

EMIGRANTS AND EMIGRATORS

A STUDY OF EMIGRATION AND THE NEW POOR LAW
WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO BEDFORDSHIRE,
NORTHAMPTONSHIRE AND NORFOLK, 1834-1860

Thesis submitted for the degree of
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by

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For My Mother and Father

PREFACE

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

B.C.R.O.	Bedfordshire County Record Office
<u>B.P.P.</u>	British Parliamentary Papers
CLEC	Colonial Land and Emigration Commission
CLEO	Colonial Land and Emigration Office
D.C.R.O.	Derbyshire County Record Office
<u>L.F.M.</u>	<u>Labourer's Friend Magazine</u>
<u>N.M.</u>	<u>Northampton Mercury</u>
N.C.R.O.	Northamptonshire County Record Office
Nor. R.O.	Norfolk Record Office
PLB	Poor Law Board
PLC	Poor Law Commission
PRO	Public Record Office
<u>Q.R.</u>	<u>Quarterly Review</u>

CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

The subject of this thesis is a little studied clause of one of the major pieces of social reform legislation of the nineteenth century, section sixty-two of the Poor Law Amendment Act (1834).¹ Section sixty-two gave English and Welsh parishes the power to raise or borrow money against the security of the poor rates to pay for poor people to emigrate to the non-tropical British colonies. The study of the impact of the emigration clause offers unique perspectives on British emigration history and on British social history. This introduction seeks to provide a historiographical context for the thesis and to outline the issues that the thesis explores.

A central problem for the historian of nineteenth-century emigration is the limited value of the sources. Whyte and Pooley comment that, 'Research on migration is a little like trying to do an unfamiliar jigsaw in the dark'.² For British emigration the sources are particularly problematic. Compared with other northern European countries, the statistical record of British emigration is very poor.³ Philip Taylor notes that 'evidence about British

¹ Earlier treatments of this measure include: Arthur Redford, Labour Migration in England 1800-1850 2d edn. (Manchester, 1964), pp. 97-117; Robin Haines, "Shovelling out Paupers?": Parish-assisted emigration from England to Australia, 1834-1847', in Poor Australian Immigrants in the Nineteenth Century, ed. by Eric Richards (Canberra, 1991), pp. 31-68; Anne Digby, Pauper Palaces (1978), pp. 100-5.

² Colin G. Pooley and Ian D. Whyte, 'Introduction: Approaches to the Study of Migration and Social Change', in Migrants, Emigrants and Immigrants: A Social History of Migration, ed. by Colin G. Pooley and Ian D. Whyte (1991), pp. 1-15 (p. 4).

³ Only as a result of clever manipulation of census returns do we have regional breakdowns of decennial net emigration by county for England and Wales. See Dudley Baines, Migration in a Mature Economy: Emigration and Internal Migration in England and Wales, 1861-1900 (Cambridge, 1985). Compare Baines' calculations with the detailed regional breakdowns found in Scandinavian research, e.g. Harald Runblom and Hans Norman (ed.), From Sweden to America: A History of the Migration (Minneapolis, 1976); Jon Gjerde, From Peasants to Farmers: The Migration from Balestrand Norway to the Upper Middle West (Cambridge, 1985); Kristian Hvidt, Flight to America: The Social Background of 300,000 Danish Emigrants (1975).

emigration is in a state quite remarkably unsatisfactory for an advanced country'.⁴ Charlotte Erickson laments the 'want of adequate and accessible evidence in England' of emigrant departures.⁵ The poor quality of data about British emigration reflects the nature of the movement, as a movement of individuals, not organised groups, in an age before passports and of limited state supervision. Nineteenth-century emigration is less well-recorded than early modern emigration, where indentured servant records and government enquiries have provided rich seams for historians.⁶ The poor quality record of British emigration also reflects a lack of interest on the part of the state and suggests a deep ambivalence about the question of the departure of people for new lands. Though obviously restricted by the limitations of the documentary record, British, and especially English, emigration has remained a little explored area of historical research.⁷ In Thistlethwaite's words, to the English historian

⁴ Philip Taylor, The Distant Magnet: European Emigration to the U.S.A. (1971), p. 43.

⁵ Charlotte Erickson, Leaving England: Essays on British Emigration in the Nineteenth Century (1994), p. 11. See also Maldwyn Jones, 'The Background to Emigration from Great Britain in the Nineteenth Century', Perspectives in American History, 7 (1973), 3-92 (pp. 22-5).

⁶ See Bernard Bailyn, Voyagers to the West: A Passage in the Peopling of America on the Eve of the American Revolution (1987); David Galenson, White Servitude in Colonial America: An Economic Analysis (1981); David Hackett Fischer, Albion's Seed: Four British Folkways in America (Oxford, 1990); David Cressy, Coming Over: Migration and Communication between England and New England in the Seventeenth Century (Cambridge, 1987).

⁷ Here the distinction of English as opposed to British emigration is revealing. The Irish diaspora is central to the nation's sense of its past and has received detailed attention e.g. Kerby A. Miller, Emigrants and Exiles: Ireland and the Irish Exodus to North America (Oxford, 1985); Patrick O'Farrell, The Irish in Australia (Sydney, 1986); David Fitzpatrick, Oceans of Consolation: Personal Accounts of Irish Migration to Australia (Cork, 1994). Scottish emigration history has focused on the Highland Clearances: J.M. Bumsted, The People's Clearance: Highland Emigration to British North America, 1770-1815 (Edinburgh, 1982); Eric Richards, A History of the Highland Clearances 2 vols (1982 and 1985); T.M. Devine, The Great Highland Famine: Hunger, Emigration and the Scottish Highlands in the Nineteenth Century (Edinburgh, 1988). For work outside the framework of the clearances see T.M. Devine ed., Scottish Emigration and Scottish Society (Edinburgh, 1992); Marjory Harper, Emigration from North-east Scotland 2 vols (Aberdeen, 1988).

'emigration appears to be an embarrassing subject best ignored'.⁸ Taylor notes that John Clapham's Economic History of Modern Britain devotes only six pages per volume to emigration.⁹ The centrality of emigration to British history has largely remained unacknowledged.¹⁰

Though outside the historical mainstream, a number of works have been written on British emigration. The work by other historians displays a number of approaches, a consideration of which helps to contextualise the current enterprise. In the description of previous work on the subject a number of traditions and approaches in emigration historiography will be outlined.

Central to an appreciation of other work is the question of how it has related to available sources. Earlier work on nineteenth-century emigration relied heavily on published sources: parliamentary papers (Blue Books), published statistics, plans of proposed schemes of emigration, newspapers and political debates. The available sources determined the focus of the studies on emigration. Deprived of manuscript sources, other than Colonial Office papers, skilfully used by Helen Cowan, the pre-World War II historians of British emigration focused on the role of the state in British emigration and the formal peopling of the British empire.¹¹ In essence a work such as Stanley Johnson's A History of Emigration from the United Kingdom to North America, 1763-1912 (1913) was in fact a history of assisted

⁸ Frank Thistlethwaite, 'Migration from Europe Overseas in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries' (1960), reprinted in A Century of European Migrations, 1830-1930, ed. by Rudolph Vecoli and Suzanne Sinke (1991), pp. 17-49 (p.21). The neglect of emigration by English historians was not solely an English problem. Gjerde, From Peasants, p. 6 notes a similar tradition in Norway.

⁹ Taylor, Distant Magnet, p. 42.

¹⁰ See Erickson, Leaving England, pp. 12-13.

¹¹Helen I. Cowan, British Emigration to British North America: The First One Hundred Years rev. and enlarged ed. (Toronto, 1961).

emigration and a recounting of different schemes of assistance. The tone of post World War I work on British emigration to the empire appears to have been influenced by a heightening suspicion and antipathy towards the mother country, influenced by Gallipoli and even 'Bodyline'. Both Madgwick and Norman MacDonald were highly critical of the laissez-faire policy of British governments towards the question of emigration.¹² Earlier work on emigration however is not without value. It displays a sharpness of eye for references in published sources that is unmatched today with the modern preoccupation with manuscript sources. Given the flimsiness of the evidential base, it is remarkable how much could be written on emigration.

Additional foundations to the more sophisticated study of nineteenth-century emigration were laid in the pre-World War II period and extended further after the war. An important shift in focus, in English emigration studies, was provided by a brilliant work by Marcus Hansen on the Atlantic Migration. Though of limited value for a narrow Anglo-centric treatment of the subject, Hansen's work painted intercontinental emigration on a grand scale that suggested the subject's vibrancy and vigour.¹³ Within a similar tradition to Hansen's work was Oscar Handlin's emotive Uprooted which captured something of the drama and excitement of the subject.¹⁴ The canvas on which both Handlin and Hansen worked was

¹² R.B. Madgwick, Immigration into Eastern Australia, 1788-1851 (1937); Norman MacDonald, Canada, 1763-1841: Immigration and Settlement (1939). MacDonald states that 'emigration should have been conducted upon an enlightened, liberal and national basis, suitable means should have been employed to secure desired ends' (p. 30). See also W.A. Carrothers, Emigration from the British Isles With Special Reference to the Development of the Overseas Dominions (1929); R.C. Mills, The Colonization of Australia (1915).

¹³ Marcus L. Hansen, The Atlantic Migration, 1607-1860 (Oxford, 1940). Both Erickson and Taylor acknowledge their debt to this work and the subsequent The Immigrant in American History (Oxford, 1942). See Erickson, Leaving England, p. 2; P.A.M. Taylor, Expectations Westward: The Mormons and the Emigration of their British Converts in the Nineteenth Century (Edinburgh, 1965), preface.

¹⁴ Oscar Handlin, The Uprooted (1951).

broad. By focusing on the individual lives of the emigrants they provided a potential framework for further research. The building blocks of Hansen and Handlin were in part used by Frank Thistlethwaite. Thistlethwaite pointed to the rich potential of emigration as a subject of historical enquiry. A further feature of Thistlethwaite's call was to focus attention back on the recreation of the European background of the emigrants.¹⁵ Thistlethwaite claimed that one could not make sense of the immigrant experience without making sense of the emigrant past. Blessed with better records, the Scandinavians have been able to respond to his strictures. Students of English emigration have not ignored the issue. Miles Fairburn interpreted emigration statistics to suggest that most New Zealand immigrants 'came alone or as members of their immediate families and thus left most of their blood and affinal relationships behind'. From this point Fairburn suggested that the lack of kinship networks of early settlers to New Zealand accounted for the society's loneliness, anti-social behaviour and general chaos.¹⁶ It is no coincidence that after a lifetime concerned with intellectual connections between New World and old world, Bernard Bailyn has now focused on the transference of people. However, the number of times that Thistlethwaite's call to arms is recited and even reprinted suggests that his suggestions are difficult to meet with full satisfaction. Nonetheless Thistlethwaite encouraged the development of the study of emigration history.

¹⁵ Thistlethwaite, 'Migration from Europe'.

¹⁶ Miles Fairburn, *The Ideal Society and Its Enemies* (Auckland, 1989), p. 165 and *passim*. Fairburn's views have been challenged. For an emigrationist's riposte see Raewyn Dalziel, 'Emigration and Kinship: Migrants to New Plymouth 1840-43', *New Zealand Journal of History*, 25 (1991), 112-28 (Papers in the same volume by Daley, Griffin, Hirst and Mackay offer critiques of different aspects of the Fairburn thesis). Despite the controversy over nineteenth-century Pakeha society Jock Phillips, 'Of Verandahs and Fish and Chips and Footie on Saturday Afternoon: Reflections on 100 Years of New Zealand Historiography', *New Zealand Journal of History*, 24 (1990), 118-34, points to the centrality of understanding the origins of New Zealand settlers. 'We cannot understand what made New Zealand different unless we understand the habits and values of those who came here' (p. 133).

The perspective of emigration to the United States on which Hansen and Handlin concentrated further expanded perceptions of the subject of British emigration history. In the field of imperial history, emigration could be partially understood with reference to official policy. For immigration to the United States, the role of the state and emigration agencies was minuscule. The post-war period of emigration research showed a marked appreciation that to get to a deeper understanding of emigration, it was essential to move beyond officially published sources and organised schemes of emigration.

The main innovation in the study of British emigration history has been in the imaginative use of different sources: passenger lists, county histories, unpublished emigrant letters, census manuscripts. The result has been to hint at the rich potential for emigration research, but at the same time to outline the problems of researching into emigration.

One strand of emigration research has been the study of particular groups. In recent years there have been studies of Cornish 'hard-rock men'¹⁷, women emigrants, both rich and poor¹⁸, gentlemen emigrants¹⁹, Chartists in America²⁰, trade union emigrants²¹, Macclesfield

¹⁷ John Rowe, The Hard Rock Men: Cornish Migrants and the North American Mining Frontier (Liverpool, 1974).

¹⁸ A.J. Hammerton, Emigrant Gentlewomen: Genteel Poverty and Female Emigration (1979); *idem*, 'Without Natural Protectors: Female Immigration to Australia, 1832-36', Historical Studies, 16 (1975), 539-566; Charlotte MacDonald, A Woman of Good Character: Single Women as Immigrant Settlers in Nineteenth-century New Zealand (Wellington, 1990); Janice Gothard, 'Radically Unsound and Mischievous': Female Migration to Tasmania, 1856-1863', Australian Historical Studies, 24 (1989), 386-404; *idem*, 'Pity the Poor Immigrant': Assisted Single Female Migration to Colonial Australia', in Richards (ed.), Poor Australian Immigrants, pp. 97-116; Paula Hamilton, 'The "Servant Class": Poor Female Migration to Australia in the Nineteenth Century', in *ibid*, pp. 117-131.

¹⁹ Patrick Dunae, Gentlemen Emigrants: From the British Public Schools to the Canadian Frontier (Vancouver, 1981).

²⁰ Ray Boston, British Chartists in the United States (Manchester, 1971).

²¹ Charlotte Erickson, 'The Encouragement of Emigration by British Trade Unions, 1850-1900', Population Studies, 3 (1949), 248-273; R.V. Clements, 'Trade Unions and Emigration, 1840-80', Population Studies, 9 (1955), 167-80; Howard L. Malchow, 'Trade

silk workers²², well-to-do return migrants who published their stories²³, Mormon emigrants²⁴, industrial workers²⁵, child emigrants²⁶. All these studies were in part shaped by the limitations of the available sources. The focus in some studies is on organised emigrations and with the political implications of the question. In that sense there are similarities between a number of special case studies and the older tradition. However where they differ is in their added concentration on the lives of the emigrants. Specific group studies have certain strengths. The focus is manageable and the questions posed can be more specific. A potential problem with the study of any one particular group is the narrowness of vision that such a study can produce which can lead to a distorted presentation of the relative importance of that group, filiopietism.²⁷ However the potential of the small case study to illuminate a wider, elusive historical process is considerable.

Unions and Emigration in Late Victorian England: A National Lobby for State Aid', Journal of British Studies, 15 (1976), 92-116; Pamela Horn, 'Agricultural Trade Unionism and Emigration, 1872-1881', Historical Journal, 15 (1972), 87-102; Amy Zahl Gottlieb, 'The Influence of British Trade Unionists on the Regulation of the Mining Industry in Illinois, 1872', Labor History, 19 (1978), 397-415; *idem*, 'Immigration of British Coal Miners in the Civil War Decade', International Social History Review, 23 (1978), 358-375; Clifton K. Yearley, Britons in American Labor 1820-1914 (Baltimore, 1957).

²² Richard Margrave, The Emigration of Silk Workers from England to the United States with Special Reference to Coventry, Macclesfield, Patterson, New Jersey, and South Manchester, Connecticut (1986).

²³ Wilbur Shepperson, Emigration and Disenchantment: Portraits of Englishmen Repatriated from the United States (Oklahoma, 1965).

²⁴ Taylor, Expectations Westward.

²⁵ Rowland T. Berthoff, British Immigrants in Industrial America, 1790-1950 (Cambridge, Mass., 1953).

²⁶ Joy Parr, Labouring Children: British Immigrant Apprentices to Canada, 1869-1924 (1980); Gillian Wagner, Children of the Empire (1982); Philip Bean and Joy Melville, Lost Children of the Empire (1989).

²⁷ An interesting reverse of this tendency is David Jeremy, Transatlantic Industrial Revolution: The Diffusion of Textile Technologies between Britain and America, 1790-1830s (Oxford, 1981), which argues for a limited role for British workers in the transmission of skills to the United States.

A different strand of emigration research has been a quantitative investigation of the characteristics of British emigration. The value and need for such studies is clear. Historians, basing their assertions on newspaper reports and Blue Books have made varying claims about the nature and characteristics of British emigration.²⁸ The sources for a clear exploration of the character of British emigration are not welcoming. Such is the paucity of the official published record, historians have turned to manuscript passenger lists of arrivals of emigrants at United States ports, in Erickson's words as a 'last resort'.²⁹

The results of passenger list research are revealing of the characteristics of nineteenth-century British emigration for particular years.³⁰ The need for such an inquiry is shown by the basic level of the questions asked of the data: who were the emigrants for particular years? The results display a shift from family emigration during the early nineteenth century to labour migration in the late nineteenth century. With better, less expensive transportation, emigration became a viable strategy for single people. The labour-orientated nature of the late nineteenth-century emigration in part substantiates Brinley Thomas's notion of the influence

²⁸ See Erickson, *Leaving England*, pp. 128-131, for a range of opinions about the character of British emigration during the first half of the nineteenth century.

