and second sales were paid promptly, but for the subsequent sales there was a considerable delay in the payment of the donations to the draper. This may account for the fact that the surviving records show this society as running for a limited period only from 1833 to 1839. There was no mention of any donation by Earl Spencer, but the Reverend H Rose gave donations of ten shillings in April 1833 and one pound in October 1839. The donation level rose from a quarter in



1833 to a high in 1835. These levels were considerably higher than those in Creaton and Spratton, although not matching those of Farthinghoe.

**Table 4.7: Sales of clothing to members of the Brington clothing society, showing the value of donations**

<i>Date of sale</i>	<i>Total amount of sales</i>	<i>Amount of donation</i>	<i>Donation as a % of sales</i>
1 <sup>st</sup> sale February 1833	£ 3 6s 2d	£ 0 13s 4½d	20%
2 <sup>nd</sup> sale April 1833	£ 7 8s 5d	£ 1 16s 8d	25%
3 <sup>rd</sup> sale October 1833	£ 3 7s 0d	£ 1 17s 1½d	55%
4 <sup>th</sup> sale January 1834	£18 0s 11d	-	-
5 <sup>th</sup> sale October 1834	£ 4 7s 1d	£ 3 0s 8d	70%
6 <sup>th</sup> sale March 1835	£21 2s 6½d	£15 3s 6d	72%
7 <sup>th</sup> sale April 1836	£ 6 17s 9d	£ 4 2s 6d	60%
8 <sup>th</sup> sale October 1839	£15 3s 2½d	£ 7 8s 8d	50%

Source: Spencer Estate Records, Brington clothing society<sup>77</sup>

However, it would appear that the benefits of the Brington Society were not experienced by all its members. The membership list contained the names of women who never managed to pay any deposits and, therefore, did not participate in the sales. The records contain details of the amounts spent by members over three sales in 1833 and this is shown in Table 4.8.<sup>78</sup>

As can be seen, the benefits of this club were limited, as the amount members could afford to spend on clothing varied considerably from as much as fourteen shillings over three sales to as little as sixpence and the highest percentage were those members who did not manage to make deposits or purchases during 1833.<sup>79</sup> This may be

<sup>77</sup> NRO, Spencer 7f5, Sundry Articles of Clothing

<sup>78</sup> The members included here are the 65 members that could be definitely identified through their husband's name and traced in the 1841 census returns for Great Brington, Little Brington and Nobottle. This has been done because there were many members with the same name, which made it difficult to ascertain their individual purchases. However, the majority of those whose names could not be traced did not purchase anything.

<sup>79</sup> This percentage is even higher if all the members are taken into account.

another factor to explain the apparent short life of the society.

**Table 4.8: Amount of money spent by members on clothing across three sales of Brington clothing society**

<i>Amount</i>	<i>No of members spending at each amount</i>	<i>As a percentage of total 65 members</i>
Nothing	25	39%
0d to 4s 11d	24	37%
5s to 9s 11d	8	12%
10s and above	8	12%

Source: As Table 4.7

In Creaton and Spratton the depositors were allowed to order their articles of clothing, which were then purchased by Mr Jones and distributed to them in parcels on the first Monday after Christmas Day.<sup>80</sup> The total amount of clothing distributed in this way in 1821 was linen for sheets (1,540 yards), linen for shirts (1,150 yards), calico (200 yards), baize, (182 yards), bed ticking (eighty-eight yards), flannel (forty-six yards), eighty blankets, ten rugs and seventy-seven jersey aprons as well as cloaks, coats and gowns.<sup>81</sup> The list of clothing distributed to depositors was similar in Farthinghoe. In 1831, the depositors chose, linen (492 yards), print (409) yards, sheeting (376 yards), calico (304 yards), nankeen (120 yards), Welsh flannel (sixty-nine yards), brown tick (sixty-five yards), cotton cords (forty-two yards), jersey (twenty yards), Russia duck (twenty yards), check (thirteen yards), gingham (seven yards), fifty-five pairs of stockings, fifty-nine handkerchiefs and twelve shawls.<sup>82</sup> Both of these societies gave away the majority of provision in the form of material rather than individual articles.

<sup>80</sup> His biographer noted that 'Another change has been adopted: Mr Jones bought himself the articles and had them distributed; but the easier and more satisfactory way is, to send the subscribers to a respectable Draper for the articles, so that they may choose what may suit them, NRO, LBY 386 K5, *Memoirs*

<sup>81</sup> BL, 8285.bbb.34, *Clothing Societies*

<sup>82</sup> BL, T.1394 (36) T.1394 (36), *Three Years' Results, Results*

In Brington, however, the distribution was entirely in the form of articles of clothing, which had been made up free of cost. In Farthinghoe the distribution of the clothing at first glance would seem to have been similar in manner to that initially practised by Jones. Rule 21 specified only that the depositors would be allowed to purchase various articles of clothing to the amount of their respective shares. However, Litchfield's remarks listed considerable restraints on the way in which the poor could do this. Mainly he was concerned that the poor should not be allowed to go direct to a draper's shop, because 'he may have a bill there which this ticket may be taken to pay - or he may sell it to the draper, or to some person not a depositor.' Thus the poor were deprived of the means to negotiate or bargain with their fellows. Additionally it would mean that:

You have no means of directing the choice; and moreover, the attendance of ladies and others resident in the parish at the time of sale is lost... My parishioners have derived great advantage from the advice received upon such occasions, and the general habit of economy and advantage of cleanliness, have been usefully pointed out.<sup>83</sup>

This had a dual purpose, for Litchfield believed 'that the personal attendance of subscribers enables them to see more distinctly the good effects of the society' and, therefore, hopefully to secure their continuing support.<sup>84</sup> Litchfield engaged the presence of a draper 'prepared with useful articles as I considered proper for sale, no flannel but Welsh flannel, and nothing tawdry in appearance.'<sup>85</sup> The Farthinghoe results give an example of one depositor, Jane Baldwin and show that her 3d per week ensured her two yards of calico, one and a half yards of print, one and an eighth yards of gingham, one handkerchief, one pair of hose, four yards of linen, six yards of

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<sup>83</sup> Ibid

<sup>84</sup> Ibid

<sup>85</sup> Ibid. Presumably this was the red 'charity' cloth mentioned in Joseph Ashby's autobiography – see concluding remark in this chapter.

calico, twelve yards of sheeting, five yards of print and one and a quarter yards of jersey.<sup>86</sup> Unfortunately, there are no surviving records of the yearly bill book, so we have no record of other depositors, their occupation or size of family. However it is possible to estimate how effective the clothing society was in helping a poor man to provide clothing for his family. In 1795 the Reverend David Davies estimated that a family of six living in Brington, earned £21 4s 8d between them in a year out of which two pounds was spent on clothing. This represented roughly ten per cent of their annual income.<sup>87</sup> In 1832 the average wage in Farthinghoe was 10s a week for a farm labourer, roughly £26 a year, out of which he paid either 13s or 11s a year and received an almost equal amount from the subscription fund. In addition his wife and children were able to contribute up to a limit, set by Litchfield, of 6d per week per family in total, thereby doubling both the yearly deposit and the subscription fund. Effectively, when compared to Davies's figures, the labourer's family of 1831 was only having to pay half the amount of his contemporary in 1797, if they were able to maintain deposits at the highest level, which would in fact have been difficult in this period of high unemployment and under-employment.

Although of value to labourers, it is evident that clothing societies were a cheap and effective option for landowners.<sup>88</sup> This is illustrated in the estate correspondence of Sir James Langham of Cottesbrooke, a Northamptonshire landowner who was largely non-resident. The correspondence contains several references to clothing societies, to which he was a regular subscriber. However, within the 'close' estate parish of Cottesbrooke there was discontent amongst the non-resident tenants as was revealed

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<sup>86</sup> Ibid, Result 16

<sup>87</sup> D Davies, *The Case of the Labourers*, p.175

<sup>88</sup> In much the same way that allotments were. See Chapter 5 and J E Archer, 'By a Flash and a Scare', p.63

in this letter from Sir James Langham to his agent William Dean, dated 11 December 1830:

I have received a letter from 13 persons complaining of their suffering condition and hardship they endure by residing out of the Parish to which they belong by which they become seriously inconvenienced and unnecessarily wearied. They desire to be restored to their former privileges and to reside again within the Parish ... I cannot understand what they mean by desiring to be restored to their privileges ... I hope you will be able to make them see clearly how impossible it will be that I can comply with their request.<sup>89</sup>

William Dean's reply of 14<sup>th</sup> December 1830 reveals what some of these privileges may be have been:

Another grievance or two they seem to feel which is they are shut out from subscribing to the Clothing Society in this Parish and they don't receive any share of coals given away by Mr. Irby and their name is not upon the Brewery List. To their grievance I answer them - but you have an opportunity to subscribe in the Parish where you live - Sir James subscribes handsomely to the Creaton Clothing Society - the coals I believe are given away by Mr. Irby according to the Covenants of the Will and your Friends all have an opportunity of receiving benefit from the Brewery.<sup>90</sup>

Nevertheless, although still denied residence, which was really their main grievance, by the following year the question of charitable hand-outs seems to have been resolved in favour of the labourers for William Dean wrote to Sir James Langham in November 1831, saying:

The non-resident Cottagers have now most of them received their Coals and shoes and I am requested to make their thankful acknowledgement to you for them ... I believe your studying their comforts in this Benevolent manner has now done away with all that discontent we had so much of at this time last year.<sup>91</sup>

In this instance clothing societies were a cheap means of addressing some of the

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<sup>89</sup> NRO, Langham, L[C]1187, Letter from Sir James Langham to W Dean (11 December 1830)

<sup>90</sup> NRO, Langham, L[C]1188, Letter from W Dean, Cottesbrooke to Sir James Langham, Langham Place (14 December 1830)

<sup>91</sup> NRO, Langham, L[C]1198, Letter from W Dean, Cottesbrooke to Sir James Langham, Marine Parade, Brighton (20 November 1831)

problems of the rural poor, but by no means the major issues of employment and housing.<sup>92</sup> Furthermore, the provision of clothing societies in this instance was very much, as Roberts stated a reaction to the threat of Swing riots. If the correspondence is to be believed then clothing societies were useful in promoting stability within parish society, by rewarding the 'respectable' and excluding the undesirable.<sup>93</sup> An examination of the recipients and of the various exclusions contained in the rules will illustrate this further.

Litchfield claimed that 'out of a population of nearly five hundred souls, there were only three poor families at Farthinghoe in the second year of the society, that did not yield a deposit, and only two above the class of poor, that did not produce a subscription.'<sup>94</sup> This claim appears to be borne out by the 1831 census.<sup>95</sup> Eighty-six families were recorded in this census and there were 120 depositors in Litchfield's society. As the Farthinghoe depositors could include two adults in one household and children it is not possible to ascertain the percentage of families who were actually members, apart from Litchfield's estimate. In Spratton and Creaton the membership was 89% of households, whereas in Brington it was much lower at 65%.<sup>96</sup> Of the sixty-five members of the Brington clothing society that could be traced in the census, only one member was male and he was a weaver. Of the female members, 65% were the wives of labourers, 18% were the wives of artisans and tradesmen, 15% were indigent widows and one was a servant. Thus the majority of members were the

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<sup>92</sup> The question of Sir James's attitude to housing provision is discussed in Chapter 6.

<sup>93</sup> Again, as is argued by John Archer, this applies to allotments too, J E Archer, 'By a Flash and a Scare', p.66

<sup>94</sup> BL, T.1394 (36) T.1394 (36), Three Years' Results, Results

<sup>95</sup> NRO, 123P/65, 1831 Populations Enquiry Census for the parish of Farthinghoe

<sup>96</sup> PP, 1822 XV(1) and PP 1833 XXXVI(1); XXVII(1); XXXVIII(1), Census Abstracts (1821 & 1841)

wives of working men, but the charity also assisted the traditional recipients of charity, the widows.

In the Farthinghoe clothing society there were many rules that covered the manager's power to exclude parishioners from membership. The twenty-four rules (a marked contrast to Jones's four rules) were designed to keep a strict control over the members and the results were designed to show that the clothing society played a major part in the parish in tackling various social concerns. Although Litchfield had claimed that membership of the clothing society included virtually all the parish, the rules concerning exclusion and indeed inclusion were clearly aimed at tackling the social 'evils', so frequently found in poor law reform rhetoric. Rule 2 stated that the Manager should 'determine annually what applicants shall be admitted as Depositors for the coming Year.'<sup>97</sup> Litchfield, as Manager, considered this rule essential. This was because it 'reminds the poor man of the necessity of observing good conduct, not only in those matters to which a rule would apply, but in others in which it would not and that subsequently he finds the fear of exclusion as dreaded as expulsion was at first.'<sup>98</sup> As most inhabitants were members, this could either mean that Litchfield was successful in this aim or that in practice he was reluctant to actually make exclusions. Furthermore, this rule allowed him to open membership to all 'poor inhabitants, no matter to what parishes they may belong.' This was probably in opposition to the farmers' wishes for he acknowledged that this was not the usual practice of voluntary charitable societies, where 'the farmers object to allowing any but their own poor to benefit by them.' Instead he urged the farmers to endeavour 'to raise the poor man's mind to a state of independence' for 'as long as a labourer lives apart from his

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<sup>97</sup> BL, T.1394 (36), *Three Years' Results*, Rule 2

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid*, Remarks & References – Rule 2

settlement, nothing but a good character, industry, and civility, can place him upon an equality with the rest.<sup>99</sup>

Those depositors who were included were divided into the elder class, those over sixteen and the younger class, those under sixteen, and paid different rates respectively. The elder class was not allowed to deposit more than threepence, or less than twopence, and the younger not more than twopence or less than one halfpenny.<sup>100</sup> The deposit of the elder class was limited, the reason being ‘to guard against trick’, and was explained thus:

If the sum were large, it might be supplied in part by some excluded person or by some relation or friend in another village, to whom the clothes would be given after distribution.<sup>101</sup>

Litchfield was obviously determined that clothing should only be received by those who had actively deserved it by their deposits. This was further demonstrated by Rule 22, which forbade the selling of the society’s clothing and threatened forfeiture or exclusion, if the depositor could not produce the articles of clothing on demand.<sup>102</sup> The amount of detail recorded by Litchfield in the minutes of the select vestry about the activities of his parishioners, make it feasible that he would have demanded the presentation of such articles. However, he also limited the amount of the deposit ‘to enable the Manager to have as many depositors as possible’, by not allowing ‘more than sixpence per week to be deposited by any one family.’ That sixpence could be made up by as many depositors as possible, i.e. husband, wife and children.<sup>103</sup> The

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<sup>99</sup> Ibid

<sup>100</sup> Ibid, Rules 3 & 4

<sup>101</sup> Ibid, Remarks & References – Rule 2

<sup>102</sup> Ibid, Rule 22

<sup>103</sup> Ibid, Remarks & References – Rule 4



purpose of dividing the depositors into an elder and a younger class was explained by him thus:

It was an object with me to keep the old and young distinct, as will be seen by referring to rule 24, according to which I am able to enact rules for discipline and good order during the year.<sup>104</sup>

In fact Rule 24 allowed the manager 'to make such regulations, as may connect school discipline and good order with the Society.'<sup>105</sup> Litchfield had founded a school to teach domestic skills and was keen that boys should be apprenticed and girls sent into domestic service.<sup>106</sup> A study of the select vestry minutes clearly shows how this trend towards out-of-parish service and apprenticeship was encouraged as much by poor relief policy as by the clothing society. On 16 November 1829 the select vestry resolved:

That a list be prepared by the Deputy Overseer of all persons that have refused to let their boys be apprenticed, or that have not sufficiently encouraged their sons and daughters to go out to service, as well as those boys and girls who are now remaining at home that have already been out service, with the amount of wages which have been refused by any boy or girl where it can be ascertained.<sup>107</sup>

It is evident that this resolution was acted upon, for there are several instances in the select vestry minutes where applicants for relief or employment were refused assistance or where they were threatened with increased rents, because they had allowed their children to remain or return home. The harshness of this ruling was particularly evident in the case of Sarah Butler who on 25 January 1829 'applied for relief for her son George who had been ill with an inflammation in his side' and was

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<sup>104</sup> Ibid, Remarks & References – Rule 3

<sup>105</sup> Ibid, Rule 24

<sup>106</sup> R Greenall, 'Parson as a Man of Affairs', p.123

<sup>107</sup> NRO, Farthinghoe Parish Records, 123p/26, Farthinghoe Select Vestry Minute Book (1829-30)

refused 'because it was known that he refused, when in health, four places at service.'<sup>108</sup>

Significantly, although the younger class included female servants, they were excluded from a share in the subscription fund, unless they were 'at service at the time when the clothing is distributed, for it encouraged the girls to remain in their places.'<sup>109</sup> Furthermore, he would 'allow no girls to belong to the society, if old enough for service, unless actually in service at the beginning of the year.' Even then they were only to be allowed to remain in the society for two years, by which time it was supposed that they would have acquired sufficient clothing. However, the initial supply of clothing was seen as an inducement to farmers to take girls into service and for the girls 'to appear in such decent apparel, that a service out of the parish afterwards more easy.'<sup>110</sup> Litchfield was particularly concerned to discourage girls who 'preferred the miserable profits of lace making at home, where they helped to impoverish their families.'<sup>111</sup> In the case of boys, the Farthinghoe apprenticeship indentures for 1807-1839 show the majority of boys were apprenticed to cordwainers, in the boot and shoe industry. Yet these indentures recorded only one apprenticeship per year from 1829 to 1831.<sup>112</sup> Litchfield's results recorded an increase of fifteen single men gone out to service, but did not specify the type of service.<sup>113</sup> The provision of clothing for the girls may have improved their out-of-parish employment prospects, but it is not apparent how the clothing society affected the employment of

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<sup>108</sup> Ibid

<sup>109</sup> BL, T.1394(36), Three Years' Results, Rule 5

<sup>110</sup> Ibid, Remarks & References – Rule 5

<sup>111</sup> Ibid, Remarks & References – Rule 2

<sup>112</sup> NRO, Farthinghoe, 123p/55, Apprenticeship Indentures for the Parish of Farthinghoe (1807-1839).

<sup>113</sup> BL, T.1394(36), Three Years' Results, Result 10

young men. It is far more likely that their employment was affected by decisions of the select vestry, which controlled the provision of relief. However, as manager of the clothing society, it is possible that Litchfield could have threatened expulsion to those families who did not co-operate by sending their children away from home.

In practice, however, Litchfield's results reveal that no one was expelled from the society in the three-year period, but the number of seceders for the three years totalled ten. The reasons given were that four had emigrated, one had quitted the parish and five were discontented with the vestry.<sup>114</sup> This may have been the only way in which the poor parishioners could show their discontent with the stranglehold maintained by Litchfield and the farmers, who constituted the other members of the select vestry.<sup>115</sup> Certainly, the select vestry minutes show how difficult it was to show any opposition, because the select vestry members, and most particularly Litchfield made orderly and respectful conduct a condition for obtaining relief.<sup>116</sup> There is evidence to suggest that the poor considered it a genuine grievance that the select vestry members were denying them their right to relief in the attempt to reduce the costs of poor relief.<sup>117</sup>

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<sup>114</sup> Ibid, Result 9

<sup>115</sup> The select vestry members appointed in July 1828 were the Reverend Litchfield, eleven farmers, one carpenter, one butcher and two whose occupations are unknown. NRO, Farthinghoe, 123p/25, Select Vestry Minute Book (1828-29)

<sup>116</sup> The select vestry minutes show several instances of this and also the reaction of the applicant, illustrated here by the case of Job Williams. At a select vestry meeting in November 1828 it was reported by a farmer and member of the select vestry that Job Williams 'had been very abusive to him while in his employ on the Round and that he had turned him off on that account.' It was ordered that 'he be not employed or relieved for the present.' A week later he was told that he would be allowed work if 'he would promise to behave himself better to his Master.' Williams refused adding he was 'not afraid he could keep himself very well without work.' This defiance continued until 22 December 1828 when he 'at length acknowledged himself in a fault, and promised for the future to work the proper number of hours and to behave more civil to his Master.' He was granted employment on the rounds with his former master. The other instances of reported 'insolence' were concluded in a similar way. NRO, Farthinghoe, 123p/25, Select Vestry Minute Book (1828-29)

<sup>117</sup> On 8 August 1831, William Kitley's wife was refused relief and desired to know 'what a parish was for but to maintain its own poor.' NRO, Farthinghoe, 123p/27, Select Vestry Minute Book (1831-32)

Indeed the results of the clothing society recorded parochial expenditure. Of particular mention was the reduction of the number of able-bodied men receiving 'head money', which he defined as a 'system of giving so much a head for every child, in addition to the wages obtained by the labourer from his employer.' He believed that 'the continuance of such a compulsory payment is utterly unjustifiable wherever a Clothing Society can be established in connection with land allotments.'<sup>118</sup> Whilst he saw the abolition of head money as an 'imperious duty for 'it is one of the saddest curses that ever afflicted an industrious people,' he urged caution in the adoption of his rule 20 until 'the circumstances of the parish have in some degree been prepared for it.' He did not specify what those circumstances were but from the following list of the objects of head money, it was clear that this meant the compliance of the farmers:

1. To catch some petty ratepayer, by whom perhaps no labourer is employed, and by whom the practice might not I doubt be resisted as illegal.
2. To catch some farmer in the habits of employing an insufficient number of labourers, in proportion to the redundant population.
3. To make the parochial expenditure and rates appear high to the landlord.
4. To keep down the price of labour, particularly in the case of young men.<sup>119</sup>

Assistant Poor Law Commissioner Richardson's report suggested initial opposition to the raising of wages and reduction of head money amongst the farmers in Farthinghoe. He believed that this faded when they experienced the benefits of 'increased exertion of the men, their earlier and later hours at morning and evening, their greater dependence upon their masters, and their consequent increased civility and good behaviour.'<sup>120</sup> However, what Richardson did not remark on was the reduction in parochial expenditure, which was probably the greatest incentive to the

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<sup>118</sup> BL, T.1394 (36), Three Years' Results, Remarks & References – Rule 20

<sup>119</sup> Ibid

<sup>120</sup> PP 1834 XXIX(1), Assisstant Poor Law Commissioner's Report (Northamptonshire), p.209

farmers, who as occupiers were responsible for paying poor rates. Result No.13 showed a reduction of £333 11s in parochial expenditure from 1826 to 1831, 'including in the last three years the same sums paid for eight apprentices and six emigrants.'<sup>121</sup> It is unclear how far this reduction was solely attributable to the abolition of head money but Result 10 recorded a reduction in the number of able-bodied labourers, receiving head money from twenty-nine in 1828 to zero in 1831.<sup>122</sup> In this instance then the monetary motive was as strong as the improving agenda.

Litchfield also claimed a role for the clothing society in improving order and good conduct by combating crime. Rules 15, 16 and 17 threaten the expulsion of any depositor, and the husband or wife of the same, if 'convicted before a Magistrate of stealing, or any other felony' or offences such as 'drunkenness, Poaching, Assault, or any misdemeanour ... which require to be particularly guarded against by the labouring poor.'<sup>123</sup> This threat was carried out in one instance of an un-named clothing society found in a letter to the editor of the Northampton Herald. The writer, known only as Pastor, stated the case of a parishioner of his who lost his clothing club membership upon being convicted 'of the offence charged against him.'<sup>124</sup> In Litchfield's results the number of actual convictions for these crimes was virtually non-existent, but he claimed that the absence of petty crimes was attributable to his clothing society:

To the statement of Results I may add this, that the plunder of hedges, posts and rails and turnips, at Farthinghoe, seems to have entirely ceased since the

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<sup>121</sup> BL, T.1394 (36), Three Years' Results Result 13

<sup>122</sup> Ibid, Result 10

<sup>123</sup> Ibid, Remarks & References – Rule 15

<sup>124</sup> NCL, Northampton Herald, Letter to the editor from Pastor (11 November 1843)

establishment of a Clothing Society. It is probably in this respect that the society has so strongly recommended itself to the farmer.<sup>125</sup>

The clamp down on these types of crime was reinforced by the select vestry. On 24 November 1828 a resolution was passed that 'coal be not sold at a reduced price to any pauper that shall after this time be detected in taking away live or dead wood from any hedge or field without leave from the owner and that every owner be requested to report every such theft to the Select Vestry.'<sup>126</sup> Thus this type of 'crime' or customary right was dealt with by the parish by using a carrot and stick approach.<sup>127</sup>

The same approach was taken against drunkenness, although in his remarks Litchfield seemed, at first glance, to adopt a reasonably lenient attitude, for he said 'when the misdemeanour is slight, the Manager has by this rule the liberty of forbearing to punish.'<sup>128</sup> Indeed in his remarks he included a barrel of beer among the comforts which have 'more to do in determining the moral, and through that the religious character than is generally supposed.'<sup>129</sup> Yet this leniency is belied by his chairmanship of the select vestry where on 27 October 1828 it was 'resolved that in future parish relief be withheld from any man that is known to have tumbled during the preceding week at the Public House.'<sup>130</sup> The close watch which Litchfield kept on his

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<sup>125</sup> Ibid

<sup>126</sup> NRO, Farthinghoe, 123p/25, Select Vestry Minute Book

<sup>127</sup> William Kitley was refused employment on 18 November 1833 in part for 'his late offences of stealing wood and telling lies', having told Rev Litchfield that he had been given the wood, when found carrying a log and Litchfield subsequently making enquiries to prove that this was untrue. NRO, Farthinghoe, 123p/29, Select Vestry Minute Book (1832-33)

<sup>128</sup> BL, T.1394 (36), Three Years' Results, Rule 17

<sup>129</sup> Ibid, Remarks

<sup>130</sup> NRO, Farthinghoe, 123p/25, Select Vestry Minute Book

parishioners and his ability to withhold relief may well have done more to discourage these offences than the threat of expulsion from the clothing society.<sup>131</sup>

When dealing with pre-marital sexual relationships, the society's Rule 18 threatened expulsion for 'any Depositor becoming pregnant while unmarried.'<sup>132</sup> Furthermore Rule 19 dealt with the expulsion of those who 'by the too early birth of child prove herself to have been pregnant at the time of her marriage.'<sup>133</sup> It was considered necessary by Litchfield to counter an opinion 'which is too often expressed by those in higher stations, about women being made honest women of by marriage.'<sup>134</sup> Yet for Litchfield this view was not only 'opposed to scripture, as well as common sense', but 'the instances of female frailty previous to marriage have become so frequent among the working classes' that he felt this rule should be included. However, he did admit that he had 'not excluded from my society any parishioners on account of past misconduct, it being my object to prevent rather than to punish.' Furthermore he stated 'that up to this time I have not been called upon to punish any depositor under this rule.'<sup>135</sup> Certainly, although the results showed three illegitimate children born during the three years before the Society was established, there were none for the three years after.<sup>136</sup> Yet Litchfield admitted that this 'may not be altogether owing to this rule', but rather that 'the providence of the young man now discourages the female from early marriage, and by consequence discourages the female from relying

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<sup>131</sup> On 27 May 1832 Richard Tims was refused employment, because on the day before his application (a Sunday) as 'he was seen by the Chairman [Litchfield] coming from a Beer House in this parish, where it was ascertained he had been drinking and wasting his money.' NRO, Farthinghoe, 123p/28, Select Vestry Minute Book

<sup>132</sup> BL, T.1394 (36), Three Years' Results, Rule 18

<sup>133</sup> *Ibid*, Rule 19

<sup>134</sup> *Ibid*, Remarks & References – Rule 19

<sup>135</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>136</sup> *Ibid*, Result 10

upon it.<sup>137</sup> Litchfield saw a Malthusian role for his clothing society whereby early marriage and childbirth should not be encouraged by the promise of provision. In Farthinghoe concerns about illegitimacy and sexual relations before marriage seem largely to have been unjustified, although this is hardly surprising when it has been shown that the majority of young people had left the village to work elsewhere. Once again, apart from expulsion being threatened, it is hard to ascertain how the clothing society had been instrumental in preventing a social 'evil', this time bastardy. Here again it can be seen that it was the role of the select vestry to deal with this problem by attempting to make fathers liable for the upkeep of their illegitimate children.<sup>138</sup>

It is clearer to see how the clothing society may have been able to combat the threat of dissenting religion by attaching material benefits to church attendance. Rules 6 and 7 specified that deposits had to be made on a Sunday and were clearly designed to ensure that membership of the clothing society was directly dependent upon church attendance. In this respect, however, it was not dissimilar to many endowed charities, where distribution was made at church on a Sunday. Litchfield acknowledged that Rule 7 'may perhaps excite objections with some', particularly 'on the score of its being a worldly and secular act', but that it was designed 'to bring a blessing upon the society as well as the depositor.'<sup>139</sup> Furthermore he was able to justify this rule by pointing out that often collections were distributed on Sundays after charity sermons. It was also to supply 'a motive for attendance at divine worship where higher motives

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<sup>137</sup> Ibid, Remarks & References – Rule 19

<sup>138</sup> A resolution was passed on 22 December 1828 'that as the assisting the father of any Bastard child in the maintenance of such child either by advancing money or paying it for him is an encouragement given to crime, no such facility be given in future to any such parent.', NRO, Farthinghoe, 123p/25, Select Vestry Minute Book

<sup>139</sup> BL, T.1394 (36), Three Years' Results, Remarks & References – Rule 7



might be wanting.’<sup>140</sup> However, more significantly, this rule implicitly denied membership of the society to dissenters, although Litchfield claimed that he ‘had not intended to exclude dissenters.’<sup>141</sup> Nevertheless he then listed the following six reasons why it was not unreasonable to do so:

1. The dissenters I believe never include any but those of their own body in their own charitable societies.
2. The dissenters are not hereby prevented from establishing similar societies among themselves, for the relief of their own members.
3. It may properly operate to keep members of the establishment quitting the household of their faith, as some are apt to do, not from any ground of objection to the principles of our establishment, but from worldly and temporal reasons.
4. The society, in encouraging depositors to go to church, encourages them to hear those doctrines which every clergyman of the establishment regards as involving questions not of party triumph, but of eternal happiness.
5. If dissenters are included in such a society, while the members of the establishment are excluded from the dissenting societies, a positive pecuniary premium will be given to bribe men into places of dissent.
6. It enables the clergyman to know more of the character of the depositors.<sup>142</sup>

One of the concerns was that dissenters might have an advantage over Anglicans, because they would be able to belong to both the clothing society and also to their own charitable societies, from which Anglicans were excluded.<sup>143</sup> He considered this particularly undesirable because it could be the means of attracting men to dissenting religion. It is clear that ‘denominational control’ was the real issue here. Litchfield hoped that by ensuring attendance at church, his parishioners would be encouraged by the Anglican doctrines that they heard there. If that failed they could be bribed by ‘worldly and temporal reasons’ to remain Anglicans, although he claimed that it had not been necessary to apply this rule, ‘there not being a single dissenter in my

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<sup>140</sup> Ibid

<sup>141</sup> Ibid

<sup>142</sup> Ibid

<sup>143</sup> This attitude reflects that of the clergyman in Middleton Cheney when dispensing Garnett’s Charity.

parish.<sup>144</sup> However, the 1851 Religious Census showed that a Primitive Wesleyan Chapel was present in Farthinghoe with a membership of at least ninety persons, compared with an Anglican congregation of at least 300.<sup>145</sup> Furthermore, as Obelkevich has pointed the figures in the 1851 Religious Census may not present an accurate picture of religious attendance for many attended both church and chapel.<sup>146</sup> Litchfield, as a 'zealous conservative', may well have preferred to keep his congregation through material incentives rather than displaying an evangelical fervour in his services.<sup>147</sup>

Indeed his role within the parish was in many respects consistent with that of other pre-poor law reform clergymen, who were actively involved with the affairs of the poor either as justices, through the vestry, or as authors of pamphlets on poor relief.<sup>148</sup> By insisting on church attendance as a condition of membership, Litchfield was determined to exert a 'denominational control' over his parishioners. Thus, Litchfield's society, with its extensive and comprehensive rules, made many provisions for expulsion or exclusion from the society, although in practice it appears that they were seldom applied. The Farthinghoe Society was still in existence in 1867, when it was mentioned in the Commission on the Employment of Children, Young Persons and Women in Agriculture.<sup>149</sup>

There was a marked contrast in the clothing society in Creaton and Spratton, which

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<sup>144</sup> BL, T.1394 (36), *Three Years' Results, Remarks & References – Rule 7*

<sup>145</sup> NRO, *Religious Census* (1851). These figures were recorded as estimates of attendance at evening service. The Anglican figure included those attending Sunday School.

<sup>146</sup> J Obelkevich, *Religion*, p.157

<sup>147</sup> R L Greenall, 'Parson as a Man of Affairs', p.121

<sup>148</sup> A Digby, *Pauper Palaces*, p.201

<sup>149</sup> PP 1867-8 XVII, *First Report from the Commissioners on the Employment of Children, Young Persons and Women in Agriculture: Evidence from Northamptonshire*

contained only the following four rules:

1. To admit only one name from a family, leaving them at liberty to subscribe what sum they please.
2. All descriptions of poor residing in the parish are without exception admissible.
3. Every subscriber is to bring his money within the month, or be liable to be excluded except sufficient reason can be given for the omission.
4. Every member proved guilty of dishonest practices, since he last entered, to be excluded the society for that year, and forfeit his money.<sup>150</sup>

It is evident from these rules that the Creaton and Spratton Society had far less of an overt improving agenda, the only exclusions being for dishonesty and non-payment of subscriptions. However when the Reverend Thomas Jones published his pamphlet he wrote, ‘every step you take to raise the poor from abject poverty to increasing comforts and enjoyment, has a natural tendency to increase their sensibility and improve their morals.’<sup>151</sup> He saw the society as achieving this by ‘teaching, encouraging, and assisting the lower classes to provide for their own necessities by their own industry and frugality.’ He believed that ‘this was the only principle that can be acted upon with any prospect of success, towards raising the poor at large in circumstances of comfort and contentedness.’<sup>152</sup> Contentedness could, of course, mean physical well being or it could mean being content with one’s place in society, reminiscent of the ‘rich man in his castle, the poor man at his gate.’ Thus, Jones could have been using a clothing society to try to create harmony and stability in his parishes. As was seen in Chapter two, there had been a considerable amount of discontent among the poor of Spratton in particular and an indication of considerable hardship. Jones’ desire to alleviate the condition of his parishioners was evident in the other charitable schemes in which he took an active part during his curacy, which

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<sup>150</sup> BL, 8285.bbb.34, Clothing Societies

<sup>151</sup> Ibid

<sup>152</sup> Ibid

lasted, from 1785 until 1833, becoming Vicar there for the last five years.

Lastly, it is significant that the poor were required to pay their subscriptions 'every Monday, at a fixed time, the most convenient for the poor to attend' and suggests that Jones was not using his club as a means of 'denominational control,' at least not in an overt way.<sup>153</sup> It is likely, therefore, that Jones did not exclude dissenters from membership of the clothing society. There had been a flourishing congregational church in Creaton since 1688 and also a smaller one in Spratton founded in 1807.<sup>154</sup> Indeed, Jones had been asked to leave a curacy in Oswestry because of his Methodism, prior to coming to Creaton.<sup>155</sup> Certainly, according to his biographer, Jones initially had no particular quarrel with dissenters, but rather with his fellow clergymen, who considered him 'a minister to be shunned' and whom he described as 'in a deplorable state of deadness and unconcern, and not a few grossly immoral.'<sup>156</sup> Although he found that a considerable number of his congregation were 'drawn away to Dissenting Meetings' he did not believe that was 'from any quarrel with the Established Church.'<sup>157</sup> Nevertheless he attempted to draw them back into the church, holding two full services on Sunday, and a lecture on Wednesday evenings and by inviting 'some of the most eminent ministers of the day' to preach in Creaton.<sup>158</sup> However during his ministry, although he had attracted dissenters to hear some of these preachers, he began to despair of achieving Christian unity as can be seen in a letter, dated 17 July 1792:

Mr. Newton preached at Creaton that very day; and we had a good day. A great number of Ministers, both Churchmen and Dissenters attended: but

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<sup>153</sup> Ibid

<sup>154</sup> NRO, 1966/159/5, Notes on Creaton Congregational Church and Religious Census (1851)

<sup>155</sup> NRO, LBY 386 K5, Memoirs, p.50

<sup>156</sup> Ibid, p.78

<sup>157</sup> Ibid, p.82

<sup>158</sup> Ibid, p.85

though we sometimes meet, we cannot coalesce. We are further off from one another than the parties have been for a century.<sup>159</sup>

Jones had hoped that the Bible Society 'would be the means of uniting different parties together in the work of promoting the interest of true religion', but that he thought, 'this had been frustrated through the fault of the Dissenters.'<sup>160</sup> Therefore, unlike, Litchfield who tried to discourage dissenters by tying material benefits to a tight control over his parishioners, Jones preferred to rely on the merits of the religious experience that he could offer to his congregation.