²⁹ Charlotte Erickson, 'Emigration from the British Isles to the U.S.A. in 1841: Part I Emigration from the British Isles', *Population Studies*, 43 (1989), 347-76 (p. 349). For a review of ship list research see Robert P. Swierenga, 'List Upon List: The Ship Passenger Records and Immigration Research', *Journal of American Ethnic History*, 10 (1991), 42-53.

³⁰ See *ibid*; Charlotte Erickson, 'Emigration from the British Isles to the United States in 1831', *Population Studies*, 35 (1981), 175-97; *idem*, 'Who were the English and Scots Emigrants to the United States in the Late Nineteenth Century?', in *Population and Social Change*, ed. by David V. Glass and Roger Revelle (1972), pp. 347-81; *idem*, 'Emigration from the British Isles to the U.S.A. in 1841: Part II. Who were the English Emigrants?', *Population Studies*, 44 (1990), 21-40; William E. Van Vugt, 'Prosperity and Industrial Emigration from Britain during the early 1850s', *Journal of Social History*, 22 (1988), 339-54; *idem*, "'Running from Ruin?": The Emigration of British Farmers to the U.S.A. in the wake of the Repeal of the Corn Laws', *Economic History Review*, 41 (1988), 411-28; *idem*, 'Welsh Emigration to the U.S.A. during the Mid-Nineteenth Century', *Welsh History Review*, 15 (1991), 545-61; *idem*, 'British Emigration during the Early 1850s with Special Reference to Emigration to the U.S.A.' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of London, 1986).

of long swings of economic cycles on migration patterns.³¹ A further revealing feature of the research on nineteenth-century passenger lists is the precise occupational data that it provides. Such detail is important if we are to identify emigration as a 'safety valve' for people suffering from the impact of the industrial revolution. Compared with the relevant census, 'depressed groups' do not feature in proportions above those of the census. In 1831 we do not see a significant number of handloom weavers emigrating. By cross-comparing emigrating populations with the broader population we get a different picture of emigration than that presented by earlier accounts that emphasised the influence of economic distress. The connection in earlier accounts between economic distress and emigration was attacked by Erickson as representing a 'hardy tradition of immigration historiography to cite groups in the population with particular problems and thereby imply that these were the emigrants'.³² Dudley Baines summed up the findings of Erickson thus: 'English emigrants in the first half of the nineteenth century were largely composed of people like farmers and skilled artisans who were capable of making a good living in England but were transforming a reasonably successful life-style from England to another country'.³³

The model of emigration that quantitative work presents is of a movement of people not leaving from hardship; but responding to aspirations, unfulfilled within the old world. Emigration is associated with individual action. The process of deciding to emigrate involves self-selection; not the response to sudden changes over which the emigrant had no control.³⁴

³¹ Brinley Thomas, *Migration and Economic Growth* (Cambridge, 1954).

³² Erickson, 'Emigration 1831', p. 177.

³³ Baines, *Migration*, pp. 74-5.

³⁴ This is not to say that this was the case for all emigrants. Sudden changes in domestic circumstances is a feature that recreating emigrant life histories reveals. (See Erickson, *Leaving England*, p.25.). The point is that quantitative work presents the emigrants as being economically rational people in control of some information and some transferrable skills; not the unskilled victims of secular economic change.

This is a benign approach to the emigratory impulse which has challenging implications for the way that we think about emigration.

Quantitative work on passenger lists is problematic. The body of information is considerable, requiring, even for the investigation of one year's emigrants, the adoption of a method of sampling. Furthermore, so far we are reliant upon census years for our understanding of English emigrant populations. It is natural that Erickson and Van Vugt's pioneering work on ship lists should start with census years, providing an obvious way of cross-comparing emigrating populations with the broader population. However, as Erickson's work on late nineteenth-century emigration shows, the characteristics of emigration changed from year to year. A particular downturn in the British economy saw a rise in the proportion of single male labourers from a trough in 1878 to a peak in 1882.³⁵ We know little about the fluctuations in emigrant populations, and little about the seasonal differences of emigrant populations.³⁶

Technical difficulties with using ship passenger lists also make the interpretation of the data difficult. Though providing the best window on the occupational profile of the emigrants, occupational data on these lists is problematic. A number of ship lists do not have complete occupational listings of emigrants or are dominated by imprecise descriptive terms such as 'labourer' and the careless use of dittoes. For Erickson, such lists were too unreliable to be used, and the presence of such lists caused her to devise an individual sampling technique.³⁷ Different sampling practices adopted by Raymond L. Cohn have re-emphasised

³⁵ Erickson, *Leaving England*, pp. 110-12.

³⁶ *ibid.*, p. 23.

³⁷ For a discussion of the sampling method adopted see Charlotte Erickson, 'The Uses of Passenger Lists for the Study of British and Irish Emigration', in *Migration across Time and Nations: Population Mobility in Historical Contexts*, ed. by Ira Glazier and Luigi de Rosa (New York, 1986), pp. 318-35.

the position of labourers in the English emigrating population. Cohn took 'bad' lists (that is lists with a large number of dittoes and imprecise occupational data) at face value. Naturally more 'labourers' feature in his results than in the work of Erickson and Van Vugt.³⁸ The difference between Cohn's calculations and Erickson and Van Vugt's hints at a further problem in interpreting ship list data. Occupations were filled in by ships' captains on the basis of the information provided by the emigrants. In other words the emigrant defined his occupation and status. The question is whether emigrants gave an accurate description of their occupation or whether they were describing their aspirations. Van Vugt found a large number of 'farmers' in his 1851 sample. Some 'farmers' from grain counties might have been 'running from ruin'. However the use of the occupation 'farmer' might have reflected the hopes and aspirations of some emigrants rather than their economic circumstances at the time of leaving England.³⁹ A positive side of 'good' ship lists is the rich occupational detail that they do provide. This contrasts with the vagueness of census data which probably deskilled a number of people by the use of the category 'labourer' which did not take account of the range of skills that an agricultural labourer might possess. A further problem with British ship lists is the lack of place of origin data. Van Vugt's investigation of the emigration from England in 1851 only garnered place of origin data for seventy-five farmer emigrants.⁴⁰ The quantitative record of British emigration is incomplete, but we now have a better picture of people that left for the New World and some working models for their motivation.

Another approach to the investigation of emigration involves the investigation of individual emigrants. Emigration was very much an individual decision. Most emigrants left

³⁸ Raymond L. Cohn, 'The Occupations of English Immigrants to the United States, 1836-1853', *Journal of Economic History*, 52 (1992), 377-87.

³⁹ For a discussion of this issue see Van Vugt, 'Running from Ruin', pp. 415-416.

⁴⁰ *ibid.*, p. 423.

not as members of organised groups but as individuals. Yet we know little about the individuals who emigrated. Published snippets of emigrant lives have been found in local newspapers and in guidebooks and accounts. Yet such sources, by virtue of publication and uncertainty of authorship, are viewed with suspicion.⁴¹ Private correspondence and the careful reconstruction of emigrant life-stories, pursuits associated with the genealogist, have become a way of unlocking the lives of the emigrant.⁴² The personal level of such inquiries appears to contrast, perhaps to conflict, with the quantitative investigation of emigration. The two approaches are however different parts of the same whole. The close assessment of individual careers and motivations adds more flesh to the bare figures of emigrating populations, which quantitative enquiries can never reveal. However quantitative analysis allows for a broader sense of perspective. The two types of inquiry are complementary.⁴³ Unsurprisingly the interpretation of emigrant letters is difficult. Typicality is almost impossible to assess. Survival is random and unpredictable. The reasons for writing and for preserving the letters might be idiosyncratic. Do people who failed to assimilate tend to write more often than those who succeed? How does an emigrant communicate with relatives that he might never see again?⁴⁴ Despite the problems of interpreting emigrant letters, they provide us with a unique

⁴¹ An exception to this scepticism of published sources is Stephen Fender, Sea Changes: British Emigration and American Literature (Cambridge, 1992) who treats all emigration material as part of a 'discourse on emigration'.

⁴² See Charlotte Erickson, Invisible Immigrants: The Adaptation of English and Scottish Immigrants in Nineteenth-Century America (1972); Fitzpatrick, Oceans of Consolation; Walter D. Kamphoefner, Wolfgang Helbich, and Ulrike Sommer, News from the Land of Freedom: German Immigrants Write Home (Ithaca, 1992). For the point on the new use of the genealogist's tools see Fitzpatrick, p. 25.

⁴³ Fitzpatrick, Oceans of Consolation, p.4, mentions the value of 'mesh[ing] aggregate profiles with individual chronicles'.

⁴⁴ For discussions of this issue see Erickson, Invisible Immigrants, pp.12-21; Fitzpatrick, Oceans of Consolation, pp. 19-30; Eric Richards, 'Voices of British and Irish Migrants in Nineteenth-century Australia', in Pooley and Whyte (ed.) Migrants, Emigrants, and Immigrants, pp. 19-41.

and privileged perspective on the process of emigration, of individual decision-making and perspectives on home and abroad. Complemented by other forms of record linkage, the emigrant letter follows through a complete career of an emigrant. The use of emigrant letters in histories of emigration is not a new enterprise. The novelty of recent enquiries has been in the conjunction of different sources to corroborate and enrich accounts of the emigrants, to provide a precious picture of individual emigration.

Emigrant letters provide a direct window on the past. The richness of emigrant letters as an historical source has a significance beyond the confines of emigration history. Manuscript emigrant letters are remarkable because some are written by the common people for whom writing was neither a simple nor a straightforward task. Their emigration made people, who would not usually write, put pen to paper. Although they were uncomfortable and uneasy with a literary culture, emigrants wrote letters. Emigration and family separation was a sufficiently momentous event in people's lives for them to write. Their letters provide a unique perspective on the lives of the common folk, people normally hidden from the historian's gaze. Furthermore, emigrant letters are one of the few sources in which ordinary people communicate directly to friends and relatives. Fitzpatrick has used Irish emigrant letters brilliantly to portray the power of emigration material to shed light on a whole series of different historical issues. He claims his letter collection contains material on 'every imaginable subject (except sex)'.⁴⁵

The value of emigration as a subject which offers unique perspectives on the past is a strong theme in the historiography. On occasions the point has been explicitly made. Oliver MacDonagh took the study of 'an obscure and all but forgotten body of legislation' concerned with the regulation of the passenger trade to develop a broad interpretative framework for a neo-Weberian model of government growth. For MacDonagh, emigration provided an entry

⁴⁵ *ibid.*, p. viii.

point for considering broader themes⁴⁶. In a similar tradition Eric Richards has pointed to the value of Australian emigration material in providing rich perspectives on British social history.⁴⁷ One example of the power of emigrant letters was briefly explored by K.D.M. Snell who suggested that the concerns expressed in emigrant letters provide a sharper perspective on 'standard of living issues' than a narrow focus on 'real' wages for the rural poor.⁴⁸ Erickson has maintained that emigration history offers rich perspectives on how English people responded to and coped with industrial change.⁴⁹ Van Vugt has used the investigation of mid-century emigration to pose questions about the dating of the start of mid-Victorian 'prosperity' as well as a clear entry point to the assessment of Welsh mining conditions and farming reaction to the repeal of the Corn Laws.⁵⁰ Erickson's work on the 'agrarian myth' gives a voice to the hopes of 'middling sort' emigrants, another grouping left without a voice in a domestic context.⁵¹

The rich potential of emigration as a subject is shown in countless studies. Convict

⁴⁶ Oliver MacDonagh, A Pattern of Government Growth: The Passenger Acts and their Enforcement (1961), p. 15 and *passim*. See also the seminal article in which intensive emigration work supported a broader thesis of governmental growth: Oliver MacDonagh, 'The Nineteenth-century Revolution in Government: A Reappraisal', Historical Journal, 1 (1958), 52-67. Needless to say the 'MacDonagh debate' played a central role in the development of administrative history. For a critique of MacDonagh's model for passenger regulation see Peter Dunkley, 'Emigration and the State, 1803-1842: The Nineteenth-Century Revolution in Government Reconsidered', Historical Journal, 23 (1980), 353-380.

⁴⁷ Eric Richards, 'Annals of the Australian Immigrant', in Visible Immigrants: Neglected Sources for the History of Australian Immigration, ed. by David Fitzpatrick (Canberra, 1989), pp.1-23, (p. 21) and *idem*, 'Voices of British and Irish Migrants', pp. 20-22.

⁴⁸ K.D.M. Snell, Annals of the Labouring Poor: Social Change and Agrarian England, 1660-1900 (Cambridge, 1985), pp. 9-14.

⁴⁹ Erickson, Leaving England, pp. 26-8.

⁵⁰ Van Vugt, 'Running from Ruin'; *idem*, 'Welsh Emigration'.

⁵¹ Charlotte Erickson, 'Agrarian Myths of English Immigrants', in In the Trek of the Immigrants, ed. by O.F. Ander (Rock Island, 1964), pp. 59-80.

data provides rich material on literacy and internal mobility.⁵² Ship passenger data presents us with useful insights on fertility, mortality and family planning amongst working-class emigrants, and by implication on the working-class population.⁵³ Australian emigrant lists provide rich details on literacy and religious orientation.⁵⁴ The behaviour of Britons abroad provides a powerful perspective to view perceptions of Britishness and British culture. How Scots behave in Australia provides one entry point to consider a notion of Scottishness.⁵⁵ The construction of an Irish exile motif provides one rich seam for considering Anglo-Irish relations.⁵⁶ Emigration involves the separation of individuals from their homeland. The result of this separation can be useful perspectives on questions of identity. Public policy and organised emigration are particularly interesting in examining notions of national stereotypes. Andrew Hassam notes, 'There is nothing like crossing the seas for bringing out a culture's

⁵² Stephen Nicholas and Peter Shergold, 'The Intercounty Labour Mobility during the Industrial Revolution: Evidence from Australian Transportation Records', *Oxford Economic Papers*, 39 (1987), 623-40; *idem*, 'Internal Migration in England, 1818-1839', *Journal of Historical Geography*, 13 (1987), 155-68; Stephen Nicholas and Jacqueline Nicholas, 'Male Literacy, "Deskilling", and the Industrial Revolution', *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, 23 (1992), 1-18.

⁵³ Ralph Shlomovitz and John McDonald, 'Babies at Risk on Immigrant Voyages to Australia in the Nineteenth Century', *Economic History Review*, 44 (1991), 86-101; John McDonald and Ralph Shlomovitz, 'Mortality on Immigrant Voyages to Australia in the Nineteenth Century', *Explorations in Economic History*, 27 (1990), 84-113; Raymond L. Cohn, 'The Determinants of Individual Immigrant Mortality on Sailing Ships, 1836-1853', *Explorations in Economic History*, 24 (1987), 371-91; Helen R. Woolcock, *Rights of Passage: Emigration to Australia in the Nineteenth Century* (1986).

⁵⁴ Robin Haines, 'Indigent Misfits or Shrewd Operators? Government-assisted Emigrants from the United Kingdom to Australia, 1831-1860', *Population Studies*, 48 (1994), 223-47; S. Colin Holt, 'Family, Kinship, Community and Friendship Ties in Assisted Emigration from Cambridgeshire to Port Phillip District and Victoria, 1840-1867', (MA thesis, La Trobe University, 1987).

⁵⁵ Cliff Cumming, 'Scottish National Identity in an Australian Colony', *Scottish Historical Review*, 72 (1993), 22-38.

⁵⁶ Miller, *Emigrants and Exiles*.

latent chauvinism.⁵⁷ Scottish emigrants were consistently viewed as reliable doughty settlers in both a potentially defensive sense, as with the sponsorship of Canadian settlement after the War of Independence, and in a labouring context, as with the support amongst Yorkshire woollen manufacturers who campaigned for more Scots to emigrate to Australia in the belief that Scottish settlers would be more likely to stay as labourers and not rush off to the gold fields.⁵⁸ An unexplored question concerning the nineteenth-century Highland Clearances is the issue of English involvement and interest. The Highland and Island Emigration Society set up in London to campaign for Highland emigration might provide an interesting perspective on Anglo-Scottish relations and perceptions.

Emigration provides a different and engaging framework within which to view actions. Dunae's work on gentlemen emigrants provides an interesting account of a rich couple's, the Moodies, failure to adapt to life in the Canadian backwoods. During the voyage from Scotland to Canada in 1832, Susanna Moodie could barely restrain her shock at the seemingly high aspirations of the poor fellow passengers in steerage below. These became more optimistic, the closer to Canada the boat came. 'The sight of the Canadian shores had changed them [the steerage passengers] into persons of great consequence. The poorest and the worst-dressed, the least deserving and the most repulsive in mind and morals exhibited the most disgusting traits of self-importance'. She was amazed to see a poor Irish man dancing a jig on arrival in Canada shouting 'Whurrah! My boys! Shure we'll all be jintlemen!'. In Canada she did not receive the deferential behaviour she had experienced at home. She complained of enduring 'the saucy familiarity of servants who, republican in spirit, think themselves as good as their employers'. The experience of the Moodies is a lesson in the

⁵⁷ Andrew Hassam, Sailing to Australia: Shipboard Diaries by Nineteenth-century British Emigrants (Manchester, 1994), p. 2.

⁵⁸ Devine, Great Highland Famine, pp. 248-9.

transformation of the working- class character when transposed to a different environment, learnt with bitter experience by people accustomed to more obsequious behaviour.⁵⁹

In one sense the data on nineteenth-century British emigration is poor and incomplete for the purposes of exploring the careers of emigrants. However flaws of coverage in historical data are part and parcel of historical enquiry. For a whole range of other questions the data available on emigration is excellent. We might argue that emigration data is almost better suited for exploring questions other than those directly connected with emigration!

A discussion of previous work on emigration illustrates the traditions which have helped to shape the method and focus of this thesis. Having discussed the approaches adopted by other historians of emigration it is now time to relate the subsequent chapters more directly to the historiographical traditions.

In one sense the focus of this thesis is slightly old fashioned. It investigates assisted emigration. Assisted emigration is associated with the earlier generation of historians of British emigration such as Madgwick and Johnson. Furthermore if we accept the Erickson and Van Vugt interpretation of English emigration as a movement of people in fear of, rather than experiencing, distress, poor law emigrants are untypical English nineteenth-century emigrants. Some explanation for investigating a numerically insignificant emigration is warranted.

The first obvious reason, which might seem strange given the attention of earlier historians on assisted emigration, is that our knowledge of assisted emigration is incomplete and sketchy. We have a fair amount of superficial evidence on which to make preliminary comments on assisted emigration. Indeed the presence of some accessible published material has given an impression of more complete knowledge than we actually have. Assisted emigration has received fleeting attention from historians in need of a concrete example of

⁵⁹ Dunae, *Gentlemen Emigrants*, pp.24-6.

rural depopulation or as an example of a novel policy to counteract the problems of 'surplus labour'.⁶⁰ The publication of annual returns of emigration carried out under the sanction of section sixty-two of the Poor Law Amendment Act presents the place of origin, destination, year, gender and age grouping of the emigrants. We know how many went, where they went and when. But we do not know from published material the precise ages of the emigrants, their occupations, family structure or any indication of their 'quality'. Earlier historians of assisted emigration have made assertions about the quality of assisted emigrants based on contemporary fears and impressionistic comments. Recently R.B. Madgwick's assertions about the quality of assisted female emigrants have been questioned by A.J. Hammerton. Robin Haines and S. Colin Holt have shown that the recipients of assisted passages to Australia were remarkably literate and were opportunists in possession of some information and knowledge rather than the dross of society. In view of the criticisms of assisted emigration, dominated by Charles Buller's phrase 'shovelling out paupers' there is a clear need for a closer investigation of the characteristics of the poor law emigrants.⁶¹ Basic questions of the 'who were' variety that Erickson used to provide a fuller picture of unassisted emigration to the United States are equally valid for the assessment of poor law emigrants.

Work on assisted emigration has also concentrated on the experiments and debates about emigration in the post-Napoleonic period. H.J.M. Johnston's valuable monograph on British emigration policy 1815-30 concentrates on Wilmot Horton's schemes of assisted

⁶⁰ See for example, Barry Stapleton, 'Inherited Poverty and Life-cycle Poverty: Odiham, Hampshire, 1650-1850', *Social History*, 18 (1993), 339-55 (p. 353); Roger Wells, 'Social Protest, Class, Conflict and Consciousness, in the English Countryside 1700-1880', in *Class, Conflict and Protest in the English Countryside, 1700-1880*, ed. by Mick Reed and Roger Wells (1990), pp. 120-214 (p. 144); David Eastwood, *Governing Rural England: Tradition and Transformation in Local Government, 1780-1840* (Oxford, 1994), pp. 178-9.

⁶¹ *Hansard*, LXVIII (1843), col. 522. Buller first used the phrase in 1843 and was specifically referring to Horton's 'experiments'. The phrase has since been applied by historians in discussions of all descriptions of assisted emigration in the nineteenth century.

emigration. The emigration clause of the New Poor Law is mentioned, but as a rather lame appendix to a fierce debate which changed focus after Horton left office.⁶² In comparison with Horton's grand schemes of assisted emigration, the small number of emigrants assisted under the sanction of the New Poor Law appears insignificant. Yet the continued practice of parochial emigration provides a valuable perspective on the debates of the 1820s. By investigating assisted emigration at the local level we can assess the practicality of Horton's proposals. It is possible to gain clues as to the potential impact of Horton's proposals by seeing what local officials made of his policy.

An investigation of the practical implications of poor law emigration does not just complete an analysis of the emigration debate of the 1820s. Emigration remained a panacea for domestic ills throughout the nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth century. In rhetoric it was a simple policy to propose. In practice, as studies of other schemes of assisted emigration have shown, it was a more difficult proposition. A close inspection of one episode in the application of the policy provides a useful perspective on later schemes of assisted emigration.⁶³ By displaying the arrangements and procedures necessary for the successful implementation of assisted emigration we can gain some understanding of why it remained a policy that was often called for, but was only carried out to a limited degree.

To enhance knowledge about a little studied piece of social policy is, in itself, sufficient justification for studying emigration carried out under clause sixty-two. A central

⁶² H.J.M. Johnston, British Emigration Policy, 1815-1830: Shovelling out Paupers (Oxford, 1972), p. 164.

⁶³ For examples of work on later schemes of assisted emigration see H.L. Malchow, Population Pressures: Emigration and Government in Late Nineteenth-Century Britain (Palo Alto, California, 1979); Stephen Constantine, 'Empire Migration and Social Reform', in Pooley and Whyte (ed.), Migrants, Emigrants and Immigrants, pp. 62-83; Desmond Glynn, 'Exporting Outcast London': Assisted Emigration to Canada, 1886-1914', Histoire Sociale-Social History, 15 (1982), 209-38; Gareth Stedman Jones, Outcast London: A Study in the Relationships between Classes in Victorian Society (Oxford, 1971), pp. 309-12.

argument of this thesis is that assisted emigration can also inform our understanding of unassisted emigration.

In some respects the documentary record for assisted emigration sheds light on an emigratory process about which for unassisted emigration we can only speculate. The practical arrangements for assisted emigration were not solely made by the emigrants. Parish officers had to survey the opinions of potential emigrants, arrange meetings and purchase tickets and the necessary equipment for the emigrant voyage. Through the correspondence of parish officers a whole emigratory process is revealed: from the early expression of a wish to emigrate to the eventual departure of the emigrants. The planning essential for a long voyage is described in rich detail. If the poorest emigrants, presumably only equipped with the barest essentials for the emigrant voyage, had to make lengthy preparations for emigration we can only speculate what preparations unassisted emigrants made before they left these shores. Philip Taylor's work on the Mormon emigrations shows the lengthy and detailed preparations required for organised emigration. His account of the Mormon emigration made moving from old world to new world appear a complicated task.⁶⁴ Evidence of unassisted emigration provides little detail of the planning which emigrants made. Unassisted emigrants would have taken their receipts connected with emigration preparations with them to a new world and presumably disposed of them at some point in time. Parish officers were accountable to their ratepayers and to central supervisory agencies. They could not be so casual about disposing of receipts. Through the receipts and records of assisted emigration we can see something of the process of emigration on a material and physical level. It is easy for us, in an age of easy travel and communications, to minimise the size of the steps that moving from one continent to the next represented. The study of assisted emigration offers a useful corrective to that image.

⁶⁴ Taylor, *Expectations Westward*, pp. 113-42.

The evidence for assisted emigration has additional advantages over that available for unassisted emigration. As we mentioned earlier, place of origin data for unassisted emigrants is extremely poor. Even when a place of origin is noted on a passenger list, we cannot be sure the place listed is accurate. In other words, was emigration a final stage in stage migration or a one leap movement?⁶⁵ For poor law emigrants we know the county of origin of the emigrants and the parish from which they left. This provides rich possibilities to contextualise the emigration of poor people within their local circumstances. In this thesis, suggestions are made concerning the nature of the emigrating parish, but plenty of room is left for others to probe this intriguing question more deeply. The issue of knowing the place of origin of the emigrants, as well as offering the opportunity to compare regional differences in emigration flow, is that it allows for further investigation into the process of decision-making and information flow, central issues in emigration historiography.⁶⁶ The unit of poor law emigration was the English parish. Evidence connected with the emigration of poor people was generated in that parish. Unlike much emigration data, the emigrant is located directly in the place of his departure. It is therefore possible to probe deeper into reasons for emigration. We can trace the steps taken by the emigrant before departure. We are also able to connect the emigrant with previous emigrations from the same locality and draw some connections between previous emigrations. In other words, through assisted emigration we can examine the impact of news of emigration on a small community. The importance of kinship links and friendship links can also be investigated. By focusing on the parish we can gain some insights on the decision-making process for emigration: how poor people might

⁶⁵ Baines, *Migration*, pp. 84, 160. By the late nineteenth century Baines has argued that at least forty-five per cent of English and Welsh emigrants were born and brought up in an urban environment, thus suggesting that the stage migration model for English emigration is possibly over stated. (p. 264).

⁶⁶ e.g. *ibid*, pp. 27-31.

have suddenly decided to go and how others had harboured a wish to leave for a long time. A further issue on which poor law emigration provides insights is on the people who decided not to leave. In most records people either emigrate or do not. We know very little about those who thought about emigrating and changed their minds. As parishes, not emigrants, made preparations for emigration we have some record of those who decided not to go. The reasons for non-departure: ill-health, imprisonment or simple change of mind show the delicate nature of the decision to emigrate. In revealing the quirks of human decision-making, assisted emigration provides a valuable perspective on all emigration.

The evidence of poor people deciding whether to emigrate or not is an important component of the interpretation of poor law emigration presented in this thesis. The evidence investigated suggests that poor law emigrants were self-selecting, willing emigrants; not paupers shovelled out into a void. Poor emigrants exerted some control over their destinies. This interpretation of poor law emigration supports recent research by Australian historians who have pointed to the strategies of poor people who managed to gain assistance to leave.⁶⁷ The focus on the recipients of assistance and on their own role in the process contrasts with earlier treatments of assisted emigration. For the earlier generation of emigration historians, restricted to published sources, emigrants were shadowy figures. Earlier accounts of assisted emigration presented the emigrants as either a social problem or as grateful recipients of assistance. The poor emigrant was largely described as passive, hidden from view by the rhetoric of philanthropists. Official policy in response to the emigrant question formed the depth of earlier historians' enquiries. This project has enabled the emigrants to emerge as individuals, working within the institutional setting. This study combines the focus of earlier work concerned with official policy, but benefits from later techniques and perspectives that

⁶⁷ Eric Richards, 'How Did Poor People Emigrate from the British Isles to Australia in the Nineteenth Century?', *Journal of British Studies*, 32 (1993), 250-279; Haines, "Indigent Misfits".

attempt to provide a voice for the people who moved from the old world. It maintains that the voice and experience of the assisted emigrant can also illuminate our understanding of a broader emigratory process.

Mention of the strategies of the poor emigrant provides an introduction to another theme that this work seeks to develop: the value of poor law emigration as a starting point to address a range of questions about nineteenth-century English history. Poor law emigrants are visible emigrants (visible, that is, compared with the great body of nineteenth-century English emigrants); they are also visible members of the poor. By their emigration they become noteworthy. Yet the evidence that they provide is not just of value in an emigration context. It is of value to students of British social history for whom the agricultural labourer is often hidden from view, characterised in the poor law reformers' rhetoric as 'surplus labour' and in the contemporary cartoon image as the ignorant 'Hodge'. The very fact that some agricultural labourers took the dramatic step of leaving the land of their birth to try their luck in a new continent is suggestive of an enterprise with which agricultural labourers are rarely credited. Emigration material in part provides them with a voice.⁶⁸

The poor emigrants become visible by their interaction with the parish officers who paid for them to leave. The nature of this interaction was governed by rules and customs. How the poor operated within these constraints provides evidence of how they related to authority figures. Assisted emigration thus provides us with valuable perspectives on the basis of social relations. How did poor people get the necessary assistance to emigrate? The techniques used and strategies adopted by the poor provide interesting examples of an informed knowing poor prepared to demand assistance from their betters. The implications of the pattern of interaction between rich and poor on the question of assisted emigration

⁶⁸ For a vivid example of a poor emigrant voice see Eric Richards, 'A Voice from Below: Benjamin Boyce in South Australia, 1839-1846', *Labour History*, 27 (1974), 65-75.

provide interesting insights on the relationship between rich and poor.⁶⁹

The question of social relations implies the study of the interaction between people of different economic groupings. Assisted emigration was effected by the mutual agreement of people who paid for the poor to leave and the poor emigrants. By suggesting that the poor had some role, other than that of passive victims, we are creating a model of interaction between rich and poor. To gain a complete understanding of the policy of assisted emigration as practised at the local level, it is necessary to consider the motivation of those who paid for their poor to leave. This is an important question given the emotive nature of the act of paying for 'surplus population' to leave the land of its birth. The popular memory of the Highland Clearances provides an example of the emotionalism which might be attached to the policy. An awareness of the sensitivity of the subject should be kept in mind throughout the progress of the thesis. In England assisted emigration was essentially small-scale. Grandees in the famed examples of the Petworth Emigration Committee and Lord Bruce's emigrations might have played a central part in private emigration committees and as landlords and occupiers paid their share of emigration bills.⁷⁰ However the main participants in paying and arranging for the poor to leave were parish officers. The focus on parish officers offers two useful insights, firstly into social relations and secondly into the continued capacity of local

⁶⁹ The notion that poor people were not always passive is not new. Paul Slack, The English Poor Law, 1531-1782 (1990), p.56, states, 'We should not think of the poor as passive recipients of doles or charity. They were well able to manipulate the system for their own purposes, entering workhouses, for example, when they needed housing, putting pressure on overseers and if necessary justices when outdoor relief suited them better.' See also Marco H.D. van Leeuwen, 'Logic of Charity: Poor Relief in Preindustrial Europe', Journal of Interdisciplinary History, 24 (1994), 589-613. The difficulty is to find sufficient examples of the strategies adopted by the poor. Work that attempts to show this includes Peter Mandler (ed.), The Uses of Charity: The Poor on Relief in the Nineteenth-Century Metropolis (Philadelphia, 1990).

⁷⁰ Wendy Cameron, 'The Petworth Emigration Committee: Lord Egremont's Assisted Emigrations from Sussex to Upper Canada, 1832-37', Ontario History, 65 (1973), 231-46; Mark Baker, 'A Migration of Wiltshire Agricultural Labourers to Australia in 1851', Journal of the South Australian Historical Society, 14 (1986), 67-82.

government to shape social policy.

If assisted emigration provides an example of the poor's interaction with the rich, it simultaneously provides an example of the rich's interaction with the poor. The central question is: on what basis was assistance to emigrate given? Was it simply a matter of the parish worthies paying for their poor to leave or were other considerations involved in the operation of the policy? The attitudes of the people who paid for their poor to leave provide one perspective on how parish officers, in a broader sense, related to their poor. Can we see assisted emigration as part of a broader paternalistic revival and as an attempt to revive and remodel rural society? In what respects was it a useful policy? Assisted emigration is one way by which the poor become visible to the historian. On another level it is one way by which Anglican clergy and farmers, as governors of rural England, become visible. Emigration, applied as a social policy at the local level, provides one way of investigating the governing ethos of the vestrymen.⁷¹

This study also offers a consideration of the functions of rural government in the aftermath of the New Poor Law. The New Poor Law sought to replace the *ad hoc* parish-based system of poor relief by a nationally devised system. Parishes were no longer the main unit of relief administration. Parishes were members of unions, subject to the decisions of the Boards of Guardians, meeting at the union workhouse. Boards of Guardians formed the decision-making body for the practical administration of poor relief. Guardians' relief policies had to conform to the regulations sent forth from Somerset House, home of the centralised, supervisory poor law agency. The role for the parish in this order seemed negligible. At the same time, however, as we saw the restructuring of one of the key functions of parish government, the parishes were gaining additional permissive powers, the power to pay for poor people to emigrate. Given the decision of central government to play only a supervisory

⁷¹ This territory is explored in David Roberts, *Paternalism in Victorian England* (1979).

role in emigration matters, the location of powers for emigration in the ancient parish is deeply ironic in an age of centralisation and professionalisation. The reason why emigration remained a live issue for the parish after 1834 was the result of another limitation of the Poor Law Amendment Act's scope as a reform measure; the principles of the Law of Settlement remained until the Union Chargeability Act (1865). By the Law of Settlement the parish was the unit where people 'belonged'. For relief purposes, everyone belonged to a parish somewhere. In times of misfortune all poor people could call on the parish of their settlement to provide them with poor relief. Though the union workhouse provided supposedly the only place where able-bodied males could receive out-relief, the poor who took advantage of the workhouse's services were charged to the parish; not the union. Thus individual parishes were financially responsible for the relief expenditure that their poor caused. Emigration was one way by which the local problem of parish rates could be solved. Its resolution provides an example of how the parish coped with the changed realities of the New Poor Law.⁷²

A further benefit of focusing on the parish as a unit of government is the light that it sheds on the relationship between central supervisory agencies and ancient local administrative units. The parish was given the power to pay for the emigration of its poor. It was not given free rein to do whatever it wanted. The central supervisory agency, the Poor Law Commission (later Board), exercised considerable control in the setting up of procedures for parish actions and oversaw the actions of the local agencies. The effectiveness of central supervision, and the process of negotiation between centre and locality, can be tested by the detailed investigation of the operation of one aspect of poor law administration.