These two case studies have shown that, although most clothing societies were financially organised along the same lines, with contributions from both subscribers and recipients, the use of such societies to exert 'social control' and 'denominational control' could vary considerably. There is insufficient evidence to prove conclusively which of the two was more typical. However, Litchfield's society would seem to have influenced others, for the rules from the Chipping Warden Provident Clothing Society established in 1833 and the Helmdon Clothing Club established in 1835 are virtually word for word the same as Litchfield's.<sup>161</sup> These societies were in close proximity to Farthinghoe and it may have been personal contact as much as the publication of Litchfield's Results, which achieved the desired aim of encouraging the setting up of like-minded societies. This was certainly true of the Brackley clothing society for the Northampton Herald stated that 'it is conducted nearly on the same principle as Farthinghoe.'<sup>162</sup> Furthermore, rules for four clothing societies in Suffolk

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<sup>159</sup> Ibid, p.111

<sup>160</sup> Ibid, pp.202-203

<sup>161</sup> NRO, Chipping Warden Parish Records, 66P/67, Rules and Helmdon Parish Records, 162P.370, Clothing Club

<sup>162</sup> NCL, Northampton Herald (6 December 1834)

managed by clergymen were similar, suggesting that there was a formula adopted by the founders of many such societies.<sup>163</sup> This can also be seen with allotment rules as will be seen in chapter five. However, although two of the Suffolk societies threatened expulsion for felony and drunkenness, none of them were concerned with pre-marital sexual behaviour or bastardy. Nevertheless, like Litchfield's society, payments were to be made on Sundays in church after divine service in all four Suffolk societies. There was only one instance where the inclusion of dissenters was broached and that was in the following letter from John Marshall to the editor of the Northampton Herald about the clothing club at Old:

The club is, and always has been, conducted without reference to the religious or political opinions of the recipients of the charity...<sup>164</sup>

Furthermore John Marshall stated that the clothing was provided by 'the contributions of persons of various sects and parties, as well Dissenters as Churchmen. The fact that he wished to specifically draw attention to the role of dissenters suggests that his club may not have been typical in this respect, although the case study showed that Jones' Creaton clothing society too did not discriminate against dissenters. The two case studies presented here show two extreme examples of clothing societies. Jones' ecumenicalism was exceptional and can be seen in the context of a passing phase of Methodism to which he had been attracted. Litchfield's model of a clothing society can be seen as extreme in its attempts to impose social discipline particularly in its moral crusade against bastardy and pre-marital sexual relations. Most clothing societies were a modified version of Litchfield's, containing rules governing church attendance and honest behaviour.

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<sup>163</sup> BL, 10351.i.24(45), Rules of the Clothing Club at Sutton (1833); 10351.i.24(46) Rules of the Ubbeston Provident Clothing Society (1833); 10351.i.24(47), Rules of the Haveningham Provident Clothing Society (undated) and 1891.e.2(35), Kettleburgh Penny Clothing Club (1837)

<sup>164</sup> Ibid, Letter from John Marshall to the Editor (30 December 1848)

### **Conclusion:**

This chapter has demonstrated that considerable changes were occurring in this period in the charitable provision of clothing. This can be seen in both the nature and depth of such provision and also in the level of the disciplinary agenda attached to it. The depth of provision increased substantially through the establishment of clothing societies. The endowed clothing charities generally had very limited resources by the beginning of the nineteenth century and so were only able to give limited assistance to a small number of parishioners. In contrast, the clothing societies, if well supported by subscribers, were able to substantially increase the deposits made by their members. In the case of the Farthinghoe clothing society this meant doubling the deposits on occasions. Additionally membership of a clothing society was open to a much larger number of parishioners than that covered by the gifts of the endowed clothing charities and represented a change in the type of recipient being targeted. Whereas endowed clothing charities had been aimed at the 'necessitous' poor, which had often meant the elderly, clothing societies were open to any working men and their families who could afford regular payments.

The endowed clothing charities did not demonstrate an overt use of social or 'denominational' control in the selection of recipients, although the connections between endowed charities and the Anglican church imply that church attendance could have been a factor. Nevertheless, the clothing given to children by the endowed charities was aimed specifically at Sunday school attendees. Furthermore, as was seen in the Garnett's charity, the clergyman had changed the rules of the endowed charity to exclude dissenters and it is possible that this happened elsewhere, but went

unrecorded. Although some endowed clothing charities showed evidence of discrimination in the choice of recipients based on respectability, non-reliance on poor relief and Anglican church attendance (particularly where clothing was given to Sunday school pupils), the majority did not display an explicit disciplinary agenda. This was not true among the clothing clubs.

It was evident that clothing clubs were not just about material benefits, but were believed to have an improving moral agenda. The desired effect of such clubs is illustrated by a letter to the Editor of the Northampton Herald, as follows:

By means of a clothing-club, such a change has been effected in the external appearance of my poor parishioners, that to be slovenly and ragged is now to be marked out as more idle than others.<sup>165</sup>

Thus, it was apparent that many of these clubs had an explicit disciplinary agenda. A key feature of the clothing clubs was the role that they played in attaching social control and 'denominational control' agendas to membership. The case study of the Farthinghoe clothing club demonstrated the depths of the control that could be exercised over the recipients, at least in theory. Litchfield's aim in this respect was clearly set out by him in that he intended 'to connect charity, industry, prudence and morality more intimately together' and 'to convince the Poor, that good conduct is in all respects their best policy.'<sup>166</sup> Those who could demonstrate the qualities of self-help and thrift were generously rewarded, thanks to the gifts of the subscribers. On the other hand those members found guilty of criminal and immoral behaviour were threatened with exclusion from this assistance. He attempted to show in his results

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<sup>165</sup> NCL, Northampton Herald, Letter from A Friend to the Industrious to the Editor (9 June 1832).. The letter goes on to cite the example of a dirty woman, who was now the exception, and who was given soap in lieu of part of her poor relief.

<sup>166</sup> BL, T.1394(36), Three Years' Results



how 'good conduct' had been achieved with his clothing society, but, in reality, the level of social control in Farthinghoe also owed as much to the decisions of the select vestry, in which Litchfield played a major role. As well as a social disciplinary agenda the rules of the Farthinghoe clothing club demonstrated Litchfield's efforts to impose 'denominational control' in his parish by making membership dependent on attendance at his church. As the benefits from clothing clubs were considerable, they offered a powerful incentive to attend Anglican services. However, as Obelkevich pointed out, the poor may well have attended church in order to be seen to be showing deference to the clergy, but additionally attending chapel as a matter of faith.<sup>167</sup>

Although Litchfield's style of clothing club was adopted elsewhere, there were examples of others, particularly the club in Creaton, where the clergyman did not adopt explicit social and 'denominational' control agendas.

The new model of charitable clothing provision had an impact on social relations. In particular it demonstrated a move from the old familial paternal role to that of a contractual role for many major landowners. Whilst some landowners still performed the traditional role of personally distributing gifts of clothing to their parishioners, others preferred to take a less personal interest and make monetary donations to clothing societies, although these were still made public in the local press. In the case of clothing societies this left the face-to-face paternalist relationship in the hands of the 'lieutenant' classes, and in particular the clergy.<sup>168</sup> The clergy too, still held a traditional role in bestowing gifts of clothing on their needy parishioners and in the administration of the endowed clothing charities. They extended their involvement by playing a prominent part in the establishment and management of the clothing

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<sup>167</sup> J Obelkevich, *Religion*, p.157

<sup>168</sup> A Howkins, *Reshaping* p.76

societies and this provided some of them with a means of re-asserting the importance of their role in parish society, which had been undermined by the rise of non-conformity. Farmers and tradesmen, who had traditionally been engaged in the management of endowed clothing charities, were supporters of clothing societies, carrying on the traditional role that they had played as members of parish vestries in granting clothing as a form of outrelief.<sup>169</sup> As the Farthinghoe clothing society showed, farmers made up a substantial proportion of the subscription list and there was no evidence to show that farmers objected to this form of self-help, because clothing societies encouraged good conduct without the threat of independence posed by allotments.

It is hard to uncover the attitudes of the poor to this shift in clothing provision, as their voices are rarely recorded. Although there is little surviving evidence of the help that the poor gave each other with donations of second-hand clothing, this would have been one of the major sources of assistance available to them. Although clothing clubs could contain a disciplinary agenda, the Langham correspondence demonstrated that they were welcomed by the poor. Certainly the Cottesbrooke workers understood the material benefit of belonging to a clothing club and were prepared to use the threat of agitation to ensure their admittance to one. The fact that clothing clubs began to appear in newspaper reports in the 1830s is a clear indication that their establishment in many cases was part of the measures taken to remake social relations in the aftermath of Swing. However, the newspaper reports also showed that incidents of arson and animal maiming continued to take place even in parishes that contained clothing clubs or where gifts of clothing were distributed by individuals. The

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<sup>169</sup> S King, 'Reclothing', p.41-42

Farthinghoe select vestry minutes and the Langham estate correspondence demonstrated that the poor were not always passive bystanders. The poor whilst accepting charity clothing were well aware of and showed a resistance to the underlying ideology. This is well illustrated by this quotation from Joseph Ashby of Tysoe, who described an occasion when a recipient of charity clothing washed her flannel, saying “Why, I bin washing the charity out on it’ and Joseph wrote ‘And there it hung, a long scarlet banner, pure of charity.’<sup>170</sup>

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<sup>170</sup> M K Ashby, Joseph Ashby of Tysoe 1859-1919. A study of English Village Life (Cambridge, 1961), p.46

## **Chapter Five**

### **Access to Land by the Poor**

#### **Introduction:**

The eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries witnessed a significant change in the poor's rights of access to land both for cultivation and for fuel gathering as a result of the parliamentary enclosure acts. By 1850 ninety-two percent of all Northamptonshire parliamentary enclosures had been carried out.<sup>1</sup> This chapter will address the response of those in authority to this change either through the donations and subscriptions of individuals or the establishment of self-help initiatives such as coal clubs and allotments. The self-help initiative that has received most attention from historians, and was the site of much debate amongst contemporaries, was the establishment of allotment societies. Allotments in particular were at the forefront of debates about encouraging the labourer to be more independent and to supplement his income through the fruits of his labour. Furthermore, as was seen in the clothing charity, self-help initiatives could be used to maintain social discipline. Thus, the chapter will consider whether allotments were created in response to a crisis in rural social relations in the first half of the nineteenth century, most notably the Captain Swing riots and a major part of this chapter will concentrate on this provision. However, as this thesis is concerned with examining how charitable endeavours could alleviate the conditions of the rural poor, other types of land provided for cultivation by the poor are considered, whether by endowed charities, individual philanthropists

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<sup>1</sup> NRO, J W Anscomb, Enclosures

or under the auspices of organisations such as The Labourers' Friend Society.

There are difficulties in examining land provision, particularly in the early part of the nineteenth century, for, although there is a substantial body of evidence for the allotment movement as a whole, the local records for this and other types of provision have been fragmentary. This has been particularly problematic when assessing the extent of such provision. However, a range of sources has been accessed. These include the Charity Commission reports, the replies to the Rural Queries, the Report of the Assistant Commissioner of the Poor Law for Northamptonshire, allotment society records, newspaper sources and pamphlets, particularly those published by The Labourers' Friend Society. The estate papers of Northamptonshire landowners provide additional evidence of allotments. These sources will be used to answer a set of questions – who were helped by fuel and land provision, how much of a contribution did the poor receive and what was the extent of such provision? The chapter will also consider allotment provision in detail. It will examine who provided them and the motivation for doing so. An examination of the rules and regulations will be used to uncover the depth of social discipline attached to this form of self-help.

### **5.1: Fuel:**

There were thirty-seven fuel charities in the Charity Commission reports, twenty-one of these were established as the result of enclosure agreements where it was decided

that the rent from land allotted to the poor would be used for providing coal.<sup>2</sup> The Charity Commission reports recorded only three charities where the common rights of the poor were continued. One was the Poor's Land in Thornby, enclosed in 1623, which was 'for the inhabitants occupying ancient town-houses, in equal proportions' and 'enjoyed by the poor for cutting fuel and depasturing cattle, in payment of certain small rents.'<sup>3</sup> The second was the Poor's Land in Clay Coton, where an undated but 'ancient enclosure' had ensured that there was 'common of pasture for the poor, in payment of small annual rents to owners of land' and 'right of common over 25 acres land.'<sup>4</sup> In the period of early enclosures by mutual agreement it was customary that 'the land allotted to compensate tenants was attached to the cottage itself, or took the form of a 'cowgate', which was the right to use a common pasture.'<sup>5</sup> The third charity with common rights was that of the Town Lands in Litchborough, partially enclosed in 1711. Although the poor still had rights to cut fuel from the 'thorns, bushes and underwood' on part of this land, the Charity Commissioners reported that 'the churchwardens have long been desirous to let the land to a tenant who would bring it into a proper state of cultivation.' However, 'as the poor inhabitants insist on the maintenance of the privilege they have enjoyed, it has not been practicable to interfere with their claim.'<sup>6</sup> When it came to parliamentary enclosure, access to land for fuel gathering was often curtailed, with the land being rented out and the profits

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<sup>2</sup> In the case of the charity provided by the Poor's Land in Ashton this was changed from money to coal after enclosure, but not until the cost of enclosure had been paid for, see Chapter 2.

<sup>3</sup> PP 1825 XI(1), 13<sup>th</sup> Further Report, p.38

<sup>4</sup> PP 1826 XII(1), 14<sup>th</sup> Further Report, p.231

<sup>5</sup> D Crouch and D Ward, The Allotment, p.47

<sup>6</sup> PP 1826 XII(1), 14<sup>th</sup> Further Report, p.231

applied to the poor in form of various handouts, including fuel.<sup>7</sup> Seven of the coal charities that resulted from parliamentary enclosure specified that the coal was to be distributed in lieu of common rights that had been held by parishioners. In Duston and Helpstone these rights were described as 'common rights' and 'lands and rights in common', with no detail about what those rights were.<sup>8</sup> In the remaining coal charities given in lieu of common rights in Tifffield, Kettering, Helpstone, Scaldwell, Boughton and Pitsford the rights were specified as cutting furze. However, it would appear that there was little guarantee that these charities were confined to those who had such rights. In Boughton and Pitsford, it was reported that there was no documentary evidence to support the payment, but that it had been the tradition at the time of the enclosure of both parishes. Although the Charity Commission reports showed that these payments were still being honoured, they do not give any details of the recipients. However, in some cases, the enclosure of charity land and the loss of rights to commoners became a battle between the enclosers and the commoners.<sup>9</sup> This was evident in the case of the Poor's Land in Stowe IX Churches, which was recorded in the court minutes of the Corporation of the Sons of the Clergy.<sup>10</sup> In 1811 this corporation arranged for the enclosure of forty acres of heath or wasteland in this parish. The following year it was reported that eighteen cottagers 'under a pretence of having a right to different plots of the Heath for the purpose of cutting the Furze and

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<sup>7</sup> On the enclosure of Poor's Heath Land in 1766, this land was supposed to provide for the poor in lieu of fuel cutting rights. However, it had lain waste until 1810 when the tenant planted it with trees at his own expense and it was proposed that he could apply part of the profits towards the expense and the remainder to the poor. In the Charity Commission report of 1830 the land was recorded as 'planted and unproductive at time of inquiry' and, therefore, had effectively been lost to the poor for seventy years. PP 1831 XII(1), 24<sup>th</sup> Further Report, p.156

<sup>8</sup> PP 1826 XII(1), 14<sup>th</sup> Further Report, p.238 & PP 1831 XII(1); 24<sup>th</sup> Further Report, p.143

<sup>9</sup> J E Archer, 'By a Flash', pp.58-59

<sup>10</sup> NRO, Stowe IX Churches Parish Records, 305p/205, Letter (with abstract) from J W Williamson, Accountant, Corporation of the Sons of the Clergy to Reverend H H Crawley (1916) The abstract was a summary of the minutes of the court minutes of the Corporation and all quotations are from this.

Brakes' had destroyed a hedge and twenty acres of oats and 'committed other acts of violence.' The Corporation denied that the cottagers had any rights and so took an action of trespass against them. The Corporation then wrote to the cottagers offering them an annual allowance 'in lieu of the furze' if they acknowledged their past misconduct. However, the cottagers did not respond to this request and in 1813 were charged with the damages and costs of their action. Nine defendants submitted to this, but seven were arrested and taken to prison. They wrote a petition 'praying to be released from their confinement.' The Corporation replied that 'as soon as satisfactory security can be given to this Court that the Petitioners and the other Cottagers of Stowe will not again disturb the Tenant of the Corporation occupying the same Heath, the Court will take the said Petition into consideration.' The Stowe cottagers submitted to this and after expressing 'their distress and sorrow for their past conduct' they were released. Having won the battle, in 1814 an alteration was made in the distribution of coals from the Corporation. It was restricted to a quantity not exceeding half a ton to each cottager and the distribution was 'extended to all cottagers, as well as to those that had formerly plots of furze on the heath allotted to them as to those who had none, at the discretion of the Rector and Churchwardens.' The depth of emotions aroused by this case was so strong that the 'injustice' was still being disputed at the end of the century, particularly the extension of this charity to those who had not lost common rights.<sup>11</sup> Lastly, the loss of common rights was not

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<sup>11</sup> An undated document written by the assistant curate to the same Reverend Crawley as above stated 'a very grievous wrong was done to the cottagers.' He gave an account of the incident as related to him by the granddaughter of one of the ringleaders 'the village shoemaker, and a kind of village Hampden.' She gave a graphic description of how the cottagers 'were dragged one pouring wet day, from the Heath by Special Constables, how some of them were hatless, all were covered with blood and mud, their clothes torn.' According to her the men asserted that they came out of prison, when the coal was promised. NRO, *Stowe IX Churches*, 305p/275, Unsigned, undated document written by the Assistant Curate to the Late Reverend Crawley. This was in the tradition of 'radical' shoemakers as described by Hobsbawm, who played a prominent part in the Swing riots. E Hobsbawm, *Worlds of Labour, Further Studies in the History of Labour*, (London, 1984), p.103



always compensated by a charitable handout.<sup>12</sup> In Paulerspury, the funds of an existing coal club were augmented as a result of loss of common rights. The coal club rules had the following amendment:

Since these Rules were drawn up, and amended, a sum of money has been paid to the account of the Rector and Churchwardens of Paulerspury, in lieu of Forest privileges, to be expended in fuel for the Poor of that place. This sum has been employed in cheapening 2cwt, more of Coals, for each Subscriber, which the Occupiers of land here have kindly engaged to bring, carriage free, as well as the 10cwt, brought before, to the doors of their poor neighbours.... They [the 2cwt of coal] are cheapened to all; to Trades-persons, as well as to others.<sup>13</sup>

In Kettering, the loss of common right led to the establishment of a coal club, where the coals were sold to the poor. The annual rent of £13 a year was ‘applied pursuant to a resolution at a vestry meeting, in aid of a fund, which was some years ago raised by subscription, for supplying the poor with coals at reduced prices.’<sup>14</sup> Thus it is clear that enclosure had a considerable impact on the nature of some endowed charities with a move from rights of fuel gathering to distributions of fuel from the trustees, thereby lessening the independence of the recipients.

Were the poor adequately compensated by this change? It is difficult to assess the value of the fuel charities, as very few of them give either the amount of fuel or the number of recipients. Most of the thirty-seven fuel charities specified that coals, sometimes with wood, were to be distributed to the poor, apart from four, which just stated ‘fuel.’ Eden’s estimate of the household budget for the labourer in Roade was for £2 10s a year spent on wood for fuel.<sup>15</sup> Davies shows the annual cost of fuel and

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<sup>12</sup> PP 1831 XII(1), 24<sup>th</sup> Further Report, p.135

<sup>13</sup> NRO, Paulerspury Parish Records, 255p/352, Coal Club Rules (1846). The 10 cwt of coal was not available to trades-persons.

<sup>14</sup> PP 1831 XII (1), 24<sup>th</sup> Further Report, p. 135

<sup>15</sup> F M Eden, The State of the Poor, p.547

coals for a labourer in Castor for 'fuel and coals' to be £1 10s and £1 6s in Brington.<sup>16</sup> However, as stated in previous chapters, these were estimates made on the basis of the most needy families in a year of crisis. In the Poor's Land Charity in Upper and Lower Boddington 'a boat load of coals, containing on an average from twenty-two to twenty-five tons, is purchased every year.' This was out of a rent income of £30, with 'the difference when the price exceeds the amount of the rent, being made up from the parish rates.'<sup>17</sup> This was then distributed annually at Christmas 'amongst all the poor belonging to and resident in the parish, in quantities of five and six hundred-weight to a house, according to the number of inmates.'<sup>18</sup> The Boddington coal was approximately 1s 4d per hundredweight, if the rent was sufficient to buy a boatload of coal. The value of the coal to each recipient householder was therefore between five and six shillings per annum, around twenty percent of Eden and Davies's estimates. In Oundle, the residents of Laxton's Almshouses received a very generous amount of wood and coals that amounted to roughly £1 14s each per annum, which would have covered their annual fuel costs.<sup>19</sup> At the other end of the scale the Poor's Land charities in Pitsford and Boughton only yielded £5 per annum to be spent in each parish on providing half a hundred-weight to each recipient.<sup>20</sup> Apart from the almshouse residents, there is very little detail about who the recipients were in most charities. In Helpstone it was specified that the coal should be paid to 'poor widows and other poor persons as a mode of parochial relief.'<sup>21</sup> In Warkton, Hunt's Charity only yielded an annual income of £2 2s and 2d, but this was supplemented by the

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<sup>16</sup> D Davies, *The Case of the Labourers*, p.177

<sup>17</sup> PP 1826 XII(1), *14<sup>th</sup> Further Report*, p.314

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid*, p.314

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid*, p.354

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid*, p. 286 & PP 1825 XI(1), *13<sup>th</sup> Further Report*, p.46. This sum of money was provided in both parishes by Colonel Vyse, the lord of the manor.

<sup>21</sup> PP 1831 XII(1), *24<sup>th</sup> Further Report*, p.143

Duke of Buccleugh (although the size of the donation was not given) in order to buy coals to be distributed among the poor during winter.<sup>22</sup> Thus, coal handouts ranged from the generous provision of a year's supply to a small contribution towards fuel costs, although the sample is too small to say which was most common. As was seen in Warkton, a local landowner stepped in to help the endowed charity. The donations of individuals will be examined next.

Individual landowners, the gentry and the clergy were also involved in providing fuel in numerous parishes and their efforts were reported in the local press.<sup>23</sup> The Duke of Grafton's donations for coals were recorded in his charity book and Earl Spencer's 'gift' of coal was reported in 1797 by Davies.<sup>24</sup> Landowners, gentry and clergy were also active in raising subscriptions amongst their fellow parishioners. In Earls Barton in 1841 the inhabitants raised a subscription which was boosted by a donation from Viscount Dungannon.<sup>25</sup> The subscriptions were raised among those labelled as 'leading inhabitants' (Harpole), 'more opulent neighbours' (Marston Trussell), 'the tenantry' (Kelmarsh), 'the owners and occupiers' (Moulton).<sup>26</sup> These terms are vague, but, particularly in the latter two examples, would have included farmers. In

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<sup>22</sup> PP 1830 XII(327), 23<sup>rd</sup> Further Report, p.334

<sup>23</sup> NCL, Northampton Herald, Ravenstone (12 February 1835), Horton & Piddington (31 December 36), Brixworth (25 March 1837), Great Houghton (10 February 1838), Welford, Sulby & Sibbertoft (9 January 1841), Abington (18 December 1839), Little Bowden (4 January 1840), Farthinghoe (6 February 1841), Kislingbury (13 February 1841), Carlton, Ashby & Middleton (22 January 1842), Denford (30 February 1843), Croughton (6 March 1847), Brackley 15 January 1848, Castle Ashby, Yardley Hastings & Denton (20 January 1849), Northampton Mercury (9 February 1839), Potterspury, Yardley Gobion, Grafton Regis, Alderton, Hartwell, Ashton, Stoke Bruerne, Shutlanger, Blisworth, Greens Norton, Cold Higham, Abthorpe & Paulerspury (22 February 1840), Kelmarsh (13 January 1846), Easton Neston & Towcester (10 January 1846), Great Billing (16 January 1847), Welton (16 January 1841), Stanford (2 January 1847), Sibbertoft & Welford (2 January 1847)

<sup>24</sup> D Davies, The Case of the Labourers, p.175

<sup>25</sup> NCL, Northampton Herald (6 March 1831)

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid*, Harpole (29 January 1842), Moulton (6 February 1841); Northampton Mercury, Marston Trussell (23 February 1839, Kelmarsh (13 January 1846)

Naseby the farmers were mentioned specifically as raising a subscription of twenty pounds and supplying free carriage of the coal in 1838.<sup>27</sup> The farmers in Brixworth, Farthinghoe, Kislingbury and also contributed to coal charities by offering free carriage.<sup>28</sup> In the Duke of Grafton's charity book it was stated that in 1838 money was given to the coal merchant 'for 25 tons of coals to sell to the poor at cost price at Yardley Wharf, the farmers having done the carting.'<sup>29</sup> It is not clear whether the subscriptions raised were for handouts in times of particular hardship or for coal clubs designed to give long-term assistance.

Evidence from the Duke of Grafton's charity book shows that after 1840 he favoured subscriptions to coal clubs. In 1841 the entries relating to coal changed from 'donations' of £5 each to buy coal to 'subscriptions' of £5 each to coal clubs in Alderton, Blisworth, Greens Norton, Hartwell and Paulerspury and these continued throughout the charity book. This may have been because such subscriptions were a way of giving assistance in a number of parishes in which he had a landed interest. Likewise the local press reported that the Countess of Cardigan subscribed to coal clubs in Deene and Deenethorpe and the Earl of Cardigan did likewise in Glapthorne, Stanion and Corby.<sup>30</sup> It is likely that the popularity of coal clubs was that such schemes promoted self-help as they relied on the poor paying regular deposits and on donations by the rich. The Paulerspury coal club had three principal rules upon which

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<sup>27</sup> NCL, Northampton Herald (10 February 1838)

<sup>28</sup> Ibid, Brixworth (25 February 1837), Farthinghoe (6 February 1841), Kislingbury (13 February 1841)

<sup>29</sup> However, there is evidence that farmers attached conditions to this. In 1865 the accounts of the Stoke Bruerne coal club recorded that 'the farmers would not draw for all the people as formerly, because so many men worked at the ironstone pits and on the railways and they would not work for the farmers and they thought that men who earned such high wages did not need this charity.' NRO, Stoke Bruerne Parish Records, 305p/52, Stoke Bruerne Coal Club (1858-77)

<sup>30</sup> NCL, Northampton Mercury (27 October 1838); Northampton Herald (19 January 1850)

the club was established. They were as follows:

1. That every poor person, being a member, shall pay to the lady of the district one shilling the first Monday in each Month, from the first Monday in April, to the first Monday in December.
2. That no Trades-persons be admitted to partake of the Fund Subscribed for the Poor; but their Subscriptions will be received, and Coal delivered to them in the Winter, at Summer, cost price, according to the amount of their Subscriptions.
3. That two families living in one house, shall be allowed only one subscription.<sup>31</sup>

As with the individual donations coal was to be sold at a reduced price, but only one subscription per household was allowed, irrespective of the number of people therein.

The club contained a further eight rules, mostly relating to the method of payment.

Each member was expected to pay 6d at least every month, with fines for non-payment. Forfeits were to be enforced if more than one family in a household attempted to make deposits and if 'an out Parishioner' was found to be a member of a coal club in the parish where he lived as well as this one. Entitlement to the Paulerspury coal club could also be forfeited if members who were allotment holders failed to pay their allotment rents:

No Subscriber will profit, during the year 1846, by the Coal Club, whose rent for a Depslade Allotment, has not been paid up to Christmas 1845. And after the present year, no person's name will taken by the Collectors in May, whose rent has not been received for the Depslade Land, up to the twenty-fifth of December previous.<sup>32</sup>

The coal club was, therefore, restricted to those who earned sufficient to pay their subscriptions and if they were allotment holders, their rents as well. Thus it was not targeted at the poorest parishioners. What then was the value of the donations made by individuals?

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<sup>31</sup> NRO, Paulerspury, 255p/352

<sup>32</sup> Ibid

As with the endowed fuel charities, it is difficult to estimate the value of these donations, as little information is given in most cases. The Duke of Grafton gave most generously to supply coal for the poor of Potterspury, which lay at the heart of his estate. Although he only gave £3 8s 4d in 1833, this rose to £27 1s 8d in January 1838 and fell back to £13 17s 4d in May 1839. Elsewhere he gave £5 each to the Stoke and Shutlanger coal charity in 1838, towards 'giving the poor of Ashton coals' in 1840 and towards the purchase of coals for the poor of Alderton in 1832, which was sold to them at 6d per hundredweight.<sup>33</sup> This practice of selling coal at a reduced rate had been noted by Davies, who reported in 1797 that the poor of Brington were sold coal at the price of 4d per hundredweight which was 'was less than prime cost.'<sup>34</sup> The press also noted such practices with coal being sold for 6d per hundredweight in Farthingstone in 1841 and for 5d to 6d per hundredweight in Kettering in 1844.<sup>35</sup> The reductions in the cost of coal were relatively generous. In some cases the actual amount given to each family was recorded. In Moulton it was two hundredweight, in Marston Trussell four hundredweight and in Abington and Harpole five hundredweight, a similar amount to the wealthier of the endowed charities.

The first half of the nineteenth century, therefore, saw the establishment of several methods of supplying the poor with coal to compensate them for the loss of their customary rights to gather fuel. Nevertheless, the combination of coal charities, subscriptions and coal clubs provided the poor with a substantial amount of coal in a significant number of parishes. These represented a less flexible provision and one

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<sup>33</sup> NRO, Grafton, G.3930, Charity Book. In the case of Ashton this was to support a charity that had suffered the costs of enclosure.

<sup>34</sup> NRO, Grafton, G.3930, Charity Book. In 1836 the price to the poor of Alderton had doubled to 1s per hundredweight.

<sup>35</sup> NCL, Northampton Herald (6 February 1841 & 30 January 1844)

that could be subject to discrimination and, therefore, could be used as disciplinary mechanisms.

## **5.2: The poor's access to land for cultivation**

The provision of land for cultivation was the subject of considerable debate amongst those concerned with providing for the poor in the early nineteenth century, particularly the question of allotments. However, land for cultivation came in several different guises – gardens, potato grounds and allotments and these will all be considered when examining the extent of such provision. Although all types of land could be very valuable to the poor, the allotment schemes represented a new initiative and a marked change in the nature of charity giving. Therefore, the bulk of the chapter will concentrate on allotment provision, analysing who provided them and why, how valuable they were both materially and also as a means of social discipline.

Until recently the only historian to have provided an overall picture of the extent of land provision in the early decades of the century was D C Barnett.<sup>36</sup> Barnett concentrated on allotment schemes and acknowledged the difficulty in establishing the extent to which they existed because of the failure of contemporaries to use a common terminology or to define their terms. 'Allotment', 'cottage-garden', 'potato ground', 'garden-allotment' meant very different things to different observers.<sup>37</sup> Barnett, Moselle and Archer have all been criticised, in turn by Jeremy Burchardt for failing to make these distinctions.<sup>38</sup> As defined by Burchardt an allotment was a piece of land especially set aside for a labourer to hire from year to year. Potato grounds on the other hand were odd corners of land let out specifically for potato growing and

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<sup>36</sup> D C Barnett, 'Allotments', p.165

<sup>37</sup> Ibid, p.166

<sup>38</sup> J Burchardt, *The Allotment Movement*; D C Barnett, 'Allotments'; B Moselle, 'Allotments'; J E Archer, 'The Nineteenth-Century Allotment'

usually for no more than one season.<sup>39</sup> However, as this chapter is not solely concerned with allotments, but with all types of charitable land provision, all three types make up the extent of all schemes for which records survive, as shown in Table 5.1 (on this page and continues onto the next page).

**Table 5.1: Date of foundation and type of land in Northamptonshire up to 1856**

<i>Parish</i>	<i>Date of foundation</i>	<i>Type of land</i>
Bainton	Unknown	Charity land
Burton Latimer	1514	Charity land
Thornby	1623	Charity land
Lilburne	1681	Charity land
Loddington	1681	Charity land
Brigstock	1795	Charity land
Orlbury	1809	Gardens & allotments
Cold Higham	1812	Charity land
Barby	1820	Allotments
Corby St John	1820	Allotments
Spratton	1822	Allotments
Farthinghoe	1826	Allotments
Deene	1828	Allotments
Glaphthorn	1828	Allotments
Byfield	1829	Allotments
Cottesbrooke	1831	Allotments
Geddington	1832	Allotments
Middleton Cheney	1832	Charity land
Eydon	1834	Allotments
Kingsthorpe	1834	Allotments
Moulton	1834	Charity land & herbage
East Haddon	1834	Garden & allotments
Aynho	1834	Gardens
Boddington	1834	Gardens
Evenley	1834	Gardens
Harlestone	1834	Gardens
King's Cliffe	1834	Gardens
Wilbarston	1834	Gardens
Flore	1834	Gardens & allotments
Grendon	1834	Gardens & allotment
Kettering	1834	Gardens & allotments
Yardley Hastings	1834	Gardens & allotments
Norton	1836	Allotments
Pytchley	1837	Allotments
Kislingbury	1838	Allotments

<sup>39</sup> J Burchardt, The Allotment Movement



<i>Parish</i>	<i>Date of foundation</i>	<i>Type of land</i>
Wicken	1838	Allotments
Greens Norton	1841	Allotments
Great Oakley	1844	Allotments
Paulerspury	1845	Allotments
Wappenham	1845	Allotments
Moreton Pinkney	1846	Allotments
Stanford	1847	Allotments
Weston Favell	1847	Allotments
Little Bowden	1848	Allotments
Kelmarsh	1849	Allotments
Daventry	1853	Allotments
Gretton	1853	Allotments
Staverton	1854	Allotments
Tiffield	1856	Allotments

Sources: See footnote<sup>40</sup>

Surviving evidence for land provision was found in forty-nine parishes representing seventeen percent of all Northamptonshire parishes. Barnett estimated that allotments were to be found in fifty-one to sixty percent of parishes in Northamptonshire.<sup>41</sup> He based his findings on the replies to Rural Queries. In Rural Queries the Poor Law Commissioners asked two separate questions related to the provision of land.<sup>42</sup> The first, Question 19, being ‘Whether Gardens to the Cottages?’ A positive response was received from the parishes of Aynho, Upper & Lower Boddington, Byfield, King’s Cliffe, Evenley, Flore, Grendon, East Haddon, Harlestone, Middleton Cheney, Orlingbury, Wilbarston and Yardley Hastings. The extent of cottage gardens ranged from ‘some small Gardens’ to ‘Gardens to most of them’. In Evenley it was noted that ‘almost all have Gardens, but they are not very industrious in the cultivation of

<sup>40</sup> I am indebted to Jeremy Burchardt’s thesis, The Allotment Movement in England, 1793-1873 (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Reading, 1997) for the references to Spratton and Barby. Other sources were PP, Further Reports, (full references given in bibliography and as they occur); PP 1834 XXX(1), Rural Queries & PP 1834 XXXIX(1), Assistant Poor Law Commissioner’s Report (Northamptonshire); BL, 1027.h.19, The Labourers’ Friend: A Selection from the Publications of the Labourers’ Friend Society Showing the Utility and National Advantage of Allotting Land for Cottage Husbandry (London, 1835); BL, 7055.b.9, Abner Brown, Village Horticultural Societies The History, Rules, and Details of One Established in 1837, at Pytchley, Northamptonshire; with Remarks on the Formation of Similar Institutions and the Encouragement of Cottage Gardening (London, 1849); NRO, Parish Records for Corby St John, Geddington, Middleton Cheney, Wicken, Kislingbury, Wappenham, Weston Favell, Daventry, Gretton, Staverton and Tiffield (full reference to parish records given in bibliography and as they occur.)

<sup>41</sup> D C Barnett, ‘Allotment’, p.165

<sup>42</sup> PP 1834 XXXIX(1), Assistant Poor Law Commissioner’s Report (Northamptonshire)

them'. Kettering and Moulton had very few Gardens. Question 20 asked 'Whether any Land let to Labourers; if so, the Quantity to each, and at what Rent?' and the following parishes responded in the affirmative: Aynho, Byfield, Flore, Grendon, East Haddon, Kettering, Moulton, Orlingbury and Yardley Hastings. Again the extent of land provision varied and did not necessarily mean allotments of land in the strict sense. In Moulton, the response was 'Land by the side of the roads has been let to most of the Labourers at a nominal rent.' The parish of Evenley replied negatively saying 'No Land let to Labourers, except garden land.' The parish of Middleton Cheney, which replied negatively to Question 20, had replied to Question 19 'some Gardens.'<sup>43</sup>

However, if all forms of land provision are included there was evidence of schemes in fifteen out of the nineteen parishes that replied to the Rural Queries (seventy-nine percent). If only the responses to Question 20 are considered then the percentage comes down to forty-seven, slightly lower than Barnett's estimate. However, Barnett, like contemporary observers, did not identify which forms of land provision he had included in his estimate. Of course, all these estimations give a very limited picture of the actual extent of allotment provision in Northamptonshire, because only nineteen out of approximately 297 parishes (six percent) made a return at all. Additionally those filling in the questionnaires were not always scrupulous about responding to all the questions. Thus in the parish of Loddington, although the Rector of the parish made a return, he completely ignored Questions 19 and 20, even though, as has been shown, Loddington did have a charity which provided allotments of land to the poor. Other sources show that land was provided in a further nine parishes before 1834.

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<sup>43</sup> NRO, Middleton Cheney Parish Records, 211p/406, Rules and Regulations for Taylor's Charity (1832)

The report of the Assistant Poor Law Commissioner for Northamptonshire asserted that the letting to the poor of small plots of land ‘has become almost universal in Northamptonshire.’<sup>44</sup> There is obviously some considerable disparity between Richardson’s assertion and the sample estimate from Rural Queries. Richardson may well have been exaggerating the extent of provision as part of the propaganda by poor law reformers to encourage landowners to promote the independence of labourers through the provision of allotments. Thus, in selecting Farthinghoe as a model of what could be achieved by enforcing stringent poor law measures, an allotment scheme was singled out for praise as had been the clothing society. Richardson’s report mentions three other schemes at Kingsthorpe, Eydon and Glapthorn, but does not give the dates of their formation, although the Northampton Mercury shows that the Glapthorn scheme was started in 1828 by the Earl of Cardigan, as well as one in Deenthorpe, not mentioned in Richardson’s report.<sup>45</sup> As can be seen from Table 5.1 there was surviving evidence for a total of thirty-four land provision schemes, which were conventional allotment schemes.<sup>46</sup> Some of the replies from parishes, which were known to have had allotments, failed to mention them. This may have been because the allotments were no longer in existence, but it is more likely that it depended on the interests of the persons giving evidence. Lastly, although the dates of formation are not known, the 1867 Report of the Employment of Women and Children in Agriculture gave details of sixty-three parishes in Northamptonshire of which thirty-nine (sixty-two percent) mentioned allotments.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> PP 1834 XXXIX(1), Assistant Poor Law Commissioner’s Report (Northamptonshire), p.406

<sup>45</sup> NCL, Northampton Mercury, (22 August 1828)

<sup>46</sup> Although the dates of formation are not known, PP 1867-8 XVII, Employment of Children, Young Persons, and Women in Agriculture gave details of 63 parishes in Northamptonshire, of which 39 mentioned allotments.

<sup>47</sup> PP 1867-8, XVII, First Report from the Commissioners on the Employment of Women and Children in Agriculture

### **5.3: Instigators of land allotment schemes**

The role of endowed charities was limited in providing plots of land for cultivation. Table 5.1 showed the date of foundation and the type of land provision in Northamptonshire parishes for which there is surviving evidence of their existence in the early nineteenth century. Only nine endowed charities out of 667 reported charities were found to have actually let land to the poor and three of these were as the result of parliamentary enclosure agreements. In one case in Cold Higham, it was reported that the allotment was not let as directed by the enclosure act. The rector and churchwardens had divided the land 'into small parcels, giving one parcel to each individual who had exercised the privilege of cutting fuel on the heath. However, 'in order to prevent a claim by the occupiers to the absolute ownership' they had lately 'demanded the payment of a small rent or acknowledgement from each.' Thus, it was made clear that these plots of land were not a right as their old customary rights had been. Furthermore, the Charity Commissioners suggested that there was 'no reason to doubt that, by letting the land at its fair annual value in the ordinary way, a greater profit would be obtained.' This would suggest the possibility that at some time these plots of land could be taken away, but at the time of the report the Commissioners felt that 'the system, which has prevailed, cannot be altered without the risk of considerable opposition and disturbance.'<sup>48</sup> In Middleton Cheney, too the original intentions of the enclosure act had been altered as it was reported in 1833 that Middleton Cheney possessed 'a field called Taylor's Doles' which by 1832 was let in allotments to the poor.<sup>49</sup> It is evident from these sources that charitable endowments were not a major source of land provision for the poor either before or

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<sup>48</sup> PP 1826 XII(1), 14<sup>th</sup> Further Report, p.302. The type of disturbance they probably feared had occurred at Stowe IX Churches.

<sup>49</sup> NCL, The Northampton Herald, (27 April 1833)

during the first half of the nineteenth century. That need was addressed by other sources of charity and usually in the form of allotments.

Although Barnett states that allotment schemes were well known from the middle of the eighteenth century, before 1830 they tended to be 'small schemes operated on the large estates of very wealthy landowners with a tradition of helping their poor cottagers in this way.'<sup>50</sup> There was no evidence of such schemes at the start of the nineteenth century in Pitt's General View of the Agriculture of the County of Northampton,<sup>51</sup> but in 1834, Assistant Commissioner Richardson was able to report on the spread of allotments in Northamptonshire.<sup>52</sup> Allotment sites were fairly evenly spread throughout the county. In some instances sites were located in adjoining villages, such as Glapthorn and Deene; Gretton and Corby; Kettering, Pytchley and Orlingbury; Cottesbrooke and Spratton; and Byfield and Eydon, and this could be an indication that allotment provision was made as a result of personal recommendation. Additionally, if one proprietor in a parish was prepared to start a scheme, other proprietors may have been encouraged to do likewise. This can be seen in the parish of Hollowell, when on 7 December 1830, William Dean, the estate manager of Sir James Langham of Cottesbrooke wrote. 'I had a letter from Mr F Lucas informing me that he intends at Xmas to set out some land at Hollowell in small lots for the Labourers and he wishes me to mention it to you and hopes you will join with him being a proprietor in the same Parish.'<sup>53</sup> It is not clear whether Sir James actually responded to this request, but his estate records do show that he did provide allotments for some of his labourers. Although it is not clear in which parish, it was most probably in the closed parish of Cottesbrooke, for as was seen in the previous chapter, Sir James was more inclined to provide for his resident labourers rather than the non-resident. In the case of the Gretton and

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<sup>50</sup> D C Barnett, 'Allotments', p.172

<sup>51</sup> W Pitt, General View of the Agriculture of the County of Northampton (1809)

<sup>52</sup> PP 1834 XXXIX(1), Assistant Poor Law Commissioner's Report (Northamptonshire), p.406

<sup>53</sup> NRO, Langham, L(C)1183, Letter from William Dean to Sir James Langham, (7 December 1830)

Pytchley Cottage Garden schemes, these were founded by the same person, the Reverend Abner Brown, and the Corby, Glapthorn and Deene schemes by the Earl of Cardigan. Table 5.2 shows the instigators of twenty-four allotment schemes for which this evidence is known.

**Table 5.2: Instigators of allotment schemes**

<i>Parish</i>	<i>Instigator</i>
Daventry	C Watkins Esq
Geddington	Duke of Buccleugh
Greens Norton	Duke of Grafton
Moreton Pinkney	H B Whitworth Esq
Stanford	Lady Braye
Kelmarsh	Lord Bateman
Corby St John	Earl of Cardigan
Deene	Earl of Cardigan
Glapthorn	Earl of Cardigan
Orlingbury	Lord of the Manor
Grendon	Occupier
Byfield	Rector
Tiffield	Rector
Wappenham	Rev & occupier
Little Bowden	Rev Barlow
Gretton	Rev Brown
Pytchley	Rev Brown
Weston Favell	Rev Knight &c
Farthinghoe	Rev Litchfield
Great Oakley	Sir Arthur de Capel Broke
Cottesbrooke	Sir James Langham
Wicken	Sir John Mordaunt
Aynho	W Cartwright Esq
Eydon	Rev Clarke

Sources: As Table 5.1

Fourteen allotment schemes were instigated by landowners, nine by the clergy, one by an occupier and in the case of the land allotment in the parish of Wappenham a clergyman and a farmer. In Wappenham, the land was let by Thomas and Richard E Newitt (yeomen farmers) with the consent of the Reverend Thomas Scott.<sup>54</sup>

<sup>54</sup> NRO, Whellan's Commercial Directory (1849)

Newitt as the occupier of the Reverend Scott's land may well have been encouraged by him to provide allotments and, therefore, it is difficult to ascertain who was the actual promoter of this particular scheme.<sup>55</sup> In some cases, although the landowner was the provider of land, it was left to others to actively promote the allotment scheme. This was certainly true in Cottesbrooke where the landowner, Sir James Langham, was mainly absent from his estate and, left its management to two men, William Pearce and William Dean, who were his agents. This included the provision of allotments. Indeed Pearce was responsible for suggesting the idea to Sir James. He wrote to Sir James in January 1831, saying, 'I would recommend to you Sir James to let those who have large Families and indeed all married Men to have a Rood or from that to half an Acre of Land to grow hereafter a little Corn and Potatoes at an easy rent.'<sup>56</sup> Evidently, Sir James agreed, for in August 1831, Pearce wrote:

The Allotments of Land set out by me in January are all growing Potatoes are something that will be beneficial to the Occupier and they one and all express themselves most gratefully for the Consideration that has been shewn to them. This Plan works well everywhere.<sup>57</sup>

William Dean, too, corresponded with Sir James on the subject of allotments and was also responsible for allotting potato ground, writing in March 1831 that he had 'allotted out the Potato ground ... it is now dug up and ready to plant tomorrow (under the direction of Mr Pearce).'<sup>58</sup> Although these two men kept Sir James informed of how they were allocating his land, it is clear that they were responsible

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<sup>55</sup> The instigators of the allotment schemes in Barby, Boddington, East Haddon, Evenley, Eydon, Flore, Harlestone, Kettering, Kings Cliffe, Kingsthorpe, Kislingbury, Norton, Paulerspury, Spratton, Staverton and Yardley Hastings were not named. However, in parishes such as Harlestone and Yardley Hastings, which were both in the proprietorship of major landowners (Earl Spencer in Harlestone and the Marquis of Northampton in Yardley Hastings), it would not have been possible to set up such schemes without the support of these men.

<sup>56</sup> NRO, Langham, L(C)1159, Letter from W Pearce, Cottesbrooke to Sir James Langham, Glyndbourne, Sussex (10 January 1831)

<sup>57</sup> NRO, Langham, L(C)1163, Letter from W Pearce Cottesbrooke to Sir James Langham (11 August 1831)

<sup>58</sup> NRO, Langham, L(C)1191, Letter from William Dean, Cottesbrooke to Sir James Langham (14 March 1831)

for the idea of providing allotments. This could well have been true of allotment schemes instigated by aristocratic landowners such as the Duke of Buccleugh and the Earl of Cardigan, who would have left the management of their estates in the hands of agents. Additionally, in other parishes with largely absentee landowners, it was left to the resident clergyman to implement these schemes. Richardson had noted that the spread of allotments was largely thanks to 'the clergyman of the parish being in general the person who has set the thing on foot.'<sup>59</sup> As has already been seen in the parish of Farthinghoe, the management of parish affairs was left in the hands of the curate, Francis Litchfield. He was a promoter of allotments in his parish and was singled out for praise in the Northampton Herald by G W Perry, of the Labourers' Friend Society. Perry recommended Farthinghoe as 'a beautiful and highly successful specimen of the beneficial system which we advocate' where Mr Litchfield had 'given almost every family an allotment of land in fields adjacent to the village.'<sup>60</sup> Litchfield himself was not a substantial landowner or occupier, so these allotments were only possible with the co-operation of the landowner and even so it would appear that he did not have the full co-operation of all the occupiers of the parish. In a report to the Brackley Union, the Assistant Poor Law Commissioner, Richard Earle made the following observation:

Mr Litchfield, whose insolent, energetic temperament led him to enforce in his parish sound principles of management in a mode little calculated to create good will, became if I am to believe the evidence of his Brother Magistrates, or indeed his own testimony, the object of detestation to all classes.<sup>61</sup>

Litchfield, himself, in response to Perry's letter, wrote that 'his eulogy was much too strong, but being accustomed to unmerited blame, I have not been sorry to obtain his tribute.'<sup>62</sup> In this instance, it would appear that Litchfield was able to

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<sup>59</sup> PP 1834 XXXIX(1), Assistant Poor Law Commissioner's Report (Northamptonshire), p.406

<sup>60</sup> NCL, Northampton Herald, Letter from G W Perry, Oakley Hall to the Editor, (4 January 1834)

<sup>61</sup> PRO, MH12, 310/8671, Correspondence between Poor Law Commission and Brackley Union (5 May 1832)

<sup>62</sup> NCL, Northampton Herald, Letter from F Litchfield to the Editor (11 January 1834)



overcome opposition to his various schemes of parish management, because he had the support of the landowner. Clergymen also played a prominent role in the Weston Favell and Pytchley allotment schemes. The rules and regulations for the field garden tenants at Weston Favell stated that 'the object of this Society be to hire Land, and re-let the same in Gardens for Spade Culture, to Labourers and Artisans in Weston Favell.' The members of this society were listed as The Reverend R H Knight, Mr Michael Harris, Mr William Barber and Mr H B Whitworth.<sup>63</sup> The Pytchley scheme was the subject of a pamphlet by the Reverend Abner W Brown and was entitled Village Horticultural Societies. In particular, the Pytchley scheme was mainly the result of the efforts of the resident clergyman with 'the zealous efforts of a few friends.'<sup>64</sup> Thus, it would appear that the major force behind the implementation and administration of allotment schemes was, as observed by Richardson, the clergy, although landowners played a significant role in actually providing the land.

There was little evidence of farmers being involved in the provision of allotments, despite Moselle's claim that 'subletting by farmers must have been the dominant source of allotments in a significant proportion of parishes', which was based on the 1834 and 1843 reports.<sup>65</sup> Yet this was not the case in Richardson's report from Northamptonshire and there is only evidence to support allotment provision by two occupiers at most. The 1843 report did not collect evidence from this county, but the testimony of the witnesses predominantly shows hostility towards allotments from farmers, rather than evidence of subletting by them. Out of the thirteen witnesses giving evidence, only two gave any indication that farmers were responsible for supporting allotments. One of these was Henry Martin, described as a farmer, who had been engaged as the local agent for the West Kent Allotment

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<sup>63</sup> NRO, Weston Favell Parish Records, 359p/52, Rules and Regulations for the Field Garden Tenants at Weston Favell (1847-1861)

<sup>64</sup> BL, 7055.b.9, Village Horticultural Societies

<sup>65</sup> B Moselle, 'Allotments', p.486

Society for the last seven or eight years. When asked whether the farmers in Kent were generally hostile to allotments, he replied, 'They were, but they are not now; we have in several parishes committees composed entirely of farmers.'<sup>66</sup>

However, even this may have been an optimistic view, for another witness said that 'the farmers in Kent were generally hostile to the allotment system.'<sup>67</sup> The other pro-allotment farmer was James Hulbert from Bingley, Yorkshire, who stated that although no land was let in his parish, he thought that allotments would be beneficial because 'there are a great many weavers and combers who have nothing at all to do.'<sup>68</sup> Thus it may have been that farmers were more likely to support allotments in a manufacturing district. In a rural district such as Northamptonshire, it can be seen that there was little active encouragement by farmers to provide allotments.

However, although they are generally not recorded, it is very likely that a number of farmers did provide their labourers with potato grounds, as is suggested in the 1834 Poor Law Report, and as John Archer has noted.<sup>69</sup> One example was found amongst the farm accounts of David and William Randall who farmed land in Aldwinckle and Warmington. In October 1830 the accounts showed that they received payments from nine labourers for potato land. Four men paid five shillings, one, three shillings, two, two shillings and one, one shilling and sixpence. However, this was the only entry for potato land in the whole of the account books which ran from 1817 to 1841.<sup>70</sup> This would suggest that for these farmers this provision was only provided in exceptional circumstances. In the payment section of the accounts an entry was made on 2 December 1830 stating 'we began to watch our rickyards for fear they should be burned down.' This was followed by

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<sup>66</sup> PP 1843 VII(201), Report on Allotments, p.2

<sup>67</sup> Ibid, p.12

<sup>68</sup> Ibid, p.29

<sup>69</sup> J E Archer, 'The Nineteenth-Century Allotment', p.21

<sup>70</sup> NRO, Farm Accounts of David and William Randall, Wigsthorpe, Miscellaneous Photostat 1591/1-3 (1817-41)

payments to various men for 'watching nights' from 6 December to 11 December. Thus, in this case the provision of potato land was given in a year of rural unrest, the Swing crisis. It has been hard to uncover further evidence of such schemes in the surviving records, probably due to the nature of such provision, but it is extremely likely to have been more widespread than shown here.

There is evidence to suggest that farmers were hostile, or at least suspicious of allotments. In his pamphlet on Village Horticultural Societies, the Reverend Abner Brown, wrote 'the prejudice which farmers often feel against labourers having land is neither slight' and he added 'nor in general ill-grounded.'<sup>71</sup> The objection felt by farmers was noted by Assistant Poor Law Commissioner Richardson:

The higher class of farmers, and the gentry are sufficiently favourable to the system; the lower sometimes pretend that a man who is employed on his own land every morning and every evening cannot do his master's work justice.<sup>72</sup>

One of the main objections of farmers was that labourers would devote more time and energy to their allotments than to their paid employment. This was the view of an anonymous farmer who wrote to the Northampton Herald in 1841 saying that a labourer's obligations to his master must be violated, in some way or other, if he hold a considerable quantity of land! He went on to complain that 'many of the advocates of land allotments are persons who do not occupy land, and in their zeal to benefit the poor, overlook the farmer, not considering that the labourer's land is too often dug at the farmer's expense.' Thus, he was expressing a conflict of interests between the landowning class and the farmers. The way in which he helped his labourers was then expressed.

I constantly employ twelve labourers, all of whom have gardens, but not allotments, and when they have toiled for me ten hours I wish their work to

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<sup>71</sup> BL, 7055.b.9, Village Horticultural Societies.

<sup>72</sup> PP 1834 XXIX(1), Assistant Poor Law Commissioner's Report (Northamptonshire), p.407

end, for the day. I believe they are all happy and contented, and I consider my duty to endeavour to make them so, by shewing compassion to them, by remembering the 'sweat of their brows,' by giving them good wages, by applying to the board of guardians for them in affliction and distress, and relieving them by private charity.<sup>73</sup>

His solution was, therefore, to provide regular employment, good wages and assistance in the form of poor relief and charity. It could be argued that this approach was of greater benefit to the labourer than an allotment scheme, but only if the wages and charity were generous. This farmer clearly was not going to tolerate any of his men becoming allotment holders, for any that expressed such a wish were in his view 'tired of my service.' As John Archer says, the farmers 'did want their labourers to be dependent upon them for work, wages, and even poor relief' and they were concerned that allotments would remove some of that dependence.<sup>74</sup> Yet in some cases the farmers were persuaded to agree to allotment schemes if it meant a reduction in poor rates. This is reflected in a report of the Rector's allotment scheme in Byfield, which appeared in the publications of the Labourers' Friend Society:

The proposition met with considerable opposition from the resident farmers, and I believe one magistrate; but they ultimately consented to the trial, with the understanding that none of those who rented any part of this land should receive parochial relief during the time of such holding.<sup>75</sup>

The concern about the cost of poor relief would account for the failure of parish allotment provision. Laws passed in 1819, 1831 and 1832, allowed parish vestries to let land in allotments, but there is little evidence of parish provision of land in the Rural Queries apart from road herbages, such as those in Moulton and Yardley Hastings. Furthermore, it is clear from the 1834 Poor Law Report that the

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<sup>73</sup> NCL, Northampton Herald (8 June 1841)

<sup>74</sup> J E Archer, 'The Nineteenth-Century Allotment', p.34

<sup>75</sup> BL, 1027.h.19, The Labourers' Friend

provision of allotments by the parish was not approved of by the Commissioners, for they concluded:

That where the system of letting land to labourers has been introduced and carried on by individuals, it has generally been beneficial; and on the other hand, that where it has been managed by parish officers, it has seldom succeeded.<sup>76</sup>

The Poor Law Commissioners considered that the main reason for this lay in the relationship between the overseers and the recipients of relief. The labourer would be distrustful of any provision from the parish and therefore that 'he neither brings to any contract with them the cheerfulness, nor performs his part with the activity and perseverance which would be necessary to the success of the undertaking.' The overseers would be 'anxious to escape with as little trouble as possible from the thankless office that has been forced on them, or are likely to bestow little care on the selection of tenants, or in the framing of rules, and still less on enforcing their observance.'<sup>77</sup> This concern was expressed by Assistant Commissioner Richardson who cited the following example of the mis-management of parish affairs in Kingsthorpe:

Small plots of land were let to the labourers, which they worked at while nominally employed on the roads; the wages were high, piecework very general, and the beer-shops numerous and flourishing.<sup>78</sup>

Evidently, he was concerned that parish provision of allotments could become yet another form of outdoor relief that was not discriminating and was considered a right by the poor. This view was echoed by a correspondent to the Northampton Herald, who called himself 'A Cautious Land-Allotter':

The plan of allotting land to the poor is being adopted in several parishes in this county ...Once established, it will assuredly become as much a part of our parochial system as head-money, or any other mode of relief. Indeed in

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<sup>76</sup> S G & E O A Checkland, The Poor Law Report, p.292

<sup>77</sup> Ibid, p.292

<sup>78</sup> PP 1834 XXIX(1), Assistant Poor Law Commissioner's Report (Northamptonshire)

twenty years from the present time, it will be decreed, I suspect an invasion of rights of the poor to withdraw from those advantages which are now voluntarily conferred..... A Cautious Land-Allotter.<sup>79</sup>

It would seem that the cautious land-allotter was concerned that private provision could be just as 'pernicious' as parish provision in extending relief, if not treated with caution. The clear intention of the 1834 amendment was to remove any form of outdoor relief and to focus on the provision of relief in union workhouses. The combination of the farmers' opposition and the Poor Law's concerns about parish allotment provision meant that little was done by the parish. Thus, as Barnett states, 'allotments were seen in the context of philanthropy and self-help, not state action.'<sup>80</sup>

However, endowed charities rarely let allotments of land directly to the poor and the trustees of charity land actually preferred to use the profits from renting the land to donate to the poor. In the case of the Moulton Charity, discussed in Chapter three, this could benefit the trustees, who used the opportunity to the advantage of their own social group. However, one of the trustees, John Nethercoat broke ranks with his fellow trustees and appealed to the Poor Law Commissioners:

I beg to request that you will shortly send down to Northampton an Assistant Commissioner to aid the local authorities in putting in force the powers of the poor law bill passed last session of Parliament. The Trustees of a Charity Estate in this Parish are anxious that a farm of 33 acres, which will be let at Ladyday next, should be disposed of to the best advantage, and as I see that by a Clause 68, page 39 in the Bill, the Poor Law Commissioners have power over lands left for charitable purposes. I think it might strike the Assistant that the land might be advantageously let in small allotments to the poor of the Parish ....<sup>81</sup>

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<sup>79</sup> NCL, Northampton Herald (24 March 1832)

<sup>80</sup> D C Barnett, 'Allotments', p.178

<sup>81</sup> PRO, MH12 311/8689, Correspondence between Poor Law Commission and Brixworth Union (1834)

There is no evidence of any involvement in this case by the Poor Law Commissioners and, indeed, the history of the charity, as related in Chapter three, show that the poor did not get the opportunity to rent this land and that Nethercoat was over-ruled by his fellow trustees. Certainly it is not surprising that if parish provision was not forthcoming, then the letting of charity land in allotments for the poor's use was also rare, for on the whole the parish officials and the trustees were generally from the same small group of land occupiers within the parish.

#### **5.4: What motivated allotments providers?**

Allotments were undoubtedly the most prominent of the self-help charitable initiatives in the contemporary debates about rural poverty. Indeed allotments warranted the setting up of two national philanthropic bodies The Labourers' Friend Society and The Agricultural Employment Institution. The Labourers' Friend Society was founded in 1830 and was patronised by the King and his Consort. It was the direct descendant of The Society for Bettering the Condition and Increasing the Comforts of the Poor, which had been formed in 1796 by several philanthropic worthies including Sir Thomas Bernard and William Wilberforce. The Society for Bettering the Condition and Increasing the Comforts of the Poor published its reports from time to time until 1814 and these included the desirability of allotment schemes. Several of these early reports on allotments were reprinted in the early numbers of the publications of the Labourers' Friend Society.<sup>82</sup> The Agricultural Employment Institution, founded in 1832, also attracted royal patrons and influential committee members and proposed to establish allotments on wastes.<sup>83</sup>

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<sup>82</sup> BL, 1027.h.19, *The Labourers' Friend*

<sup>83</sup> BL, T.1446(23), *The First General Report of the Proceedings of the Directors of the Agricultural Employment Institution, read at the Public Meeting, held at The Great Hall, Freemasons' Tavern, on Saturday, the 23rd March, 1833* (London, 1833)

Thus, although both the Labourers' Friend Society and the Agricultural Employment Institution were concerned with the acquisition of land, which could be farmed by the poor, their methods differed. The Agricultural Employment Institution advocated the following means:

The Institution has in view the obtaining of waste, or other cheap lands, by gift, grant, lease, or purchase; to divide the same into smaller portions, where advisable; and by means of letting it to the poor, to bring the same into a state of profitable cultivation.<sup>84</sup>

The report then referred its readers to the example of the Poor Colony established in 1818 on wasteland at Frederick's Oord in Holland. This was an unwise move as it raised fears about the establishment of pauper colonies in England. Much of the debate about the wisdom of allotments centred on the fears of reducing the labourer to the condition of the Irish peasant. The following extract from the Poor Law Report of 1834, which registered complaints about the 'evils' of too large an allotment, serves as an example of this concern:

The labourer then becomes a petty farmer ... In a few years more, the new generation will want land, and demand will follow demand, until a cottier population similar to that of Ireland is spread over the country, and misery and pauperism are every where increased.<sup>85</sup>

Fears about the intentions of the Agricultural Employment Institution were expressed most vividly in the following letter to the Editor of the Northampton Herald by a member of the Kettering Labourers' Friend Society:

The Institution have already cast a sheep's eye upon parts of Whittlebury and Rockingham forests, and as to the fine tracts of Abthorp Woodland and Yardley Chase, it is intended to apply without loss of time to their noble proprietors, and with every chance of success, for leave to establish these interesting colonies in the neighbourhood of their respective residences. Troops of male and female paupers will shortly be transported from the workhouses of St Giles, Bethnal Green and St Martin's in the Fields, to enjoy

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<sup>84</sup> BL, T.1446(23), The First General Report, pp.9-10

<sup>85</sup> S G & E O A Checkland, The Poor Law Report, p.280



the pure air and Arcadian scenes of Northamptonshire, and will be seen hereafter footing it barefoot in a state of primitive nature ... or enjoying the pleasures of rural love...

The neighbouring villages .... have unfortunately no paupers to contribute in the filling of the necessary habitations ... it is therefore intended to procure an abundant supply from the other side of the country, filling up the chinks from Wiltshire, Hampshire and Buckinghamshire; and enabling all who may wish to better their situation to enter this promised land of milk and honey.<sup>86</sup>

Obviously this is alarmist propaganda from a rival society, but may well have confirmed long-held fears and prejudices about the influx of outsiders, especially paupers and those likely to breed indiscriminately, thus the reference to Arcadia. Certainly there is no evidence that any of their schemes came to fruition in Northamptonshire and the surviving records of the Institution are very scant.

The objects of the Labourers' Friend Society were less alarming as they intended 'obtaining for the labourer a small portion of land, at a moderate rent.'<sup>87</sup> The idea was to rent existing land from occupiers and let it out to parish inhabitants, not the establishment of poor's colonies. Thus G W Perry an agent for the Midland Circuit attempted to reassure the readers of the Northampton Herald:

You must be aware from having perused our publications that we aim not at introducing any vague or novel measure. We interfere not with any social institutions now existing connected with property ... We neither rent nor purchase land with money raised by subscription ... we dream not of farming colonies of poor labourers on commons or other lands either purchased or rented ...<sup>88</sup>

A major role of the Labourers' Friend Society was to disseminate information and provide advice and encouragement about setting up allotment schemes. To this end local societies were formed and the Northampton Herald reported that this had occurred in Kettering, Oundle, Peterborough and Banbury (which served the west of Northamptonshire). Unfortunately, there are no surviving records from these

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<sup>86</sup> NCL, Northampton Herald Letter from a member of the Labourers' Friend Society, Kettering (11 March 1834)

<sup>87</sup> BL, 1027.h.19, The Labourers' Friend, p.ix

<sup>88</sup> NCL, Northampton Herald, Letter from G W Perry to the Editor (4 January 1834)

societies. However, the Labourers' Friend Society published an account of a local scheme established in Wallington, Surrey, which was personally endorsed by Nicholas Carlisle, the Charity Commission Secretary, and one of the Managers of the society. This document shows that a Labourers' Friend Society could become involved in the actual process of letting land. The stated object of this society was that:

The Society does not seek to become possessed of land, for the purpose of Profit, but with the intention of letting it to Labourers ... the land shall be let at its actual value ... if land, however, should bear such a price that no poor man can rent it with a chance of success, then the Society shall rent the land, and re-let it at a price which shall remunerate the Tenant, the difference to be made up from the Funds of the Society.<sup>89</sup>

Allotments were also considered an important weapon by poor law reformers in the battle to remove labourers from a culture of welfare dependency. Thus the provision of garden land or allotments was included as a question in the Rural Queries of 1832 and a recommendation for the provision of allotments was made in the 1834 Poor Law Report.

In his article on allotments in Norfolk and Suffolk, John Archer attributes the spread of allotments to three long term causes: enclosure; rising poor relief; and the decline of rural industries, particularly the textile industry.<sup>90</sup> Additionally, he maintains that the timing of the majority of allotment sites in that region show that the real impetus was endemic rural unrest. Crouch and Ward argue that the emergence of the modern allotment was directly compelled by the parliamentary enclosures that occurred between 1750 and 1850.<sup>91</sup> Certainly contemporary observers referred to enclosure as marking the decline in the fortunes of the

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<sup>89</sup> BL, 8282.g.14, Report from the Select Committee on Labouring Poor, p.iv for Bettering the Condition of the Labouring Classes particularly in Allotting to them small portions of land. Established at Wallington, in Surrey, in the Month of July, 1835 (1835)

<sup>90</sup> J E Archer, 'The Nineteenth-Century Allotment', p.22

<sup>91</sup> D Crouch & C Ward, The Allotment, pp. 39-43

labourers, for which allotments would compensate. This can be seen in the first general report of the Agricultural Employment Institution, which recommended that the public support the institution by stating its objectives, which were:

...To let small quantities of land with cottages to the Agricultural and deserving poor and thereby to supply them and their families with the means of subsistence in times when they cannot get other employment, and to save them from the degradation of becoming paupers on the parish books; in short, to restore them to a healthful, contented and independent state, such as they once enjoyed; to encourage them in honest industry, and to render them valuable Members of Society ... to give them back in effect what the enclosures of commons and wastes, and the taking away their little pieces of land and throwing into large farms, have during the last forty years and upwards, deprived them of.<sup>92</sup>

It is clear that the members of the Institution hoped that the provision of allotments would restore the labourer to his former elevated state. They evidently placed the 'evils' of the present day on the enclosure movement for they state:

With reference to the Agricultural districts, the mischief has arisen in most of them from depriving the small occupiers of their land, and from enclosing the commons without setting apart allotments for such small occupiers ...<sup>93</sup>

A similar view was expressed by G W Perry, of The Labourers' Friend Society, who wrote to the Editor of the Northampton Herald on 28 December 1833:

We merely inculcate and show the utility of returning to a system which obtained in the best days of our history, when every agricultural cottager had an interest in the soil, and a stake in the country that gave him birth.... a system which when it shall have become general over England will have done much to bring us back to what we were before the impolitic and iniquitous system was introduced of adding farm to farm and field to field till there was no place left for the lowly children of soil ...<sup>94</sup>

Northamptonshire had experienced a major change in landholding and occupancy as a result of parliamentary enclosures. Neeson estimated that both in West

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<sup>92</sup> BL, T.1446(3), The First General Report, p.3

<sup>93</sup> Ibid, pp. 6-7

<sup>94</sup> NCL, Northampton Herald (4 January 1834)

Haddon, enclosed in 1765, and Burton Latimer, enclosed in 1803, the smallest occupying commoners lost a significant amount of their land.<sup>95</sup> Furthermore small occupiers lost not only land and common rights but also the possibility of acquiring more land at low rent.<sup>96</sup> This was a fact that was appreciated by the poor who rioted against the enclosure of Stoke Plain as they wanted to be granted a portion of land as a right to compensate for their privilege of cutting furze.<sup>97</sup> However, in only two parishes, Corby St John and Orlingbury, were the dates of enclosure and of setting up an allotment scheme close enough to suggest that allotments for rental to the poor were a direct response to enclosure. Orlingbury was enclosed in 1808 and its allotment scheme started in 1809. In the parish of Corby St. John the allotment rules for the 'Conditions of tenure of gardens on waste' are dated 1820, the same year as the enclosure.<sup>98</sup> However, the long-term effects of enclosure on the labourer, both materially and morally, underpinned the philosophy of those promoting allotment schemes. Both the Agricultural Employment Institution and the Labourers' Friend societies expressed belief in the restorative powers of allotments, particularly in improving the labourers' moral condition. The Agricultural Employment Institution wrote that it intended to restore the labourers 'by salutary means, to a contented and independent state, to encourage them in honest industry, and, in every point of view to render them valuable members of society.'<sup>99</sup> The Labourers' Friend Society, when writing about one of its predecessors, a society 'for the Encouragement and of Industry and the Reduction of Poor-rates' reported that it had addressed the legislature thus:

What effects might such assistance [provision of land at a low rent] be expected to produce in a given number of years ... on the moral condition and happiness of the poor...<sup>100</sup>

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<sup>95</sup> J M Neeson, Commoners, p.220

<sup>96</sup> Ibid, p.255

<sup>97</sup> NCL, Northampton Herald (3 August 1841)

<sup>98</sup> NRO, Corby Parish Records, 79p/134, Conditions of tenure of gardens on the waste (1820)

<sup>99</sup> BL, T.1446(23), The First General Report, p.10

<sup>100</sup> BL, 1027.h.19, The Labourers' Friend, p. VII

As well as providing material comforts then, an allotment was also intended to promote respectability and contentedness. A correspondent to the Northampton Herald, known simply as 'H', echoed these views:

If we would witness in them a moral, industrious, provident, sober, and well-affected race, we cannot promote a better system in the several parishes to which we belong, for furthering these desirable ends, than that of allotting moderate portions of land to the poor...<sup>101</sup>

These views echo those of Assistant Commissioner Richardson who was convinced that 'the hopeless and reckless state of degradation' of the labourer was due to his dependence on parish relief which meant that he had 'no inducement whatever to cultivate habits of providence and economy.'<sup>102</sup> Allotments were therefore also promoted as a means of combating the increase in pauperism and removing the labourer from a dependence on poor relief, which was seen as so detrimental to his moral state.

The Agricultural Employment Institution intended 'to relieve parishes from the dreadful burthen of the existing heavy poor rates.'<sup>103</sup> The Labourers' Friend Society was less explicit in its aims, stating that it was formed 'to meet the pressing exigencies of the times.'<sup>104</sup> This phrase could, of course, cover a multitude of 'evils', one of which could have been the problems of the old poor law system. The Northampton Herald printed an extract from The Farmer's Journal in which a member of the Labourers' Friend Society, Mr Montague Gore, advocated an allotment plan whose first advantage 'appears to me to consist in its certain tendency to diminish the amount of poor rates.'<sup>105</sup> It is not surprising, therefore, that, on the whole, allotments were viewed favourably by poor law

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<sup>101</sup> NCL, Northampton Herald, Letter from 'H' to the Editor (12 May 1832)

<sup>102</sup> PP 1834 XXIX(1), Assistant Poor Law Commissioner's Report (Northamptonshire)

<sup>103</sup> BL, T.1446(23), The First General Report, p.1

<sup>104</sup> BL, 1027.h.19, The Labourers' Friend, p.ix

<sup>105</sup> NCL, Northampton Herald (28 January 1832)

reformers and that the Poor Law Commissioners included two questions on the provision of land in their Rural Queries. Although Assistant Commissioner Richardson in his report on Northamptonshire had viewed parish allotments in a negative way, he believed that ‘combined with the refusal of relief, except under very peculiar circumstances, the system of allotting land may be a very efficient instrument in unpauperizing a parish and raising the tone of moral feeling.’<sup>106</sup> Not surprisingly, he cited the allotment system adopted in Farthinghoe as an example of efficiency in this endeavour. Mr Perry, too, praised Litchfield’s allotment system for tackling pauperism:

This worthy individual [Litchfield].... has gone a great deal towards ‘connecting property with pauperism!!’... The rates, too have been greatly reduced ...<sup>107</sup>

However the connection of property with pauperism lay at the heart of the objections to allotments held by poor law reformers, such as Richardson. Litchfield, too, expressed his concern with this notion when responding to Perry’s letter.