Having outlined some of the areas where the thesis can contribute to historical knowledge in both a British social history and emigration context, it is necessary to consider the key source material on which this contribution is based. The voluminous Ministry of

⁷² Digby, *Pauper Palaces*, pp. 83-92.

Health Files held at the Public Record Office are well-known to a generation of poor law historians. PRO MH 12 contains a considerable number of files of correspondence between poor law unions and the Poor Law Commission. The correspondence concerns all issues connected with the administration of the New Poor Law: poor relief, workhouse regulations, evaluations, rating disputes, local elections, public health issues, the appointment and conduct of local officials, smallpox inoculation, sale of parish property. As each poor law union consisted of thirty or more parishes, it is no surprise that the correspondence is both bulky and repetitive. Contained within this material are snatches of information about the operation of the emigration clause.

Emigration material falls in three broad categories: emigration lists, emigration motions, and correspondence between parishes or unions and the Poor Law Commission. Emigration lists provide us with names and ages of emigrants, as a minimum. They give us an impression of the demographic profile of the poor law emigrant. Space on lists is sometimes filled in to provide additional information which illuminates either the character of the emigrants or the process of emigration. Most lists are fairly barren in the provision of additional information; however odd snatches and fragments concerning the assumptions of the emigrants and the emigrators are revealed. Motions of emigration meetings are fairly dull fare, listing decisions of the emigrators. They confirm a considered official structure for poor law emigration but do not often provide added detail. Miscellaneous correspondence is the most productive source for the picture presented below. In this, parish officers articulate their concerns and central officials respond back. We see something of the process of negotiation between centre and locality and an articulation of the different priorities of local officials and central agencies.

There are a number of problems with the available sources for poor law emigration. The sheer volume of irrelevant material concerned with the numerous other aspects of the

New Poor Law makes searching for emigration material time consuming. The nature of the evidence held in MH 12 is also problematic. Few emigrations provide us with a full account of the process. The language used in forms generated by the PLC was replicated in the justifications that parish officials gave. As a result much of the official correspondence on assisted emigration is unrevealing. It is therefore difficult to investigate the motives and concerns of the emigrants and the emigrators. However, the evidence in MH 12 presents us with the occasional extra comment made by an assiduous clergyman filling in an emigrant list or with additional details provided by a parish officer requesting extra information. These details shed interesting light on the attitudes of and interaction between the parish officers and the poor. The typicality of the extra information, of added details furnished when emigrant and emigrator move away from being just signatures on the bottom of a motion or 'several poor persons in the parish', is difficult to assess. However taken together these snatches provide illuminating perspectives on the process of assisted emigration and social relations. In this thesis extra details, fragments not lengthy policy statements, form the basis for an assessment of poor law emigration. The details of assisted emigration reflect the difficulties of arranging assisted emigration. Difficulties generate correspondence, and only from the written record can we have any way of reconstructing the emigrants' lives. The available evidence shapes the view taken of emigrants and emigrators. The more thoughtful and the more careful emigrator reveals himself in his correspondence with the supervisory agency. The more difficult and informed emigrant, the emigrant who is noted as doing more than just leaving the country with a sad look over his shoulder, appears in the following pages. It is difficult to assess how representative these examples are. All the historian can do is to interrogate the available evidence and offer a reading.

The time-consuming aspect of research on MH 12 has shaped the thesis by limiting the geographical coverage of study. Three counties have been surveyed for material relating

to poor law emigration: Bedfordshire, Northamptonshire and Norfolk. To find emigrant lists providing demographic data on poor law emigrants is not a difficult task. The lists are often placed in the end section of a year's correspondence. It is fairly straightforward to tick off emigrants reported in official printed returns against manuscript sources. This would undoubtedly be a worthwhile project. The difficulty in adopting such a ruthless approach to data collection is that the researcher would gain a large number of emigrant lists but would have missed non-list material which illuminates the thought of the participants and the process of assisted emigration, in all its richness. The approach adopted for this thesis has therefore been to collect all emigration data and to attach weight to a scribbled note by an obscure cleric as well as to the 'certainty' of an emigrant listing. Concentrating on three counties has also allowed for more intensive research in county record offices which have provided additional information to examine the actions of emigrants and emigrators.

The choice of two south Midlands counties and Norfolk requires some explanation. Norfolk presents us with the most vigorous adoption of section sixty-two in one year. It provides a wealth of data and an opportunity to test the notion of poor law emigration as the 'lowland clearances'. A natural addition to Norfolk would be other high poor law emigrating counties, for example Suffolk, Sussex and Kent. Suffolk in particular would give the study a natural geographical logic. The starting point for the research on this project, however, was the South Midlands. The pattern and nature of assisted emigration from the South Midlands was quantitatively and qualitatively different from Norfolk's emigration. The contrast between the emigratory experience of the two regions provides worthwhile comparisons. The high concentration of emigration from Norfolk in one year would also create problems of interpretation of qualitative evidence. If assisted emigration was adopted as an automatic, almost feverish, response to social conditions, the quality of evidence justifying and explaining the adoption of the policy might lack depth and detail. In the South Midlands, where assisted

emigration was a less common policy, fuller explanations of the policy might be expected.

Having outlined the context and focus of the thesis and pointed to some of the issues concerned with the collection and evaluation of the data, an explanation of the organisation and structure of the thesis is called for. The following two chapters lay additional foundations to the consideration of poor law emigration. Chapter II considers the background to the adoption of section sixty-two of the New Poor Law, placing the emigration clause within a debate about assisted emigration. Chapter III considers the economic and social background to the implementation of assisted emigration at the local level, reconstructing the world from which the emigrants came and assessing the social and economic influences on the promoters of assisted emigration. The focus then shifts to the impact of assisted emigration. Chapter IV considers the quantitative data available to provide a picture of the demographic profile of the poor law emigrants. Chapter V considers the strategies adopted by the poor emigrants and attempts to consider how they viewed assisted emigration. Chapter VI considers the role and motivations of the emigrators. The last two chapters consider the process of assisted emigration. Chapter VII considers this issue from the perspective of the parish officers and Chapter VIII assesses the influence of the Poor Law Commission's regulations on the characteristics of assisted emigration.

Each chapter provides a different perspective on the question of assisted emigration. Together the chapters present a complete picture of the subject. Each chapter also contributes to a number of debates and questions central to an understanding of emigration history and British social history. The focus is at once narrow: to explore the implementation of an obscure clause of the New Poor Law in three counties. Yet the range of connecting questions which spring from such an enquiry suggests the importance of the New Poor Law as a subject for investigation, serving as a 'point of contact' between rich and poor, and illustrates the unique perspectives that emigration history offers British social historians.

CHAPTER II: THE ORIGINS OF SECTION SIXTY-TWO OF THE POOR LAW AMENDMENT ACT

Section sixty-two of the Poor Law Amendment Act gave English and Welsh parishes the power to raise or borrow money against the security of the poor rates in order to pay for the emigration of their poor to the British colonies. The emigrations that stemmed from this empowerment form the subject of this thesis, providing a previously unused data-set of English emigration. However, before turning to the data of emigration, it is worthwhile to sketch the background to this measure; in other words to explain how a permissive clause for assisted emigration came to feature in the Poor Law Amendment Act (1834). By tracing the early nineteenth-century debate on assisted emigration, a small scale measure of assisted emigration undertaken by the English parishes can be connected to broader themes concerning emigration policy. The influence of Malthusian ideas and classical political economy on policy making will also be considered. The relationship between local initiatives and national policy formation can also be assessed. By interpreting the theory of assisted emigration we are also laying the foundations for any assessment we make of the subsequent measures. The issues that were raised in debates on assisted emigration determined the operation of the policy and shape the interpretation of its significance.

Pride of place in any account of the intellectual origins of nineteenth-century assisted emigration must go to Thomas Malthus. For Lillian Knowles, Malthus's 'theory of overpopulation thoroughly scared the ruling class' and led to a change in elite attitudes towards emigration.¹ Before we develop the link between Malthus and emigration, we need to emphasise the profound shift in mentalités that Malthus's Essay on the Principle of

¹ L.C.A. Knowles, The Economic Development of the British Overseas Empire (1924), pp. 90-2.

Population (1798) represented. Adam Smith had stated that, 'the most decisive mark of the prosperity of any country is the increase of the number of its inhabitants'.² This proposition echoes the mercantilist maxim of 'population is strength'. Malthus challenged this view, and despite numerous revisions, notably the second edition (1803) which saw the introduction of the concept of 'moral restraint' to soften the 'melancholy hue' of the first version, it was the first version of The Essay that in Himmelfarb's phrase 'cast a permanent shadow upon the work'.³ The notion that population was a burden instead of a resource had serious implications for political economy. Malthus exercised a profound influence over early nineteenth-century political discourse which is difficult to overestimate. The skill of Malthus was to apply a study versed in the language and style of the political economists to the perceived state of the nation. He offered a pseudo-scientific law of remarkable neatness. He wedded his law to the present, and with particular piquancy to the future. He isolated the allowance system of poor relief as a source of increased population and thus of ever increasing poor rate expenditure. If the pattern of relief continued to increase, the circle would not be squared and cataclysmic natural checks of disease or war would be the only solution. For an elite, fearful of a jacquerie, Malthus's theories were alarming and marked a break from the utopian idealist tradition of Godwin that he sought to discount. The influence of his interpretative schema was considerable. Whether people agreed or disagreed with Malthus, he set the context within which people constructed their arguments; either for or against. Himmelfarb notes that, 'he formulated the terms of discourse on the subject of poverty for half a century...It was Malthus who defined that problem, gave it a certainty it had not had before, made it dramatically, urgently instantly problematic... It gripped the imagination of

² Cited in Gertrude Himmelfarb, The Idea of Poverty: England in the Early Industrial Age (1984), p. 109.

³ ibid., p.114. See also Donald Winch, Malthus (Oxford; 1987) for a useful summary of the changes in the editions.

contemporaries, of all ranks, classes, callings, and persuasions as few other books had ever done'.⁴

Population was defined as a problem. Yet problems generally are not met by universal solutions, even if the basis of the premise is universally accepted (as was not the case with The Essay). To shift from a diagnosis of rules of population to the idea of actively promoting the emigration of people requires a number of leaps. Malthus diagnosed problems; he did not provide solutions. 'Moral restraint' was only placed as a get-out, perhaps out of a need to humanise the message of the first edition, and only clarified in subsequent editions. The tradition of natural laws within which Malthus operated was primarily fatalistic. Programmatic reforms, other than the abolition of poor relief, were not conducive to a Malthusian world-vision. Nature provided God-given immutable laws. Tinkering was essentially futile.⁵

Unlike charity or poor relief, emigration could lay claim to a certain naturalness. Proponents of emigration or colonisation, as a cure for domestic ills, could draw on parallels in nature. Emigrationists pointed out that birds and bees migrate and move. Furthermore they could point to the ancient Greeks and Romans' recourse to colonisation, thus depicting their schemes within a noble lineage.⁶ Such a lineage had alternative interpretations of decadence and corruption. For Malthus, emigration, as a social policy, was but a weak palliative of temporary value, to be quickly overtaken by another natural law: 'nature abhors

⁴ Himmelfarb, Idea of Poverty, pp. 126-7. For an entertaining example of how profound Malthus's influence could be see Boyd Hilton, The Age of Atonement: The Influence of Evangelicalism on Social and Economic Thought 1785-1865, (Oxford, 1988), pp. 73-4.

⁵ Dirk Hoerder emphasises the secular nature of emigration as an individual response in 'From Dreams to Possibilities: The Secularization of Hope and the Quest for Independence', in Distant Magnets: Expectations and Realities in the Immigrant Experience, 1840-1930, ed. by Dirk Hoerder and Horst Rössler (1993), pp. 1-32.

⁶ See Peter Burroughs, Britain and Australia 1831-1855: A Study in Imperial Relations and Crown Lands Administration (Oxford, 1967), p. 18.

a vacuum'. The room created by emigrants would soon be filled. Malthus's fatalism did not prevent R.J. Wilmot Horton from seeking his blessing for his schemes of pauper emigration. Those who supported assisted emigration directly responded to Malthus's challenge.⁷

Emigration was but one of a number of remedies for the 'pressures of population'. As a solution to social problems it was problematic. Mercantilist perspectives still had some influence. The post-Napoleonic investigations into assisted emigration were preceded by a period of sustained scepticism about the benefits of any decrease in population. Seventeenth-century economic theorists, grappling with the problems of an underdeveloped economy, opposed emigration to the plantations. Carew Reynell believed that double England's population could be sustained by inclosure and that further population growth would improve trade. For Joyce Appleby, 'Restoration writing on the poor offers compelling evidence of the existence of a vision of economic growth and development'.⁸ This vision did not include emigration. Eighteenth-century Scottish emigration was viewed with sufficient alarm by the elite to construct a register of emigrants as a prelude to a law limiting emigration.⁹ Similar anxieties about the negative effects of emigration in the early nineteenth century explain the passing of the First Passenger Act (1803), which under the guise of humanitarianism, sought to quell the flow of emigrants.¹⁰ Only in 1824 were statutes repealed that required artisans

⁷ Malthus's correspondence with Horton is helpfully reprinted in R.N. Ghosh, 'Malthus on Emigration And Colonization: Letters to Wilmot Horton', *Economica*, 30 (1963), 45-61. See also Donald Winch, *Classical Political Economy and the Colonies* (1965), pp. 55-60.

⁸ Joyce Oldham Appleby, *Economic Thought and Ideology in Seventeenth-Century England* (Princeton, 1978), pp. 135-6.

⁹ See Bailyn, *Voyagers to the West*, pp. 29-66.

¹⁰ Johnston, *British Emigration Policy*, p. 2; Wilbur S. Shepperson, *British Emigration to North America: Projects and Opinions in the Early Victorian Period* (Oxford, 1957), p. 192; Dunkley, 'Emigration and the State', p. 356. MacDonagh, *Pattern of Government Growth*, pp. 55-63 argued that the act was primarily humanitarian in intent.

to register before leaving the country.¹¹

Proponents of emigration faced residual doubts about the value of an extraction of people. A further problem with which emigrationists had to contend was a profound doubt about the value of empire. The loss of the American colonies presented a model of imperial development that made imperial expansion, and the expenditure required, appear futile. If colonies would eventually break away, there seemed little point in expending time and energy on them. The value of empire was dubious in terms of economic benefits, but also from a civic humanist perspective that equated empire with decadence and degeneration; though this stance was on the wane by the 1780s.¹² The early nineteenth-century British empire was haunted by the disaster of the American War of Independence and its economic principles were subject to strong attacks by economic theorists.¹³ The failure of losing one empire determined, to some extent, the development of the second. One source of staples had been removed. Possibilities existed elsewhere. The United States should not be rewarded for its rebellion by receiving British people. British people could go elsewhere and bolster the colonies that Britain still possessed. As Smith had predicted, it was politically unfeasible to withdraw from empire.¹⁴ Thus those colonies that remained should be protected. One means of protection lay in the retention of the mercantilist proposition of 'population is strength'. Peopling the empire with loyal subjects was one way of bolstering the remaining colonies against incursion. The settlement of Loyalists in Canada further enhanced a sense of imperial

¹¹ David Jeremy, 'Damning the Flood: British Government Efforts to Check the Outflow of Technicians and Machinery, 1780-1843', *Business History Review*, 51 (1977), 1-34.

¹² C.A. Bayly, *Imperial Meridian: The British Empire and the World 1780-1830* (1989), p. 138.

¹³ Winch, *Classical Political Economy*, pp. 25-38.

¹⁴ *ibid.*, pp. 14-15.

obligations. The aggressive stance of the United States in 1812 further highlighted the value of exporting people to preserve empire. Imperial defence remained a strong rationale for governmental involvement in assisted emigration to both the Cape and Canada.¹⁵

Two propositions formed the basis for considering assisted emigration as a measure of social policy. They hinged on two contrasting readings of the principle of population. In an old world context, population was a source of weakness and potential calamity. In an imperial context, population performed a dynamic function, bolstering underpopulated imperial outposts against incursion. The intersection of these two propositions provided the basis for a neat, simple theory of assisted emigration that would be espoused throughout the post-Napoleonic period.

Debates on public policy are not carried out in a vacuum. Three contrasting features of the early nineteenth-century polity complicated the picture: economy, transportation and colonial fears.

Economy was a key concern of a small, but influential, group of Radicals in Parliament led by Joseph Hume. Any measure of financial extravagance was scrutinised and examined and ridiculed. The Government used the same language of retrenchment and accountability and thus found itself especially vulnerable to charges of extravagance. Radicals shared an ambivalent attitude towards empire and thus sharpened their focus on imperial expenditure. The Ordnance Department was hounded into submission and impotence by the glare of Radical scrutiny.¹⁶ Scrutiny of public finance acted as a countervailing force to the process of natural bureaucratic development that MacDonagh has delineated. The impact of searching enquiries into Government expenditure was to limit the size of agencies that might take a role

¹⁵ See Cowan, *British Emigration*, pp. 40-7.

¹⁶ Peter Burroughs, 'The Ordnance Department and Colonial Defence, 1821-1855', *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 10 (1982), 125-149.

in supporting emigration. The number of personnel employed by the Colonial Office rose and fell dependent on available sources of income.¹⁷ Administration was held together by remarkable individuals such as James Stephen and Frederick Elliot.¹⁸ A.C. Buchanan, the Chief Emigration Agent in Quebec, complained constantly of his lack of pay. He wrote to Horton that, 'there is not so ill paid a situation under the Crown for the benefit rendered'.¹⁹ Other members of staff were perhaps not so dedicated, fitting in their work between morning and afternoon rides.²⁰ Economy limited the administrative capacity of the State to perform a central role in peopling an empire. The Colonial Land and Emigration Commission had a constant struggle for premises and finance. A lack of administrative machinery limited the capacity of the State to play a key role in emigration, other than in a supervisory role. The lack of administrative machinery typified an attitude that struck at the heart of government, that of limited powers and responsibilities. An attitude of retrenchment and limited financial commitments explains the nature of the 'experiments' in assisted emigration and also explains why they remained 'experiments'.

¹⁷ For example in 1816 the Secretary of State for War and the Colonies lost seven clerks, one précis writer, one interpreter and an under-secretary of state (Johnston, British Emigration Policy, p. 23). In the 1820s under Horton's influence the Colonial Office grew. Between 1823 and 1825 the number of clerks doubled and the expenditure of the department doubled. The expansion of the office can be largely attributed to the healthy state of the Government's finances. Financial stability presented Horton with the opportunity to develop the office. Further expansion attempts were not so trouble free. (D.M. Young, The Colonial Office in the Nineteenth Century (1961), pp. 81-3.)

¹⁸ Stephen's career is treated in Paul Knaplund, James Stephen and the British Colonial System, 1813-1847 (Madison, Wisconsin, 1953). Young, Colonial Office, pp. 59-61, emphasises the precarious unofficial nature of Stephen's early connection with the Colonial Office. On Elliot see Fred Hitchens, The Colonial Land and Emigration Commission (Philadelphia, 1931), pp. 21-8, 38-46, 59-73, 282-3.

¹⁹ Derbyshire County Record Office, Catton MSS, WH 2756, A.C. Buchanan to Horton, 3 August 1830.

²⁰ R.C. Snelling and T.J. Barron, 'The Colonial Office and its Permanent Officials 1801-1914', in Studies in the Growth of Nineteenth-century Government, ed. by Gillian Sutherland (1972), pp. 139-166 (p. 143).

A second limiting factor in the adoption of emigration, as a measure of social policy, was a second form of emigration: forced emigration. Throughout the eighteenth century, convicted felons had been exported to the North American colonies as an alternative punishment to hanging.²¹ With the removal of the American colonies as a vent for convicts a new arena was developed, Australia. The early nineteenth century saw an increase in the transportation of felons, as convict labour became a key component of Australian economic development.²² The assisted emigration of poor people, particularly when classified as 'surplus labourers', could not be untainted from the notion of transportation. This exposed the policy to the charge of callousness by Radical Tories like Cobbett and Sadler who invoked the comparison between assisted emigration and transportation.²³ From a High Tory perspective the connection between transportation and assisted emigration could also send out uncertain messages. The Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, Lord Wellesley responded with a certain level of irritation on finding Peter Robinson recruiting emigrants in County Cork, without having been informed of the plan. He pondered the efficacy of informing the poor of the benefits of emigration, when at the same time transportation was being used as a punishment.²⁴ The mixed message of transportation for the labouring poor was shown by a report from Gloucestershire that letters from convicts had encouraged labourers from Stroud to emigrate to Australia.²⁵ Transportation undoubtedly made assisted emigration a delicate subject. An associated form of forced emigration, slavery, tainted assessments of schemes for

²¹ See A. Roger Ekirch, Bound for America: The Transportation of British Convicts to the Colonies, 1718-1775 (Oxford, 1987).

²² See Nicholas (ed.), Convict Workers.

²³ For example see Sadler's speech on Howick's Bill and his pamphlet discussed below. William Cobbett, Rural Rides (1830, Penguin edn., 1985), pp. 319-20.

²⁴ Johnston, British Emigration Policy, p. 71.

²⁵ 'S.C. on Transportation', B.P.P., 1837-38 XXII (669), p. 6.

assisted emigration. The mention by a child emigrant, assisted to leave for the Cape by the philanthropic Children's Friend Emigration Society, of 'slavery' caused a scandal, reinforcing the sensitivity of any measure of assisted emigration.²⁶ The sensitivity of emigration as a social policy lingers in modern accounts of children's emigration that retain a condemnatory tone.²⁷

The connection between transportation and assisted emigration shaped British perceptions of the policy. It also moulded the receiving countries' appreciation of what might be involved. By connecting emigration policy with domestic problems, emigrationists had hinted at the value of the colonies as a cure for domestic ills. This obviously alarmed the colonists, who were fearful of the character of the emigrants who might be sent out under such a scenario. Perhaps the clearest expression of colonial unease about the character of pauper emigrants is found in the statements of the members of the Van Diemen's Land Immigration Committee. They were replying to a proposal from Lord Goderich that the colony might pay the costs of unemployed agricultural labourers to emigrate to Van Diemen's Land.

Jocelyn Franklin, the chairman, remarked:

The English parishes will have the option of deporting those whom they may think proper, and they will naturally endeavour to disencumber themselves of the most worthless class, who are at present the greatest burden to them; such a description of persons would find no employment in Van Diemens Land, and their presence would engender every species of disorder, misery and crime.

Josiah Spode was even more trenchant, thinking the potential emigrants, 'in every sense of the word "paupers", and such other useless beings as are totally unfit to provide their own

²⁶ Hadley, 'Natives in a Strange Land', pp. 412-416.

²⁷ Parr, Labouring Children; Bean and Melville, Lost Children; Wagner, Children of the Empire.

living.²⁸ Goderich firmly defended the character of poor potential emigrants. 'The name of pauper by no means implies...a man unable or unwilling to work, one whose infirmity or idleness would disqualify him from becoming a useful settler'. He continued, 'it has been found that the idle and worthless paupers have frequently been rendered so by the hopelessness of their situation, and when enabled to find constant employment at fair wages a great change has almost invariably been taken place in their conduct'.²⁹ Whether he was believed or not is a different matter. Throughout the period the issue of the British government's involvement in the recruitment of Australian immigrants remained one of considerable sensitivity.³⁰

We have sketched the structural features of the debate on emigration. Changes in attitudes towards domestic population and empire were preconditions for a shift in policy. However, the 'new' attitudes were not universally accepted and even if they had been this would not have guaranteed support for the adoption of a policy of assisted emigration. Furthermore, residual anxieties existed that limited the likelihood of the wide-scale adoption of the policy. We shall now locate the question of assisted emigration more firmly in the context of the post-Napoleonic era, to gain a more period-specific sense of the policy implications.

The period before the emigration clause became attached to the Poor Law Amendment Act saw a number of experiments in state sponsored emigration that were carried out with different motives and with varying degrees of success. The first post-war exercise was the settlement of Scots and north of England people on the Rideau River in Canada. The impulse

²⁸ 'Correspondence on Emigration', *B.P.P.*, 1833 XXVI (141), pp.40-1.

²⁹ *B.P.P.*, 1833 XXVI (141), pp. 46-7, Goderich to Darling, 27 January 1833.

³⁰ See Madgwick, *Immigration to Eastern Australia*, pp. 90, 102, 113, 118, 134-149, 202-4. On the financial angst caused by the application of land revenue on emigrant recruitment see Burroughs, *Britain and Australia*, pp. 253-75.

for this exercise in emigration was primarily imperial. The method of finance bypassed the Treasury. It was paid out of the military chest as a consequence of the emigrants being carried out on ships commissioned by the Transport Office to collect 20,000 troops from Canada. Surplus military stores were given to the settlers for the first year. An awareness of the wider implications of this emigration was shown by the Colonial Office's determination for the emigrants to be successful. Two years of crop failures led to the settlers being provided with supplies by the Federal Government for a further two years. Once emigrants had been sent out, the government could not afford to allow them to fail. This displayed an awareness of the value of assisted emigration with respect to its impact on subsequent emigrations; as a way of establishing a diversionary stream.³¹

The concern with diverting emigrants from the United States was shown by the informal process of assisted emigration that saw James Buchanan, the British Consul in New York, paying for British emigrants landing at New York to settle in Canada. The money was provided by the British Treasury. In 1820 Buchanan sent 7,000 British people to settle in Upper Canada.³²

Following the Rideau settlement project a small grant of £4,000 was made to pay for the emigration of nearly seven hundred British people to Canada. This was an insignificant measure. H.J.M. Johnston places it in context by noting that the sum allowed was less than Colonial Secretary Bathurst's salary.³³

The next exercise in state sponsored emigration had a more overtly political origin. At the end of a troubled session, in a year (1819) of popular protest and conspiracies, £50,000 was granted by Parliament, to pay for emigration, primarily of Paisley and Glasgow weavers.

³¹ Johnston, *British Emigration Policy*, p.19.

³² *ibid*, pp. 24-5.

³³ *ibid*, p. 29.

Two destinations were favoured by this grant: Canada and the Cape.³⁴ The emigration to the Cape had an imperial context. The governor, Lord Somerset, was concerned with incursions of Xhosa tribesmen. The exercise was not a success. The land selected was infertile and not suitable for extensive settlement. Furthermore Xhosa incursions were not halted by the settlement of emigrants who were subsequently subjected to attacks and danger.³⁵ The Algoa Bay settlement remained a negative model of assisted emigration. Sadler would refer to it as an example of, 'the misery' which was inseparable from colonisation.³⁶

The pattern of early exercises in state-sponsored emigration was uncertain and uneven. The commitment of the Government was spasmodic and the numbers involved small. Both Bathurst and his deputy Goulburn were cautious and reluctant colonisers. Goulburn's departure to the Irish Secretaryship opened the job of under-secretary at the Colonial Office to an enthusiast for political economy, Robert Wilmot Horton, Member of Parliament for Newcastle-under-Lyme. Horton's early interest in the problems of Ireland made him acutely aware of the question of surplus population. His position within the Colonial Office, where he led a programme of administrative reform and reorganisation, further enhanced his belief in the value of emigration to the colonies. Helen Cowan correctly identified him as first and foremost 'an imperialist'.³⁷ A sturdy yeoman class settled in Canada would be of benefit to the colonies. Through Peter Robinson, he conducted his 'experiments' in pauper emigration from Southern Ireland in 1823 and 1825. Though Robinson was entrusted with a parliamentary grant for both emigrations, the resultant emigrations still owed much to the

³⁴ *ibid*, p. 32.

³⁵ *ibid*, pp. 32-48. Johnston emphasises the domestic reasons for settlement. However the choice of the Cape clearly had military considerations as well.

³⁶ *Hansard*³, 1831, II, col. 891.

³⁷ Cowan, *British Emigration*, p. 86. Cf Mills, *Colonization of Australia*, p. 31.

cooperation of local officials and landlords. Robinson had to weave a difficult path through conflicting imperatives of Irish landlords wanting to get rid of 'troublemakers', popular suspicion of the motives behind the emigrations and Horton's wish to use the emigrations as 'experiments' on which further government financed emigration could be based.³⁸ Again the success of the emigrations was open to debate. Tensions between Irish and Scots erupted in 1823.³⁹ The 1825 emigration, to a more remote neighbourhood, where problems of quarrelsome neighbours would not affect the 'experiment', was perhaps more successful, though the death of one hundred and ninety-two emigrants cast a shadow over the emigration which even Horton's mathematical gymnastics to present a favourable mortality rate could not dispel.⁴⁰ The status of these emigrations as 'experiments' suggested that Horton intended the plans to be examples that would lead to further measures of more extensive assistance. Indeed the evidence garnered from Robinson's experiments appeared in Horton's numerous pamphlets and pre-determined the focus of the Emigration Committees of 1826 and 1827 that he chaired. Determination that the 'experiments' should succeed caused emigrants to be well provided for, thus exposing Horton to the charge of extravagance.

From the 'experiments' Horton moved towards a national scheme of emigration. He was buoyed by indications of support from numerous political economists and politicians. The seriousness with which his proposals were viewed is shown by the calibre of people who sat on the two Emigration Committees. Johnston counted five future Prime Ministers on the first committee.⁴¹ Horton's proposed plan was simple. Emigrants would be settled on Canadian

³⁸ Wendy Cameron, 'Selecting Peter Robinson's Irish Emigrants', Histoire Sociale-Social History, 17 (1976), 29-46.

³⁹ Johnston, British Emigration Policy, p. 81.

⁴⁰ ibid., p. 86.

⁴¹ ibid., p. 92.

lands. Each family of five, consisting of man, wife and three children, would have their expenses paid for by the parish and be granted Canadian land by the Government. The Government would advance money to the parishes against the security of the poor rates. The land would sustain settlement and the profits from the agriculture would be used to pay back the costs of the emigration. Thus the capital outlay would be returned, and the plan would be self-financing. The plan displays the imperial context of Horton's thoughts and does suggest that Mills and MacDonald were mistaken to question the thoroughness of Horton's vision of assisted emigration.⁴² The plan, however, was problematic. The scale of assisted emigration was far in excess of the two thousand or so people who had been emigrated in 1823 and 1825. Furthermore Horton's theory that the emigrants would pay back the costs of emigration was viewed with suspicion. Concern with economy, however, dictated that Horton should make emigration appear cost-effective and self-financing. Such claims inspired distrust. Peel, for one, doubted whether the money lent to the emigrants would be returned. He told Horton that this part of the scheme seemed 'quite visionary'.⁴³ The word 'visionary' would haunt Horton's plans throughout his political career. 'Visionary' was nineteenth-century pejorative parlance for unsound. This charge was particularly hard on Horton, who saw himself as both a practical man and an authority on political economy.

Horton was convinced that the emigrants' wish for independence would guarantee a return on the loans. Horton believed that 'the natural impulse of man to obtain the fee simple' was sufficient guarantee. He parodied Peel's doubts; which were, he said,

That an emigrant will go and settle himself, improve his property, clear his land, habituate himself to ties of connection with his neighbours and at the end of seven years, will suffer himself to be sold up at an inordinate disadvantage and rent as a beggar on the face of the earth, rather than pay 5% interest on

⁴² Mills, *Colonization of Australia*, p. 31 and MacDonald, *Canada*, pp. 21-22.

⁴³ D.C.R.O. Catton MSS, WH 2858, Peel to Horton, 12 July 1826.

the money which has been advanced to him.⁴⁴

This statement displays an appreciation, on Horton's part, of the reason for emigration for the poor: the wish for land ownership. It suggests a conceptualisation of the poor emigrants as something more than a burden. It also suggests a high degree of faith in the capability of the poor to realise their goals in the New World.

Despite an ongoing correspondence with Peel and other cabinet ministers (notably Huskisson and Robinson), Horton failed to gain support. Horton's constant letter writing tried the patience of Peel, who complained of Horton contacting him three times in November about various remarks reported to have been made about Horton.⁴⁵ In a memorandum that Horton drew up, presumably to aid his future futile pamphleteering activities, he complained of both Huskisson and Peel, 'that though they have read on the subject; that they have not understood it either in principle or detail.'⁴⁶

Horton's status as a minister and publicist is perhaps best characterised by a note that he received from a friend only identified as 'Mr MacDonald'. The damning tone is all the more poignant as Horton copied it out himself in a notebook which contains various opinions that he received on his plans from his correspondents.

While all the rest of mankind are occupied with the infinite variety of interesting matters of contemplation which the actual state of the world exhibits you are plunged up to your chin in that eternal slough of emigration out of which the hands of all your friends have long been stretched out so to rescue you. Positively it is beyond enduring! As long as it was only a hobby it was bad enough because it subjected you to ridicule and it is become now the one engrossing and absorbing topic, the standard by which all your opinions of men and things are to be tried. I will intend to say that whatever the difference of opinion there may be among your friends on the theory itself, there is none whatever as to the injury you are doing your reputation as a

⁴⁴ D.C.R.O. Catton MSS, WH 2858, Horton to Peel (copy letter), 9 March 1827.

⁴⁵ D.C.R.O. Catton MSS, WH 2858, Peel to Horton, 16 November 1830.