But since Mr Perry says that I have connected property with pauperism, I beg to assure him that my principle throughout has been that of keeping them distinct. The able-bodied labourers of Farthinghoe have long had land allotments it is true, but the receipt, while able-bodied, of parochial relief to the amount of one farthing would instantly be followed by a loss of land ...<sup>108</sup>

Thus it can be seen that the adoption of the allotment system in Farthinghoe was one of the ‘incentives’ introduced by Litchfield to achieve the reduction of poor rates boasted by him and praised by Richardson. ‘H’ wrote enthusiastically about the effects of allotments on the poor rates:

I have for nearly twenty years witnessed the effects of this system in the parish where I live and I do say that it has far more than answered the most sanguine

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<sup>106</sup> PP 1834 XXIX(1), Assistant Poor Law Commissioner’s Report (Northamptonshire)

<sup>107</sup> NCL, Northampton Herald (14 December 1833)

<sup>108</sup> *Ibid* (11 January 1834)

expectations of its promoters. The rates are not now one half in amount to what they were fifteen years since, which I consider, may partly be attributed to the allotment system.<sup>109</sup>

Obviously a reduction in the poor rates was only achieved by allowing fewer labourers to receive parish relief. It was hoped that this could be achieved through the labourers being able to supplement their household incomes from the produce of their allotments. Furthermore it was believed that allotments could also be of benefit by keeping the men occupied in times of unemployment and under-employment and thus abolishing the systems of 'roundsmen' and 'head-money', which were held in such approbation by poor law reformers. Indeed, Litchfield claimed, in his clothing club pamphlet, that his allotment plan was in part 'as an auxiliary to the abolition of head-money.'<sup>110</sup> 'H' cited the following example of how this worked in a parish where the system had only been in operation for four months:

On visiting this spot a short time since about the middle of the day, I found several labourers at work in it, which rather surprised me, as I had rarely been in the habit of seeing them employed on their allotments in other parishes except in an evening. My surprise was, however, soon removed by one them saying to me, 'Sir, this has been a good job for the farmers!' 'How do', I answered; they replied - 'that such of their fellow-labourers as had constant work, rather than leave it, had hired others who wanted work, to dig their allotments, and that by that means all hands in the parish had been called into action.'<sup>111</sup>

Unfortunately, there is no way of knowing how universal this experience was, although a pamphlet inscribed to the Duke of Grafton by James Kent of Stanton in Suffolk also noted that the cultivation of allotments was done by the men and their families, but that 'those men who have constant work employ the loose hands of the village, and give them good wages, as an example for their employers to

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<sup>109</sup> Ibid, Letter from 'H' to the Editor (12 May 1832)

<sup>110</sup> BL, T.1394 (36), *Three Year's Results*

<sup>111</sup> NCL, *Northampton Herald* Letter from 'H' to the Editor (12 May 1832)

follow.’<sup>112</sup> This competition over wages would help to explain why farmers were not generally in favour of a system that promised to reduce the burden of finding employment for the surplus labour of a parish. Additionally, as already stated, having surplus labour suited the farmer’s need for extra labour at certain times of the year. Yet, amongst the land-owning classes, allotments were seen as a possible means of reducing dependence on parish relief and raising the moral standards of the labourer, if adopted ‘under proper regulations.’<sup>113</sup>

Most of the commentators on allotments made the stipulation that it was necessary that allotments should be managed by a strict adherence to a well-drawn list of rules and regulations. However, the adoption of rules and regulations was not only a response to the question of poor relief. John Archer has linked the introduction and eventual spread of allotments in Norfolk and Suffolk to ‘endemic rural unrest.’ and in particular that ‘interest from landowners and parsons only really began to gather momentum with the onset of the Captain Swing riots in 1830.’<sup>114</sup> The timing of the foundation of both the Agricultural Employment Institution (1832) and the Labourers’ Friend Society (1830) are unlikely to have been coincidental. Indeed the Labourers’ Friend Society’s response to the ‘pressing exigencies of the times’ could just as well refer to agricultural unrest as to the problems of poor relief.<sup>115</sup> Similarly, although the first general report of the Agricultural Employment Institution did not refer directly to the Swing crisis it did talk of the ‘mischief’ which had arisen in the ‘Agricultural districts’, which some had attributed to the ‘operation of machinery.’<sup>116</sup>

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<sup>112</sup> BL, 1391.g.(7), J H Kent, Remarks on the injuriousness of the Consolidation of Small Farms, and the Benefit of Small Occupations and Allotments; with some observations on the past and present State of the Agricultural Labourers: In two letters, inscribed, by permission, to his Grace the Duke of Grafton (London, 1844)

<sup>113</sup> NCL, Northampton Herald, Letter from ‘H’ to the Editor (12 May 1832)

<sup>114</sup> J E Archer, ‘The Nineteenth-Century Allotment’, p.23

<sup>115</sup> BL, 1027.h.19, The Labourers’ Friend, p.ix

<sup>116</sup> BL, T.1446 (23), The First General Report



Archer has been able to show that forty-nine percent of known allotment schemes established in Norfolk and Suffolk between 1816 and 1851 were introduced in the years 1830-33. It has been more difficult to make a quantitative correlation between the introduction of allotment schemes in Northamptonshire and the years of the Swing riots, because of the difficulty of firmly establishing the foundation dates of those schemes mentioned in Rural Queries. However, if it is assumed that the majority of allotment schemes mentioned in Rural Queries were of recent formation then fifty-one percent of allotments established in Northamptonshire between 1809 and 1856 were introduced in the years 1830-33. Yet, the findings of Rudé and Hobsbawm show that there were relatively few Swing incidents in Northamptonshire. They recorded nineteen 'Swing' incidents for this county compared with 208 in Hampshire, eighty-eight in Norfolk and forty in Suffolk.<sup>117</sup> Three of these incidents occurred in parishes that responded to the Rural Queries and were Kettering, Upper Boddington and Moulton. However, when responding in Rural Queries to Question 53 which asked 'Can you give the Commissioners any information respecting the causes and consequences of the Agricultural Riots and Burnings of 1830 and 1831?' these parishes failed to mention these incidents.<sup>118</sup> In Upper Boddington there was no response at all to this question. The response from Kettering suggested that the 'riots and burnings are thought to have been connected frequently with the irritations, miseries, and parish squabbles arising from the support of the poor under the present laws.' From Moulton, John Nethercoat answered 'No' and yet in a letter to the Earl of Westmoreland, dated 14 December 1830, in which he talked of his role in swearing in special constables, he gave the following account of a disturbance:

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<sup>117</sup> E J Hobsbawm and G Rudé, Captain Swing, pp.312-358

<sup>118</sup> PP 1834 XXX(1), Rural Queries. Indeed, the majority of responses were concerned with putting forward general theories about the causes of the riots, ranging from 'private revenge' in King's Cliffe to 'the evil example of the French Revolution' and 'the writings of Mr Cobbett and the speeches of Mr Hume' in Evenley. In several parishes the present poor relief system and agricultural distress were cited as was a sympathy with those in distress in other more riotous regions. In only one instance were the riots related to land in the response of the Rector of Loddington who believed that they were due to 'the idea thrown out at head-quarters, that the poor were to have an equitable division of land by means of the Reform Bill.'

On Wednesday evening the 8th instant, a number of men and boys amounting to 50 or 60 assembled in the Parish of Moulton and proceeded to the Premises of a Machine-maker and broke some articles of small value and his shop windows, but afterwards dispersed ... The Occupiers of Land in this immediate neighbourhood having intimated to their Labourers, that in consequence of the price of flour being high, they would raise their wages 1/- per week, I think the excitement and tendency to riot amongst the labouring classes are generally subsiding, and my opinion is, that this neighbourhood will soon be restored to a peaceful and tranquil state.<sup>119</sup>

Perhaps by the time he responded to Rural Queries he felt confident that peace had been restored.<sup>120</sup> His fellow respondent from Moulton, Clark Hillyard, noted that 'fortunately this county has been nearly exempt from those calamities', but suggested that 'unanimity amongst the Occupiers of the land to give full employment to the Labourers ... would be the best preventative of these abominable acts.'<sup>121</sup> None of these parishes recommended the provision of land as a prevention of riot and, although all of them had some land set aside for the labourers, this had not proved to be an effective deterrent in the period of 'Swing' disturbances. This is true also of the parish of Spratton, which had a well-established allotment, but which, nevertheless, experienced a threshing machine breaking incident. This was reported in the Northampton Mercury on 18 December 1830, but did not feature in Captain Swing.<sup>122</sup>

However, fear of the 'Swing' riots can be seen to have been an incentive in the provision of allotments (and with the granting of potato plots, as was seen in section 5.3). This is most evident in the correspondence of Sir James Langham. As has been seen, Sir James's agents Pearce and Dean promoted the provision of allotments. In their letters they both write of the unrest in the neighbourhood and

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<sup>119</sup> NRO, 298/24, Box X6771, Letter from John Nethercoat to Earl of Westmoreland (14 December 1830)

<sup>120</sup> Yet, as has been seen, John Nethercoat did try to arrange for charity land to be let in allotments to the poor in 1835.

<sup>121</sup> PP 1834 XXX(1), Rural Queries

<sup>122</sup> NCL, Northampton Mercury (18 December 1830)

recommend allotments to combat this. William Dean, in particular, wrote about his fears:

I certainly felt alarmed for the safety of the house last night after the report I heard from a respectable tenant or two of ours and I certainly think it was the intention of the rioters to have made some sort of an attack upon the house or windows...<sup>123</sup>

William Pearce, however, believed that 'Dean was unnecessarily alarmed', but he was willing to address the problems of the occupiers by allotting land to the labourers in preference to them being 'degraded by being put on the Rounds.'<sup>124</sup> From this correspondence it is evident that it was felt necessary to adopt measures to alleviate distress in a time of spreading unrest.

Although the 'Swing' riots never really took hold in Northamptonshire they left an atmosphere of anxiety in their immediate aftermath. This is apparent in the newspapers, the Northampton Herald and the Northampton Mercury where reporting on incidents of arson and other forms of unrest and the promotion of allotments schemes ran side by side and were most frequent in the years 1830-1836. Thus William Ralph Cartwright Esq, the Chairman of the Northamptonshire Quarter Sessions in April 1832, used his Quarter Sessions address to recommend allotments:

You will, I am sure, excuse my calling your attention to two subjects, which are not unconnected with the condition of the humbler classes and the state of crime. I allude to the system of allotting land for the benefit of the poor and to the epidemic of unrest.... With respect to the allotment of land, I speak from experience when I recommend it strongly to your attention. You will find in it the means of employing the labourer in his vacant hours, and of providing him with the increased general tranquillity.<sup>125</sup>

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<sup>123</sup> NRO, Langham, L(C)1183, Letter from William Dean to Sir James Langham (7 December 1830)

<sup>124</sup> NRO, Langham, L(C)1159, Letter from W Pearce to Sir James Langham (10 January 1831)

<sup>125</sup> NCL, Northampton Herald Northamptonshire Quarter Sessions, Address from the Chairman, William Ralph Cartwright, Esq. (7 April 1832)

Cartwright, himself, had been able to respond to Question 53 of the Rural Queries that 'we had very few Fires hereabouts.'<sup>126</sup> Other parishes where allotment schemes were in operation were not so fortunate. This is particularly true of the parish of Middleton Cheney. The Northampton Herald published the rules of the land allotments at Middleton Cheney on 27 April 1833 and the following week reported on 'Fire and Sheep-slaying at Middleton Cheney.' Furthermore the report stated that 'this is the third fire committed in this parish within six months.'<sup>127</sup>

Despite the culprits being committed to the assizes for trial after an examination by Reverend Litchfield, Middleton Cheney experienced four further incidents of arson reported in the Northampton Herald on 27 February 1836 and 12 March 1836.

Middleton Cheney's allotments, resulting from enclosure, had not been established in response to the tensions of 1830-31, but the above-mentioned rules were drawn up in 1832 'at the written request of upwards of One Hundred and eighty poor inhabitants of Middleton Cheney.'<sup>128</sup> The drawing up of these rules may have sparked off discontent in the parish, especially amongst those who were excluded from the allotments. Although the rules do not specifically name any excluding factors, the tenants were to be dependent 'upon the will of the Trustees.' However, according to John Archer, those most likely to be excluded from allotment schemes were the 'more troublesome villagers, the unemployed, the unattached, and the irreligious and that this may have caused divisions within a parish.'<sup>129</sup> However, the object of the 1833 incident in Middleton Cheney was reported as being 'the dismissal of an unpopular deputy overseer' and that 'the determination of the discontented paupers to drive him out of the parish' had been 'too much encouraged by a want of unanimity and firmness among the rate payers.'<sup>130</sup> The discontented paupers were likely to be made up of the same people who were

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<sup>126</sup> PP 1834 XXX(1), Rural Queries

<sup>127</sup> NCL, Northampton Herald (27 April 1833)

<sup>128</sup> NRO, Middleton Cheney Parish Records, 211p/406, Rules and Regulations for Taylor's Charity (1832)

<sup>129</sup> J E Archer, 'By a Flash and a Scare', p.66

<sup>130</sup> NCL, Northampton Herald, Report of Fire and Sheep-Slaying at Middleton Cheney (7 April 1832)

excluded from a share of the allotment land, the 'undeserving' poor. Thus, in Middleton Cheney, it was probably the 'respectable' poor, who requested regulations, thus, as Archer says, attaching themselves 'to the social and economic mores of the landed elite' as a 'class which has something to lose.'<sup>131</sup> Those excluded from both poor relief and from the allotments may well have felt embittered and turned to covert forms of protest.

Certainly those appealing directly to a landowner to provide allotments stressed their respectability as can be seen in the following 'Humble Petition of the industrious and deserving Labourers of the Parish of Peakirk' addressed to His Lordship of Gloucester and Bristol in 1839:

That we the undersigned being Married Men with Families and Church men and holding no Land hope you will grant us Permission to be allowed to Rent with your Lordship's Sanction a Piece of agricultural Ground containing Four Acres one Rood which is the Property of the Church of Peakirk and as we understand under the care of the Rector, Church-wardens and some of the Principal Inhabitants of the Parish & we hereby promise each and all of us to abide by such terms as your Lordship wishes it so to be. The Church Lands have been generally let by Public Auction to the Best Bidder, but this year the custom is not followed. £3 an Acre has been given. If we should fail in getting this Church Land, yet we and many others at Peakirk and Glinton would be glad to get some Allotments of the Rector's Land. We want Bits of Land, and they would be very serviceable to our families - whatever others may say. We wanted the Curate to do something in this Matter, but He declines interfering with it.<sup>132</sup>

Thus, they stress their deservedness. However, it is apparent that they were not well supported in their request by either the principal inhabitants of the parish or the curate. Indeed it is hinted that some may not have believed allotments to be desirable. It is not possible to tell whether the curate declined to interfere, because he was of that opinion or if he may have just have felt too powerless to contest the

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<sup>131</sup> J E Archer, 'By a Flash and a Scare', p.66

<sup>132</sup> NRO, Peakirk Parish Records, 265p/179, The Humble Petition of the industrious and deserving Labourers of the Parish of Peakirk (14 January 1839)

wishes of the principal inhabitants.<sup>133</sup> Unfortunately there is no record of any response to this petition nor to the following petition and these two are the only surviving evidence of labourers' requests. Opposition to the provision of allotments is also talked of in this second petition to Viscount Clifden of Holdenby in 1848. Here the labourers state that they believe 'there will be objections by some who will say we shall be too independent and that they will not be able to get their work done.' The labourers may have felt emboldened to make this request because they had already received a 'small piece of ground as garden' from his mother, Lady Dover. They proposed a plan 'whereby we can render your Lordship a return and cause your Estate at Holdenby to be disburdened of population.' The plan was as follows:

We shall be most happy to have one acre of land each for our cultivation at one pound per acre more than its usual rent thus thirty acres of land will be occupied by us and thirty pounds per annum will be realised more than the present rent. This thirty pounds if entrusted in your stewards care to put out one lad yearly as an apprentice to some mechanical trade will prevent your Lordships estate from being overpopulated and as there are always some Lads who are of delicate health who are not fit for Husbandry...<sup>134</sup>

Thus they provided Lord Clifden with a scheme, which would cost him nothing, but would also provide for the future of their children away from the vagaries of agricultural employment.

Indeed, as Archer says, 'the granting of allotments were not simple acts of philanthropy on the landlords' part since they asked for and received a rent, usually at the current rate for agricultural land, although in some cases the rents were excessive.'<sup>135</sup> An example of a landowner making a considerable profit was reported in the Northampton Herald on 23 February 1833:

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<sup>133</sup> The Rev James T Pedley established a clothing club in Peakirk & Glington.

<sup>134</sup> NRO, 1515.2, Letter from labourers at Holdenby to Viscount Clifden, Holdenby (25 March 1848)

<sup>135</sup> J E Archer, 'By a Flash and a Scare', p.63

A CHARITABLE REFORMER - A Gentleman of Warwickshire has lately obliged a Tenant, who occupied a Field at Two Pounds per acre, to give it up at a very Short Notice, because he wished to appropriate it 'to charitable purposes. He is now letting it to the Poor at the rate of Four Pounds an acre. - Charity with a vengeance!!!<sup>136</sup>

It could be that economic profit might have been a motive for letting land in allotments in some cases, although, if this was the case, it is surprising that allotments did not spread faster and further. Moselle argues that the extent of allotment provision was determined by 'balancing potential profits from subletting against the desire for low wages and a disciplined, readily available workforce.'<sup>137</sup> However, as already discussed, the evidence for Northamptonshire suggests that the majority of provision was made by landowners and clergymen rather than farmers. Therefore, the farmers did not need to do this balancing act and were far more inclined to favour the second option. The requests of the poor were more likely to find favour in those parishes where the dominant landowner or the clergyman was interested in allotment provision. This was more likely to happen in a 'close' parish such as Cottesbrooke rather than an 'open' parish such as Moulton and to be the result of a mixture of the motives discussed. It has only been possible in a few cases to identify the dominant motive. However, by examining how several individual schemes were regulated, it is possible to get closer to the prevailing concerns of the allotment providers.

### **5.5: The rules and regulations of allotment schemes**

There were only a small number of surviving allotment rules and regulations for the first half of the century and thus it has been necessary to include some from the 1850s to give a fuller sample. Yet, as will be seen, the rules did not change

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<sup>136</sup> NCL, *Northampton Herald* (23 February 1833)

<sup>137</sup> B Moselle, 'Allotments', p.498

significantly over time and, indeed, many of them closely resemble those recommended by the Wallington Labourers' Friend Society and published in 1835. This publication laid out rules and accompanied them with some observations and justifications which will be considered here. The Northamptonshire rules came from schemes in Corby St John, Middleton Cheney, Wicken, Wappenham, Weston Favell, Daventry, Staverton, Tiffield, Gretton and Pytchley.<sup>138</sup> The Gretton rules are in fact undated, but are contained within other documents dated 1863. The scheme was established in 1853, but the rules appear to have been framed in response to problems encountered by the Reverend Brown in relation to the letting of the allotments. A comparison of the various schemes and their rules will be made under the following categories: how much land was to be made available; the rent; the method of cultivation; persons considered suitable to be allowed to rent allotments; and the nature of forfeitures and exclusions. Table 5.3 shows the average size of an allotment plot and a comparison of different plots in acres. From this table it can be seen that Sir John Mordaunt was particularly generous with his plot size, but in this limited sample it can be seen that one quarter of an acre was more normal. This was the size recommended by the Wallington Labourers' Friend Society and subsequently by the Select Committee on the Labouring Poor in 1843.

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<sup>138</sup> NRO, Corby St John Parish Records, 79p/134; Middleton Cheney Parish Records, 211p/406; Wicken Parish Records, 364p/10, Burial Records including rules for cottage allotments (1838); Wappenham, ZA7651, Rules for Wappenham Parish Allotments (1845); Weston Favell Parish Records, 359p/52; Daventry, BU(D) 45, Rules and Regulations to be observed in the Daventry Allotments; Staverton Parish Records, STV/18, Rules for Letting, Managing and occupying the Poor's Land at Staverton; Tiffield, Allotments Rules; WFE/150; Gretton Parish Records, 142p/120, Vicarage Allotments; BL, 7055.b9, Village Horticultural Societies



**Table 5.3: Average size of allotment plot**

<i>Date</i>	<i>Parish</i>	<i>Size of Plot</i>	<i>Comparison in acres</i>
1820	Corby St John	Not known	
1832	Middleton	Not known	
	Cheney		
1838	Wicken	No more than 40 poles	1 acre
1845	Wappenham	Not known	
1847	Weston Favell	No more than 20 poles	¼ acre
1849	Pytchley	No more than one rood	¼ acre
1853	Daventry	Not known	
1854	Staverton	No more than one rood	¼ acre
1856	Tiffield	No more than 20 poles	¼ acre
1863	Gretton	33 allotments 11 of 10 poles 21 of 20 poles 1 unknown	1/16 acre or ¼ acre

Conversion : Pole /rod/ perch = 16 ½ feet

40 rods x 40 rods = 1 acre = 1600 square rods

Rood = ¼ acre = 400 square rods<sup>139</sup>

Sources: Allotment society rules and regulations for the societies in the table, see footnote.<sup>23</sup>

The Select Committee gave the following reasons for choosing a quarter of an acre:

... the allotment should be of no greater extent than can be cultivated during the leisure moments of the labourer and his family. The exact size which would meet this condition must vary according to the nature of the soil, the strength and numbers of the family, and their leisure time; but one quarter of an acre is the size usually adopted, and best suited to the average of cases.<sup>140</sup>

It is clear from this statement that such an allotment size meant that it was to be cultivated solely by the labourer and his family, with no suggestion that he might

<sup>139</sup> Conversion taken from J Richardson, 'Section A. Land and Agriculture' in his *The Local Historian's Encyclopaedia* (London 1986, reprinted 1989), pp 9 -11. Although not specified these comparisons are based on square poles.

<sup>140</sup> PP 1843 VII(201), *Report on Allotments*, p.iv

hire others to work on his allotment, as had been suggested in the reports in the Northampton Herald. Indeed out of the ten Northamptonshire rules, eight contained a clause forbidding sub-letting of the allotment and the penalties ranged from forfeiting the plot in Pytchley to a 'penalty of double rent' in Wappenham.<sup>141</sup> The Wallington Labourers' Friend Society considered this rule necessary 'to avoid the Irish sub-letting misery.'<sup>142</sup> As has already been noted, the Poor Law Commissioners in 1834 were anxious to avoid a similar system to that prevailing in Ireland. Table 5.4 shows the actual rents given in the rules and a comparison in shillings per pole.

**Table 5.4: Actual and comparative rents**

<i>Date</i>	<i>Parish</i>	<i>Rent given in rules</i>	<i>Comparison</i>
1820	Corby St John	-	-
1832	Middleton Cheney	8s per chain	2s (24d) per pole
1838	Wicken	3d per pole	3d per pole
1845	Wappenham	6s per chain	1s 6d (18d) per pole
1847	Weston Favell	-	-
1849	Pytchley	-	-
1853	Daventry	-	-
1854	Staverton	'So much per rood according to quality'	-
1856	Tiffield	4½d per pole	4 ½d per pole
1863	Gretton	10s per 20 poles	6d per pole

Source: As Table 5.3

It was considered important by the Wallington Labourers' Friend Society that the land be 'let at its actual value, such as the Farmer will give for it, as it would be a mistaken act of kindness to let it rent-free, or for less than its value, and, an act of oppression to let it for more.'<sup>143</sup> Certainly, letting the land at below market value would not endear allotments to farmers. In Table 5.4 it is notable that in Wappenham, where the land was let by occupiers, the allotment rental was considerably higher than in the parish of Wicken where the allotment was provided

<sup>141</sup> NRO, Wappenham, ZA7651

<sup>142</sup> BL, 8282.g.14, The Labourers' Friend (Wallington), p.10

<sup>143</sup> Ibid, p10

by the landowner. The afore-mentioned article in the Northampton Herald, 'Charity with a Vengeance', shows that land was let above its value in some cases and this may have been true of the Middleton Cheney Taylor's Charity Allotments, which had the highest rents recorded here. Rents may have differed, too, depending on whether expenses such as rates, taxes, drainage and repairs were paid for by the landlord or by the allotment holders. The 1843 Select Committee on the Labouring Poor recommended that:

Tithes, parochial rates, taxes and all other charges should be included in the rent, and paid by the owner and not by the occupier, for the purpose of saving trouble in the collection, of preventing the accumulation of arrears, and of guarding the tenant against frequent and sudden demands for payments which he might not be prepared to meet.<sup>144</sup>

In Wicken, the rules stated that 'the landlord will pay the levies, poor rates and all other taxes' and similarly in Weston Favell the rates, taxes and repairs were paid by the Society.<sup>145</sup> However, in Pytchley, although the rates and taxes were paid by the churchwarden, 'any draining required shall be done at the expense of all the allotments which shall be benefited by it.' In Abner Brown's scheme at Gretton, the expenses of hedges, ditches, drainage, vermin killing etc. were all paid by the landlord and charged to the allotment holders.<sup>146</sup> Most of the allotment schemes allowed the rents to be paid in instalments. In five schemes this was half-yearly, usually at Lady Day (25 March) and Michaelmas (29 September), although the Gretton scheme stipulated 6 April and 24 June. This is puzzling, as the close proximity of these dates, neither of which fell after harvest, the time of greatest employment and prosperity, would surely have proved difficult for the labourer to fulfil. In two of the schemes quarterly payments were allowed, including the Weston Favell scheme where it was stipulated that the rents should be paid 'in the School House at 7 o'clock in the evening.'<sup>147</sup> In Staverton it is unclear whether the

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<sup>144</sup> PP 1843 VII(201), Report on Allotments, p.iv

<sup>145</sup> NRO, Wicken, 364p/10; Weston Favell, 359p/52

<sup>146</sup> BL, 7055.b.9, Village Horticultural Societies; NRO, 142p/120.Gretton

<sup>147</sup> NRO, Weston Favell, 359p/52

tenants were allowed instalments or not, but they had to pay up 'before any part of the crop be taken away; or, at the latest, before the 29 September in each year.'<sup>148</sup>

The majority of the allotment rules and regulations dictated the manner in which the land should be cultivated. In six cases spade husbandry was stipulated and in a further two manual labour and digging were advocated. John Archer suggests that spade husbandry 'was demanded for both practical and morally improving reasons'.<sup>149</sup> On the practical side The Wallington Labourers' Friend Society reported 'that the land has been greatly improved by the spade-husbandry.'<sup>150</sup> The moral benefit of this manner of cultivation was that it kept the labourer fully occupied and, therefore, out of mischief, as will be discussed later. Allied to spade husbandry were regulations about the digging in of manure and seven allotments contained these and specified the amount to be applied. Furthermore, the types of crops, which could be grown, were dictated in seven allotment schemes. Four of them stipulated that half the plot should be planted with grain and pulses and the other half with potatoes and other root vegetables, including potatoes. Thus a system of crop rotation could be practised, although the 1843 Report concluded that 'this is a matter which may well be left to the discretion and experience of the cultivator.'<sup>151</sup> The intention was not to exhaust the soil and hopefully to protect against disease, particularly potato blight after the Irish experience of 1845. Indeed in Wicken and Weston Favell the tenants were not allowed to have 'the same kind of crop two years running on the same piece of land.'<sup>152</sup> However on the Wappenham allotment plots there were more restrictions on planting with 'no fruit trees, no wheat, barley, oats, horse beans or grey peas.'<sup>153</sup> As this land was let

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<sup>148</sup> NRO, Staverton, STV/18

<sup>149</sup> J E Archer, 'The Nineteenth-Century Allotment', p.28

<sup>150</sup> BL, 1027.h.19, The Labourers' Friend & 8282.g.14, The Labourers' Friend (Wallington),

<sup>151</sup> PP VII(201), Report on Allotments, p.iv

<sup>152</sup> NRO, Wicken, 364p/10

<sup>153</sup> NRO, Wappenham, ZA7651

by occupiers, this prohibition was probably designed to make sure that the labourers were not in competition by growing the same type of crops as the lessors.<sup>154</sup>

Additionally, the allotment rules were designed to ensure that the farmers did not suffer from the labourers having devoted so much time and energy to their allotments that they were not able to be an efficient workforce for their masters. The 1834 Poor Law Report had recommended that the labourer and his family should be able to cultivate a plot 'during their spare hours.'<sup>155</sup> This was designed to prevent a cottier population but also to allay the misgivings of farmers. In five of the allotment schemes rules specified that work on the allotment should be outside the normal working day or, as in the case of Tiffield and Wicken, 'at any time when his master has a just demand on the occupier's services.'<sup>156</sup> In Pytchley, the occupiers could not work on their allotments 'before going to work.' and in Staverton and Weston Favell they were unable to work after five-thirty and six o'clock in the morning and before six-thirty and six o'clock in the evening respectively. Given the limited hours it is probable that it was expected that much of the work on the allotment would be carried out by the labourer's family. The labour of women and children was a valuable resource to the labouring family's economy, particularly in Northamptonshire where there was little by-employment

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<sup>154</sup> John Archer quotes the report of Thomas Campbell Foster writing in *The Times* on 10 July 1844 of the 'absurd jealousy' among the farmers about the quality of crops grown on allotment sites, compared to neighbouring farms. J E Archer, 'The Nineteenth-Century Allotment', p.35

<sup>155</sup> S G & E O A Checkland, *The Poor Law Report*, p.278

<sup>156</sup> NRO, *Tiffield*, WFE/150, Rule 2; *Wicken*, 364p/10, Rule 2

for women and children.<sup>157</sup>

However, only two schemes, Staverton and Pytchley actually stressed the necessity of tenants being married men with families, although it is implicit in some of the other schemes. Even so, the Staverton rule may not have entirely excluded the single, for it contained a condition that 'in default of such applicants, the Managers shall be allowed to let the Land to other residents of small means and good character.' Thus in Staverton a premium was placed on the respectability of the occupier.<sup>158</sup> The recipients were described in this scheme as 'honest and industrious labourers.'<sup>159</sup> In Wappenham the land was let to 'industrious labourers', but those belonging to the parish.'<sup>160</sup> References to residency can also be found in the Pytchley and Weston Favell schemes. In Weston Favell, the occupiers should be 'labourers and artisans, residing in Weston Favell.'<sup>161</sup> Thus, as was apparent in Cottesbrooke the resident labourers were most likely to benefit from allotment provision. Furthermore, it may have been hoped that the mention of residency would reduce hostility to allotments by allaying fears about increasing pauperism. This was clearly the intention of the Wallington Labourers' Friend Society, which stated that it 'does not encourage the removal of Labourers from one Parish to another, but proposes rather to benefit them wherever they are found.'<sup>162</sup> Indeed the society reported that where the system had been tried it had resulted in the tenants and their families having 'been kept free from parish relief, and become the farmers' best labourers.'<sup>163</sup> Although this claim comes from a

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<sup>157</sup> This was particularly true of lace-making which had declined by the 1840s and was not replaced by straw-plait making as was the case in neighbouring Bedfordshire, where this industry was a source of considerable employment for women until its collapse in the 1870s. N Verdon, Changing Patterns of Female Employment in Rural England c.1790-1890 (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Leicester, 1999), p. 239

<sup>158</sup> NRO, Staverton, STV/18, Rule V

<sup>159</sup> Ibid

<sup>160</sup> NRO, Wappenham, ZA7651

<sup>161</sup> NRO, Weston Favell, 359p/52

<sup>162</sup> BL, 8282.g.14, The Labourers' Friend (Wallington),

<sup>163</sup> Ibid, p.13

source that was actively promoting allotments and, therefore is likely to be overstated, the fact remains that only two of the allotment schemes have any stipulation regarding parish relief. In Pytchley any occupier 'who leaves his family chargeable to the parish' would forfeit his allotment.<sup>164</sup> In Wicken the rule stated that:

If after the expiration of one year the Tenant shall receive for himself or his family any Parish relief, except in cases of sudden calamity or sickness, or in the case of aged and deserving Labourers, the Landlord shall re-enter without notice.<sup>165</sup>

It may be that these schemes contain these rules as they are some of the earliest schemes for which rules exist and, being formed not long after the introduction of the New Poor Law in 1834, were still pre-occupied with the question of pauperism. Also it may well be the case, as stated by John Archer, that as the unemployed would never have made it 'on to the short-list of applicants', it was not felt necessary to include this a rule about poor relief.<sup>166</sup>

Allotment rules placed great emphasis on religious observance and it may be that this was part of the 'denominational control' practised by some clergy. In the parish of Gretton it was the 'church labourers' who 'had preference on the church land.'<sup>167</sup> A further two schemes, Tiffield and Wicken, stipulated that the occupier, his wife and his family be 'constant attendants at the Parish Church.'<sup>168</sup> However, Jeremy Burchardt has pointed out that church attendance was not necessarily restricted to Anglican services.<sup>169</sup> In Pytchley and Daventry it was stated that occupiers would be 'expected to attend Divine Service every Sunday' and in Corby

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<sup>164</sup> BL, 7055.b.9, Village Horticultural Societies, Rule 13

<sup>165</sup> NRO, Wicken, 364p/10, Rule 13

<sup>166</sup> J E Archer, 'By a Flash and a Scare', p.66

<sup>167</sup> NRO, Gretton, 142p/120

<sup>168</sup> NRO, Tiffield, WFE/150, Rule 5; Wicken, 364p/10, Rule 3

<sup>169</sup> J Burchardt, The Allotment, p.134

St John that the occupiers ‘shall regularly attend divine service.’<sup>170</sup> Although the place of worship is not specified, the fact that two of these schemes were run by the clergy, would suggest that it would be expected to be the parish church where the clergyman could keep a watchful eye on attendance. Furthermore, eight of the schemes imposed a ban on working on the allotments on the Sabbath and three of these also forbade working on Good Friday and Christmas Day. The Wicken scheme stated that one of its objects was ‘the observance of the Sabbath Day, to keep it holy.’ This was in addition to the objects of encouraging ‘habits of honesty, sobriety, cleanliness and industry.’<sup>171</sup>

Significantly ten schemes were concerned with excluding anyone who was found guilty of any type of criminal offence. Table 5.5 shows the crimes mentioned in allotment rules and also the number of mentions per crime.<sup>172</sup>

**Table 5.5: Crimes mentioned in allotment rules**

<i>Type of crime</i>	<i>No. of mentions</i>
Theft, thieving,	3
Poaching	3
Dishonesty, dishonest practice or act	3
Other crimes (not specified)	3
Trespass	2
Wood-stealing	1

Source: As Table 5.2

The inclusion of such rules could be used to exclude those already on the margins of parish society, particularly those engaged in crimes such as poaching. John Archer claims that one important objective of allotments had been to deter labourers from venturing onto the game preserves.<sup>173</sup> However, an editorial in the

<sup>170</sup> BL, 7055.b.9, Village Horticultural Societies Rule 10; NRO, Daventry, BU(D)45, Rule 6; Corby, 79p/134, Rule 5

<sup>171</sup> NRO, Wicken, 364p/10

<sup>172</sup> BL, 1027.h.19 The Labourers’ Friend Society

<sup>173</sup> J E Archer, ‘The Nineteenth-Century Allotment’, p.29



Northampton Herald in 1842 expressed a concern that allotments themselves were a source of temptation for theft and poaching. A woman was convicted of taking sprouts from an allotment in Eydon and a chimney sweep of setting snares for hares in land allotments at Evenley. The editor continued with this warning:

If then the poor cannot abstain from robbing each other, and from snaring such hares as may be invited to land allotments, it is quite clear that they run a risk of losing their allotments, which will never be continued if the holders of them cannot resist the temptations to pilfer and poach.<sup>174</sup>

However, to many allotments were claimed to have a reforming effect. The Labourers' Friend Society reported that 'many striking instances have been stated to Your Committee where the possession of an allotment has been means of reclaiming the criminal.'<sup>175</sup> The 1843 Report on Allotments went further claiming that allotments could also be the means of 'reforming the dissolute, and of changing the whole moral character and conduct.'<sup>176</sup>

Thus eight of the allotment schemes had regulations governing the social conduct of the occupiers. Four schemes threatened exclusion on grounds of 'immoral conduct' or 'gross immorality', but the overwhelming concern was with drunkenness, which was mentioned in six of the schemes. Other social misbehaviours that were condemned were 'idling, quarrelling, common swearing and mis-spending time and money.' All of these examples of misconduct were liable to expulsion from the allotment plot. Yet the Wallington Labourers' Friend Society, whilst recognising that some parishes excluded bad characters, made the following recommendation:

Such exclusion shall, at any rate, if at all, be acted upon here with the utmost caution, - for we should try to reclaim the bad, as well as to benefit the good, -

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<sup>174</sup> NCL, Northampton Herald (15 October 1842)

<sup>175</sup> BL., 1027.h.19 The Labourers' Friend Society

<sup>176</sup> PP 1843 VII(201), Report on Allotments, p.iv

but if, after a fair trial, the desired effect is not attained, it will then be right, by way of example, to deprive such persons of their land.<sup>177</sup>

Therefore, it was suggested that an allotment scheme could be helpful in reforming the labourer and, if that failed, it could be an effectual means of social discipline for the landowners and the clergy. Yet, very little evidence survives to show how effective allotments were in achieving these objectives. However, by looking at the conditions which prompted the Reverend Abner Brown to consider it necessary to draw up a new set of rules for the Gretton scheme in 1863, (ten years after its formation), it is clear that the labourers were by no means necessarily as subservient and deferential as the promoters of allotments would have wished. When Abner Brown issued a notice to quit to the holders of the Gretton allotments, it was because 'some have broken many of the rules, some fewer' and 'some have not broken any', but 'the greater number, however, have broken some.' However, it is interesting to note that the rules that had been broken were concerned primarily with the cultivation of the plots rather than with the conduct of the occupiers. Thus Abner Brown complained that:

Some have sown too much grain; some have planted too many potatoes; some have neglected to keep a path between the gardens; some have not put on the full quantity of manure; some have let the gardens get foul; some have not cut down the weeds on the sides of the garden; some have dug the ground out of the right level; some have trespassed by making a way through the hedges or over the neighbours' gardens; and some though warned that they were breaking the rules, have persisted in going on wrong.<sup>178</sup>

Consequently, his new set of rules were more concerned with the method of cultivation, although they did contain one rule that related to criminal and moral offences, the punishment for which was to be the immediate forfeiture of the plot 'without being entitled to claim compensation for crop or labour.'<sup>179</sup> Along with

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<sup>177</sup> BL, 8282.g.14, *The Labourers' Friend* (Wallington), p.9

<sup>178</sup> NRO, *Gretton*, 142p/120

<sup>179</sup> *Ibid*, Rule 9

these documents were a list of memoranda for 1863-1865, which contained a list of some of those, who had forfeited their allotments. Out of a total of just eight for these years, four forfeited their plots due to criminal offences. Yet in two of these cases the occupiers were allowed some compensation. The first case was that of Michael Lenton who was convicted of poaching and forfeited his plot, but 'as he has laid out so much labour in so short a tenancy, he is allowed to take away the crops at Michaelmas.' The second case was that of Charles Woolley who was convicted and fined for assault and so forfeited his plot, but was paid '2/6 for digging and 2/- for cartage of four bags of lime etc.' Of the remaining four forfeitures, two were related to non-payment of rent, one to poor cultivation and one, John Fielding who 'having left the church and been married at the Meeting House his allotment is forfeited and given to one of the church applicants who could not be supplied.'<sup>180</sup> Although this is a limited sample it does show that in practice only just over half the exclusions were concerned with the moral or spiritual conduct of the occupier. Nearly the same number was due to the more practical considerations of the failure to cultivate or to pay for the plots and it was these problems that had particularly exercised Abner Brown.

Thus, it is hard to say whether allotments did succeed in instilling notions of respectability or whether they were only ever given to the respectable and deserving members of parish society anyway. By examining a list of the allotment holders for the Kislingbury allotment scheme in 1845 and by using the 1841 census for that parish, it was possible to carry out some analysis of the ages, occupations and stages in the life-cycle of allotment holders.<sup>181</sup> In Kislingbury seventy-one out of a total of 121 male householders were allotment holders (fifty-nine percent). It would seem that occupation was a significant factor with sixty-eight percent of

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<sup>180</sup> NRO, Wicken, 364p/10

<sup>181</sup> NRO, Kislingbury Charity Records, KC2, Kislingbury Allotments; Census Returns for the parish of Kislingbury (1841)

allotment holders being employed as agricultural labourers. Although allotment holders were well represented in all the age ranges, the largest group of thirty-three percent was found in the thirty to thirty-five-year olds. This is the group that was most likely to be married and with large families to support, although the size of family does not appear to have been a significant factor. Indeed there were two allotments holders in their twenties who were married, but did not have children. However, they may have had families in the interval between the 1841 census and the 1845 list of allotment holders. Therefore, the major criteria for the distribution of allotments seems to have been based on occupation and was mainly aimed at those engaged in poorly paid work, with a bias against single young men. All allotment holders were married men, apart from those who were widowed and two who lived with their aged, indigent mothers. Yet when it came to analysing those who were excluded from being allotment holders thirty percent of this group were employed as agricultural labourers and would be expected to be in need of them. It was, therefore, necessary to analyse the age range and family size of the agricultural labourers to consider why they should have been overlooked when their fellow workers were not. The largest age group in the non-allotment holders was that of the over-sixties with thirty-one percent. When it came to family size the most significant factor was that forty-one percent of the sample had no children living at home. Therefore, the most probable reason for inclusion and exclusion was the question of need, although there are some unexplained differences particularly amongst the elderly. Also, why were those agricultural labourers who did have families not granted allotments? As there were no obvious differences between these groups, it may have been that allotment holders were indeed selected on the basis of respectability.

Lastly, it is important to assess the value of allotments to the labourers themselves. Clearly, the two aforementioned petitions were evidence of the fact that some labourers were actively engaged in persuading the landowners to provide them

with land. An article in the Labourers' Friend Magazine published in 1835 and entitled 'The Labourer's Own Statement' (originally published in the Evangelical Magazine) was the work of one Peter Heggs, an agricultural labourer with a wife and five children, whose opinion of allotments was as following:

I will pledge my existence, if an industrious cottager were accommodated with an acre of land, at a moderate rent, he would contrive to live in such a manner, as neither to be dependent on charity, nor a burden to the parish; but half an acre of land would make a wonderful alteration.<sup>182</sup>

He also detailed his weekly wages and expenditure as follows:

Wages	12s	per week			
	£	s	d		
House Rent	0	1	0		
Three stone of flour	0	6	0		
Potatoes, and other vegetables	0	1	0		
Coals	0	1	0		
Soap, salt, and candles	0	1	0		
Milk	0	1	0		
	0	11	6		<sup>183</sup>

Thus, flour, potatoes and vegetables accounted for half of his week's wages, so the possibility of being able to supply some of those products himself, would have been of considerable benefit. It has not been possible to quantify the value of allotments to labourers, as the records for Northamptonshire do not show crop yields or profits from allotments. Further evidence of the actual benefit of allotments comes from the 1834 Poor Law report which contains a report from Mr Okenden, the Assistant Commissioner for Dorsetshire and Wiltshire, in which he states that the net profit to the labourer, on the acre was £4 12s 6d. This was based on a plot of an acre rented at £8 an acre and planted solely with potatoes.<sup>184</sup>

However, this may not have been typical, for, as has been seen, the average size

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<sup>182</sup> BL, 1027.h.19, The Labourers' Friend, pp.204-205

<sup>183</sup> Ibid, pp.204-205

<sup>184</sup> PP 1834 XXIX(1), Report of the Assistant Poor Law Commissioners, Appendix to the First Report of the Assistant Poor Law Commissioners, Report from Dorset from D O Okenden Esq (30 November 1832)

plot in Northamptonshire was generally only a quarter of an acre although the rents in Northamptonshire were much less, ranging from £2 an acre at the most to as low as 5s an acre. Nevertheless, an example, quoted by Barnett, of the profits of a quarter-acre plot recorded in the annual allotment accounts of a Willingham, Cambridgeshire labourer show that even this smaller plot made a similar profit. This man was able to make a modest profit of about 1s 9d a week by selling his excess produce and thus making an annual total of £4 14s, if that profit were consistent throughout the year.<sup>185</sup> Given that the average weekly wage for an agricultural labourer in Northamptonshire in 1837 was nine shillings, this was a substantial addition to the family income. Even the most meagre profit from a small cottage garden could enable a family to remain independent of poor relief, as this example from the autobiographical writings of John Clare, the Northamptonshire poet shows:

... the young farmer that succeeded our old Landlord revised the rent and the next year made four tenements of the house leaving us a corner of one room on a floor for 3 Guineas a year and a little slip of the garden which was divided into four parts but as my father had been an old tenant he gave him the choice of his share as he retained our old apple tree. Tho the ground was good for nothing yet the tree still befriended us and made shift to make up the greater part of our rent till every misfortune as it were came upon him to crush him at once for as soon as hee was disabled from work the old tree failed to bear fruit and left us unable to get up the rent...<sup>186</sup>

Certainly the need for the labourer to have access to allotments was a concern later in the century to the agricultural trade unionist Joseph Arch. In his autobiography he wrote of the hardships of his childhood when food was scarce and pointed out that the people 'could not grow potatoes; they had no allotments then, they had no hope of them, and the bulk of the labourers had no gardens.'<sup>187</sup> These examples

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<sup>185</sup> D C Barnett, 'Allotments', p.169

<sup>186</sup> E Robinson (ed.), *John Clare's Autobiographical Writings* (Oxford, 1983, paperback edition 1986), pp.114-115

<sup>187</sup> Joseph Arch, *From Ploughtail to Parliament: An Autobiography* (London, 1986), p.13

provide some glimpses of how much the labourers valued the opportunity to be able to supplement their meagre wages.

### **Conclusion:**

This chapter has shown that the provision of coal by endowed charities, by individual donations and by subscriptions was a valuable commodity in the 'economy of makeshifts,' ranging from the generous provision of a year's supply to a small handout given at Christmas. Even small amounts were a psychological as well as a material boost in the cold months of winter and proved to be a popular form of charity giving. The significance of coal distribution was recognised by all sections of the propertied. It was the major area for which we have evidence of the farmers' widespread involvement in charity, both in raising subscriptions and in delivering coal free of charge.

A study of fuel provision has also provided an insight into the closing stages of the enclosure process where customary fuel gathering rights were replaced with coal doles or the formation of coal clubs. This move had a significant impact on the poor's access to fuel. In some instances this actually resulted in a widening of access as the benefits were no longer confined to those who had customary rights, but were extended to the general poor. However, this change could have the effect of diluting resources.<sup>188</sup> Membership of a coal club, like that of other self-help initiatives, was subject to an ability to keep up payments and, therefore, favoured those in regular

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<sup>188</sup> J Broad, 'Parish Economies', p.1004

employment, although there does not appear to have been as strong a disciplinary agenda as was seen with clothing clubs. However, these changes meant a loss of independence as the poor's ability to gather fuel as and when required changed to a handout or to membership of a club, both of which were dependent on the generosity of the propertied and subject to discrimination.

Access to land for cultivation also witnessed a significant change in the early nineteenth century with the establishment of allotment provision. Endowed charity land that was set aside for the poor at the time of a parliamentary enclosure was rarely used to provide allotments for them to cultivate, unlike the earlier enclosures by mutual agreement. There was no evidence to suggest that allotments were established in direct response to enclosure. However, the growing impoverishment of the rural labourer from the late eighteenth century onwards did cause the propertied to search for new ways of assisting him and of encouraging the re-establishment of the level of independence that had been lost through enclosure. By 1832, the replies to Rural Queries do show that most parishes had plots of land for the labouring poor in the form of potato grounds, road herbage and cottage gardens, provided either by the parish or by landowners. The evidence in this chapter shows that by 1850 nearly three-quarters of parishes in Northamptonshire had some form of land provision for the poor to cultivate, although it was not always allotment provision.

However, allotments represented a new direction in land provision in three significant ways. Firstly, they were an important new resource in the 'economy of makeshifts' and one that was valued by the poor. There is evidence to demonstrate that labourers persuaded landowners to provide them with land and the testimonies of Peter Hegg



and Joseph Arch showed an appreciation of the value of such provision. Indeed the provision of smallholdings and the securing of suitable allotments were among the aims of Joseph Arch's National Agricultural Labourers' Union.<sup>189</sup>

Secondly, the disciplinary agenda attached to allotments ensured that they were a useful measure for restoring rural social relationships in the years of unrest during and after the Swing riots. The evidence shows that allotments spread rapidly in Northamptonshire in the period 1830 to 1850 and particularly in the years 1829-1831 which saw the establishment of sixteen percent of all the clothing clubs and twenty-six percent of all the allotment schemes that have left surviving records. Endemic rural unrest was a major incentive for the establishment of allotments in early nineteenth-century Northamptonshire, for, as Archer suggests, they were 'not only a cheap, convenient, and effective panacea for checking social indiscipline but also a vehicle through which they could reassert their power and influence over village communities.'<sup>190</sup> This was particularly evident in the correspondence of Sir James Langham in 1830 and 1831.

Thirdly, allotments were a 'cornerstone'<sup>191</sup> of a 'new' paternalist interest in charity. The major landowners were the main providers of land for allotments, but the role of the land agent and the clergy were pivotal in instigating such schemes and in their administration. It was clear that allotments were not only important in restoring calm but that they had an 'improving' agenda that was designed to instil habits of thrift, sobriety and honesty. They were targeted at the working family men, who could

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<sup>189</sup> D Crouch & C Ward, *The Allotment*, p.62

<sup>190</sup> J E Archer, 'By a Flash', p.63

<sup>191</sup> *Ibid*, p.62

afford to pay the rent and who were either already the more respectable inhabitants of village society<sup>192</sup>, or could be encouraged to achieve respectability. Furthermore, the involvement of the clergy in many allotment schemes gave them the opportunity to practice 'denominational control,' although this was not as marked as in many of the clothing clubs. However, unlike the coal clubs and the clothing clubs, allotments were not supported by the farmers and were viewed with suspicion by them, as they feared the independence that such provision might give to their workers.<sup>193</sup>

Lastly, the question of access to land by the poor illustrates the complex nature of social relationships within rural society between the three main interest groups, the landowners, the farmers and the labourers. It can be seen that the landowners and the farmers were not always in alliance against the labourer. In the case of allotments, it was the landowners and the labourers who were in a somewhat uneasy alliance against the interests of the farmers. However, allotments were also part of a struggle between landowners and labourers over the way of life of the latter. This way of life had already been greatly eroded by the effects of enclosure and the taking away of customary rights. The landowners and clergy wished to remake it, but in a form that moulded the labourer into their image of the contented cottager of the past.

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<sup>192</sup> J E Archer, 'By a Flash', p.47

<sup>193</sup> There was no evidence from Northamptonshire to support Moselle's claim about the role of farmer in providing allotments. B Moselle, 'Allotments', p.486

## **Chapter Six**

### **Housing the Poor**

#### **Introduction:**

In the decades leading up to the introduction of the New Poor Law, the question of housing the poor became an important part of the debate surrounding the provision of poor relief. The Poor Law Report of 1834 saw assistance with housing as the most extensive and prevalent form of outdoor relief given by parishes. The Poor Law Commission actively engaged in stamping out this form of relief by supporting the sale of parish-owned housing for the poor. In the view of reformers the responsibility for providing housing should be transferred from the parish to individuals. There was considerable interest in cottage building and this can be found in the many pamphlets and books published in the early nineteenth century that urged landowners to provide clean, decent housing for their workers. This was in part in response to a growing concern about the state of housing for the poor. Evidence of poor quality housing can be found in the Charity Commission reports and in Edwin Chadwick's Report on the Sanitary Condition of the Labouring Population of Great Britain published in 1842.

In the eyes of many reformers major landowners were best placed to provide and improve the quality of housing. They were the social group that had the financial resources to do so, but the emphasis on landowner provision carried a disciplinary agenda. There was considerable debate about the state of housing in 'open' villages – those with numerous owner/occupiers usually found among the artisans and tradesmen. Concerns were expressed not only about the poor condition and high rents of housing owned by this group, but also that such villages did not restrict settlement

to the extent that a 'close' parish did (one dominated by a major proprietor). Not only were these parishes found guilty by poor law reformers of the 'evil' of encouraging paupers and increasing poor rates, but also of containing unruly parishioners. This chapter examines the responses of individuals to assume responsibility for providing good quality housing for the poor at low rents, but firstly it looks at the extent and quality of housing provision for the poor as supplied by the endowed charities and then by the parish.

### **6.1: Housing provided by endowed charities**

There were sixty-three housing charities in Northamptonshire provided by endowed charities, thirty concerned with almshouses and thirty-three with cottages and tenements, which were either let to the poor directly or to overseers of the poor, including eight properties which were specifically used as parish workhouses or poorhouses. Four parishes possessed both an almshouse and houses for the poor, so the total number of parishes that contained housing charities was fifty-nine.<sup>1</sup> Endowed charitable housing was therefore present in twenty-one percent of all Northamptonshire parishes.

The quality of endowed charity housing can be assessed to some extent from the reports of the Charity Commission. The Commission reported problems for twenty housing charities, nineteen of which concerned the provision of almshouses and hospitals. The faults that were found by the Commissioners were either due to

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<sup>1</sup> As with other chapters, the towns of Peterborough and Northampton have been excluded. They in fact had many housing charities, bringing the county total to ninety.

changes that had been made that did not fully concur with the original terms of the endowment or to problems of mismanagement. The two major areas of contention were over who the inmates should be and the decay of the premises and who was responsible for their repair. These two problems were often related. In several cases, it was reported that it was not possible to fill the hospitals and almshouses strictly in accordance with the original terms of the charity. In the case of the Hospital of John Langham in Cottesbrooke which was intended to house eight poor people, two men and six women, it was simply noted that it was 'not always full in consequence of want of applications.'<sup>2</sup> Likewise, in Rothwell the Jesus Hospital built to house a master and twenty-four poor men was only filled with eighteen men. The Charity Commission recommended that a fund 'raised in lieu of tithe and title disputes' should, 'subject to the retention of a fund of reasonable amount to answer future contingencies, be devoted to the purpose of adding to the comforts of the present members of the hospital and also to that of increasing the number of the poor men, so as to approach more nearly the design originally contemplated by the founder.'<sup>3</sup> In Marholm, the problem of empty places was overcome by placing 'poor families' in vacant tenements if 'so many proper objects of charity' could not be found.<sup>4</sup> In other instances, it was possible to fill the almshouses and hospitals but not in the ratios of men to women that had been envisaged by the founders. The Hospital in Carlton similarly had 'difficulty in finding old men properly qualified to place in the hospital, the places have usually been filled by women, and the present inmates are five poor women (the original intention was to have three single men and two single women).'<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> PP 1826 XXII(1), 14th Further Report, p.233

<sup>3</sup> PP 1831 XII(1), 24th Further Report, p.188

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid*, p.143

<sup>5</sup> PP 1830 XII(327), 23rd Further Report, p.322

Likewise, the Almshouses at Dallington intended for two men and two women housed four women at the time of the report.<sup>6</sup> Furthermore, it was not possible to find prospective inmates who exactly fitted the requirements of the endowment in Trigg's Charity in Irthlingborough which provided an almshouse for two poor widows, and reported that 'it has become impracticable to make choice of such poor widows as receive no parochial relief.'<sup>7</sup> In cases such as this it was eminently practical that the parish placed their needy widows in the almshouse. Indeed it is unlikely that many widows in need of the almshouse would not be receiving some form of assistance from the parish. In some instances the parish was not responsible for choosing the inmates. In Kettering, they were nominated by the Duke of Buccleugh, in Lamport by Sir James Langham and in Barnwell, Lord Montague made the appointment on the nomination of his rector and churchwardens as did the Duke of Buccleugh in Weekley.<sup>8</sup> In Kingscliffe, the inmates were nominated by the vicar, even though the buildings were repaired at the expense of the parish.<sup>9</sup> However, there were some instances when the parish officers decided who should be placed into the almshouses and these usually resulted from their having assumed responsibility for repair of the properties. In the case of the hospital in Great Billing a deal had been struck with the landowner's agent:

The churchwarden applied to Mr F Hatton's steward, or agent to solicit his consent to the cottages being given up to the parish, on condition of their repairing them.... Expressed his assent to the parish having the use of the cottages on the above condition. Since that time, the cottages have been occupied by poor labouring people, rent-free, who are put in by the overseers of the poor... the almspeople, thus have not had the advantage of residence in the hospital, which was intended for them by the founder.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid, p.345

<sup>7</sup> Ibid, p.329

<sup>8</sup> PP 1831 XII(1), 24<sup>th</sup> Further Report, pp. 136 & 166; PP 1833 XIX(1), 26<sup>th</sup> Further Report pp.779 & 830

<sup>9</sup> PP 1831 XII(1), 24<sup>th</sup> Further Report, p.205

<sup>10</sup> Ibid, p.189

The Charity Commission appear to have been, if not exactly content with the situation, amenable to leave things as they were, for which they gave the following justification:

It is probable, however, that few would avail themselves of such advantage except inhabitants of Great Billing or the immediate neighbourhood, and we apprehend, that this failure in the performance of the founder's intention could be remedied only through the interposition of the Earl of Winchilsea.<sup>11</sup>

Thus they were prepared to pass responsibility for restoring the charity to its original intention onto the landowner, who had been happy in the past to leave the matter in the hands of the parish. However, by the 1870s it is evident that the hospital had been restored to follow its original intention. A letter from the Charity Commission to the Earl of Winchilsea stated that:

An application has been made to the Commissioners by the present Trustees of the Charity for the Establishment of a Scheme for its future regulation and it has been proposed that without otherwise disturbing the existing right of patronage that the Almspeople shall be selected in future from deserving widows residing in the Parish of Billing.<sup>12</sup>

In this instance, the charity was no longer being used by the parish as a form of out-relief for the labouring poor. The effects of the New Poor Law were probably responsible for finishing this practice but at the time of the Charity Commission reports, it was fairly widespread. Thus, a similar situation had arisen with the

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<sup>11</sup> NRO, Great Billing Parish Records, 31p/150, Copy letter from the Charity Commission to Earl of Winchilsea (6 March 1873). On this occasion the Earl was not content to leave the appointment of almspeople in the hands of the parish for, as the Charity Commission replied 'His Lordship upon that occasion stated that he was ready to continue the practice which he had always adopted of attending on all occasions to the representations of the Rector of Billing with reference to the selection of the inmates of the Hospital but he expressed a very strong objection to any scheme which might have the effect of infringing upon or circumscribing his right of Patronage. Under these circumstances the Commissioners do not feel themselves at liberty to introduce into the Scheme the contemplated provision confining the selection of the Almspeople to inhabitants of Billing.'

<sup>12</sup> NRO, Great Billing 31p/150, Copy letter from Charity Commission to J Walker, Billing Rectory (10 September 1873)

Wentworth Charity in Great Harrowden. Here co-operation between Lord Fitzwilliam and the parish had the following results; 'the buildings have been occasionally repaired at Lord Fitzwilliam's expense, and occasionally at that of the parish.'<sup>13</sup> According to the Charity Commission this situation had arisen because 'there is some reason to believe that the widows were formerly placed there and that the almshouses were repaired by the Wentworth family.' The parish and Lord Fitzwilliam had stepped in to continue this charity, but, in so doing, had also assumed responsibility for placing inmates as the Commission noted that 'for some time past the poor persons have been appointed or put in by the parish officers.'<sup>14</sup> However, in the case of the almshouse in Walgrave no such co-operation between the parish and landowner existed. The Charity Commission reported that:

The buildings having fallen into decay through age, became by degrees unfit for habitation; and since the year 1820, up to which time some occasional repairs appear to have been done, they have fallen down, excepting only one of the tenements.... which is now occupied by a poor family, who are placed in it by the overseers of the poor.... It is stated that an offer was made by Sir James Langham to the parish through his agent in 1824 to repair the almshouse at the joint charge of himself and the parish; but the parishioners having declined to contribute, nothing further was done.<sup>15</sup>

In this instance the parish presumably felt the almshouses were the sole responsibility of Sir James Langham, a view which the Charity Commission probably shared, when they stated that the almshouse was:

...reputed by tradition to have been founded by one of the family or ancestors of Sir James Langham, bart and the head of that family for the time being appears to have acted as patron of the almshouse, and to have exercised the right of appointing the poor persons to be placed therein.

However, their recommendations lacked any force:

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<sup>13</sup> PP 1831 XII(1), 24<sup>th</sup> Further Report, p.163

<sup>14</sup> Ibid, p.163

<sup>15</sup> Ibid, p.173



We cannot discover that any deeds or writings relating to the almshouse now exist, or have ever been known to exist among the muniments of the Langham family or elsewhere; and though it seems the charity ought to have been supported and maintained, as it appears to have been in former times, and that its declension is probably to be ascribed to neglect on the part of the patrons or their agents, we incline to think no compulsory means of re-establishing the charity can, under the circumstances of the case, be resorted to with the certainty of success.<sup>16</sup>

The parish were probably disappointed by this, but the Commission often had little power to effect change themselves, particularly when there was not a firm legal backing for their recommendations. If documentary evidence was forthcoming, they could at least refer a case to the Attorney General. This happened in the case of Archbishop Chicheley's Bedehouse in Higham Ferrers. Samuel Allen, agent to Earl Fitzwilliam, commented 'as the Commissioners have no authority to decide whether or not the Bede House ought, under the circumstance referred to, be rebuilt, they consider it best to refer the case with the statement to the consideration of the Attorney General.'<sup>17</sup> This charity was reported as follows

This edifice appears to have become ruinous and scarcely habitable at the time of the Earl of Malton's purchase [1734], and has not, for a great length of time, been occupied by the bedesmen: but by means of some interior structure, a part of the building has been formed into a habitation, which at present is occupied by two poor families placed therein by the overseers of the poor.<sup>18</sup>

In this case, the Charity Commission observed that:

It appears to us that the bedehouse should be put into proper habitable condition, at Lord Fitzwilliam's charge, or some other residence should be provided by his Lordship for the bedespeople; and in default thereof we think the directions of a court of equity will be requisite for the proper restitution of the charity.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid, p.173

<sup>17</sup> NRO, *Fitzwilliam of Milton Estate Papers*, F(M) Miscellaneous Volumes 724, Notebook of 'E' Vicar of Higham Ferrers (9 October 1872)

<sup>18</sup> PP 1830 XII(327), *23<sup>rd</sup> Further Report*, p.316

<sup>19</sup> Ibid, p.216

The Charity Commission felt justified in recommending that, if their suggestions were ignored, then the matter needed to be put to a higher authority. Earl Fitzwilliam's response to the Commissioners was that, owing to the fact that 'a sufficient number of such individuals could not be found to fill up the vacancies', he, in co-operation with the Higham Ferrers Corporation, had disposed of the charity to 'such individuals having large families as were deemed most deserving of it and who were generally occupiers at a small rent of comfortable cottages with gardens.'<sup>20</sup> Furthermore, he had arranged for 'apartments fitted up in the Bedehouse at my Lord Fitzwilliam's expense for two poor families who occupy rent free but who derive no benefit from this charity.'<sup>21</sup> The charity referred to was a distribution of fuel, which he agreed would in future be distributed 'amongst the Bedespeople either at their own present habitations or at the Bede House.'<sup>22</sup> It is likely that this case was settled amicably for as Earl Fitzwilliam wrote:

However despite these remarks if the Attorney General should coincide in opinion with the Commissioners that the Bede House should be restored to its former condition my Lord Fitzwilliam has no desire whatever of evading the expenses thereto but will give directions for the dilapidations of the present building to be made good and the proposed interior alterations to be forthwith completed.<sup>23</sup>

Thus, it would seem that the fate of almshouses and hospitals depended mostly on the willingness or otherwise of those responsible for their upkeep to ensure that these charities were maintained. If they were not interested then it often fell to parish authorities to take on that responsibility and so to make decisions on how such institutions could best serve the parish. The almshouses in East Carlton and Barnwell, which had been reported as being in a poor state of repair were rebuilt in 1866 and

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<sup>20</sup> NRO, Fitzwilliam, F(M) Miscellaneous Volumes 724, Notebook

<sup>21</sup> Ibid

<sup>22</sup> Ibid

<sup>23</sup> Ibid

1874 respectively. There is also evidence that a few almshouses were still being built in the early nineteenth century. Pevsner recorded almshouses that had been built in Aynho in 1822 and Carpenter's charity homes in Deanshanger the following year.<sup>24</sup>

When it came to the other form of charitable housing, tenements and cottages, the responsibility for these was firmly in the hands of the parish. Of the thirty-nine parishes which possessed cottages, twenty-four of them had property which was either let by the overseers of the poor to poor people or whose inhabitants had been placed therein by the overseers. Of those twenty-four properties in the hands of the overseers, ten were described as workhouses or poor houses. Only one recommendation was made by the Charity Commissioners in respect of parish cottages and that was in Potterspury where there were two tenements occupied by 'poor persons of the parish put in by the overseers.'<sup>25</sup> These cottages were rent-free, but were calculated by the Commission to be worth about £4 per annum and the report stated that 'it is proposed to demand the payment of a rent in future.'<sup>26</sup> It is not clear why this particular property was singled out as there were ten other parishes where the property was rent-free and no proposal was made to extract rent. Where rent was charged it is difficult to assess how much was paid for each individual property as the amounts stated do not make it clear whether they are per house or not. Roughly speaking though the rents ranged from £15 10s for 'one messuage let to overseers for a poor house' in Braunston to 18s per annum for a cottage let to the overseers in Byfield.<sup>27</sup> The largest amount quoted was £35 in Brington, but for an

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<sup>24</sup> N Pevsner, *The Buildings of England* (London, 1961), p.171

<sup>25</sup> PP 1826 XII(1), *14<sup>th</sup> Further Report*, p.222

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid*, p.222

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid*, p.227 & PP 1825 XI(1), *13th Further Report* (22 January 1825), p.6

unidentified number of cottages. Here the majority of the property was let to yearly tenants, 'excepting a few cottages, which are occupied by poor persons incapable of paying rent.'<sup>28</sup>

The costs of repair of the charity housing were reported on by the Charity Commission in six instances. Of these four were kept in repair by the parish, in Pilton, Barnack, Castor and Ufford. In Ufford, it was recommended that 'as the cottage was purchased and is used for the benefit of the parish, that 5s a year should be paid out of the rates.'<sup>29</sup> In the remaining two it was reported that housing was repaired on the initiative of individuals. In Brington it was reported that:

In January 1815 there was due to Mr John Walker, one of the trustees, for various sums expended by him in building four new cottages, rebuilding some old cottages, and converting others into separate tenements, and in erecting and improving buildings on the farm at Brington, the sum of £181.<sup>30</sup>

However, as has already been stated, only a few cottages in Brington were occupied by the poor, and the total amount of rent collected for this property far exceeded that for any other. Thus, it is unlikely that these repairs were effected for those unable to repay them through rent. A similar situation was reported in Raunds where originally six cottages and a wash-house, which, 'before the recent reparation thereof, were used for the residence of paupers, the overseers of the poor paying a rent for them, which was distributed among poor persons on St Thomas's day.'<sup>31</sup> However in 1824, 'the buildings being in a decayed condition, they were put into tenantable repair by means

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<sup>28</sup> PP 1830 XII(327), 23<sup>rd</sup> Further Report, p.342

<sup>29</sup> PP 1831 XII(1), 24<sup>th</sup> Further Report, p.155

<sup>30</sup> PP 1830 XII(327), 23<sup>rd</sup> Further Report, p.342

<sup>31</sup> Ibid, p.321

of the sum of £95 advanced by the present vicar for that purpose.'<sup>32</sup> The rent for these repaired properties, which had 'since been let to different occupiers' was £16 per annum.<sup>33</sup> So, as in Brington, the poor were not to enjoy the benefit of houses in a decent state of repair. Although the rent raised from these properties was distributed to the poor, it was further reported that this would not be until the debt to the vicar had been repaid.

It is likely that much of this charitable property was in poor repair. The Charity Commission was able to make recommendations to redress this situation, but was most likely to succeed where the property was in some way supported by a major landowner. This was most common in the case of endowments that related to almshouses and hospitals. Thus in those parishes with this type of accommodation, the elderly had a reasonable expectation of being provided with housing to see them through their old age. Indeed much of the evidence in the Charity Commission reports suggests that in those parishes with almshouses there was adequate provision for the aged poor, as in several instances it was difficult to fill them. In some cases parishes took advantage of this situation to house their non-aged poor. This indicates that housing provision for poor families was a problem in many parishes.

Furthermore, parishes were concerned with finding ways to ease the burden of poor rates and this resulted in the line between charitable and parish provision becoming blurred in many cases. Thus properties, which were administered by parish officials, were used by them to supplement poor relief.

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<sup>32</sup> Ibid, p.321

<sup>33</sup> Ibid, p.321

## **6.2: Parish housing for the poor**

The provision of housing as a form of outdoor relief came under considerable attack in the 1834 Poor Law report. The general report on 'Out-door relief in kind' stated the following:

The out-door relief of the able-bodied, when given in kind, consists rarely of food, rather less infrequently of fuel, and still less infrequently of clothes, particularly shoes; but its more usual form is that of relieving the applicants, either wholly or partially, from the expense of obtaining house-room.... Partial relief from the expense of obtaining houseroom is given, whenever the occupant of a cottage or an apartment is exempted on the ground of poverty from the payment of rates.<sup>34</sup>

In Suffolk, a Mr Stuart, stated that 'the payment of rent is a mode of furnishing relief which few parishes recognise, yet it is unquestionably a very frequent way of giving relief, not always to the extent of paying the whole rent, but of giving some assistance towards it.'<sup>35</sup> Likewise in Surrey, a Mr Maclean reported that 'the practice of paying rent is, I may say, universal; for although in but few parishes it is acknowledged, and in many the parish officers seemed surprised at my questions, and referred to the books, where nothing is entered as rent, still I found that it is frequently paid indirectly.'<sup>36</sup> He then commented on the different modes in which the overseers assisted applicants with rent, which were as follows:

An application for a pound or two to enable him to pay it {rent} ... will not be made in vain. The other indirect modes in which rent is paid, are either by an allowance of 1s a week for the third child, which is retained by the parish officer for that purpose, by an exemption from the rate, or by an application to the vestry from time to time, which is invariably so successful, that those with families do not think it necessary, by foresight or industry, to lay by any thing to meet the demand.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> S G & E O A Checkland, The Poor Law Report, pp.82-83

<sup>35</sup> Ibid, pp.85-86

<sup>36</sup> Ibid, p.86

<sup>37</sup> Ibid, pp.86-87

It is apparent that the ‘evil’ of this relief was that it was thought to discourage the virtues of thrift and economy. The readiness with which it was available created the feared culture of dependence abhorred by poor law reformers. Furthermore, as Mr Tweedy of the West Riding observed ‘when one pauper has been accustomed to receive it, another thinks himself used if it be not allowed to him also.’<sup>38</sup>

Thus, it is possible that, as with other forms of poor relief, assistance with housing was seen as a form of common right amongst the poor. How prevalent was this practice in Northamptonshire? Richardson, the Assistant Poor Law Commissioner for Northamptonshire, cited one case in his report and gave an explanation of one of the reasons why vestries were using this form of relief. When he visited the Kingsthorpe vestry, the ‘wife of a plasterer living at Northampton’ asked ‘for money to make up the Michaelmas rent.’<sup>39</sup> Richardson thought her application would be rejected and expressed surprise that:

On the contrary, though it had been agreed on some time before that no rents for houses out of the parish should be made up out of the book, they broke through their resolution, without much hesitation of the ground of providence and economy, and gave the woman £1, in order that they might not be troubled with her again for some time to come.<sup>40</sup>

Needless to say Richardson disapproved of this decision and ‘anticipated no great saving to the parish in the matter of rent from this decision.’ However, the evidence from Rural Queries gives some idea of the prevalence of assistance with housing, as is shown in Table 6.1.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> Ibid, p.88

<sup>39</sup> PP, XXIX(1), Assistant Poor Law Commissioner’s Report (Northamptonshire)

<sup>40</sup> Ibid

<sup>41</sup> PP XXX(1), Rural Queries Only eighteen parishes responded out of 301, thus representing 6% of all Northamptonshire parishes.

**Table 6.1: Parishes in Rural Queries giving exemptions for rates and rent**

	<i>Exemption of rates</i>	<i>Rents paid by the parish as well as exemption of rates</i>	<i>Unrecorded</i>
No of mentions in Poor law Returns	13	7	7
As % of all 18 parishes in Poor Law Returns	72%	38%	22%

Source: Rural Queries (1834)<sup>42</sup>

Thus three-quarters of the parishes were exempting cottages from poor rates and over a third were paying rents as well. However in Byfield, Cliffe Regis, Loddington, Orlingbury and Yardley Hastings it was stated that the rent was not often paid by the parish.