⁴⁶ D.C.R.O. Catton MSS, WH 2858, notebook entitled 'Opinions/ Objections of Huskisson and Peel'.

publick man by the manner in which you treat it. never did a man make a more gratuitous I must add more useless sacrifice of himself. No public man can ever desire to be connected with an enthusiast on some contrite point on which even if you should be right to the fullest extent it is enough that the publick are not ripe to act. You are separating yourself for the sake of this fancy from all statesmen, you are excluding yourself from Parliament, you are boring your friends to death and even thinking the worse of them for not concurring with you.⁴⁷

For the political class Horton became an embarrassment. His visionary schemes were too extreme. His fate was that of the single-issue campaigner in British politics, marginalisation. Yet his ideas were taken seriously by a number of political economists. Malthus with untypical hubris even remarked that 'if you [Horton] could indeed accomplish it [develop an effective policy of assisted emigration] in an entirely unobjectionable manner, you would, in my opinion, be the greatest benefactor to the human race that has ever yet appeared'.⁴⁸ However, as with Horton's other correspondents, a residual doubt that somehow Horton could not answer every objection tainted the assessment of his schemes. The difficulty of the design and Malthus's belief that it could not realistically be accomplished explains why Malthus applied such high praise to the effective answering of his reservations which Horton, as far as Malthus was concerned, never provided.

In view of the future development of emigration as a permissive local measure, it is important to investigate Horton's conception of assisted emigration. Horton believed the State (i.e. central government) should play a key role in emigration. He designed a scheme for central government to provide loans to parishes who would repay the money to the government by levying poor rates. We may ponder whether this was what Horton ideally wanted to happen; but even visionaries have to have some concept of limits. Horton accepted that in no circumstances could he expect the State to bankroll the project. The State's

⁴⁷ D.C.R.O. Catton MSS, Notebook WH 3068, MacDonald to Horton, 5 September 1830.

⁴⁸ D.C.R.O. Catton MSS, WH 2842, Malthus to Horton, 9 June 1830.

responsibilities would not end with the provision of loans to parishes. The State was to play a key role in supervising selection procedures and in arranging the departure of emigrants. By 1830 Horton had revised his plan so that the government would have a less defined role in proceedings. He proposed that eighty pound tickets should be provided for families of five which parishes would purchase on behalf of their poor.⁴⁹ The parishes would have some say in the selection of emigrants and would pay for the transportation of the emigrants from the parish to the point of departure. Once consigned, the exclusive direction of the emigrants was the responsibility of the government.⁵⁰ Horton was adamant that his revised scheme could only work 'as a national measure upon an extended scale. It can only proceed with advantage by being exclusively placed under the control and direction of the government.'⁵¹ Horton conceived the State playing an active role in the peopling of empire and in making a dramatic change in the lives of the poor. His plan would lead to a 'transition from poverty and degradation to cheerfulness and industry' for the emigrants. His sentiments were noble. 'The object is not profit to speculators, but personal independence to the emigrants'.⁵² Only the State could provide that reward. Nassau Senior, upon whom Horton inflicted forty-seven questions about his scheme, applauded the continued role of the State in supervising and arranging assisted emigration. Senior's support was based on a negative vision of the behaviour of the parishes. State supervision would prevent 'the dangers of profusion and jobbing on the part of the parish.'⁵³ The Quarterly Review applauded Horton's plans, posing

⁴⁹ R.J. Wilmot Horton, The Causes and Remedies of Pauperism in the United Kingdom Considered. Fourth Series (1830), p.87.

⁵⁰ ibid, pp. 88-9.

⁵¹ ibid, p. 91.

⁵² D.C.R.O. Catton MSS, WH 2801, Horton to Grenville, 26 February 1826.

⁵³ Horton, Fourth Series, p. 92.

the question: 'For what are governments appointed but to do that for the mass of the people which they are unable to do for themselves?'⁵⁴ Assisted emigration was such a measure that the government should provide.

The notion of the State as the central agency for allaying grievances persisted long after Horton's departure from the scene. J.P. Kay pointed to the powerful symbolic value of a government displaying a 'paternalistic care' over its people, as he lobbied for state aid for Norfolk and Suffolk emigrants.⁵⁵ To some extent the post-Napoleonic administrations appreciated the value of symbolic measures of emigration. We have already seen the connection between Vansittart's grant of £50,000 for emigration and escalating fears of popular unrest. Canning, who remained suspicious of Horton's plans and did not respect him, did suggest that Horton's Committees had played a useful role in defusing tensions.⁵⁶ Yet there was a difference between symbolic grants and a sustained policy of assisted emigration. In contrast to Horton's schemes, there was a more limited conception of the State that saw little place for its involvement in emigration. Grenville saw no place for government interference. 'Instead of leaving men at liberty to employ their own money in speculations...you would take it from them by the overruling power of government and direct it under official management, never the most economical, to schemes of distant colonisation.'⁵⁷ The notion of an inefficient State interfering where it had no place was repeated by Sir G. Murray: 'When Government interfered too much in matters of this kind

⁵⁴ *Quarterly Review*, 45 (1831), p. 105.

⁵⁵ PRO CO 384/41, Kay to PLC 13 February 1836, and see below (Chapter VI, pp. 185-7).

⁵⁶ *Hansard*², XVII (1827), col. 929.

⁵⁷ D.C.R.O. Catton MSS, WH 2801, Grenville to Horton, 31 January 1826.

[emigration], it was generally guilty of much mismanagement'.⁵⁸

Horton's schemes for state sponsored emigration were not just dismissed on the grounds of the State's inefficiency. More profound questions about whether emigration was a state responsibility were posed by Peel and Robinson. Robinson's critique points to the British dimension of assisted emigration. A constant contemporary concern was that the interconnection of the Irish and mainland labour market, witnessed by the extensive use of Irish labour at harvest time, would lead to England being dragged down to the same level as Ireland. An article in *The Quarterly Review* on the Emigration Committee's Report raised the key question of 'how to prevent the immigration of an ejected and destitute [Irish] population into a country [England] already burdened with great and increasing numbers of its own poor'. The 'best remedial measures' had to be adopted for stopping an influx of Irish that the reviewer called a 'plague'.⁵⁹ State efforts to assist Irish landlords, who appeared reluctant to reform their practices themselves appeared potentially futile and also undeserved. Robinson believed that the 'partiality of the Irish landlords for it [assisted emigration] is in my mind the most conclusive argument against it. It smells of Spring Rice, the knights of Kerry, of all the jobbers the worst because they affect purity'.⁶⁰ Peel's criticisms stemmed from a notion of how people should relate to the State. His early suspicions of the unsettling nature of emigration schemes, despite occasionally humouring Horton, never went away. He sent Horton a petition from Perth requesting assistance for emigration. His covering note tartly stated, 'I really think some effective step ought to be taken forthwith to prevent every unemployed man in the country looking for relief from emigration'.⁶¹

⁵⁸ *Hansard*³, II (1831), col. 882.

⁵⁹ *Q.R.*, 37 (1828), p. 567.

⁶⁰ D.C.R.O. Catton MSS, WH 2796, Robinson to Horton, 25 March 1826.

⁶¹ D.C.R.O. Catton MSS, WH 2858, Peel to Horton, 12 March 1827.

For Horton, the Government's lack of willingness to spend money on emigration was the main reason for the fate of his plans. He complained to Peel of 'the cry of economy which sacrifices everything most deeply connected with the interests and happiness of the lower classes'.⁶² Despite Horton's clear-stated concern with the 'lower classes' (and he addressed the London Mechanics Institute on matters of political economy, a performance Greville described in his diary as 'full of zeal and animation, but so totally without method and arrangement that he is hardly intelligible'), he was unable to convince sceptics of the concern that motivated him.⁶³ To political economists, 'the dismal science' became almost a secular religion. Others were immune to its charms and found it intensely objectionable. On the question of assisted emigration we can see something of what Harold Perkin has termed 'the struggle between ideals'.⁶⁴ Horton adopted the language of the 'entrepreneurial ideal' in his application of the wage fund theory of the classical political economists. His correspondence with theorists such as McCulloch, the Mills (James and John Stuart), Malthus, Senior and Torrens showed the importance that he placed on receiving their blessing. He prided himself on his reading on political economy. He also presented his ideas in the context of humanitarian paternalism that loosely equates with Perkin's 'aristocratic ideal'. The mix of the two strands was not a fortuitous one. R.C. Mills criticised Horton for his reliance upon abstract economic terms which failed to consider emigrants as individuals.⁶⁵ By applying political economy to the question of assisted emigration, and by courting Malthus's favour, Horton deprived himself of Radical Tory support.

⁶² D.C.R.O. Catton MSS, WH 2858, Horton to Peel, n.d. 1830.

⁶³ Lytton Strachey and Roger Fulford (ed.), *Greville Memoirs Vol. II* (1938), p. 95 (23 December 1830).

⁶⁴ Harold Perkin, *The Origins of Modern English Society* (1969), pp. 218-70.

⁶⁵ Mills, *Colonization of Australia*, p. 36.

Foremost amongst Horton's critics was Michael Thomas Sadler. Sadler's critique is worth some consideration. Its ferocity provides an explanation for the failure of national schemes of assisted emigration. It also provides a clear exposition of an interpretation of assisted emigration that still shapes the popular perception of the subject. In Ireland Its Evils and Their Remedies he savaged Horton's schemes. They displayed 'ignorant barbarism' and were 'revolting'.⁶⁶ Schemes of assisted emigration were 'selfish and cruel'.⁶⁷ His description of the plans used the language of convictism to taint Horton's proposals, for example 'deportations' and 'transporting'.⁶⁸ He wondered: 'In whose estimation is it that a man is worth less than nothing?'⁶⁹ He asked a further question, 'are human beings superfluous?'⁷⁰ For Sadler, the experiments in pauper emigration had led to a 'miserable condition of emigrant countrymen'.⁷¹ Furthermore, the wrong people were being asked to emigrate. For Sadler, the poor were 'a part of its [the nation's] foundations'.⁷²

Horton responded to these charges in pamphlet form, addressing each point made by Sadler, including complicated calculations to show the success of the 'experiments'.⁷³ This did not prevent Sadler from repeating his charges in response to Howick's Hortonian bill of 1831. Sadler opened his speech by stating that, 'no language he had at his command could

⁶⁶ Michael Thomas Sadler, Ireland, Its Evils and Their Remedies: Being a Refutation of the Errors of the Emigration Committees and Others, Touching that Country (2nd ed., 1829), p. 56.

⁶⁷ ibid., p. 88.

⁶⁸ ibid., p. 102.

⁶⁹ ibid., p. 88.

⁷⁰ ibid., p. 91.

⁷¹ ibid., p. 103.

⁷² ibid., p. 87.

⁷³ Horton, Causes and Remedies

sufficiently express his repugnance to it'. That said, he had a fairly good try. He claimed that the measure represented 'Ministers proclaiming...more forcibly than mere language could do, the condition of a vast mass of the community to be so deplorable, that nothing less than the strong and revolting remedy of expelling a large number of the most industrious classes of the community could mitigate the suffering of the rest.' Again the language is full of emotive phrases. 'Deplorable' and 'expelling' were not neutral measured words. Sadler rounded off his critique by attacking the premise of Horton's thinking, exposing the clash of values that the debate on emigration represented. 'If passed', he said the House 'would become the pander of political economy and teach the people that the love of their country was not worth cherishing'.⁷⁴

Like Cobbett, he pointed to the deep political implications of assisted emigration; that it marked an admission of failure on the part of the political class. We may suggest that subconsciously the elite knew that. This possibly contributes to an explanation of the poor quality of data on nineteenth-century emigration.

The debate in which Sadler expressed his sentiments took place in 1831. By this time, to the applause of the Wakefieldian Spectator, Horton was preparing to leave for the governorship of Ceylon. The debate showed that Horton still had some influence. Howick spoke of Horton's influence: 'The Government only claimed the merit of having adopted the ideas of the Right Honourable Gentleman (Mr. Wilmot Horton) who had so long and perseveringly urged on the country the consideration of the subject'. Howick's language reiterated Horton's optimism for the new life of the emigrant labourers, who would receive a 'friendly welcome' in the colonies. Yet the measure was more restrained as far as the State's activities were concerned, than in Horton's proposals. Howick maintained that the government would pay no expense. As with Horton's 1830 plan, parishes would not be given

⁷⁴ Hansard³, II (1831), cols. 885-892.

a free rein. The supervisory agency proposed, an Emigration Commission, appeared to have powers of supervision, rather than powers of direction, which Horton's model appeared to involve. Though illustrating the existence of a continued body of opinion in favour of some measure of emigration, the initiative was to be left in the hands of the parishes.⁷⁵

There is little difference between Howick's aborted Bill and the permissive clause on emigration in the Poor Law Amendment Act. However there is a large difference in profile between a bill aimed first and foremost at promoting parochial emigration and a measure tacked on to a wide-ranging reform bill. From being a single cure for social problems, emigration became but one of a number of measures dependent solely upon local initiative. This marks a profound shift in the conception of the problem and symbolises the marginalisation of Horton's plans. The emergence of assisted emigration as a local measure interestingly points to the distribution of power between central and local initiatives in the early nineteenth century. The balance of power between central and local agencies on the question of assisted emigration is resolved in a way that seems contrary to the dominant ethos of the Poor Law Amendment Act: centralisation and uniformity. By a permissive clause the English parish was to be left to its own devices to promote emigration to the colonies.

The decision that assisted emigration should primarily be a local measure exposes a number of features about the relationship between local and central government in the early nineteenth century. We can view clause sixty-two as a political tactic to defuse contentious issues. If the State lacked the political will and administrative capacity to support a policy on an extended scale, then the policy could be left to the discretion of local authorities. A similar pattern is displayed in the debate about another competing programme of rural renewal,

⁷⁵ *ibid.*, cols. 875-880.

allotments.⁷⁶ Compared with Horton's schemes for the removal of hundreds of thousands of people, the twenty-six thousand people assisted to leave over twenty-six years of the operation of clause sixty-two appears insignificant. Yet how clause sixty-two came about displays an interaction between centre and locality that presents a dynamic model for policy-making that shows the importance of local initiatives in determining the nature and extent of policies adopted.

Clause sixty-two was part of a major reform measure (the Poor Law Amendment Act) that sought to counteract the problems of spiralling relief payments by imposing rigid limits and administrative structures upon the relief administration of England and Wales. Poor law reform sought to end the chaos and confusion of local administration by replacing it with Benthamite concepts of less-eligibility and centralisation. These were centrally generated policies, profoundly influenced by political economists and national politicians. Blaug has argued that the empirical evidence upon which the measure was based did not concur with the rhetoric which it claimed to support. This argument presents the Poor Law Amendment Act as a Benthamite coup, driven by biased prejudiced reformers who knew what they wanted to say before they compiled the evidence.⁷⁷ However, the poor law reformers could find examples of good practice to support their solutions. They might have had a preconceived view as to how to implement change. Local reformers provided them with powerful examples to support their plan of reform.⁷⁸ The selectivity in the presentation of evidence, about which

⁷⁶ D.C. Barnett, 'Allotments and the Problem of Rural Poverty, 1780-1840', in Land Labour and Population in the Industrial Revolution, ed. by G.E. Mingay and E.L. Jones (1967), pp. 162-83.

⁷⁷ Mark Blaug, 'The Myth of the Old Poor Law and the Making of the New', Journal of Economic History, 23 (1963), 151-84.

⁷⁸ The clearest expression of this position is found in J.D. Marshall, 'The Nottinghamshire Reformers and their contribution to the New Poor Law', Economic History Review, 13 (1961), 382-96.

Blaug was so critical, does have an additional point, that Blaug did not consider. Evidence existed that provided support for poor law reform, as the reformers had envisaged. Furthermore to gain support for their plan it was essential that the reforms should be shown to have been effective at the local level. In fact we might suggest that the Poor Law Amendment Act was not original in the measures that it proposed. Its novelty was in its attempt to introduce a nationally uniform scheme; not in the actual principles of poor relief practice.

The introduction of a clause for assisted emigration was not the product of a casual inquiry into various local relief practices. The decision to instruct Assistant Commissioners to ask about emigration and for an emigration question to be placed in Rural Queries was the product of ideological conviction. Nassau Senior was a regular correspondent of Horton's and credited him for the resultant clause.⁷⁹ Senior's replies to over forty questions from Horton formed the basis of one of Horton's pamphlets. The inquiry into emigration indicated the residual power of Horton's viewpoint. Further indications of the belief in the value of emigration amongst the political class is evidenced by Brougham's proposed use of assisted emigration as a preliminary measure to precede abolition of the old poor law.⁸⁰ By the time the Royal Commissioners sat down to organise the investigation into the old poor law a groundswell of opinion still saw the benefit of the policy. What they found at the local level further enhanced their conviction.

Local initiatives, given the limited scale of the 'experiments' of 1823 and 1825, were always a plank in the construction of Horton's argument. It was essential for emigrationists to prove that their measures were desired and effective. Given the reluctance of central

⁷⁹ Johnston, British Emigration Policy, p. 164.

⁸⁰ Peter Dunkley, The Crisis of the Old Poor Law in England: An Interpretative Essay (1982), pp.123-6.

government to finance assisted emigration on a large scale, it was essential to display that the conviction and capability for the implementation of the policy existed at the local level.

Each Emigration Committee had a witness from Kent prepared to espouse the value of emigrations that had been undertaken. Thomas Law Hodges reported that the parish of Smarden had assisted twenty-three people to leave in 1823.⁸¹ The parish of Headcorn had assisted eighty people to leave for America. The emigrations had been paid for by borrowing against the poor rates. The emigrations had been successful, the parish's representative, James Homewood, stated that the emigrants 'have all done well; none of them wish to come back'.⁸²

If we turn from enquiries that were limited by those who were available in London at the time to give evidence, we find a number of examples of assisted emigration carried out by parishes. Norman MacDonald estimated that for the years 1831-2, the figure for pauper emigration to Canada numbered approximately 20,000.⁸³ This estimate is drawn from a report by A.C. Buchanan and might be rather a high estimate for assisted emigration. 'Pauper emigrants' as defined by Buchanan might be emigrants that required assistance in Canada on arrival; not necessarily those that were assisted to leave by their parishes. For Kent we are told that assisted emigration had been carried out to a 'considerable extent'.⁸⁴ Henry Stuart's inquiries into Suffolk and Norfolk led him to believe, 'that there are few parishes from which one or more have not emigrated'.⁸⁵ J.J. Richardson remarked that Northamptonshire had seen

⁸¹ 'Select Committee on Emigration', B.P.P. 1826 IV (44), pp.133-41.

⁸² 'Select Committee on Emigration', B.P.P. 1826-7 V (237), pp. 144-6.

⁸³ MacDonald, Canada, p. 24.

⁸⁴ 'Report from His Majesty's Commissioners for Inquiring into the State of the Poor Laws in England and Wales: Appendix A. Part I Assistant Commissioners' Reports', B.P.P. 1834 XXVIII (44), p. 198a.

⁸⁵ ibid, p. 386a.

'many isolated instances'.⁸⁶

The nature of the emigrations varied. A number of northern parishes assisted individuals or one family to emigrate. These emigrations were not in the spirit of Horton's vision of emigration as a transforming social policy. They were carried out in the tradition of the charitable functions of the English parish. The earliest example of parochial emigration traced in Bedfordshire was of one pound given to a woman and her three children to go to 'New England' in 1730.⁸⁷ This suggests the long lineage of one off payments for emigration made by parishes to individuals. The reported emigrations from the north were measures taken in response to individual requests and not intended to be part of a sustained policy. The reported assisted emigrants from the north of England included 'indifferent characters' from Sedbergh⁸⁸; one 'lazy man' and a wife and her six children from Pontefract⁸⁹; a five year old illegitimate child who left Dent in May 1831 only to return by November of the same year.⁹⁰ Only one northern parish, that of the declining mining township of Aldston Moor, reported a large measure of emigration. It had seen one hundred and twenty four people leave with the assistance of three hundred pounds raised by subscription.⁹¹ John Tweedy's report on the state of the West Riding stated that assisted emigration 'is by no means popular'. The emigrators feared that 'the best and most steady workmen are probably those who would be the most willing to accept its provisions; and the profligate might return, as they sometimes

⁸⁶ *ibid.*, p.406a.

⁸⁷ B.C.R.O P43/5/2, Ridgmont churchwardens' accounts (c 1730-1).

⁸⁸ *B.P.P.* 1834 XXVIII (44), p. 757a.

⁸⁹ *ibid.*, p. 819a.

⁹⁰ *ibid.*, p. 759a. Other mentions of northern emigration can be found in the Appendices of the Royal Commission's report from: Buckden in Craven (p. 763a); Leeds (p. 784a); Snaith (p. 829a); Doncaster (p. 833a); Thryburgh and Treeton (p. 848a). None of these emigrations were numerically significant.

⁹¹ *ibid.*, p. 320a.

have done, to renew their claims to assistance from the poor-rate'. The rate payers were also noted as being reluctant to raise the money for emigration. Furthermore, 'the redundancy of population is seldom so excessive as to make a strong measure of this sort absolutely indispensable'.⁹²

The regional disparity in attitudes to assisted emigration provides a further explanation for the limited impact of the policy. An already hesitant government would have had problems justifying a national scheme that only benefited one section of the country. In the south of England we have reports of more involved attempts at assisted emigration. Examples were reported of emigration from Oxfordshire, Dorset, Kent, Sussex, Essex, Surrey, East Anglia, Northants, Gloucestershire and Wiltshire. Within these examples there was a range of function for assisted emigration. Harlow assisted six men of 'idle character' to emigrate.⁹³ Westerham assisted 'the most vicious refractory character' to leave.⁹⁴ Other parishes sought a more long term gain. The results were essentially positive. Marden reported that the emigration of sixty people had led to a 'saving to the parish of one third'.⁹⁵ Redgwell reported that emigration had been carried out to 'very great effect'.⁹⁶ The result of Salehurst's emigration was to leave the parish in a 'comparatively flourishing state'.⁹⁷ Most celebrated of all reported cases of locally sponsored exercises in assisted emigration was the activities of the Petworth Emigration Committee. Under the sponsorship of Lord Egremont and the careful work of Thomas Sockett this emigration was successful and appeared to make some

⁹² *ibid.*, p. 739a.

⁹³ *ibid.*, p. 224a.

⁹⁴ *ibid.*, p. 208a.

⁹⁵ *ibid.*, p. 209a.

⁹⁶ *ibid.*, pp. 230-1a.

⁹⁷ *ibid.*, p. 204a.

impact on the conditions in Sussex.⁹⁸

Yet the reports in the Poor Law Report were not all positive. We may suggest a level of pre-meditation on the part of Senior and Chadwick to recommend emigration in association with poor law reform. Indeed it formed recommendation number twenty-two of the Poor Law Report, described as 'one of the most innocent palliatives of the evils of the present system'.⁹⁹ Blaug taught us to be sceptical of the rhetoric of the Report which did not necessarily match with the evidence. From this perspective we can see that the writers of the Report took a benign view of parochial emigration, ignoring examples of failure and paying little attention to doubts about the efficacy of such a policy. The numbers each parish assisted were small. The money expended on emigration was limited. Reluctance to pursue the policy existed at the local level, especially in the north. Concerns about whether 'best labourers' would be assisted to leave were also expressed.¹⁰⁰

Sufficient indications that some benefits could be gained by the application of assisted emigration was provided by local evidence. Post-Horton we see the publication of a number of collections of letters written by poor emigrants and collected by local worthies.¹⁰¹ The letters provided a ballast for parish officers who sought to pursue such a policy. The New

⁹⁸ Cameron, 'Petworth Emigration Committee'.

⁹⁹ 'Report from His Majesty's Commissioners for Inquiring into the Administration and Practical Operation of the Poor Laws', B.P.P. XXVII 1834 (203), pp. 199-203.

¹⁰⁰ Some of these points are developed more fully in Chapter VI, pp. 161-166.

¹⁰¹ e.g. George Poulett Scrope, Extracts of Letters from Poor Persons Who Emigrated Last Year to Canada and the United States 2nd ed. (1832); Letters from Sussex Emigrants Who Sailed from Portsmouth in April 1832 on board the Ships Lord Melville and Eveline for Upper Canada 2nd ed. (1833). The contribution of emigrant letters to a genuine debate on assisted emigration which lasted well beyond Horton's departure is shown by the positive review of a third edition of Letters from Poor Persons Who Have Lately Emigrated (1835) in the Quarterly Review, 54 (1835), 413-29. It stated 'the whole collection breathes but one tone; that of exultation at having exchanged English pauperism for Canadian abundance and independence, mingled with gratitude to those who assisted them to emigrate, and an anxious desire to see their friends follow their example'. (p. 425).

Poor Law sought to end what was seen as the habitual dependence upon poor relief amongst the labouring population. By introducing the harsh workhouse test the incentives which the old system had supposedly offered to poor labourers to reproduce were withdrawn. By introducing the principle of less eligibility the vacuum argument against assisted emigration dissolved. The poor law reformers played to the Malthusian ethos of moral values by presenting a system that would educate the poor. Poor law reform would also educate the officers of rural England. The first document of this educative process was the Poor Law Report, a best-seller of surprising proportions.¹⁰² Contained within the Report was the notion of assisted emigration, in direct lineage from Horton's proposals.

Poor law reform to a large extent undercut the need for a sustained measure of assisted emigration. In Horton's conception emigration would obviate the need for a dramatic change in the basis of poor relief. Emigration would provide the panacea to the nation's ills. For the poor law reformers, the nettle of spiralling poor relief bills, though not the problem of 'surplus labour', was grasped with a bare hand. The basis and mechanism of relief would be tackled and transformed. Through more stringent administration, through the doctrine of less-eligibility, surplus labour would find its level. Emigration, in this conception would be a subsidiary measure; or in Malthus's words 'a palliative'.

For the State, the experiments of the 1820s would be the closest that it would come to pursuing an active role in emigration. The fierce debate on Horton's plans proved inconclusive. When Howick next came to present government policy on emigration, in the 1840s, he adopted a more diffident stance. He spoke against calls for a national scheme of emigration. He spoke of the obligations that government sponsorship of emigration would place upon the State. He claimed that the responsibilities that the government would incur

¹⁰² Himmelfarb, *The Idea Of Poverty*, p. 155.

would be too great.¹⁰³ He was responding to growing demands for assisted emigration that took hold in the 1840s, witnessed by the publication of numerous pamphlets calling for an enlarged state role.¹⁰⁴ His response echoes that of Peel and Huskisson twenty years earlier and points to the centrality of the 1820s in setting the tone for subsequent debates on emigration policy. The debate articulates the ideas from which Clause Sixty-two resulted. It has been recounted on the premise that there is considerable value in J.G.A. Pocock's words that, 'men cannot do what they have no means of saying they have done; and what they do must in part be what they can say and conceive that it is'.¹⁰⁵

How Horton's ideals were matched by those who pursued emigration at the local level forms the basis for the questions investigated in the remainder of the thesis. The polarity between Sadler's critique and the idealism of Horton provides a framework by which the emigrations can be assessed. The discussion has attempted to move beyond an assessment of assisted emigration as a technical debate on social policy. The debate on assisted emigration involved clear questions about the role of the State in early nineteenth-century Britain. The resolution of the debate emphasises the *laissez-faire* outlook of the period, but in the process exposes certain forces for, and conceptions of, collectivism. An integral feature of the debate was the question of the English parish. The main question revolved on who

¹⁰³ *Emigration from Europe 1815-1914*, ed. by Charlotte Erickson (1976), pp. 137-42. See Burroughs, *Britain and Australia*, pp. 274-5. 'It is an interesting commentary on imperial attitudes in the 1840's that, when the need to ease domestic difficulties was so great and New South Wales offered an ideal outlet for emigrant labourers, the home government refused to spend the money of the British taxpayer on the promotion of assisted emigration.' (p. 274).

¹⁰⁴ e.g. William Carpenter, *Relief for the Unemployed: Emigration and Colonization Considered with Special Reference to the Australian Colonies of South Australia and New Zealand* (1841); Charles Shaw, *An Extensive System of Emigration Considered: with a Practical Mode of Raising the Necessary Funds* 2nd ed. (1848); P.L. Macdougall, *Emigration: Its Advantages to Great Britain and other Colonies* (1848).

¹⁰⁵ J.G.A. Pocock, 'Virtue and Commerce in the Eighteenth Century', *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, 3 (1972), 119-34 (p. 122).

should be responsible for assisted emigration. The answer came out loud and clear: the English parish. Localism and local powers were thus enshrined and celebrated. James Mill wrote that the 'expense of removal should be borne locally'; that each parish should be charged with 'the expense of removing its own poor'. Then there would be 'a local interest operating to prevent the breeding of a pauper population'.¹⁰⁶ For Mill, the local is not a pejorative phrase. It implies a dynamic concept of different levels of government. Running counter to the historian's organising themes to make sense of nineteenth-century developments- centralisation, urbanisation and industrialisation- the English rural parish continued to exist and still had a role to play in emigration policy. What it made of that role forms the basis of this thesis.

¹⁰⁶ D.C.R.O. Catton MSS, WH 2847, James Mill to Horton, 15 February 1830.

CHAPTER III: THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL BACKGROUND TO ASSISTED EMIGRATION

The previous chapter examined the way that assisted emigration was viewed by the political class and how a permissive emigration clause was established as part of the New Poor Law. We must now move on to consider the impact of assisted emigration. Its impact and implications constitute the bulk of this thesis. To lay the foundations for such an assessment it is necessary to consider the background to poor law emigration. An attempt will be made to assess why some parishes assisted their poor to emigrate and why other parishes did not. On one level poor law emigration presents us with certain advantages for such an assessment. Annual returns of emigration sanctioned by the Poor Law Commissioners were published in the annual reports of the PLC/B. We are not just told from which county the emigrants left, but also from which parish they departed. This precise information on the place of origin of English emigrants is a rare luxury for English emigration historians. No other source of nineteenth-century English emigration presents us with such comprehensive material on the place of origin of emigrants. Census enumerators' comments provide us with some clues as to which parishes witnessed emigration in the first half of the nineteenth century. In 1841 the census authorities counted emigrants from Britain by county of origin. Passenger lists occasionally list the place of origin of the emigrants. But listings of place of origin are rare and might emphasise the point of departure of the emigrants rather than the place of origin of the emigrants. From a one in five sample of United States' ship lists for English emigration in 1841 Charlotte Erickson found information about the county of origin of only two hundred and eighteen emigrants.¹ All poor law emigrants, by contrast, are listed by parish of origin. This allows for unique opportunities to assess the background to the emigration.

¹ Erickson, *Leaving England*, pp. 205-6.

In constructing some explanation for the motivations for assisted emigration we must be extremely cautious. Explanations for emigration are often self-serving. Unfortunately there are few ways of escaping from such models. We have a powerful urge to explain and understand. We need reasons and explanations for emigration; yet see it as primarily an individual response. If we choose a hardship model we have the difficulty of the many hundreds and thousands of people who suffered comparable hardship yet did not emigrate. Whichever way we approach the subject of explaining emigration we hunt for causes. 'Push' and 'pull' factors may be an old-fashioned crude terminology; yet no historian abandons them as basic interpretative tools. By moving away from the land of their birth emigrants differentiated themselves from the thousands who stayed put. Somehow we need to find out why. From whichever angle we approach the subject, economic hardship, or some fear of the future rooted in economic conditions plays a role.² William Van Vugt, unlike the earlier generation of historians, did not find economic hardship and assume that those who suffered were the emigrants. He found emigrants and then sought explanations as to why certain groups, notably farmers and Welsh miners, were over-represented. The explanations revolved around the question of economic hardship or fears of future economic problems. Van Vugt's method was in advance of those historians who had relied upon impressionistic evidence available in Blue Books and newspapers, yet the logical structure and conceptualisation of emigration as a response to economic problems was not far removed from the earlier model.³ This is not said by way of criticism of Van Vugt's work, but more to point to the difficulties of constructing explanations for emigratory behaviour. These are difficulties that we can

² Earlier historians, notably Handlin, Hansen and Carrothers placed emigration very much within the context of economic hardship. In recent years a crude hardship model has been challenged by Erickson and Van Vugt. The framework however still dominates the analysis.

³ See Van Vugt's discussion of the place of origin farmer emigrants, 'British Emigration', pp. 114-21.

acknowledge, but only attempt to resolve. Charlotte Erickson offers a humbling reminder to the historian who attempts to construct too neat an explanation of emigration along economic reductionist lines. 'In gradually piecing together life histories, I have been struck with the frequency with which the death of a wife, husband, or parent, a desire to end a marriage, a family scandal, or individual dissipation lay in the immediate background to the decision to emigrate.'⁴

For assisted emigration the object of the task is slightly different from that of explaining unassisted emigration. Our focus is not just on the emigrants and the conditions that might have influenced their decision to leave. We must also consider the circumstances that might have influenced local officers to pay for the emigration of their poor. The economic context provides clues as to why poor people might leave. Without the consent of their betters, assisted emigration would not have taken place. The subsequent analysis provides an economic context for the pauper emigrants, but also an assessment of the contexts for the adoption of a particular social policy.

Table 3.1 shows a breakdown of the number of people assisted to leave by each English county under clause sixty-two of the New Poor Law (1834). The counties are grouped together using the urban/rural classification adopted by Dudley Baines. Baines calculated that for the years 1861-1900 English and Welsh emigrants were almost evenly distributed between urban, urban/rural and rural areas. Assisted emigration does not follow that pattern. Only three per cent of English poor law emigrants came from 'urban counties'. Fifty-seven per cent of poor law emigrants came from 'rural counties'. The remainder came from the 'rural/urban' counties. Of emigrants from that classification the vast majority

⁴ Erickson, Leaving England, p.25. For a particularly pessimistic assessment of the difficulties of constructing explanations for emigratory behaviour see Dudley Baines, 'European Emigration, 1815-1930: Looking at the Emigration Decision Again', Economic History Review, 47 (1994), 525-44.