What type of parishes were giving assistance with rates and rent? According to the report of the poor law commissioner for Suffolk 'it is most prevalent in towns and large villages, in which tradesmen, who are commonly the owners of cottages, have a greater influence in the distribution of the poor fund.'<sup>43</sup> Was this true of the parishes in Rural Queries? Of the seven parishes which were exempted from rates and sometimes paid rent, five were parishes with small populations and limited proprietorship. Aynho and Yardley had one single proprietor, Loddington had two proprietors and Orlingbury and Stoke Albany had three proprietors. The only parishes which came anywhere near Mr Stuart's description were Byfield and East Haddon, which had six and four proprietors respectively. The other major form of assistance given by parish poor relief was housing supplied by the parish for the poor.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid

<sup>43</sup> S G & E O A Checkland, The Poor Law Report, p.86



However, in Rural Queries only five parishes (twenty-eight percent) admitted to owning parish property, although the subsequent Poor Law Reports for the years 1838 to 1844 record fourteen (seventy-eight percent) of the same parishes as selling parish property.<sup>44</sup>

Certainly the Poor Law Commission was keen to combat this form of relief, for in 1835 a Bill was introduced, 'To facilitate the Conveyance of Workhouses and other Property of Parishes, and of Incorporations or Unions of Parishes in England and Wales.' This stated:

That it shall be lawful for the Guardians of any Parish or Union and for the Overseers of any Parish.... To sell, exchange, let, or otherwise to dispose of, and to purchase, hire or take any workhouses, tenements, buildings, land, effects or other property belonging to any such parish or Union and to convey, assign or transfer the same accordingly to the purchasers or parties exchanging.<sup>45</sup>

This gave the green light to a large-scale selling off of parish property with the intention that:

In case of a sale, to apply the produce arising therefrom (after deducting the reasonable expenses thereof) towards the purchase or building of any Workhouse...<sup>46</sup>

Given the considerable cost that was borne by a parish in contributing towards the union workhouse, this was a considerable incentive to sell parish property.

It was intended that endowed charitable housing should be exempt from this sell-off, but as we have seen it was often difficult in practice to separate it from parish

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<sup>44</sup> PP 1835 XXXV(107); 1837 XXXI(127); 1837-8 XXVIII(145); 1839 XX(1); 1840 XVII(397); 1841 Session 1 XI(291); 1842 XIX(1); 1843 XXI(1); 1844 XIX (9), 2<sup>nd</sup> to 10<sup>th</sup> Annual Reports of the Poor Law Commissioners

<sup>45</sup> PP 1835 III, A Bill to facilitate the Conveyance of Workhouses and other Property of Parishes, and of Incorporations or Unions of Parishes in England and Wales

<sup>46</sup> Ibid

property. If there was any doubt about the provenance of a property that the parish requested to sell, then the Charity Commission were consulted. As a matter of course when a request to sell parish property that lacked information as to title was received by the Poor Law Commission, the Commissioners wrote to Hine, the secretary of the Charity Commission asking if the property in question was subject to a charitable trust. In the majority of cases, Hine's reply was in the negative. In a few cases, if there was some doubt, the parish was asked to provide further proof. The case of the parish of Woodford presents a typical example of the procedure. In February 1838 Mr Burton, the clerk of the Daventry Union put forward the request to sell six cottages in Woodford, saying 'the parish officers have no deeds or documents relating to them and there are no trusts existing, which affect the same.'<sup>47</sup> The Poor Law Commissioners replied to Burton that they 'have deemed it necessary to address the Commissioners of Charities on the subject of the Woodford parish property with a view to ascertain whether it is affected by any charitable trust.'<sup>48</sup> The Charity Commission's opinion was that:

It seems probable that all or part of the above mentioned premises are comprehended in the property described in the document which accompanied your letter.... If so, such property appears to be affected by charitable trusts.<sup>49</sup>

Accordingly, the Poor Law Commission wrote to Burton informing him that they could not 'comply with the application for their sanction to the sale of the property.'<sup>50</sup> However, this was not the end of the story for Burton replied in March that the property was 'not comprehended in the property referred to in the communication

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<sup>47</sup> PRO, MH12, 312/8711, Correspondence between the Poor Law Commission and the Daventry Union, letter from Burton to Poor Law Commissioner (February 1838)

<sup>48</sup> Ibid, Letter from Poor Law Commission to Burton (14 February 1838)

<sup>49</sup> Ibid, Letter from J Hine, Secretary of the Charity Commission to Poor Law Commission (17 February 1838)

<sup>50</sup> Ibid, Letter from Poor Law Commission to Burton (22 February 1838)

from Mr Hine' nor was it 'affected by any Charitable Trust.'<sup>51</sup> To substantiate this claim he enclosed a 'Declaration of Possessory Title', a standard form which many other parishes forwarded to the Poor Law Commission when the question of title was unknown. In this document a fifty-five year old resident of Woodford declared that he had lived in the parish all his life and that 'during the period of twenty-five years the premises have been in the possession of the Churchwardens and Overseers of the Poor of the said parish of Woodford.' Consequently, the property was duly sold. It may have been the case that other charitable properties without sufficient title were sold off in this way. There is very little evidence to show that parish officers were anything but enthusiastic to take part in this sell off.

Indeed there was only one parish, Newnham, for which there was evidence that the parish officers were reluctant to sell parish property. The clerk of the Daventry Union wrote to the Poor Law Commission in December 1843, stating that although the 'usual preliminary forms for a sale of parish property' had been forwarded to the parish officers, 'they declined selling the property in question.' Despite a follow-up letter from the Poor Law Commission in February 1844, this property remained unsold. However, some parishes may have regretted their decision to sell, if the case of Brigstock is a typical example. The parish officers of Brigstock, the parish did sell off the parish property in 1837, but by October 1838 Thomas Corfield, the curate, wrote to the Poor Law Commission stating that:

I am requested by the Guardians, Overseers & Ratepayers of the Parish of Brigstock in the Thrapston Union, to make application to you, to allow them to lay out a portion of the money, for which the parish property was sold, to build about four cottages for some able bodied labourers and their families; who are now obliged to be in Barns or out of doors for want of house room. The families are in this state of destitution, in consequence of the Poor

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<sup>51</sup> Ibid, Letter from Burton to Poor Law Commission (14 March 1838)

Houses, which were in a wretched, tumbledown state, & a sink of iniquity and filth, having been sold by your orders, & since pulled down & done away with by the purchaser.<sup>52</sup>

The selling of parish property had had a disastrous effect on the welfare of the labouring population in this parish and furthermore was not seen as advantageous to the parish officers as the Curate went to explain:

Some of the families have already been for a time in the workhouse at an enormous expense to the parish, & must go again without any prospect of getting out, unless something can be done to remedy the present dreadful evil. The able bodied men find no difficulty in getting work here or in the neighbourhood, if they could have a house to be in.<sup>53</sup>

The parish was in fact discovering that it was more expensive to use the Union workhouse than to provide parish housing. The curate's request was backed up by the Clerk of the Union. He wrote to the Poor Law Commission in October 1838, stating that, although the occupants of the old parish houses had been 'people of bad character, it was a serious and expensive evil to the Parish to be compelled to maintain able bodied Paupers in the Union workhouse.'<sup>54</sup> The Poor Law Commission, however, were not moved by this appeal and their reply explains why:

The sales of parish cottages, which the Commissioners have sanctioned throughout the country, have not been made for the mere purpose of assisting towards the loans borrowed for building workhouses or only with a view to promote the pecuniary advantage of the parish. The Commissioners have considered as an important reason for encouraging the disposal of property of this nature the impossibility (as shown by experience) of preventing the occurrence of abuses in the letting and management of cottages by the parish officers & the tendency which this lettings have to assume gradually the form and produce the evils of relief in aid of wages.<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> PRO, MH12, 319/8861, Correspondence between the Poor Law Commission and the Thrapston Union, Letter from Thomas Corfield, Curate of parish, Brigstock Vicarage (18 October 1838)

<sup>53</sup> Ibid

<sup>54</sup> Ibid, Letter from Clerk of Thrapston Union (24 October 1838)

<sup>55</sup> Ibid, Copy letter from Poor Law Commission

This view was the one that had been expressed in the 1834 Poor Law Report. The Poor Law Commissioners did not want a sliding back to the 'evils' of the old poor law and hoped that 'the farmers of land will soon find it in their interest to provide sufficient dwellings to accommodate a population adequate to the demand for their labour.' Certainly as Anne Digby has shown in her work on Norfolk, many parish officers tried to circumvent the strictures laid down in the New Poor Law.<sup>56</sup>

However, the sale of parish housing would seem to be one area where on the whole parishes entered into the spirit of the New Poor Law. This may well have been largely because it was a necessity to do so in order to be able to furnish the parish's contribution to the building of a Union workhouse. It may also be, as John Broad points out, that the cost of maintaining such property was considered too great, particularly by rate-paying farmers.<sup>57</sup>

For the purpose of examining the sale of parish property this study has concentrated on those parishes incorporated into the Northamptonshire Poor Law Unions of Brackley, Brixworth, Daventry, Hardingstone, Kettering, Northampton, Oundle, Peterborough, Towcester and Wellingborough and has, therefore, excluded those parishes, which were in the out of county unions of Banbury, Lutterworth, Market Harborough, Rugby, Stamford, and Uppingham, and also the towns of Northampton and Peterborough, whose size would distort the picture of the situation in the rural parishes. In Northamptonshire parish property was sold off in 141 parishes between 1836 and 1844, that is forty-seven percent. This had major implications on the availability of housing for the very poorest sections of rural society, mostly those

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<sup>56</sup> A Digby, 'The Labour Market', p.69

<sup>57</sup> J Broad, 'Housing the Rural Poor in Southern England', *The Agricultural History Review*, Vol 48, II (2000), p.170

unable to pay rent either due to old age, sickness or unemployment in over a half of all Northamptonshire parishes. It is extremely likely that all parishes that contained parish housing sold their stock, as the correspondence from the poor law commissioners shows that they exerted considerable pressure to do so and there was little evidence of reluctance on the part of parish officials. It has, therefore, been possible to calculate the percentage of the total housing stock of a parish that was owned by it, by using the 1841 Census Abstracts for Northamptonshire and the conveyances of parish property lodged in MH12 files of correspondence for the Northamptonshire unions.<sup>58</sup> The percentage ranges from less than one percent to forty-one percent, averaging at thirteen percent.

It is hard to ascertain what happened to that housing stock once it had been sold. In certain cases, as was seen in Brigstock, the housing was probably pulled down. This certainly happened with some parish property in Braunston. The Clerk of the Daventry Union wrote to the Poor Law Commission in 1841, 'the houses, or rather hovels, comprised in Lot 5 are so great a nuisance to the parish, that the Vestry has determined to take them down and throw the very small site of them open to the street into which they very inconveniently project.'<sup>59</sup> In many parishes, the property may just have changed ownership. There was one example, in the parish of Welton, where the parish officers 'could not obtain a purchaser' for five freehold cottages.<sup>60</sup> Table 6.2 shows the occupations of purchasers as found in the conveyances.

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<sup>58</sup>PP 1842 Session 2, II(277), Accounts of Population and Number of Houses according to 1841 census, of each County in Great Britain and Comparative Statement of Population and Houses, 1801, 1811, 1821, 1831 and 1841; PRO, MH12, Correspondence between the Poor Law Commissioners and the Northamptonshire Unions. (See bibliography for full references).

<sup>59</sup> PRO, MH12, 312/8711, Correspondence (Daventry Union), Letter from Clerk of Daventry Union to Poor Law Commission (25 June 1841)

<sup>60</sup> PRO, MH12, 312/8712, Correspondence (Daventry Union), Letter from E S Burton, clerk to Daventry Union (15 December 1843) There is no record of these five cottages having been sold.

**Table 6.2: Occupations of those purchasing parish property and as a percentage of all known purchasers**

	<i>Gentlemen</i>	<i>Professional men</i>	<i>Clergy</i>	<i>Farmers</i>	<i>Artisans &amp; Tradesmen</i>
Number in each occupational category	33	3	11	24	28
As % of all 99 identified occupations	33%	3%	11%	24%	28%

Sources: Conveyances in MH12 correspondence and Whellans Commercial Directory (1849)<sup>61</sup>

In twelve out of the fourteen parishes with a sole proprietor, the property was bought by him. The purchasing of parish property gave landowners the opportunity to increase their influence in terms of housing and therefore settlement, in those parishes where they were sole proprietors. Additionally several of the major landowners, such as Earl Fitzwilliam and Earl Spencer purchased parish property in a number of parishes where they shared ownership with one or two other proprietors. This was the case in Titchmarsh when the Guardians wrote the following letter to the Poor Law Commission in November 1836:

... The Parishioners of Titchmarsh are desirous to offer their property for sale by private contract to Lord Lilford the proprietor of the principal part of the Parish with a view to prevent the increase of settlements an evil which they anticipate will be the result of its being offered in small lots and purchased by cottagers and the Guardians are ready to comply with their wish on receiving the sanction of the Poor Law Commissioners.<sup>62</sup>

Poor law reformers were convinced that cottages rented from small occupiers were open to a number of abuses – poor conditions, high rents and the crowding of several

<sup>61</sup> PRO, MH12, Correspondence between the Poor Law Commissioners Northamptonshire Unions

<sup>62</sup> PRO, MH12, 319/8861, Correspondence (Thrapston Union). There is no evidence of this property actually having been sold.

families in one tenement. This was the chief concern of the parishioners in Titchmarsh (particularly the principal rate-payers) who were in an alliance with the major proprietor to prevent an increase in population and subsequently the possibility of higher poor rates. Reverend Litchfield voiced yet another concern. This was that the non-interference of the Poor Law Commissioners in the process of sale (particularly of copyhold properties) enabled small occupiers to purchase a cottage and turn it into a beer shop, which he stated was 'in nine instances out ten the object of the purchaser.'<sup>63</sup> He then gave an example of what could happen if the 'respectable farmer and others' refused to sign a beer license:

I have known a quiet and well-ordered parish punished in another way, where, a license being refused, a threat was made of converting a cottage into a conventicle, so that the parishioners were left by an unprincipled man to choose between a Baptist meeting and a beer-shop!<sup>64</sup>

However, amongst the farmers, artisans and small tradesmen, only one was listed as a beer retailer and one as a malster. A further three were listed as victuallers, although it is unknown whether this related to just food. Of course, it may be that some purchasers may have become beer retailers after purchasing parish property, but, as with much of his rhetoric, Litchfield exaggerated 'evils' to press home his own social disciplinary agenda. Despite these reservations over half of parish property was purchased in small lots by farmers, artisans and small tradesmen, particularly in those parishes where this class were already proprietors. It is difficult to see what effect this change of ownership had on the occupants of parish property most of whom were listed as paupers incapable of paying rent, as details of individual properties were not listed and so cannot be compared with the 1841 census. What is apparent in this large-scale change of ownership of parish property is that the responsibility for

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<sup>63</sup> NCL, Northampton Herald (30 July 1836)

<sup>64</sup> Ibid



housing the poorest inhabitants of an 'open' parish often remained in the hands of the parishioners who, as parish officers, had administered parish property. It may be that in some cases they continued to house some of their labourers rent-free. This would be consistent with Anne Digby's findings in the Eastern counties where farmers continued to use the outdoor relief strategies of the old poor law after 1834 in preference to the indoor relief provided in the union workhouse, in order to regulate the supply of labour needed by them.<sup>65</sup> However, this tied cottage system would have been aimed at their employees so that the unemployed, either those who were sacked or retired, may well have found themselves forced to enter the new union workhouses. Thus there was a shift in emphasis in the responsibility for housing the poor from the parish to the union.

### **6.3: Housing provided by individuals**

Although the first half of the nineteenth century saw the publication of many pamphlets and books of architectural designs of cottages intended to encourage landowners to build new cottages, the evidence that has been hardest to come by is the extent to which landowners were directly involved in providing housing to the poor.<sup>66</sup> Many of the estate records of Northamptonshire landowners do not contain details of rents and lettings to labourers or accounts of building cottages and so the evidence is

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<sup>65</sup> A Digby, 'The Labour Market', p.70

<sup>66</sup> Two such examples are E Bartell, Hints for picturesque improvements in ornamented cottages and their scenery: including some observations on the labourer and his cottage (London, 1804) and R Elsam, Hints for Improving the Condition of the Peasantry in all parts of the United Kingdom by promoting comfort in their habitations: interspersed with plans, elevations, and descriptive views of characteristic designs for cottages, contrived for the use and convenience of the peasant and small farmers, as well as occasional retreats for persons of moderate income (London, 1816).

patchy.<sup>67</sup> Therefore, although major landowners had the means to provide housing for the poor, even here there is little evidence of large-scale involvement. This was due to two major factors, cost and the desire to restrict settlement. As Huzel points out the returns on cottage building were low to the investor because of the inability of the labourer to pay a rent that represented a reasonable return on the capital outlay.<sup>68</sup> Sir James Langham of Cottesbrooke certainly felt that the cost was too great. In December 1830, he received a letter from 'thirteen persons complaining of their suffering condition and hardship they endure by residing out of the Parish' and responded thus:

They can hardly expect to be received again by their parents into their houses as their children and I certainly cannot in justice to my own children who are dispersed about in the army and elsewhere set about building and providing houses for other persons [sic] children.<sup>69</sup>

Furthermore, it would appear that Sir James Langham was prepared to take more drastic steps to restrict the settlement in Cottesbrooke as can be seen in a letter sent by the auditor of the Brixworth Union to the Poor Law Commission in 1836:

Sir James Langham the principal owner of the parish of Cottesbrooke pulled down all the cottages in that place belonging to him. The poor people there became distressed and destitute and applied to the overseers for habitations who said, what can we do, we can't build the cottages up again? Sir James said the poor may do as they can for houses.<sup>70</sup>

Although this may well be rather an extreme example, until the 1865 Union

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<sup>67</sup> An examination of the catalogues for the following estates in Northamptonshire Record Office found no such records for the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century: Bouverie (Delapre), Brudenell, Buccleugh (Montagu), Capell (Flore), Cartwright (Aynho), Dryden (Canons Ashby), Fermor Hesketh, Finch Hatton, Gunning (Horton), Isham, Knightley, Wake (Courteenhall), Westmorland

<sup>68</sup> J Huzel, 'Labour II', p.747

<sup>69</sup> NRO, Langham, L(C)1187, Copy letter from Sir James Langham to W Dean (11 December 1830)

<sup>70</sup> PRO, MH12./311/8689, Correspondence between the Poor Law Commission and the Brixworth Union, Letter from Auditor of Brixworth Union to Poor Law Commission (4 February 1836)

Chargeability Act, the question of settlement and the consequent size of poor rates was a deterrent to the building of cottages, particularly in 'close' parishes. In Farthinghoe the Reverend Litchfield supported Sir James Langham's approach, for which he was praised by Assistant Poor Law Commissioner Richardson in his report:

Several of the most ruinous cottages have been pulled down as they became vacant, and new and better, but *fewer* habitations erected, and to all, both new and old cottages, gardens have been attached. Low rents, from 26s to 40s, were put upon the cottages, and the produce applied to their improvement. The cottages, the rents of which are applied to this purpose, have been made wholesome and improved in appearance by whitewashing, painting, pointing and other additions.<sup>71</sup>

His purpose in so doing was expressed in the following letter addressed to the Editor of the Northampton Herald in November 1849.

Without being a Malthusian, I venture to urge, that one of the great causes of the misery and vice we are witnessing in our rural districts, and which we see filling our workhouses and prisons so fast, is the redundancy of the population. By redundancy I, of course, mean a population fostered into existence beyond the demand for labour... And can anything more surely tend to such an unhappy result than the facility of securing a cottage the moment a full-grown boy and girl of eighteen or nineteen desire to be married?<sup>72</sup>

Litchfield went on to urge 'noblemen and gentlemen not to build cottages, but to ascertain whether it will or will not be for the benefit of the poor that more cottages should be built.' In particular he questioned the activities of rich and benevolent noblemen, particularly the Duke of Bedford who did not consider the consequences before they gave 'a sweeping order to their stewards to build so many new cottages.' However, the restriction of housing in 'close' parishes caused problems in neighbouring 'open' parishes as was expressed by Clark Hillyard Esq in a letter to the Northampton Mercury in 1847, who quoted this example:

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<sup>71</sup> PP 1834 XXIX(1), Assistant Poor Law Commissioner's Report (Northamptonshire), pp.409 & 411

<sup>72</sup> NCL, Northampton Herald (10 November 1849)

The whole of the land in the parish of A. belongs to one individual, who, not liking to have a large population near his mansion, or in fact in his parish, has not for many years past allowed any additional cottages to be built for dwellings of the increased population; therefore, when a labourer in the parish of A. marries he has been obliged to get a cottage in the adjoining parish of B, the land of which belonging to many individuals, a number of poor confined cottages have been built on speculation by carpenters and masons, and let to the labourers of parish A at rents distressingly high to them. Thus, a great proportion of the poor of A parish are saddled on the parish of B, which has ever been greatly burdened with poor.<sup>73</sup>

Hillyard believed that this problem could be amended by 'landlords building near each of their tenant-farmer's houses cottages sufficient for the number of labourers constantly employed on the farm.' One of the advantages of this solution was that 'it would very much tend to improve the morals of the agricultural poor if they were not so congregated as they are in villages.' Clearly, too, it would be a means of restricting their activities. Not surprisingly then there was some resistance to this type of housing. In the 1867 report Mr Scriven, land agent to Lord Northampton suggested the building of cottages at the farmers' lodges, but found that 'we cannot get people to live in them although the farmers want them to come.'<sup>74</sup> Earl Spencer too commented that he was 'usually ready to let cottages attached to what in this country is called a lodge or isolated farm to the nominee of the farmer.' However, as a rule he thought that 'all labourers should, with scarcely an exception, rent their cottages directly from the landlord, as it makes them more independent.'<sup>75</sup> It is hard to see how this would be achieved, rather it would mean dependency upon the landlord instead of upon the farmer. Some landowners were engaged in cottage building. The Northamptonshire Mercury, which regularly reported the philanthropic activities of local landowners noted in 1829 that:

<sup>73</sup> NCL, Northampton Mercury (22 March 1847)

<sup>74</sup> PP 1867-8 XVII, Report of the Employment of Women and Children in Agriculture, p.441

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid*, p.429

The parish of Stanion, which forms part of Lord Cardigan's property in this county, has of late years been much improved, not only as to its appearance, but its comfort, by the erection of neat and commodious cottages for the poor and the foundation of a National School, at the cost of this distinguished Individual.<sup>76</sup>

The rent accounts of Earl Fitzwilliam record that in 1832 he provided five new cottages in Castor.<sup>77</sup> Similarly the Duke of Grafton's estate papers show that two cottages were built at Blisworth in 1838.<sup>78</sup> The most extensive evidence can be found on Earl Spencer's estate papers which list the cottage building as follows: three cottages at Brampton Ash, ten cottages each in Chapel Brampton, Church Brampton and Harleston, six cottages in Little Brington in 1844-45 and in 1851 an unspecified number of cottages in Heyford and of Widows' cottages in Brington.<sup>79</sup> Pevsner provides further evidence of some cottage building in the early nineteenth century. By 1800, the entire village of Laxton had been rebuilt by Lord Carbery and the model village of Hulcote was constructed between 1800 and 1820. However, apart from these the only other buildings he mentions were those provided by Earl Spencer and some estate houses built by Mr Young in Orlingbury (of unknown date).<sup>80</sup> Havinden states that there were a number of problems associated with the building of model villages, which included cost and the fact that often inhabitants of model cottages or villages were employed by the tenant-farmers not the landowners and so the latter did

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<sup>76</sup> NCL, *Northampton Mercury* (31 October 1829)

<sup>77</sup> NRO, *Fitzwilliam*, F(M)508, Book of receiving rents for Northamptonshire parishes (1829-1834)

<sup>78</sup> NRO, *Grafton*, G4038/2, Building accounts for double cottage at Blisworth (1838). Physical evidence shows that many more Grafton cottages were built. A row of houses in Potterspury bear the inscription 'Erected by the Duke of Grafton in 1840.' Furthermore, Havinden talks about the style of the Duke of Grafton's cottages in Potterspury which were influenced by Henry Roberts's cottage designs for the Society for Improving the Condition of the Labouring Classes. However, these may have been built after 1850. M Havinden, 'The Model Village' in (ed.) G E Mingay, *The Victorian Countryside*, Vol.II (London, 1981), p.419

<sup>79</sup> NRO, *Spencer*, 7d.3, An Abstract of the Expenses of Building Commenced in 1844 and completed in 1852

<sup>80</sup> N Pevsner, *The Buildings*, p.290 & p.361

not have a vested interest in subsidising wages in this way. Also, in some 'close' parishes there was a fear of encouraging the poor to take up residence, when they might prove to be a burden on the poor rates at some time in their lives.<sup>81</sup> A more consistent picture can be obtained from Rural Queries, although, as always, this is limited by the size of sample. Rural Queries attempted to ascertain the ownership of cottage property with 'Question 16. What Class of Persons are the usual Owners of Cottages?'<sup>82</sup> In thirteen parishes (sixty-eight percent) the landowner, lord of the manor, or the proprietor were generally the owners of the cottages. This ranged in scale from Aynho where 'they all belong to the principal proprietors' to East Haddon where 'about half belong to the chief proprietor of the parish'. In Stoke Albany cottage ownership was shared by 'small tradespeople, masons, wheelwrights, small occupiers of the land, and the Lord of the Manor' and likewise in Wilbarston by 'mechanics, little tradespeople, and the Lord of the Manor.'<sup>83</sup> In three parishes, none of the cottages were owned by principal proprietors. This included the town of Kettering where the cottages were owned by 'persons in trade in the middle class, and others' but in two rural parishes as well. In Cliffe Regis (otherwise known as King's Cliffe) cottages belonged to 'handicraftsmen, manufacturers, hawkers, pedlars and labourers and in Moulton by 'tradespeople, such as carpenters, masons, blacksmiths, and a few others and farmers.' In six parishes, ownership was divided between landowners, artisans, and tradespeople. One parish (Orlingbury) recorded cottages being owned by the Rector. Grendon recorded 'several Cottage Owners.' Farmers as owners of cottages are only mentioned once in Upper and Lower Boddington where the response was 'Lord Spencer in general, and some of the Farmers.' However,

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<sup>81</sup> M Havinden, 'The Model Village', p.417

<sup>82</sup> PP 1834 XX(1), Rural Queries

<sup>83</sup> PP 1834 XXX(1), Rural Queries

farmers were often responsible for actually letting the cottages as in Byfield. Here, although 'the cottages in general belong to the landed proprietors' they were 'frequently let with the farm to the tenants.' Thus, although, sixty-eight percent of this sample recorded cottages being owned by the chief proprietor of land, it may not have meant that he was directly responsible for placing cottage tenants in them. This is, in fact, one of the major problems with the definition of 'open' and 'close' parishes in that it relies on landownership and ignores occupancy. Table 6.3 shows the extent of housing recorded in the estate rentals and, therefore, presumably rented directly from the major landowners and this varied considerably.<sup>84</sup> Earl Fitzwilliam had the lowest recorded rentals whereas Earl Spencer and Lewis Loyd had significant numbers in parishes where they were the sole proprietors. From these figures it can be seen that householders would also have rented from tenants of the major proprietor (occupiers).

In order to understand how tenants were selected by the major proprietors the study has concentrated on the parishes Abington, Little Billing and Overstone where Lewis Lloyd was the sole proprietor, Brington where Earl Spencer was the sole proprietor and Great Billing where the sole proprietor was Robert Elwes Esq. The occupations of the male tenants were analysed, excluding the professionals and the farmers. The indigent included both males and females.

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<sup>84</sup> Cottage tenants are calculated as those who paid a rental of less than £4 per annum.

**Table 6.3: Percentage of householders in respective parishes (as recorded in 1841 census) who were tenants of major proprietors**

<i>Major proprietor</i>	<i>Parish</i>	<i>No of householders</i>	<i>No of proprietors in parish</i>	<i>Landowners' tenants as % of householders</i>
Earl Fitzwilliam	Helpstone	103	3	7%
Lewis Loyd Esq	Sywell	47	2	9%
Earl Fitzwilliam	Bainton	35	3	10%
Lewis Loyd Esq	Pytchley	105	3	19%
Earl Fitzwilliam	Castor	201	1	22%
Earl Fitzwilliam	Newborough	66	?	34%
Elwes	Great Billing	67	2	35%
Earl Fitzwilliam	Marholm	24	1	41%
Earl Fitzwilliam	Upton	6	1	43%
Earl Fitzwilliam	Maxey	111	4	49%
Earl Spencer	The Bringtons	163	1	52%
Earl Fitzwilliam	Longthorpe	54	?	52%
Earl Fitzwilliam	Etton	22	1	67%
Lewis Loyd Esq	Abington	22	1	69%
Earl Spencer	Harlestone	122	2	69%
Lewis Loyd Esq	Overstone	40	1	71%
Lewis Loyd Esq	Little Billing	15	1	81%
Earl Spencer	Chapel Brampton	39	1	85%
Earl Spencer	Church Brampton	34	2	85%
Earl Spencer	Strixton	8	1	91%
Duke of Buckingham	Astwell & Falcutt (hamlets)	31	1	100%

Sources: Estate rentals for Earl Fitzwilliam, Lewis Loyd Esq, Sir Robert Elwes, Earl Spencer and Duke of Buckingham and 1841 census abstracts<sup>85</sup>

<sup>85</sup> NRO, Fitzwilliam, F(M)508, Book of receiving rents for Northamptonshire parishes (1829-1834), Overstone Estate Papers, X4211/7 Accounts of Receipts & Disbursements upon the estates of Lewis Loyd by John Beasley, Spencer, 7G 1-5, Spencer Estate Rentals (1841), Elwes (Great Billing) Collection, E(GB) 348, Farm & Cottage Rentals (29 September 1841), Temple (Stowe) Collection, T(S) Box 39, Cottage & Allotment Rent (1840-66). Lewis Loyd and Spencer shared the same land agent, John Beasley, who appears to have been meticulous in recording estate matters, which accounts for the survival of records for these estates.



Table 6.4 shows the occupations of these tenants.

**Table 6.4: Occupations of tenants shown as a percentage of each occupational category in 1841 census**

<i>Major proprietor</i>	<i>Parish</i>	<i>Artisans &amp; tradesmen</i>	<i>Labourers</i>	<i>Indigent</i>
Spencer	Bringtons	52%	53%	51%
Overstone	Overstone	83%	71%	0
Overstone	Abington	0	71%	83%
Overstone	Little Billing	0	90%	0
Elwes	Great Billing	18%	42%	67%

Sources: 1841 census returns for parishes of Brington, Overstone, Abington, Little Billing and Great Billing and estate rentals as in Table 6.3<sup>86</sup>

In the Bringtons just over half of the labourers, artisans and tradesmen and the indigent were direct tenants of Earl Spencer, but in Great Billing, where the main proprietorship was shared with the Rector, less than half the labourers were tenants of Elwes and an even smaller proportion of artisans and tradesmen. The absence of artisan and tradesmen tenants in Abington and Little Billing is explained by the fact that the census only recorded two in this category in Abington, and none in Little Billing. Likewise the census did not record anyone as being indigent in Overstone and only one widow in Little Billing. However, in Lewis Loyd's third parish, Abington, eighty-three percent of indigent parishioners were housed by him, which would suggest a high level of care. Even in Great Billing, where there was a smaller percentage of working tenants, over half the indigent were housed by Elwes.

Therefore, when it came to housing the most vulnerable section of the community, the

<sup>86</sup> NRO, *Spencer*, 7G 1-5, Rentals. There is a problem with the census with the labelling of certain categories. Those called 'indigent' could, of course, sometimes be elderly labourers.

indigent, all three proprietors played a significant role. The effect of life-cycle can be seen in more detail if the ages of these tenants are examined. Table 6.5 concentrates on the artisans, tradesmen, labourers and indigent tenants.

**Table 6.5: Ages of artisans, labourers and indigent tenants as a percentage of same age groups in 1841 census for same parishes**

<i>Major proprietor</i>	<i>Parish</i>	<i>Age 20-29</i>	<i>Age 30-39</i>	<i>Age 40-49</i>	<i>Age 50-59</i>	<i>Age 60 plus</i>
Overstone	Abington	100%	67%	60%	86%	60%
Overstone	Little Billing	100%	67%	33%	100%	100%
Overstone	Overstone	0%	63%	50%	83%	89%
Elwes	Great Billing	14%	35%	24%	59%	56%
Spencer	Bringtons	18%	55%	59%	75%	57%
	Average %	46%	57%	45%	81%	72%

Sources: As Table 6.4<sup>87</sup>

It would appear that the age groups twenty to twenty-nine were just as likely to become tenants of the major proprietor as the two mid-life age groups. However, these figures are distorted by Abington and Little Billing, both of which were very small parishes with only one householder in Abington and two in Little Billing in this age group in the census. An average of the other three parishes would result in only eleven percent of this age group being tenants of the major proprietor. Late middle age to old age saw the greatest likelihood of householders being housed by the major proprietor. This is not surprising in 'close' parishes where the desire to restrict settlement would be reflected in limiting the housing available to young householders. In all the parishes several young married men were not householders in their own right, but resided with their parents. The opportunity to take over the parental household obviously increased in middle age.

<sup>87</sup> In this table widows are included in the 'indigent.'

Given a restriction of settlement in 'close' parishes what criteria did major proprietors use when deciding which parishioners should become their tenants? The most obvious explanation would be that the proprietors gave preference to those who were directly employed by them. Unfortunately in the case of Lewis Loyd and Elwes, there are no surviving wages books to determine which householders were their employees. However, the estate records of Earl Spencer contain charity lists, which also record the employers of the recipients of this charity. Thus it is possible to see how many of Earl Spencer's artisan/tradesmen, labourer and indigent tenants were either employed by or in receipt of a pension from him and this is shown in Table 6.6.

**Table 6.6: Artisans, labourers and indigent tenants employed by Spencer as a percentage of householders in 1841 census**

	<i>Artisans &amp; Tradesmen</i>	<i>Labourers</i>	<i>Indigent</i>
No of householders in 1841 census	46	71	38
No of householders employed by or in receipt of pension from Spencer in 1841 census	24	34	7
Householders employed by or in receipt of pension from Spencer as % of same occupational category in 1841 census	52%	48%	18%
No of tenants employed by or in receipt of pension from Spencer	16	25	3
Tenants employed by or in receipt of pension from Spencer as % of same occupational category in 1841 census	35%	35%	8%

Sources: 1841 census returns for Bringtons and Spencer estate rentals.<sup>88</sup>

Just over half of the artisan/tradesmen householders in Brington were employed by Spencer and a third of them were also tenants of his. When it came to the labourers it

<sup>88</sup> NRO, Spencer, 7G 1-5, Rentals & 1841 Census returns for the Bringtons

can be seen that just under half of them were employed by him and again a third were also tenants of his. The indigent who were in receipt of a pension from Spencer represented eighteen percent and only a small number of those were living in houses provided by him. As there was charity housing in Brington, it may have been that some of the indigent were accommodated by this. Table 6.7 shows the relationship between employer and all those artisans/tradesmen, labourers and indigent who were listed as Spencer tenants.

**Table 6.7: Employers of artisans, labourers and indigent tenants of Spencer as percentage of total number of tenants in each category**

	<i>Artisans/tradesmen</i>	<i>Labourers</i>	<i>Indigent</i>
Employed by Spencer	67%	68%	16%
Employed by others	13%	11%	0
Unknown	20%	21%	84%

Sources: As Table 6.6 plus Spencer charity records<sup>89</sup>

There was a significant percentage of tenants for whom the employer was unknown, but, nevertheless, although householders in this category employed by others were not excluded from being tenants of Spencer, it would appear that the likelihood of being his tenant was far greater if they were employed by him. It may be that some labourers were housed by their employers, who were themselves tenant farmers of Spencer's. The major landowners in most cases ensured that there was housing for the elderly. In addition in the Spencer case his employees were assured of residency in the parish and in all cases the chances of this were improved with age. This was a considerable advantage to the labourers and one which they would be reluctant to lose, thus raising the possibility of housing being used to exercise social discipline.

<sup>89</sup> NRO, Spencer, 7f5, Names of the Poor

#### **6.4: The cost of housing for the poor**

As has already been discussed, it has not been possible to calculate the rents of charity housing, except to positively identify ten charities as providing rent-free housing, but it is likely that the majority of charity provision was either free or of a very low cost. The same was true of parish property. The records in MH12 show that parish housing was mainly inhabited by paupers, living rent-free. Returning to the issue of rent paid on all cottages, Question 18 of Rural Queries asked what was the rent of cottages and the replies are summarised in Table 6.8.

**Table 6.8: Annual rents recorded in Northamptonshire Rural Queries**

	<i>Rent-free</i>	<i>Under £1</i>	<i>£1 but under £2</i>	<i>£2 but under £4</i>	<i>£4 plus</i>
No of rents	2	1	9	12	3
As % of all 27 recorded levels of rent	7%	1%	33%	44%	14%

Source: Rural Queries<sup>90</sup>

The most generous form of assistance was found in the parishes of Stoke Albany and Wilbarston, which did not appear to have parish property, but where the labourers lived rent-free. As the majority of parishes recorded a range of rents, the table includes the highest and lowest level in each parish. This range of rents makes it hard to ascertain whether rents were lower in parishes with a more limited proprietorship, as the answers do not state who is charging what rent. The majority of rents were in

<sup>90</sup> PP 1834 XXX(1), Rural Queries

the range of £1 to £4 per annum.

These rents can be compared to the recorded rentals of Lewis Loyd, Earl Fitzwilliam, Sir Robert Elwes, Earl Spencer and the Earl of Cardigan given in Table 6.9.

Generally the average rentals for these major proprietors was on a par with those recorded in Rural Queries.

**Table 6.9: Annual rents for tenants of Lewis Loyd, Earl Fitzwilliam, Robert Elwes, Earl Spencer and the Earl of Cardigan given as a percentage of all for each landlord respectively**

	<i>Rent under £1</i>	<i>Rent £1 but under £2</i>	<i>Rent £2 but under £4</i>
Overstone tenants	72%	24%	4%
Fitzwilliam tenants	2%	7%	91%
Elwes tenants	0%	48%	52%
Spencer tenants	23%	58%	19%
Earl of Cardigan	82%	5%	13%
Average of all rents in each price category	36%	28%	36%

Sources: Estate rentals as Table 6.3 plus Earl of Cardigan's estate rentals<sup>91</sup>

However, there were considerably more properties let at under £1, particularly by Lewis Loyd, who was the most generous with his low rent. Earl Spencer too let the majority of his property at under £2 per annum. The estate records of the Duke of Buckingham show an even greater benefit to his tenants. His rents for the Northamptonshire parishes of Astwell and Falcutt in 1840 were recorded as five shillings, two shillings and sixpence and one shilling a year. Additionally half a

<sup>91</sup> NRO, Cardigan, ASR 513 Accounts & Rentals for Deene, Deenthorpe, Stanion, Corby, Bulwick, Glapthorne, Cotterstock, Tansor, Southwick & Stoke Doyle (1811)

year's rent was returned to all the tenants except five who were either not seen as they were ill with fever or were in arrears with their rent. An allowance was also recorded for beer given to tenants on rent day.<sup>92</sup> As can be seen the majority of Earl Fitzwilliam's tenants paid over £2 per annum in rent and those of Sir Robert Elwes were fairly evenly distributed between the mid range and higher range rents. To be a tenant of either the Duke of Buckingham, Earl Spencer or Lewis Loyd was to be guaranteed housing at a reasonable rent that would see one through a period of raising a family and often into old age. The rents of the Earl of Cardigan were particularly low in some cases with rents of 3d and 6d per annum. His rents may have been lower than the other landowners (with the exception of Lewis Loyd) because the evidence was from an earlier date.<sup>93</sup> However, the rents in the 1790s that were calculated by Davies were considerably more than this with 10s to £1 per annum being quoted for Brington and £1 10s to £2 2s per annum in Castor.<sup>94</sup> Eden's estimate of the rent for a labourer in Roade was 8s per annum. This labourer was tenant of the Duke of Grafton and Eden recorded that he had 'sometimes been assisted by his landlord.'<sup>95</sup> Unfortunately, Eden did not say what form this assistance took, but in the Duke of Grafton's charity book there was evidence of two occasions when assistance was given with rents. In March 1830 he gave £1 10s to Widow Sutton as 'a year's allowance for house rent' and in October 1839 10s was given to Widow Alice Pell of Potterspurty 'to prevent a distress of rent.'<sup>96</sup> Furthermore, Pitt's General View, stated that:

The Duke of Grafton never makes cottages an object of revenue, expecting only that, on the general account, they should repair and support one another;

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<sup>92</sup> NRO, Temple (Stowe) Collection, T(S) Box 39, Cottage & Allotment Rents

<sup>93</sup> He may have been concerned with helping the poor by providing low rents. Evidence in the allotments chapter show that he provided allotments of land for the poor in three parishes.

<sup>94</sup> D Davies, The Case of the Labourers, pp. 175 & 177

<sup>95</sup> F M Eden, The State of the Poor, p.547

<sup>96</sup> NRO, Grafton, G3930, Charity Book

they are accordingly let at from twenty to twenty-five shillings. This liberality deserves imitation: I found, however, other cottages letting at thirty-five and forty shillings.<sup>97</sup>

However, by the 1840s it was clear that such a liberal attitude to rents on the Duke's estates was being questioned. In 1841 the steward of his Suffolk estate of Euston, wrote to his heir, setting out his objections to low rents.

Where cottages are easily procured at low rents, it has a tendency to promote a temptation for improvident marriages, which too frequently overwhelm both parties with cares, and misery, before either have arrived at years of discretion as likewise tending to increase an already redundant population. Another objection to low rents, is that it holds out an inducement to all who can have any possible plea, to put in a claim as belonging to such parish – thereby tending in an undue proportion to increase the population of that parish, compared with adjoining ones, where rents are higher.<sup>98</sup>

Thus he was reflecting the major concerns of poor law reformers, but there was no surviving evidence to show whether the Earl agreed with Cooper's advice to provide medium fair rents. Certainly, as was shown in Chapter three, the Earl was concerned with the condition of labourers in Potterspury. The other benefit that might be expected from housing provided by a major landowner was that it might be of superior quality to both charity and parish housing.

### **6.5: Quality of housing provision for the poor**

There is little documentary evidence to show the quality of housing until the 1867 Report on the Employment of Women and Children. However, this is not in the time-scale of this thesis and was written as a response to a major change in poor law policy

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<sup>97</sup> W Pitt, *General View*, p.28

<sup>98</sup> WSRA, *Grafton Estate Papers*, HA 513/6/ 67, Letter from Kelsey Cooper, Steward to the Earl of Euston, Euston (18<sup>th</sup> January 1841)



that had a marked effect on rural housing, that is the repeal of the Act of Settlement and Union Chargeability. It will, however, be referred to where it sheds light on the state of housing in the preceding decades. As has been seen, the reports of the Charity Commissioners and the correspondence relating to the sale of parish property showed that rural housing was often in a dilapidated state and the cost of upkeep was a considerable burden. When William Cobbett undertook his rural rides he commented on the state of housing in the countryside, although not specifically mentioning Northamptonshire. To the south of the county in Hertfordshire and Buckinghamshire he commented in 1822 that:

All along the country that I have come, the labourers' dwellings are good. – and you see here, as in Kent, Sussex, Surrey and Hampshire, and, indeed, in almost every part of England....those neatly kept and productive little gardens round the labourers' houses.<sup>99</sup>

However, his opinion of housing in Leicestershire, to the north of Northamptonshire, was far from favourable when he wrote in 1830:

This morning I walked out to Hailstone, nearly three miles on the Lutterworth road... You have nothing to do but to walk through these villages, to see the cause of the increase of the jails. Look at these hovels, made of mud and of straw; bits of glass, or of old off-cast windows, without frames or hinges, frequently, but merely stick in the mud wall. Enter them, and look at the bits of chairs or stools; the wretched boards tacked together, to serve for a table; the floor of pebble, broken brick, or of the bare ground; look at the thing called a bed; and survey the rags on the backs of the wretched inhabitants.<sup>100</sup>

It may have been that housing conditions in the Southern counties were better than the Midlands, but it may also be that between 1822 and 1830 Cobbett's priorities had changed. In 1823 he published his book Cottage Economy in which he promoted his

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<sup>99</sup> William Cobbett, Selections from William Cobbett's Illustrated Rural Rides 1821-1832 (London, 1992 edition), p.45

<sup>100</sup> Ibid, p.215

ideas about the desirability of giving each labourer a cottage with enough land to be able to provide for himself and his family.<sup>101</sup> By 1830 Cobbett was preoccupied with the problems of the countryside, as demonstrated by the Swing riots.

In 1838 Edwin Chadwick began his sanitary enquiry on behalf of the Poor Law Commission. Chadwick was concerned with the increased expenditure on poor relief that arose from disease and the cost of removing the waste material believed to cause disease.<sup>102</sup> Accordingly a circular letter of instruction was sent to the Assistant Commissioners requesting that they find out 'the general condition of the residences of the labouring classes where disease is found to be the most prevalent.'<sup>103</sup> Robert Weale, the assistant commissioner reporting on Bedfordshire, Northamptonshire and Staffordshire reported that in Northamptonshire he had contacted the clerks of the Unions of Oundle and Towcester. He only received a reply from the clerk of the Towcester Union, which was as follows:

It is remarkable how little trouble some of the parishes, considering their size and population give us, the Board seldom or never receiving an application from; Blakesley, Gayton, Blisworth and Whittlebury are instances. There may be others, but these occur to me at the moment..... Applications for medical relief are infrequent, and there is a marked love of home, and an attention to its wants and comforts here, which leave the beer-shops nearly forsaken. In these places some cottages of an improved description have been built, and others enlarged, for the labourers by their landlords, and I entertain no doubt that the advantages afforded by such cottages have had a very great and salutary effect upon the health and moral habits of the people.<sup>104</sup>

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<sup>101</sup> William Cobbett, Cottage Economy; containing information relative to the brewing of beer, making of bread, keeping of cows, pigs, bees, ewes, goats, poultry etc. (1823)

<sup>102</sup> M W Flinn, (ed.) Report on the Sanitary Condition of the Labouring Population of Great Britain 1842 Edwin Chadwick (Edinburgh, 1965), p.43

<sup>103</sup> PP 1837-8 XXVIII(145), 4<sup>th</sup> Annual Report of Poor Law Commissioners Appendix A No. 1, Supplements 1,2 & 3 Health General Chadwick Inquiry Sessions

<sup>104</sup> Ibid, p.761

Three of these parishes, Blakesley, Gayton and Whittlebury were 'open' parishes with four or five proprietors. Blisworth contained 145 houses but had only one major proprietor, the Duke of Grafton and has already been seen he had built some new cottages there. The Duke of Grafton was also a proprietor in the other three parishes and may well have been responsible for improving housing in them. Pitt's General View recorded that:

In the village of Potterspury and other places upon the Duke of Grafton's estate, considerable attention has been paid to the accommodation of the cottagers: the cottages are built of stone walls and thatch ... but comfort to the occupiers and not outward appearance is the object in view. They are built in an oblong row, forming the side of a street, with conveniences beneath and two or more lodging-rooms to each.<sup>105</sup>

The effects of the superior housing provided by landed proprietors was commented upon by the clerk of the Ampthill Union in Bedfordshire:

There are cottages in the union (not of recent erection) belonging to landed proprietors which are of a superior description, and that in the occupiers thereof a marked difference is observable, both as regards their personal appearance and moral conduct, as compared with the occupiers of cottages of an opposite description. Now the fact is, the proprietors of such superior cottages invariably select their tenants.<sup>106</sup>

Thus, although cottages built by landed proprietors were of a better quality, it was likely that they were only available for the 'respectable' members of parish society. An example of how housing was used as a measure of social discipline can be seen in the parish of Kelmarsh where the sole proprietor was Lord Bateman. In 1849 the Northampton Mercury gave the following report:

It appears that his Lordship had been compelled to serve notices to quit upon the occupiers of every cottage, in consequence of the unsatisfactory nature of

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<sup>105</sup> W Pitt, General View, pp. 30-31

<sup>106</sup> PP 1837-8 XXVIII(145), 4<sup>th</sup> Annual Report, Ibid, p.757

their holdings and a spirit of insubordination which had grown up from long indulgence.<sup>107</sup>

However, Lord Bateman did not evict his tenants. Instead he assembled his cottagers and told them that ‘he wished to forget the past, and hoped he might never again feel it necessary to exercise the rights of a landlord.’ He then offered his cottage tenants a package of benefits – a village school for their children to which they would be required to contribute a penny a week, the cottages to be put into good repair and an allotment of a quarter of an acre for every cottage. This would seem to be fairly generous, but there were conditions attached. Firstly he pulled down buildings ‘which had grown up from time to time at the back of the cottages.’ Next he read a form of agreement ‘which every cottage tenant would be required to sign’, and which placed particular emphasis on prohibiting lodgers or allowing more than one family to reside in a cottage. The allotments replaced cottage gardens and also were accompanied by a set of rules to which the tenants had to agree. All those tenants who paid their rent regularly ‘and conducted themselves properly’ would be invited to an annual rent-supper. Although Lord Bateman was improving the quality of housing for his tenants, it was clear that he was using this as an opportunity of exerting greater control over their behaviour. Furthermore there was a threat of non-renewal of rental agreements if tenants were considered in any way not conforming to his standards of honesty and sobriety. As with allotments housing was a means of rewarding those who conformed to notions of respectability and of excluding those who failed in this respect.

The conclusions of the 1867 report were that responsibility for providing decent accommodation for labourers lay with the landowners:

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<sup>107</sup> NCL, Northampton Mercury (29 December 1849)

We must look chiefly to the larger landowners for improved cottage accommodation. They, owing partly to feelings of benevolence, partly to the additional value conferred on their farms by a supply of labourers well-housed and near at hand, have already done a great deal in this way and are likely to do more.<sup>108</sup>

This was the major crux of the 1867 report when it came to cottage building and this must be taken into account, when considering the contrasting pictures it painted of housing provided by landowners in 'close' parishes and that provided by speculators or built by squatters in the 'open' parishes. The 1867 report commented that the condition of cottage accommodation varied so much in different parishes that it was almost impossible to generalise, but that 'cottages may, however, be divided into two main classes'.<sup>109</sup> These were 'close' parishes and 'open' parishes.<sup>110</sup> The report described the first class thus:

In close parishes a great number of new cottages are being or have recently been built. These are excellent. They are built of stone or brick, roofed with slate or tiles; the living room is about 12 feet by 14; behind this is a kitchen of rather smaller dimensions. None of these cottages have less than two bedrooms, most of them have three, and a scullery in the house. The water supply and drainage are usually excellent; all have gardens of from 20 to 40 poles adjoining the cottage, a pigsty, wood or coalhouse and privy out of the house, and usually an oven in the house or access to an oven adjoining it.<sup>111</sup>

These were the types of houses built by Earl Spencer in Brington between 1845 and 1848. Building vouchers for six cottages show that these had stone walls and were roofed with slate tiles. They were provided with casement windows, pumps, drains, stoves with grates, kitchen ranges, stone sinks and stone floors.<sup>112</sup> In the 1867 report Earl Spencer said 'I think it necessary that a labourer should have a cottage with three

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<sup>108</sup> PP 1867-8 XVII, Report of the Employment of Children, Young Persons, and Women in Agriculture, p.119

<sup>109</sup> *Ibid*, p.116

<sup>110</sup> Huzel writes that 'the introduction of union chargeability in 1865 could not undo local shortages overnight, and different housing standards in open and close villages were still discernible in Suffolk, for example, as late as the 1890s.' J Huzel, 'Labour II', p.757

<sup>111</sup> PP 1867-8 XVII, Report of the Employment, p.116

<sup>112</sup> NRO, Spencer, EP13, Vouchers for building of 6 new cottages (1845-48)

bedrooms to bring up a family respectably; therefore, in building cottages, I always build more with three rooms than with two'. These cottages would indeed have been a great improvement on the contemporary methods of construction that consisted of single stories open to thatched roofs and with earth floors.<sup>113</sup> In October 1847 the Northampton Herald reported on the state of thirty cottages owned by the Provost and Fellows of Worcester College, Oxford in the parish of Whitfield. These cottages were 'little better than hovels, very few with more than one sleeping room, and most of them wanting repair.'<sup>114</sup> It was decided to improve their condition and to start by building twelve new cottages adopting the following plan:

Two cottages under one roof; stone-built and slated, and sash casements. The staircase opposite the door of entrance, with a room to the right and left. Two very light and airy chambers in each cottage. Ventilators introduced between the floors and ceilings and under the roofs. The rooms fitted with every convenience in the shape of cupboards, shelves, &c, and each cottage provided with a good hovel &c.<sup>115</sup>

However, it cannot be assumed that all housing provided by landowners was of such a good quality. The Duke of Grafton's charity book recorded one payment of 5s to Widow Sutton 'to buy matting, having a damp cottage.'<sup>116</sup> In the 1834 report for Northamptonshire by the Assistant Commissioner of the Poor Law two parishes, Bozeat and Yardley Hastings, had been castigated as 'two very bad villages', because of their poor law practices and their impoverished accommodation and the major proprietor in both cases was the Marquis of Northampton. In Yardley Hastings Richardson reported that the granting of parish pay to married men rather than single men encouraged early marriages and subsequently 'if houses are not ready for them

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<sup>113</sup> E Gauldie, 'Country Homes', G E Mingay (ed.), The Victorian Countryside, Vol.II, p.537

<sup>114</sup> NCL, Northampton Herald (16 October 1847)

<sup>115</sup> Ibid

<sup>116</sup> NRO, Grafton, G3930, Charity Book (25 May 1831) As has been shown Widow Sutton was given an allowance for rent in the following year.

under these circumstances, they herd together several families in the same house.’<sup>117</sup>

In Bozeat it was reported that:

Six or seven weddings had taken place among very young people but a short time before I visited the place, and the people were content to huddle together several families in the same small cottage. The moral condition of the parish was, of course, exceedingly bad; there were endless complaints of poaching and pilfering of all sorts, of increasing, bastardy, of insolence on the part of the paupers, and fear on that of the farmers.<sup>118</sup>

The condition of accommodation in Bozeat had not improved greatly by 1867 when it was reported by Reverend Pizey that ‘some of our cottages are awfully bad, not fit to house a pig.’<sup>119</sup>

This poor standard of housing was found to be the norm in the 1838 report. The clerk of the Ampthill Union commented that ‘a large proportion of the cottages in the union are very miserable places, small and inconvenient, in which it is impossible to keep even the common decencies of life.’<sup>120</sup> The miserable conditions of such cottages were detailed in evidence for Northamptonshire. This was in the report of W H Parker, the assistant commissioner for Oxfordshire who commented on Middleton Cheney, which, although in the Banbury Union, was in fact a Northamptonshire, not an Oxfordshire parish. He wrote:

The parish of Middleton Cheney, in Oxfordshire possessed 38 cottages, occupied by poor people, who made their dunghills in front of the doors. The windows of the cottages are much broken, although they are frequently repaired, and the inmates sometimes burn the wood-work. One of the inmates who paid no rent, actually pulled up part of the flooring for firing and considered himself aggrieved at being committed to prison for this wilful destruction of property.<sup>121</sup>

<sup>117</sup> PP 1834 XXIX(1) Assistant Poor Law Commissioner’s Report (Northamptonshire), p.399

<sup>118</sup> *Ibid*, p.407

<sup>119</sup> PP 1867-8 XVII, Report of the Employment of Women and Children in Agriculture, p.446

<sup>120</sup> *Ibid*, p.757

<sup>121</sup> *Ibid*, p.725

These poor cottages were situated in a parish, which had experienced considerable rural unrest during the 1830s.<sup>122</sup> In this instance the writer was making a connection between the poor nature of the cottages and the irresponsible behaviour of the tenants, probably aggravated, in his opinion, by the fact of not paying rent. After all the sale of parish property had been designed to discourage the practice of providing rent-free accommodation to the poor. Middleton Cheney was recorded as having sold off parish property by 1842.<sup>123</sup> It is not possible to tell whether this included all or some of the above mentioned property or whether the parish continued to provide rent-free accommodation for its poorest residents after the sell-off.

‘Open’ parishes were condemned by the 1867 report as follows:

In open parishes cottages of every description may be found; but rarely, if ever, is the accommodation sufficient to provide for the health, comfort, and morals of the inhabitants.<sup>124</sup>

The situation had not improved since the publication of Pitt’s General View in 1809:

I observed, in various parts of the county, particularly in the open parishes, a great number of tenements built with mud and covered with thatch.<sup>125</sup>

The main reason that was put forward in the 1867 for the inferior accommodation in ‘open’ parishes was either building by speculators or by villagers building houses on the wastes. The report stated that:

In a few villages are also to be found cottages which have been built upon the waste, before the enclosures took place. These are usually, but not always, of the worst description.<sup>126</sup>

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<sup>122</sup> See Chapter 5 on Allotments

<sup>123</sup> PP 1842 XIX(1), 8<sup>th</sup> Annual Report of the Poor Law Commssioners, p.637

<sup>124</sup> PP 1867-8 XVII, Report of the Employment of Women and Children in Agriculture, p.116

<sup>125</sup> W Pitt, General View, p.28

<sup>126</sup> Ibid, p.117



The eighteenth century had seen a revival of allowing a man to build on common land if it could be achieved within a day.<sup>127</sup> Additionally parishes and charities had also built houses on the wastes during the period 1780 to 1830 and the quality of this provision was doubtful.<sup>128</sup> Indeed much of the parish property that was sold off after 1835 was just such property. In the case of speculators, the Poor Law returns reported such an instance in the parish of Byfield where ‘the increased population, and the consequent advance of rent, has of late years induced persons who have saved a little money to buy small bits of land, and erect mean cottages upon speculation.’ Clark Hillyard’s letter to the Northampton Mercury in March 1847 had also complained of ‘a number of poor confined cottages’ which had been built ‘on speculation by carpenters and masons’.<sup>129</sup> The removal of settlement laws aimed to increase mobility of labour and to that end to encourage landowners to take a more prominent part in cottage building. However, until that took place the extent of new building was limited as can be seen in the following evidence about the increase of housing up to 1851.

Weber’s index of house-building, quoted by Gauldie, showed a very slight upswing in rural house-building from 1841 to 1871, and a downturn for the following twenty years.<sup>130</sup> In Northamptonshire, census figures show the growth in housing in Northamptonshire Union between 1831 and 1851 as is shown Table 6.10.

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<sup>127</sup> E Gauldie, ‘Country Homes’, p.534

<sup>128</sup> J Broad, ‘Housing the Rural Poor’, p.165

<sup>129</sup> NCL, Northampton Mercury (22 March 1847)

<sup>130</sup> E Gauldie, ‘Country Homes’, p.537

**Table 6.10: Percentage increases in number of houses and population for 1831-1841 and 1841-1851**

<i>Union</i>	<i>% increase in no of houses 1831 -1841</i>	<i>% increase in population 1831-1841</i>	<i>% increase in no of houses for 1841-1851</i>	<i>% increase in population 1841-1851</i>
Brackley	21%	17%	5%	1%
Brixworth	167%	2%	6%	2%
Daventry	10%	12%	2%	2%
Hardingstone	12%	7%	6%	6%
Kettering	12%	0.5%	8%	12%
Northampton	27%	30%	15%	20%
Oundle	29%	27%	7%	8%
Peterborough	105%	107%	13%	12%
Potterspury	53%	66%	11%	9%
Thrapston	29%	25%	4%	-16%
Towcester	9%	1%	4%	2%
Wellingborough	20%	14%	8%	7%

Sources: Census abstracts for 1831, 1841 and 1851<sup>131</sup>

However, a note of caution is needed regarding these figures. As June Sheppard points out, the data on inhabited houses in particular is unreliable in the first four censuses, as the enumerators (parish overseers of the poor) were not given guidelines on what definitions to use for 'family' and 'house'.<sup>132</sup> This may well account for the particularly high rise seen in the Brixworth Union from 1831 to 1841. The other high percentage returns of housing can more reasonably be attributed to the fact that they were in those unions that contained the major towns of Northamptonshire,

<sup>131</sup> PP 1833 XXVI(1), XXXVII(1), XXXVIII(1), PP 1842 Session 2 II(277) and PP 1852-3 LXXXIX(1), Abstract of Census Returns

<sup>132</sup> J Sheppard, 'Inhabited houses 1801-51: an evaluation of census figures', *The Local Historian*, 18 (1988)

Northampton, Peterborough, Kettering and Wellingborough. The exception is Potterspury and there may be several explanations for this. Firstly, when the Potterspury Union was first formed it contained only eleven rural Northamptonshire parishes, but in 1836, it was enlarged to include four Buckinghamshire parishes, including the town of Stony Stratford. Although the 1831 census is problematic, and may reflect a far higher increase in the number of houses by 1841 than was actually the case, it can be tested to some extent against the population figures. There is a greater consistency between the percentage increases in population for the two periods. Those unions that had shown the highest rises in the number of houses also recorded the highest levels of population rise, with the exception of Brixworth. Peterborough recorded an untypical high rise in population from 1831 to 1841. The figures in the 1841-1851 percentages show a greater consistency in the percentage increases of the number of houses and the increase in population. From this table it can be seen that the percentage increase in the number of houses between 1831 and 1841 was greater than the percentage increase in population in eight out of the twelve unions (sixty-seven percent), and in the remainder it was less. There is a serious mismatch in Brixworth Union. In seven unions (fifty-eight percent) the percentage increase in the number of houses between 1841 and 1851 was greater than the percentage increase in population, in two unions it was equal and in three it was less. Two of those unions that had an increased shortfall of housing between 1841 and 1851 contained two of the major towns in Northamptonshire, Northampton and Kettering. Thus, although, the shortfall of housing did not increase significantly, given that there was an acknowledgement that there was insufficient housing, there does not appear to have been a significant amount of building activity to deal with the problem.

### **Conclusion:**

Housing for the poor provided by endowed charities was available in twenty-one percent of Northamptonshire parishes and parish housing in twenty-eight percent of the sample of parishes in Rural Queries. Overall, therefore, if provision by individuals is also included, housing for the poor was in existence in over half of all Northamptonshire parishes in the first half of the nineteenth century. However, from the sample in Rural Queries it is evident that the majority of cottage provision (for the labourer as well as the pauper) was provided by the major proprietor in sixty-eight percent of the parishes in this sample. Additionally twenty-eight percent of cottage housing in Rural Queries was owned by artisans and tradesmen. The sale of parish property gave principal proprietors an opportunity to increase their holding within their 'close' parishes, but half of all parish property was bought by the artisans and tradesmen. The ownership of cottage property by this group ran counter to the wishes of the Poor Law Commissioners who were keen for major landowners to take greater responsibility for housing the labouring poor. The lack of interest by some landowners in providing new housing was exemplified by the Langham correspondence. Not only was Sir James reluctant to engage in the expense of building new houses, but he had also been instrumental in restricting settlement in Cottesbrooke through the demolition of cottages. The cost of cottage building and the concern over the cost of outdoor relief meant that this aspect of charitable provision was slower to develop than other aspects of 'new' paternalistic benevolence in the period.

However, several major landowners let cottages to their workers for low rents and, as in the case of the Duke of Buckingham, sometimes refunded part of the rents and this could, therefore, represent a major contribution to the 'economy of makeshifts' of some of the labouring poor. Here again though, as was seen with the Duke of Grafton, fear of increased settlement and rising pauperism, could result in low rents coming under pressure. The Poor Law Commissioners in particular were concerned with these issues. Under the old poor law not only had some parishes provided housing, but a great deal of assistance was given with the cost of housing. Rural Queries showed that three-quarters of the parishes exempted housing for the labouring poor from rates and one third paid the rents of such tenants as well. The drive to sell off parish houses was in part designed to fund the union workhouses, but it was also intended to put an end to this major form of outrelief. Although much of the property provided by endowed charities was also rent-free, it was in theory protected from this action. It is probable though that some property was lost in this way as the distinction between parish and endowed charity housing was not always clear or well documented and the procedure for safeguarding endowed charity housing was sometimes dependent upon the reliability of local memory.

Evidence about the quality of housing for the labouring poor found in the Charity Commission reports, the MH12 correspondence, Chadwick's report and the 1867 report suggests that most of it was in a poor state of repair. However, most of these sources were biased against property held by artisan and tradesmen proprietors in 'open' parishes. In particular the 1867 report was concerned with justifying the change in settlement laws of 1865 and so was presenting 'open' parishes in the worst possible light. There was some evidence to show that housing for the labouring poor

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Evidence about the quality of housing for the labouring poor found in the Charity Commission reports, the MH12 correspondence, Chadwick's report and the 1867 report suggests that most of it was in a poor state of repair. However, most of these sources were biased against property held by artisan and tradesmen proprietors in 'open' parishes. In particular the 1867 report was concerned with justifying the change in settlement laws of 1865 and so was presenting 'open' parishes in the worst possible light. There was some evidence to show that housing for the labouring poor

was also in a poor state in 'close' parishes as well. However, by the 1840s some major landowners were beginning to show an interest in building new cottages and in improving the standard of existing ones.

Thus, from the 1840s onwards there was an improvement in the quality of housing for the labouring poor as provided by major landowners. The evidence shows that not only was the housing provided by the major landowners from the 1840s onwards of a superior quality, but also that it had the added benefits of low rentals and large gardens or allotment plots. However, as was shown in Kelmarsh, tenancy agreements could be used as a means of social discipline. The decisions of some landowners to increase and improve housing for their labourers from the 1840s onwards can, therefore, be seen as another means of restoring stability to rural society in a period of considerable unrest. The attempt to rehouse labourers in cottages attached to remote farmhouses and away from contact with village social life (particularly beerhouses) showed that a definite disciplinary agenda was being attached to the housing of the labouring man, which was welcomed by the farmers but, understandably, resisted by the labourers.

The greatest change in housing provision that occurred during this period was in housing owned by the parish. The 1834 Poor Law Reform specifically attacked the provision of housing as a form of outdoor relief. Until recently this aspect of the 1834 Act has been largely overlooked, yet it potentially had a major impact on relief.<sup>133</sup> After 1835 parish property was rapidly sold in a third of Northamptonshire parishes

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<sup>133</sup> J Broad, 'Housing the Rural Poor'

and parishes were no longer in the position to acquire property in which to house their poor. This does not necessarily mean that these houses were no longer available for the poor, as in some cases they may have continued to inhabit the same houses as previously. However, the major impact of the sale of parish housing was that there was no longer a 'moral' obligation by the parish officials to house their poor and the responsibility for housing them shifted from the parish to the individual, thus representing a significant change in the balance of options within the 'mixed economy of welfare.'



## **Chapter Seven**

### **Conclusion**

This study of the nature, depth and role of charitable provision in Northamptonshire has demonstrated that charity could be an important element in rural society in the early nineteenth century. By moving away from a dependence upon the records of endowed charitable trusts and by using a wide range of sources to uncover the charitable involvement of individuals and joint initiatives, it has revealed that significant levels of charity were available to a widespread group within the population. In some parishes the value of charity outweighed that of poor relief and in many it made a significant contribution. Very few parishes had no charitable resources. Furthermore, as much charity giving either went unrecorded or has left no surviving records, the depth and extent of charity was almost certainly greater than is apparent from the sources available. This county study, therefore, suggests the need to re-evaluate the role of charity in this period. In addition, through a detailed and contextualised study of Northamptonshire charities it has been able to address important facets of six inter-related questions that have played a large role in historiographical debates about English rural society in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

Firstly, this thesis has offered a number of important insights into the nature of, and internal balance within, the 'mixed economy of welfare' in the period from the late eighteenth century to the middle of the nineteenth century.<sup>1</sup> In addition to the

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<sup>1</sup> J Innes, 'The "Mixed Economy of Welfare"', p.169

endowed charities, which were present in eighty-four percent of Northamptonshire parishes, the use of sources such as newspapers and estate records has shown that there was a high level of involvement in charity-giving by individuals across the social groups – landowners, the clergy and farmers. Although, as Innes points out, the options within the ‘mixed economy of welfare’ are always being revised, the early nineteenth century was a particularly significant moment of change.<sup>2</sup> For example, in the 1830s and 1840s, Northamptonshire witnessed the rapid spread of self-help initiatives – allotments, clothing clubs and coal clubs. It is very possible that the majority of Northamptonshire parishes had such schemes by the second third of the nineteenth century. The Assistant Poor Law Commissioner reported that clothing clubs were to be found ‘everywhere’ and that allotments were ‘near universal’ by 1834.<sup>3</sup> Although his wish to promote such initiatives may have led to some exaggeration, there is considerable evidence to support his contention that most parishes had such schemes. The survival of records for thirty-nine clothing clubs covering forty-four parishes and thirty-four allotments sites suggests a high prevalence, given the very low survival rate of semi-official and relatively short-lasting organisations such as these.

A case study using the detailed records of the Spencer estate tested the significance of charity in the ‘mixed economy of welfare’ for those inhabitants of his estate villages, who received both his charity and outdoor relief. These findings revealed that charity played a major role, representing around half the income for twenty-three percent of this group of recipients and as much as three-quarters for another twenty-three percent. On this estate Earl Spencer’s charitable provision represented at least fifty-

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<sup>2</sup> J Innes ‘The “Mixed Economy of Welfare”, p.169

<sup>3</sup> PP 1834 XXIX(1), Assistant Poor Law Commissioner’s Report (Northamptonshire), p.407

six percent of the combined welfare available (defined as the sum of poor relief and Spencer's pensions and alms payments). The contribution of charity was certainly higher than this, as it was not possible to put a figure on many of the other charitable resources provided by him. Given the high number of major landed estates in the county it is possible that at least thirty or forty percent of parishes in Northamptonshire may have exhibited a similar relationship between levels of charity and poor relief. Even if other major landowners were only half as generous in their charitable contributions as Spencer, this would still have meant that at least a third of total welfare payments in these parishes were coming from non-poor relief sources. The balance of options in the 'mixed economy of welfare' varied considerably between parishes depending upon such factors as the land-owning structure, the generosity of individuals, the level of endowed charity and the number of subscription clubs. But, while the overall balance between charity and poor relief within the 'mixed economy of welfare' requires much further research in many parishes, charity clearly had an impact on the experiences of the poor and on their struggle to put together an 'economy of makeshifts.'

Secondly, this thesis has contributed to recent research that has attempted to uncover the experience of being poor in the early nineteenth century by examining the significance of the poor's access to various resources within the 'economy of makeshifts.'<sup>4</sup> It has concentrated on the wide range of charitable provision that the poor could access and explored their experience as recipients in a number of ways. One pervasive theme has been the examination of access criteria to charity. In the

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<sup>4</sup> S King & A Tomkins, *The Poor*. This forthcoming book in particular contains recent work on the experiences of the poor in accessing various elements of the 'economy of makeshifts.'

conclusion to their forthcoming book King and Tomkins point out that we know little ‘about the complexities of access conditions to charitable resources and what we do know comes from the rules of charities themselves.’<sup>5</sup> By a detailed examination of the recipients of a number of charities, and by developing the first detailed census-based analysis of the status, gender and life-cycle position of recipients of non-endowed charities, this study has begun to fill this gap. This approach was adopted to give a detailed analysis of the recipients of an endowed charity (Miss Langham’s clothing charity), the holders of allotments in Kislingbury, and the beneficiaries of Earl Spencer’s benevolence, and these case studies revealed that charity was being extended to the labouring family man.

Although, in the majority of parishes the amount available from endowed charities was small, nevertheless, as a number of recipients of such charities were elderly, widowed or in irregular employment, these contributions would have staved off the worst effects of poverty, when combined with outdoor relief and others sources of charitable provision. The same was true of the annual handouts of money, clothing, food and fuel provided by the major landowners and clergy (and very occasionally farmers) which were advertised in the local press. These charitable gifts were particularly important as they were handed out around Christmas when the harsh conditions of the winter months, including cold and lack of employment, meant that the poor’s ‘economy of makeshifts’ was under great strain. Resources that may not appear significant to the modern eye may have been extremely important in the early nineteenth century. For example, the evidence from John Clare’s biography demonstrated how even something as small as the produce from a single apple tree

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid, p.351

could make a vital difference to the household income of the poor and the level of housing that they were able to pay for.<sup>6</sup> The average allotment yielded a much greater level of material assistance, even after rent had been paid, providing the labourer and his family with a wide variety of diet and a supply of fresh food, just as his various clothing needs were regularly met by access to a clothing club.

The case study of Earl Spencer's estate demonstrated the range of such charitable resources available in one community, which added up to a very substantial level of charitable benevolence. The majority of labouring inhabitants in the Bringtons had access to an annual handout of bread and meat, to a shoe charity, to a clothing club and, for some, to housing of a good quality let at a relatively low rent. Those that were excluded were generally men who did not have dependent children, suggesting that Spencer's land agent (who recorded the charitable distributions) had an intimate knowledge and understanding of the needs of individuals relating to family size, points in the life-cycle and periods of peak vulnerability, and adjusted charitable payments accordingly. For Spencer's employees there were the added advantages of secure employment and above average wages plus the possibility of a pension in old age and widowhood. On this major landed estate the combination of different types of charitable provision made a massive contribution to the 'economy of makeshifts.' Elsewhere, even where charitable provision was less deep, the attitudes of the poor towards it indicate that they saw it as a highly significant part of their 'economy of makeshifts.'

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<sup>6</sup> E Robinson (ed.), *John Clare's Autobiographical Writings*, pp.114-115

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<sup>6</sup> E Robinson (ed.), *John Clare's Autobiographical Writings*, pp.114-115

The letters addressed to the Charity Commission during their investigations illustrated similar attitudes to those shown in the pauper letters examined by Sharpe and Sokoll.<sup>7</sup> The poor were distressed at their exclusion by the propertied (particularly the farmers) from what they believed was a right of access to certain endowed charities in their parish. Furthermore, these letters, like those written to the Poor Law Commission, also demonstrate their belief that a higher body, in this case the Charity Commission, would uphold these rights.<sup>8</sup> The depth of feeling expressed shows the importance placed on such a resource. Furthermore, the instances of protest when customary fuel-gathering rights were replaced with coal distributions and clubs demonstrate that the poor understood the implications of such actions which eroded their independence.<sup>9</sup> They also demonstrate, as Jeanette Neeson has pointed out, that the sense of loss and bitterness felt by the rural poor remained long after enclosures had taken place.<sup>10</sup> The attitudes of the poor to the charitable resources available on Spencer's estate were not recorded in this period, but an indication of the poor's continuing understanding of their value in the 'economy of makeshifts' can be seen in the work of Elizabeth Hurren who has demonstrated the depth of reaction in the late nineteenth century when they were removed.<sup>11</sup> The requests for allotments and access to clothing clubs demonstrated not only that the poor understood the potential value of

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<sup>7</sup> P Sharpe, 'The Bowels of Compassion': A Labouring Family and the Law, c.1790-1834', Chapter 4 in T Hitchcock, P King & P Sharpe (eds.), Chronicling Poverty, p.87 and T Sokoll, Essex Pauper Letters, p.3

<sup>8</sup> G C Smith, 'The Poor in Blindness', pp.211-238

<sup>9</sup> J E Archer, 'By a Flash', pp.58-59

<sup>10</sup> J Neeson, Commoners, p.291

<sup>11</sup> E T Hurren, The 'Bury-al Board': Poverty, Politics and Poor Relief in the Brixworth Union Northamptonshire c. 1870 – 1900 (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Leicester, 2000)

these new initiatives, but also that they used fears of social unrest, particularly the Swing disturbances, to exert pressure on the propertied to provide charitable resources. This point will be explored further through the themes of social control and paternalism.

Thirdly, this thesis has demonstrated that, although early nineteenth-century Northamptonshire witnessed the development of a 'new' style of paternalistic involvement in charitable provision, along the lines set out by historians such as David Roberts, Alun Howkins and John Archer,<sup>12</sup> there were also major elements of continuity within patterns of charitable giving. Roberts, Howkins and Archer, have between them identified three major developments that characterised 'new' paternalistic benevolence. These were – the revival of the mid-eighteenth century gifts of food, clothing and fuel;<sup>13</sup> an involvement in the new self-help initiatives - coal clubs, clothing clubs and allotments;<sup>14</sup> and an increased role for the 'lieutenant' classes (the land agents, the clergy and the farmers).<sup>15</sup> The examination of gifts of food, clothing and fuel in this thesis has revealed that there was very little that was new about these forms of provision in Northamptonshire. In many places they can best be seen as a continuation of older traditions of charity giving. Earl Spencer's bread and meat charity, for example, although meticulously recorded in the 1840s, was in fact part of a tradition of charitable provision that can be traced back at least to the 1790s.<sup>16</sup> Equally the reports of clothing, food and fuel distributions found in the local press in the 1820s suggest continuity rather than change. The stability of the

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<sup>12</sup> D Roberts, *Paternalism*; A Howkins, *Reshaping*; J E Archer, 'By a Flash'

<sup>13</sup> A Howkins, *Reshaping*, p.75

<sup>14</sup> D Roberts, *Paternalism*, pp.131-2; A Howkins, *Reshaping*, p. 80; J E Archer, 'By a Flash', p.62

<sup>15</sup> A Howkins, *Reshaping*, p.76

<sup>16</sup> D Davies, *The Case of the Labourers*, p.174



major land-owning families in Northamptonshire observed by Lawrence Stone in his work on the final years of the eighteenth century may well have contributed to this by ensuring a continuity of traditions of charity giving amongst this important group.<sup>17</sup> However, new elements were also emerging in the first half of the nineteenth century. For example, Northamptonshire witnessed the development of various types of self-help initiatives. These were a new way forward for charity giving and can be more easily linked to ideas about the development of a 'new' paternalism. By using a wider range of archival sources, in particular newspaper reports, this study revealed a greater prevalence of allotment sites in Northamptonshire than is suggested by either Barnett or Burchardt.<sup>18</sup> Allotment provision spread rapidly and made a real difference to the poor. Clothing clubs, another popular form of self-help were also widely adopted in many Northamptonshire parishes

These self-help initiatives also increased the role of the land agents, the clergy and, to a lesser extent, the farmers. The latter's contribution to allotments has been the subject of considerable historical debate, but, contrary to Moselle's much criticised view, the Northamptonshire farmers' involvement in the allotment movement was minimal. Indeed many expressed antagonism towards such endeavours.<sup>19</sup> However, the farmers did get involved to some extent when it came to the coal and clothing clubs. Farmers were regular subscribers to clothing clubs and raised subscriptions for purchasing coal which they took responsibility for delivering free of charge. This

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<sup>17</sup> L Stone, *An Open Elite?*, p.183

<sup>18</sup> Barnett's estimate of allotment provision based on *Rural Queries*, although subject to problems of interpretation, nevertheless show that over fifty percent of the sample of Northamptonshire parishes contained plots of land. D C Barnett, 'The Allotment', p.164. Burchardt estimated that there were eighteen allotment sites in sixteen parishes in Northamptonshire before 1845.

<sup>19</sup> B Moselle, 'Allotments', p.486, J E Archer, 'The Nineteenth-Century Allotment', p.21, J Burchardt, *The Allotment*, p.184

study has shown that both allotments and clothing clubs presented the clergy with an opportunity to extend paternalistic benevolence beyond their traditional involvement in endowed charities and personal gifts. This was particularly true of rural curates, who, as Obelkevich noted, had limited personal means.<sup>20</sup> The land agents, particularly those on the Spencer, Grafton and Langham estates played a pivotal role in the 'new' paternalist benevolence as they were responsible for the administration and distribution of charitable provision and for the implementation of new self-help initiatives. Both the clergy and the land agents understood the key role that charity played in social relationships and this was particularly true, as historians such as Archer have noted, in the period of crisis in rural society which led up to and followed the Swing riots.<sup>21</sup>

The timing of the growth of 'new' paternalism in Northamptonshire, in the form of allotments and clothing clubs, confirms John Archer's findings in Norfolk and Suffolk that the real impetus behind these initiatives was often endemic rural unrest.<sup>22</sup> This study has demonstrated a direct relationship in some parishes between the setting up of allotment sites and clothing clubs and the rising anxieties felt by the propertied during the turbulent years of the Swing disturbances. The years 1829-1831 witnessed the establishment of sixteen percent of all the clothing clubs and twenty-six percent of all the allotment schemes that have left surviving records for the period. The correspondence of Sir James Langham in 1830 and 1831 highlighted the significance that his agent placed on the role of allotments and clothing clubs in alleviating the tensions aroused by the Swing disturbances. These self-help initiatives grew in

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<sup>20</sup> J Obelkevich, *Religion*, p.66

<sup>21</sup> J E Archer, 'By a Flash', p.62

<sup>22</sup> J E Archer, 'The Nineteenth-Century Allotment', pp.23-24

number during the 1830s and 1840s, as unrest continued in Northamptonshire in the forms of arson and animal maiming.<sup>23</sup> These self-help initiatives had the advantage over traditional gifts of not only offering 'carrots' to restore social relationships,<sup>24</sup> but also 'sticks' to impose discipline.

Fourthly, a study of charity has given us fresh insights into the nature of social control. Although, as Gareth Stedman Jones has pointed out, any institution can in some way 'be interpreted as an agency of social control,'<sup>25</sup> the unequal power in the donor/recipient relationship in charitable provision make it an interesting vehicle to explore this complex issue. In most charitable relationships the propertied had the ability to extend or withhold paternalist benevolence and consequently there was always an element of social control.<sup>26</sup>

The introduction of self-help initiatives in Northamptonshire intensified the potential disciplinary role of charity. Although endowed charities and gifts of food, fuel and clothing had the capacity to be used to some extent as social control mechanisms, allotments and clothing clubs often had explicit disciplinary agendas. The poor could be excluded on grounds of criminal offences – poaching, assault and theft – and of moral misdemeanours – pre-marital sexual relationships and bastardy. While John Archer contends that these charities were targeted at those who were deemed

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<sup>23</sup> The Northampton Herald and The Northampton Mercury both reported such incidents.

<sup>24</sup> A Howkins, Reshaping, p.65

<sup>25</sup> G Stedman Jones, Languages of Class, p.80

<sup>26</sup> Chesterman maintains that 'the gift relationship was found even amongst primitive tribes to represent an assertion of power over the recipient, who is obliged, unless he can repay, to show some form of deference or obedience to the giver.' M Chesterman, Charities, Trusts and Social Welfare (London, 1979), p.1

‘respectable,’<sup>27</sup> it can also be argued that they were seen as measures to encourage the growth of respectability.

Although self-help initiatives did sometimes create a greater distance between donor and recipient, overall charitable giving remained imbedded in personal relationships in early nineteenth-century Northamptonshire. Until 1850 at least Donajgrodzki’s suggestion that control activities were no longer conducted through personal relationships, does not accord with the evidence available about rural charitable initiatives.<sup>28</sup> This study suggests that charity giving on a local basis used levels of discrimination that were only possible through an intimate knowledge of the lives of the likely candidates by those who had day-to-day dealings with them. In most cases these were the squires, the land agents, the clergy and the farmers, who could combine to exert a great deal of social control over the labouring poor, as Wells found in Burwash.<sup>29</sup> However, this study has highlighted the complexity of social relationships when it came to charity. Thus, it can not be assumed that there was always an alliance between these groups. There were some instances of clashes over charitable provision. For example, the local gentry and the clergy could find themselves at odds over the distribution of endowed charities. More frequently, perhaps, these two groups joined forces against the farmers, for example when it came to supporting the rights of their poor parishioners to endowed charities, and in the drive to establish allotments. The contest between farmers and landowners over allotment provision has been the subject of debate,<sup>30</sup> but this is the first major study to

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<sup>27</sup> ‘Village charities and allotments were invariably restricted to the married or the widowed, both hallmarks of respectability.’ J E Archer, ‘By a Flash’, p.47

<sup>28</sup> A P Donajgrodzki, Social Control, pp.21-22

<sup>29</sup> R A E Wells, ‘Social Conflict’, p.521

<sup>30</sup> B Moselle, ‘Allotments’; J E Archer, ‘The Nineteenth-century Allotment’; J Burchardt, The Allotment

show how other areas of charitable provision could also be the site of dispute not only between rich and poor, but also amongst the propertied themselves.<sup>31</sup> Thus, as historians such as Reed and Wells have suggested,<sup>32</sup> by looking beyond the open/close paradigm, this study has examined charity across a range of parishes and highlighted how a complex variety of social relationships governed the nature and degree of social control encountered by the poor. This approach was also taken in considering the notion of 'denominational control.'

Fifthly, this study has provided further insight into a relatively new concept identified by Keith Snell as 'denominational control.'<sup>33</sup> Attendance at Church of England services was part of the disciplinary agenda of many self-help initiatives. The case study of the Farthinghoe clothing club revealed that a significant aim of that organisation was to supply 'a motive for attendance at divine worship where higher motives might be wanting'<sup>34</sup> by distributing the clothing directly after the service. Furthermore, dissenters were explicitly excluded from this club. Both Howkins and Obelkevich have argued that falling church attendance motivated the clergy to take a greater role in pastoral duties, including charity, and this study has demonstrated that, by using the self-help initiatives, the clergy were able to increase their role and at the same time to impose conditions that discriminated against chapel goers. This discrimination was not just the preserve of the self-help initiatives, although in the distribution of endowed charities it was less explicit. Nevertheless, as the endowed charities were closely linked to the Church of England, the clergy could exercise

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<sup>31</sup> John Broad has written about a disagreement between the village elite and the clergy in policy-making decisions about charity and poor relief in Ashwell in Hertfordshire in the eighteenth century. J Broad, 'Parish Economies', pp.996-998

<sup>32</sup> M Reed & R A E Wells (eds.), *Class, Conflict and Protest*

<sup>33</sup> K Snell, 'The Sunday-School Movement'

<sup>34</sup> BL, T.1394 (36), *Three Years' Results, Remarks & References* – Rule 7

‘denominational control’ through them. John Archer quotes the following

observation by a Suffolk man which gives a good illustration of this practice:

During winter, blankets, pieces of flannel, and coals were distributed in many parishes only to such labourers as attended church... The distribution of these things were [sic] generally in the parson’s hands, and it is a notorious fact that they were almost always manipulated in favour of church-going men and women, and against Dissenters.<sup>35</sup>

However, the effectiveness of this method of ‘denominational control’ in dissuading parishioners from attending chapel was not necessarily very great. Litchfield’s claim that he had never had to insist upon church attendance, ‘there not being a single dissenter in my parish,’<sup>36</sup> was blatantly untrue according to the 1851 Religious Census for Farthinghoe. Furthermore, as Obelkevich has pointed out, attendance at Anglican services did not preclude chapel going.<sup>37</sup> Therefore, it may have been possible to claim charitable handouts whilst at the same time following one’s religious conscience. Thus, it is difficult to estimate the effectiveness of ‘denominational control’ in restoring the fortunes of the Anglican Church. The effect may not have been as positive as that proposed by Keith Snell.<sup>38</sup> More local studies are needed to uncover the strength of ‘denominational control,’ and in particular to test whether Northamptonshire, which had a strong presence of Baptists and Congregationalists during the nineteenth century,<sup>39</sup> consequently saw greater efforts by Anglican clergymen than in other parts of the country.

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<sup>35</sup> Glyde, ‘Autobiography’, quoted in J E Archer, ‘By a Flash’, p.58

<sup>36</sup> BL, T.1394 (36), *Three Years’ Results, Remarks & References* – Rule 7

<sup>37</sup> J Obelkevich, *Religion*, p.157

<sup>38</sup> Snell speculates that there was probably a very strong link between the Church of England’s Sunday-school efforts and its successes after the mid-nineteenth century, as ‘the Anglicans had captured 42 per cent of all English Sunday-school enrolments’ by 1850. K Snell, ‘The Sunday-School Movement’, p.166

<sup>39</sup> R Greenall, *Northamptonshire*, p.78

Sixthly, this thesis has tested Steven King's speculation that in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries the south and east 'saw the rapid dilution of charitable resources'<sup>40</sup> and has found that in Northamptonshire there was evidence not only of a continuity of substantial charitable benevolence by the propertied, but also of a growth of new schemes that increased provision to the poor. For example, Northamptonshire was amongst the foremost counties in England in terms of allotment provision. Jeremy Burchardt's national work on allotments has shown that they tended to be more prevalent in the south and east.<sup>41</sup> Northamptonshire, Wiltshire and the whole of East Anglia were particularly highlighted by him as having extensive allotment provision and John Archer's study has shown their rapid spread in Suffolk in the period 1830 to 1850.<sup>42</sup> The survival of clothing club rules for Suffolk, which mirrored those of the Reverend Francis Litchfield's Farthinghoe club, suggests that these self-help initiatives may also have been a feature of charitable provision in that county. More local studies need to be undertaken on the spread of self-help initiatives such as clothing clubs. However, this study of Northamptonshire suggests that it may be dangerous to adopt a single model that contrasts a charity-poor south and east with a charity-rich north and west.

In Northamptonshire, the high level of charitable assistance from landed elites may have been due to the concentrated land-owning pattern within Northamptonshire and the stability of this group. However, many major landowners with estates in Northamptonshire also had land-owning interests in other counties. For example, Earl Spencer and the Earl of Cardigan had estates in several other counties in the south and

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<sup>40</sup> S King, *Poverty*, p.268

<sup>41</sup> J Burchardt, *The Allotment*, p.65

<sup>42</sup> J E Archer, 'The Nineteenth-century Allotment', p.24

east.<sup>43</sup> Thus, it is possible to speculate that they may well have provided similar levels of charitable provision on their other estates. Further local studies may reveal similar levels of charitable involvement by major landowners not only in the south and east but in the north and west also.<sup>44</sup> By moving away from an over-dependence on endowed charities, the value of which is notoriously difficult to estimate, this study has begun to demonstrate that the role of charity in the south and east remained significant in the early nineteenth century.

To conclude, this study has provided a detailed examination of the nature, extent, value and availability of a wide spectrum of charitable resources in a range of rural parishes. In many places endowed provision was almost certainly supplemented by annual gifts of money, clothing, food and fuel given by the major landowners, the clergy and sometimes the farmers. It is also highly probable that a considerable level of charity was dispensed by the neighbourly reciprocity of the poor, although evidence of this has been virtually impossible to uncover. All these forms of charity continued to make a significant contribution in the nineteenth century, but they were supplemented by newly established self-help societies (clothing and coal clubs). The subscription charities, which had become increasingly important in London and other cities in the eighteenth century, were finally beginning to have a significant impact on the countryside in the period being focussed on here.<sup>45</sup> The early nineteenth century,

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<sup>43</sup> Earl Spencer had estates in Surrey, Warwickshire, Bedfordshire, Berkshire, Buckinghamshire, Dorset, Hertfordshire, Kent, Norfolk, Nottinghamshire, Staffordshire and Sussex. The Earl of Cardigan had estates in Leicestershire, Bedfordshire, Buckinghamshire, Huntingdonshire, Lincolnshire and Rutland. The Duke of Grafton's family seat was in Suffolk.

<sup>44</sup> For example, Earl Fitzwilliam held estates in both Yorkshire and Sussex.

<sup>45</sup> D T Andrew, 'On Reading Charity Sermons. Eighteenth century Anglican Solicitation and Exhortation', *Journal Of Ecclesiastical History*, 43(4), 1992, pp. 581-591; D Valenze, 'Charity, Custom and Humanity: Changing Attitudes towards the Poor in Eighteenth Century England, Chapter 4 in J Garnett & C Matthew (editors), *Revival and Religion since 1700* (London, 1993), pp.59-78



was, therefore, an important period in the history of rural charity, witnessing a marked change in the nature of charitable provision.

The poor's access to land also changed in the early nineteenth century, as the final stages of enclosure completed the erosion of their customary rights. Concerns over the ensuing impoverishment of the rural labourer led the propertied to conclude that it was necessary to restructure the ways in which land and its resources were made available to the poor. For example, customary rights of access for fuel gathering were often replaced by less flexible provision such as coal clubs. More significant was the growing importance of the allotment movement that gave the poor access to permanent sites that yielded significant food resources and gave them back a measure of independence.

Partly as a consequence of these shifts, a change occurred in the profile of charity recipients. Charitable endowments were generally aimed at the most needy in parish society. The new self-help initiatives, however, were aimed at assisting the working family man in regular employment. Thus, the emphasis of charitable giving was changing to some extent. As the self-help agendas became more important the previous tendency for charity to be focussed mainly on the aged, the impotent and the abandoned was no longer as dominant as it once had been. These changes had an impact not only on the poor, but also on social relationships generally in the early nineteenth century.

There are a number of questions that this thesis has not been able to address. It was not possible to test the nature and extent of the wide range of charitable resources in

Northamptonshire against other counties, as this is the first major study to undertake such work. Similar evaluations in other counties are needed both to assess the typicality of Northamptonshire, and to make broader comparisons between the south and east and the north and west. Such studies need to move beyond an over-reliance on the records of endowed charities. Another fruitful line of research would be to conduct community studies, such as those employed by Broad and King in order to develop a more holistic analysis of the ways in which parish elites used a combination of poor relief and charitable resources to alleviate poverty.<sup>46</sup> In particular, as Steven King has pointed out, the changing structure of poor relief in the east midlands, including Northamptonshire, has not so far been the subject of detailed empirical studies,<sup>47</sup> and work on this topic would enable the relative significance of poor relief and charity to be explored in greater detail at a local level. Further research into access criteria is also needed in order to develop the work presented here on charity recipients' profiles, on the significance of charity within the various resources available in the 'economy of makeshifts,' and on the role of charity in maintaining and re-establishing stable social relationships. However, through a detailed study of the wide range of scattered sources available for one county, this thesis has begun to redress a significant imbalance in the current historiography of rural English society by deepening our understanding of the nature, extent and social implications of a wide range of charitable resources in the early nineteenth century.

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<sup>46</sup> J Broad, 'Parish Economies'; S King, 'Making the Most of Opportunities'

<sup>47</sup> S King, *Poverty*, p.264

**Appendix I All adults listed in Earl Spencer's Names of the poor and working class people in Brington parish, giving details of Occupation, Age, Wages, Employer and whether they were recipients of Pensions, Alms and the Meat and Bread Charity and also those Adults listed in the Shoe Charity, and as Members of Brington Clothing Society**

Name	Occupation	A G E	C	Weekly wages	Employer	Annual Pension	Meat & Bread No of Weeks	Alms Per Annum	Shoes	Clothing Club
Adams James & Susanna	Labourer	50	2	9/-	Heygate or on roads		4		Yes	Yes
Adler John & Sarah	Sawyer	45	1	Contract 2/- per day	Earl Spencer					Yes
Anderson Edward & Sarah	Groom	45	3	12/- (labourer	Earl Spencer		4	£1/6/-	Yes	
Anderson George & Elizabeth	Shoemaker	30	1	His Widow	Unknown		4			Yes
Anderson Hannah	Indigent	50	2	(William's wife)			4	£1/ 6/-		
Anderson John & Jane	Labourer	40	5	10/-	Mr Manning		4			Yes
Anderson John & Elizabeth	Shoemaker	75		His Widow	Earl Spencer	2/6 p.w.	4			Yes*
Anderson John & Esther	Labourer	50	1	10/-	Earl Spencer		4			Yes*
Anderson Joseph & Elizabeth	Servant	45	5	12/-	Earl Spencer		4		Yes	Yes
Anderson Thomas & Lucy	Labourer	30	7	10/-	Earl Spencer		4		Yes	Yes

Name	Occupation	A G E	C	Weekly wages	Employer	Annual Pension	Meat & Bread No of Weeks	Alms Per Annum	Shoes	Clothing Club
Ball John & Ann	Carpenter	30	1	12/-	Earl Spencer					
Ball Samuel	Carpenter	25		18/-	Earl Spencer					
Ball Sarah	Indigent	55			Earl Spencer	2/6 p.w.	4			
Battison Thomas & Mary	Labourer	55	2	10/-	Earl Spencer		4		Yes	Yes
Beard John & Eleanor	Shoemaker	50	4				1			
Billing John & Lucy	Labourer	55		10/-	Earl Spencer		4		Yes	
Billing Thomas	Labourer	80		Infirm – past work	Unknown	2/6 p.w.	4		Yes	
Blencow Ann	Indigent	65		Pensioner	Earl Spencer	£10 p.a.	4			
Blencowe William & Charlotte	Labourer (mason)	40		(Labourer) 10/-	Earl Spencer		4		Yes	Yes*
Bosworth Elizabeth	Indigent	80	1					£1/6/-		Yes
Bosworth Richard & Hannah	Labourer	45		10/-	Late Mr Elliott		4			1841,45
Bott Henry	Labourer	50	3	10/-	Mr Worley (formerly out of employ)					1839,45

Name	Occupation	A G E	C	Weekly wages	Employer	Annual Pension	Meat & Bread No of Weeks	Alms Per Annum	Shoes	Clothing Club
Bott John & Mary	Labourer	35	4	9/-	On the roads		4		Yes	Yes*
Bott John & Mary	Labourer	60		10/-	Earl Spencer		4	£1/6/-	Yes	Yes
Bottril Ann	Indigent	75					4			
Brambly John & Mary	Labourer	60		9/-	Earl Spencer		4		Yes	Yes
Brown John & Ann	Labourer	65		Infirm – past work		2/6 p.w.	4	£1/6/-	Yes	Yes*
Butlin Lucas	Labourer	50		6/- & board	Hornsby					
Callow Ann	Schoolmistress	40	1				4	£1/6/-		
Capell Elisabeth	Indigent	90					4	£1/6/-		
Capell John & Ann	Mason	25	1	18/-	Earl Spencer					
Capell Richard & Sarah	Mason	30	3	18/-	Earl Spencer					
Capell Robert & Ann	Shoemaker	25	2		Various places		4			
Cave Thomas	Labourer	75		Infirm – past work			4		Yes	Yes
Cherry Joseph & Eleanor	Labourer	55	1	12/-	Earl Spencer		4		Yes	

Name	Occupation	A G E	C	Weekly wages	Employer	Annual Pension	Meat & Bread No of Weeks	Alms Per Annum	Shoes	Clothing Club
Cherry Joseph	Labourer	25	1	10/-	Different places		4		Yes	
Chowler Louisa	Indigent	40	3		Earl Spencer	£30 p.a.				
Crofts Edward & Sarah	Labourer	40	2	10/-	Manning, Harpole		4			Yes
Crofts John & Mary	Labourer	45	5						Yes	Yes
Dunkley Elizabeth	Indigent	55		Pensioner	Earl Spencer	2/- p.w.	4			
Dunkley John & Charlotte	Labourer (mason)	25	1	10/-	Earl Spencer		4			
Dunkley John & Rebecca	Labourer	25	2	10/-	Webbs Farm		4			
Dunkley John & Mary	Labourer	35	5	(Althorp Waggoner) 14/-	Earl Spencer		4			
Dunkley Richard & Mary	Weaver	65		Infirm – past work	Unknown	2/6 p.w.	4		Yes	
Dunkley Richard & Elizabeth	Labourer	30	4	10/-	Earl Spencer		4		Yes	Yes*
Dunkley Thomas & Matilda	Labourer	60	1	10/-	Earl Spencer					
Dunkley William	Labourer	50		10/-	Earl Spencer					
Dunkley William & Elizabeth		45		His widow			4			

Name	Occupation	A G E	C	Weekly wages	Employer	Annual Pension	Meat & Bread No of Weeks	Alms Per Annum	Shoes	Clothing Club
Eales Thomas & Rebecca	Labourer	30	2	10/-	Butlin		4		Yes	
Edmonds Richard	Blacksmith	20			Various					
Edmonds William	Carpenter	20	2	18/-	Earl Spencer					
Elliott Edward & Sarah	Labourer	35	4	10/-	Earl Spencer		4		Yes	
Elliott Joseph & Martha	Labourer	30	1	10/-	Lowicks		4		Yes	
Elliott Ralph & Susanna	Labourer	65		Infirm – past work	Unknown		4			Yes*
Elliott Richard	Labourer	35								
Elliott William & Mary	Labourer	60	3	10/-	Earl Spencer		4		Yes	
England Elisabeth	Servant	20								
England George	Labourer	45	1	10/-	Earl Spencer		4		Yes	Yes
Esson Thomas & Sarah	Labourer	55	3	11/-	Earl Spencer		4		Yes	
Farley Grace	Indigent	70								
Fisher John & Susanna	Gardener	55		9/-	Earl Spencer		4		Yes	Yes
Fisher Richard	Labourer	80	0	Infirm – past work	Unknown	3/6 p.w.	4		Yes	
Fitzhugh Charles & Charlotte	Tailor	30	2		Various					

Name	Occupation	A G E	C	Weekly wages	Employer	Annual Pension	Meat & Bread No of Weeks	Alms Per Annum	Shoes	Clothing Club
Gent Job	Carpenter	35		18/-	Earl Spencer					
Gent John & Mary	Labourer	40		8/-	Earl Spencer		4		yes	
George John & Esther	Labourer	20	1	10/-	Lowicks		4		Yes	
George Thomas & Mary	Labourer	50	4	10/-	Lowick		4		Yes	Yes
George William & Ann	Labourer	25	1	10/-	Lowicks		4		Yes	
Gillam Elizabeth	Indigent	75		Lives rent free	Unknown	£20 p.a.				
Goude Hannah	Indigent	50	1							Yes
Goude Hannah	Indigent	75								Yes*
Hawgood John & Mary	Carrier	70	1	His widow			4	£1/6/-		Yes*
Hawgood Thomas	Sawyer	20		(Carrier)	Various					
Haynes Fanny	Indigent	50	1	Pensioner		£10 10s p.a.	4	£1/6/-		
Haynes John & Ann	Labourer	60	2	(watchman) 12/-	Earl Spencer		4		Yes	Yes
Hensman John & Ann	Blacksmith	50	2		Various places					
Hensman Robert	Blacksmith	26		20/-	Earl Spencer					
Hight Hannah	Indigent	80	2							Yes*
Hyde John & Martha	Sawyer	25	3		Various places					Yes
James James	Labourer	50	1	10/-	Ill at home		4			Yes



Name	Occupation	A G E	C	Weekly wages	Employer	Annual Pension	Meat & Bread No of Weeks	Alms Per Annum	Shoes	Clothing Club
Jordan William	Labourer	60	1	Infirm	On the roads	3/- p.w. 5s overseers	4	£1/6/-		Yes
Jordan William	Labourer	25	1	10/-	Earl Spencer					
Judge George	Labourer	65		9/-	Earl Spencer		4		Yes	Yes*
Judge George & Sarah	Sawyer	30	4	Contract work say 20/-	Earl Spencer		1			Yes
Judge Richard	Labourer	25	2	10/-	Earl Spencer		4		Yes	
Kenning Thomas & Elizabeth	Watchman	25	0	11/8	Earl Spencer		4		Yes	
Kent John	Lath render	20		(Carpenter)	Thomas Kent					
Kent Thomas & Sarah	Timber merchant	30	2	(Carpenter)	Various					
Kidney Robert & Elizabeth	Labourer	60		8/-	Earl Spencer		4		Yes	Yes*
Lomas Elizabeth	Indigent	75					4			
Lomas Thomas & Hannah	Carpenter	35	3	19/-	Earl Spencer					
Main Reuben & Ann	Carpenter	55		15/-	Earl Spencer					
Main William	Infirm	80		Infirm – past work	Kept by his son Job		4		Yes	
Manning Edward & Elizabeth	Labourer	45	3	11/-	Earl Spencer		4			

Name	Occupation	A G E	C	Weekly wages	Employer	Annual Pension	Meat & Bread No of Weeks	Alms Per Annum	Shoes	Clothing Club
Manning Edward	Labourer	20		10/-	Corley (various places)					
Manning George & Harriett	Labourer	40		11/-	Earl Spencer		4		Yes	
Manning James	Labourer	45	4	10/-	Earl Spencer		4			Yes
Manning Jane	Indigent	70			Unknown	1/- p.w.	4			
Manning John	Mason	45	2	21/-	Earl Spencer					Yes
Manning Nathaniel & Anne	Labourer	35		10/-	Earl Spencer		4			
Manning Richard & Mary	Labourer	40	3	9/-	King		4			Yes
Manning William & Abigail	Labourer	40	2		Various places		4		Yes	Yes
Marriott John & Susanna	Labourer	40	1	10/-	Elliot's executors		4		Yes	Yes
Marriott Nathaniel & Sarah	Labourer	60		7/-	Butlin's Moors					
Marriott Samuel	Labourer	60	1	8/-	Earl Spencer		4			
Mawby Jane	Indigent	40	1		Earl Spencer	£18 4s p.a.	1			Yes
Newton Charles & Elizabeth	Brickmaker	50	1	Contract work say 24/-	Earl Spencer					Yes
Newton Luke & Mary	Baker	25	1		Various people					

Name	Occupation	A G E	C	Weekly wages	Employer	Annual Pension	Meat & Bread No of Weeks	Alms Per Annum	Shoes	Clothing Club
Newton William & Hannah	Brickmaker	25	3	Contract work say 15/-	Earl Spencer		4			Yes
Pedley Edward & Ruth	Shoemaker	55		Widow publican	Various People					
Pedley Richard & Elizabeth	Shoemaker	55		Unknown	Various people					
Pedley Richard & Charlotte	Shoemaker	30		Unknown	Various people					
Perkins Richard & Esther	Labourer	50		9/-	On the roads		4		Yes	Yes
Pedley Thomas & Lucy	Shoemaker	65			Various people					
Redley Charles	Servant	20		(Butcher's man) 10/-	Main & Lepper					
Redley George & Elizabeth	Labourer	55		10/-	Kennings		4		Yes	Yes
Redley James	Labourer	25		10/-	Heygate		4			
Redley Sarah	Indigent	55	1				4			Yes
Redley William & Elizabeth	Labourer	30	4	10/-	Webbs Executors		4		Yes	Yes
Redley William	Labourer	25		10/-	Corleys		4			
Richardson Thomas & Sarah	Labourer	45	3		Ill at home		4			Yes
Roberts Samuel	Labourer	50		10/-	Earl Spencer		4		Yes	Yes*

Name	Occupation	A G E	C	Weekly wages	Employer	Annual Pension	Meat & Bread No of Weeks	Alms Per Annum	Shoes	Clothing Club
Rogers George & Mary	Labourer	35		12/-	Earl Spencer		4			Yes*
Rogers Mary	Indigent	75	1		Earl Spencer	3/- p.w.	4	£1/6/-		Yes
Rolfe John & Lillian	Labourer	25		10/-	Lowicks					
Russell Thomas & Sarah	Labourer	30	1	10/-	Butlin, Nobottle		4		Yes	
Russell William & Martha	Postman	30	6	(Labourer) 10/-	Earl Spencer		4		Yes	Yes
Stow Edward & Hannah	Carrier	30	3		Various		4			Yes
Stow John & Hannah	Labourer	35	4	(shepherd) 14/-	Earl Spencer		4		Yes	Yes
Stow Joseph & Sarah	Labourer	50	4	10/-	Heygates		4			Yes
Stow Robert & Mary	Unknown	70		Infirm – past work	Unknown	1/- p.w.	4		Yes	Yes
Stow Thomas & Elizabeth	Labourer	40	0	7/-	On the roads		4			Yes*
Stow William & Sarah	Labourer	40	1	10/-	Farley		4		Yes	
Sturman Thomas & Mary	Labourer	45	1	15/-	Earl Spencer		4		Yes	Yes
Tarpy William & Fanny	Labourer	30		10/-	Butlin Moors		4		Yes	

Name	Occupation	A G E	C	Weekly wages	Employer	Annual Pension	Meat & Bread No of Weeks	Alms Per Annum	Shoes	Clothing Club
Tarry Elizabeth	Char-woman	55	3				4			Yes*
Taylor George	Labourer	50		8/-	Earl Spencer					
Thompson Elisabeth	Indigent	65		Widow & grand- children						
Thompson Chapman	Labourer	20		10/-	King		4		Yes	
Thompson Edward & Eleanor	Labourer	35	4							Yes
Thompson Joseph & Ann	Labourer	40	5	10/-	Manning		4		Yes	Yes
Threadgold John & Mary	Labourer	40	5	(Labourer & brewer)	Earl Spencer		4			Yes
Threadgold Joseph	Labourer	70		15/-	Earl Spencer		4		Yes	Yes
Wardell Ann	Indigent	70	0	(Bakehouse)	Unknown	2/6 p.w.	4			
Wardell William & Anna	Labourer	45		10/-	Earl Spencer		4		Yes	
Wheatley Elisabeth		25					4			
Wilson John & Ann	Labourer	40	4	8/-	Earl Spencer		4		Yes	Yes
Worley John Jun	Mason	40	2	18/-	Earl Spencer					
Worley John Sen & Mary	Mason	60		15/-	Earl Spencer					Yes
Worley Thomas & Catherine	Mason	35	4	18/-	Earl Spencer					

Name	Occupation	A G E	C	Weekly wages	Employer	Annual Pension	Meat & Bread No of Weeks	Alms Per Annum	Shoes	Clothing Club
Worley William & Elizabeth	Mason	65		12/-	Earl Spencer		3	£1/6/-		Yes*
Wright Brooks & Catherine	Labourer	30	3	10/-	White		4		Yes	
Wright Priscilla	Indigent	55	2			2/6 p.w.	4			Yes
Wykes John & Susanna	Whitesmith	50	1	29/-	Earl Spencer					

Sources: Earl Spencer's Estate Papers and 1841 Census<sup>1</sup>

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Braunston, Braybrook, Brigstock, Brixworth, Long Buckby, Bugbrooke, Bulwick

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Chelveston cum Caldecott, Chipping Warden, Church Brampton, Clay Coton,

Clipston, Cold Ashby, Cold Higham, Collingtree, Corby, Cotterstock, Cottesbrooke,

Crick, Croughton, Culworth, Dallington, Daventry, Deane, Deenthorpe, Denton,

Desborough, Dingley, Doddington, Dodford, Easton, Easton Maudit, Easton Neston,  
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## **VI. Theses**

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