TABLE 3.1 Poor Law Emigrants 1835-58 (1)

	1835/6	1836/7	1837/8	1838/9	1839/40	1840/41	1841b	1842
URBAN 1								
Middlesex	88	22	3	0	0	0	0	0
Lancs	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Staffs	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Warks	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
TOTAL	88	22	3	0	0	0	0	0
URBAN (2) With significant rural parts								
Glos	0	6	68	6	0	0	46	0
Leics	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Northumb	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Notts	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Yorks	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	12
TOTAL	0	6	68	6	0	0	46	12
S.E. suburban/rural								
Essex	0	13	13	0	15	0	0	0
Hants	180	0	0	0	14	17	0	0
Kent	320	156	251	307	329	298	326	298
Soton	0	0	28	0	0	0	0	62
Surrey	0	12	0	0	0	13	0	14
Sussex	248	156	330	417	299	161	309	304
TOTAL	748	337	622	724	657	489	635	678
RURAL								
West of England								
Cornwall	0	0	0	5	4	21	37	65
Devon	0	7	0	0	12	0	29	14
Dorset	0	0	0	3	0	0	7	0
Somerset	11	40	0	0	9	75	59	99
Wilts	347	35	0	81	30	11	0	58
TOTAL	358	82	0	89	55	107	132	236
East of England								
Cambs	39	29	0	0	0	0	0	4
Hunts	27	13	0	0	0	0	0	0
Lincs	17	0	13	0	0	0	0	0
Norfolk	3068	286	0	10	0	0	0	8
Rutland	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Suffolk	787	296	19	0	25	0	5	11
TOTAL	3938	624	32	10	25	0	5	23
South Midlands								
Beds	18	29	0	0	10	1	9	0
Berks	30	15	0	0	2	5	0	0
Bucks	25	0	0	0	0	6	7	17
Herts	0	0	6	0	0	0	0	0
Northants	23	11	10	0	0	0	0	46
Oxon	11	56	0	0	0	5	0	0
TOTAL	107	111	16	0	12	17	16	63
Other rural								
Heref	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Derbys	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	20
Westmo	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Worcs	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
TOTAL	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	20
TOTAL	5239	1182	743	829	749	613	834	1032

Sources: PLC/B Annual Reports. NOTE: Emigration returns ran initially from July to July. In 1839 they change to April to April. 1842 saw the introduction of calendar returns. 1841b refers to April 1841 to 31 December 1841.

TABLE 3.1 Poor Law Emigrants 1835-58 (2)

co	1843	1844	1845	1846	1847/8	1849	1850	1851
URBAN 1								
Middlesex	0	0	0	0	3	5	46	107
Lancs	0	0	0	0	0	0	5	4
Staffs	0	0	0	0	0	36	7	0
Warks	0	11	24	0	0	32	15	28
TOTAL	0	11	24	0	3	73	73	139
URBAN (2) With significant rural parts								
Glos	0	0	0	0	0	59	265	199
Leics	0	0	5	0	17	12	27	31
Northumb	0	0	0	0	0	5	0	0
Notts	21	21	0	14	9	7	0	38
Yorks	0	0	0	0	0	21	16	11
TOTAL	21	21	5	14	26	104	308	279
S.E. suburban/rural								
Essex	16	12	6	0	22	12	56	110
Hants	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Kent	193	28	9	24	86	112	236	89
Soton	39	5	9	0	13	53	44	36
Surrey	0	28	17	0	0	6	55	24
Sussex	254	184	39	25	196	260	145	66
TOTAL	502	257	80	49	317	443	536	325
RURAL								
West of England								
Cornwall	63	13	12	6	14	21	13	7
Devon	0	0	0	9	24	138	46	54
Dorset	0	15	0	0	42	94	29	44
Somerset	21	32	11	0	60	164	114	50
Wilts	41	23	7	0	39	88	197	95
TOTAL	125	83	30	15	179	505	399	250
East of England								
Cambs	20	29	41	33	39	13	67	89
Hunts	0	0	0	0	0	6	15	29
Lincs	0	13	6	0	0	7	74	81
Norfolk	12	68	10	33	112	50	29	91
Rutland	0	0	0	0	0	6	10	20
Suffolk	46	109	33	2	20	10	75	147
TOTAL	78	219	90	68	171	92	270	457
South Midlands								
Beds	0	54	105	11	68	74	38	43
Berks	0	4	21	0	22	20	3	21
Bucks	27	176	67	31	284	85	89	94
Herts	0	11	0	8	0	0	18	47
Northants	16	81	169	7	70	7	55	35
Oxon	48	62	127	5	125	40	85	46
TOTAL	91	388	489	62	569	226	288	286
Other rural								
Heref	0	0	0	0	0	4	6	0
Derbys	0	9	0	0	0	25	4	0
Westmo	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Worcs	0	0	0	0	1	2	0	0
TOTAL	0	9	0	0	1	31	10	0
	817	988	718	208	1266	1474	1884	1736

Sources: PLC/B Annual Reports.

TABLE 3.1 Poor Law Emigrants 1835-58 (3)

co	1852	1853	1854	1855	1856	1857	1858	total
URBAN 1								
Middlesex	132	26	12	1	27	22	52	546
Lancs	0	0	2	10	0	0	0	21
Staffs	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	43
Warks	32	4	0	0	0	4	3	153
TOTAL	164	30	14	11	27	26	55	763
URBAN (2) With significant rural parts								
Glos	173	20	17	0	8	16	7	890
Leics	58	27	9	0	6	0	5	197
Northumb	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	6
Notts	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	111
Yorks	13	5	0	0	7	3	11	99
TOTAL	245	53	26	0	21	19	23	1303
S.E. suburban/rural								
Essex	111	23	10	5	1	19	0	444
Hants	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	211
Kent	144	30	1	22	20	60	34	3373
Soton	40	10	3	6	17	0	11	376
Surrey	89	26	32	17	21	21	16	391
Sussex	88	10	28	11	13	82	45	3670
TOTAL	472	99	74	61	72	182	106	8465
RURAL								
West of England								
Cornwall	17	9	0	0	0	0	0	307
Devon	119	19	7	4	0	8	1	491
Dorset	6	9	13	8	1	0	0	271
Somerset	155	16	7	2	17	23	10	975
Wilts	157	8	14	12	7	16	6	1272
TOTAL	454	61	41	26	25	47	17	3316
East of England								
Cambs	461	65	41	1	7	0	0	978
Hunts	89	11	3	0	0	0	0	193
Lincs	30	4	0	0	0	0	7	252
Norfolk	208	23	0	2	1	0	0	4011
Rutland	50	16	21	0	0	0	0	123
Suffolk	395	33	20	6	17	12	6	2074
TOTAL	1233	152	85	9	25	12	13	7631
South Midlands								
Beds	130	1	14	1	0	8	0	614
Berks	29	0	5	0	12	11	3	203
Bucks	98	2	0	8	0	18	2	1036
Herts	98	0	11	0	6	0	0	205
Northants	47	9	5	15	2	0	0	608
Oxon	73	2	0	0	0	0	7	692
TOTAL	475	14	35	24	20	37	12	3358
Other rural								
Heref	0	0	5	8	7	2	0	32
Derbys	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	60
Westmo	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	4
Worcs	79	0	3	0	0	0	0	85
TOTAL	83	0	8	8	7	2	0	181
	3126	409	283	139	197	325	226	25015

Sources: PLC/B Annual Reports.

(eighty-seven per cent) came from the 'suburban/rural south east' which in the early nineteenth century would have been called 'Speenhamland counties'.⁵ Table 3.2 places the emigrating counties in rank order. The top four counties of Norfolk, Sussex, Kent and Suffolk account for over half the number of poor law emigrants.

Table 3.2 Rank Order of Poor Law Emigrating Counties, 1836-58.

COUNTY	EMIGRANTS	COUNTY	EMIGRANTS
Norfolk	4011	Dorset	271
Sussex	3670	Lincoln	252
Kent	3373	Hampshire	211
Suffolk	2074	Hertfordshire	205
Wiltshire	1272	Berkshire	203
Buckinghamshire	1036	Leicestershire	197
Cambridgeshire	978	Huntingdonshire	193
Somerset	975	Warwickshire	153
Gloucestershire	890	Rutland	123
Oxfordshire	692	Nottinghamshire	111
Bedfordshire	614	Yorkshire	99
Northants	608	Worcestershire	85
Middlesex	546	Derbyshire	60
Devon	491	Staffordshire	43
Essex	444	Herefordshire	32
Surrey	391	Lancashire	21
Southampton	376	Northumberland	6
Cornwall	307	Westmoreland	4

Source: as for Table 3.1.

These four counties were agricultural depressed areas where poor relief expenditure was high and agricultural wages were low. They are followed by other depressed rural counties of Wiltshire, Buckinghamshire, Cambridgeshire and Somerset. Clearly poor law emigration was a response to the problems which affected southern rural England. To gain an appreciation of these problems and of the society from which poor law emigrants left, it is necessary to consider the conditions of rural England during the adoption of the policy of assisted emigration.

Before assessing the world from which the emigrants came it is worthwhile to draw out a number of other issues regarding the distribution of assisted emigration. By far the

⁵ Baines, *Migration*, p. 144.

highest year for assisted emigration was 1835/6. As the Poor Law Commissioners dated 1835/6 from July 1835 we can safely say that the great majority of emigrants left in 1836. The dominant destination of those years was British North America and by July the 'emigration season' had passed its peak. This year's emigration was dominated by Norfolk and Suffolk which provided over three-quarters of the poor law emigrants. The next year still saw an East Anglian emphasis with over half the emigrants coming from the eastern counties. However, no subsequent year would provide anywhere near the same number of poor law emigrants. In the next eleven years more than one thousand emigrants were assisted to leave the whole of England in only two years (1836/7 and 1842). The other main providers were the rural south eastern counties of Sussex and Kent. These two counties provided the bulk of poor law emigrants up to 1843 providing between two-thirds to three-quarters of all poor law emigrants between them. East Anglia's emigration was concentrated in the first two years of the operation of the policy. Kent and Sussex were more constant in their supply of assisted emigrants. Other regions provide a number of emigrants at particular periods. The West Country after a flurry from Wiltshire in 1836 sent few emigrants until 1842, only to show less interest for the mid-1840s. By 1849 assisted emigration in that region had moved further westward to Somerset and Devon which assisted a number of emigrants in that year. The South Midlands showed little early interest in emigration until the mid-1840s when the region accounted for over a third of poor law emigrants in 1844 and over a half in 1845. By 1852 it is the turn of the eastern counties to show a marked revival in assisted emigration, with one county Cambridgeshire providing over half its poor law emigrants in just that one year.

The swings of emigratory activity and the ups and downs of particular regions throughout the period indicate that assisted emigration was not a blanket response to 'the problems of rural England'. There are clear regional patterns of emigratory activity and waves of assisted emigration. Assisted emigration might provide a helpful indicator of the

state of the regions of rural England throughout the second quarter of the nineteenth century. By the late 1840s, the dominance of Australasian destinations might suggest that assisted emigration was more directly linked to the activities of Australasian recruiting agents. The geographical and chronological breakdown of assisted emigration provides some indications that the movement was not a simple one and the explanations are not straightforward. Before focusing on the conditions of the counties which provided the emigrants in our sample we shall consider some of the factors which might have influenced agricultural labourers and their local officers to consider assisted emigration.

Post-war demobilisation of 400,000 troops combined with the change from a war-time to a peace-time economy emphasised the problem of surplus labour in rural England. The decline in the prices of agricultural products caused a decline in farmers' profits which increased anxiety. The decline in prices was particularly severe in 1821-23 and 1833-36. The latter period coincides with the introduction of the New Poor Law and with the Norfolk 'emigration fever'.⁶ The result was an increase in pauperism and as a consequence poor relief bills rose to unprecedented levels. Structural changes in the nature of rural society further contributed to the conditions of rural England. Old customs of traditional agriculture gave way to the dictates and rationale of the market.

The consolidation of land holding under parliamentary enclosure in the late eighteenth century led to increased concentration of land ownership. One effect of this process was the loss of customary rights for the rural poor as commons were enclosed and the poor were deprived of access to land. The loss of customary rights and land ownership affected the sense of independence which workers had previously experienced. Alternative sources of

⁶ See J.D. Chambers and G.E. Mingay, *The Agricultural Revolution, 1750-1880* (1966), pp. 127-8; Pamela Horn, *The Rural World, 1780-1850: Social Change in the English Countryside* (1980), pp. 72-74.

income thus dried up.⁷

Changes in the labour market and labour hiring practices further increased the strain on the agricultural labourer. A traditional form of employment was that of service in husbandry. An agricultural labourer would be hired for one year and would often live in with his employer. This type of hiring declined from the middle of the eighteenth century with farmers hiring labourers for shorter terms of employment, marking a shift from service to day wage labour. This change had a profound impact on rural social relations. The servant in husbandry had a direct face to face relationship with the employer, eating and sleeping in adjacent quarters. A close relationship existed between master and servant. Changes from yearly contracts to shorter term contracts symbolised a change in attitude amongst the employing class. A full year contract entitled the labourer to a right of settlement. Refusal by landowners to grant full contracts, or the termination of hiring contracts just before the full year had run, indicates the level of calculation applied by farmers with respect to hiring practices. Changing hiring practices were a response to an increasing shift to seasonal agricultural requirements. Landowners realised that labour was only required for particular periods of the agricultural cycle, notably harvest. The rest of the time demand for labour was considerably less. The agricultural labourer became increasingly another factor of production; a resource to be paid for to perform a specific function. His bargaining position was

⁷ The debate on the impact of enclosure has been fierce. A helpful survey of the issues is provided by Michael Turner, 'Benefits But at Cost: The Debates about Parliamentary Enclosure', *Research in Economic History*, Supplement 5 (1989), 49-67. This interpretation of enclosure has a lineage that can be traced back to J.L. and Barbara Hammond, *The Village Labourer* (1922) and has been reinvigorated by Snell, *Annals*, pp. 138-227; J.M. Neeson, *Commoners: Common Right, Enclosure and Social Change in England, 1700-1820* (Cambridge, 1993) and Robert C. Allen, *Enclosure and the Yeoman: The Agricultural Development of the South Midlands, 1450-1850* (Oxford, 1992). Both Snell and Neeson rely heavily on a consideration of the value of custom for the economic well-being of the poor. Other work that has placed custom to the fore as a vital economic value for the poor includes: E.P. Thompson, *Customs in Common* (1991), esp. pp.97-184; Bob Bushaway, *By Rite: Custom, Ceremony and Community in England 1700-1880* (1982).

extremely weak as a result of an over-supply of labourers and a shortage of alternative employment. Agricultural wages in emigrating counties were low (and poor law reform saw them fall even more). In predominantly arable south-eastern England the labour market needed a labour surplus to provide the necessary hands for harvesting.⁸

A further device that determined the labourers' position was the operation of poor relief systems. Under the old poor law every poor person had a right to relief within his parish of settlement. With a high level of surplus labourers dependent upon seasonal employment, it is unsurprising that poor labourers would often have recourse to poor relief. The domination of day to day relief procedures, despite occasional interventions from J.P.s, by the employers of the labourers influenced the development of the employment and relief systems. Farmers used their control of the poor law administration to integrate poor law practice with their employment needs. Poor relief and wages operated in tandem, maintaining poor labourers in times of limited work and allowing wages to stay relatively low in times of harvest. The old poor law can thus be presented as a rational economic system which supported a large labour force required for seasonal labour needs.⁹

A further problem for agricultural labourers was the lack of alternative forms of employment. Enclosure of commons and restrictions on customary rights played one part

⁸ On changes in hiring practices see Ann Kussmaul, Servants in Husbandry in Early Modern England (Cambridge, 1981), pp. 120-134; Snell, Annals, pp. 67-103. On the shift to seasonal employment see Snell, Annals, pp. 15-66; E.L. Jones, 'The Agricultural Labour Market in England, 1793-1872', Economic History Review, 17 (1964), 322-338 (pp. 325-7); Alan Armstrong, Farmworkers: A Social and Economic History (1988), p. 64. On the broader shift in social relations that these changes produced see also Howard Newby, The Deferential Worker (1977), pp. 27-32; E.J Hobsbawm and George Rudé, Captain Swing (1969), pp. 45-7.

⁹ Mark Blaug, 'Myth of the Old Poor Law'; *idem*, 'Poor Law Report Reexamined'; D.A. Baugh, 'The Cost of Poor Relief in South-East England', Economic History Review, 28 (1975), 50-67; Anne Digby, 'The Labour Market and the Continuity of Social Policy after 1834: The Case of the Eastern Counties', Economic History Review, 28 (1975), 69-83; George R. Boyer, An Economic History of the English Poor Law, 1750-1850 (Cambridge, 1990).

in depriving labourers of alternative and additional sources of income. Industrial development provided one alternative. The scale of industrial 'take off' in the north of England provides an explanation for why so little assisted emigration came from that part of the country. Industrial employment provided a vent for surplus agricultural labourers. In the north the viable alternative of factory employment saw agricultural wages hold up in the years 1833-50 while throughout non-industrial England they declined in the same period.¹⁰ In fact a parallel scheme to assisted emigration was poor law migration by which parishes paid for their surplus labourers to journey to the manufactories in Derbyshire, Lancashire and Yorkshire.¹¹ In rural England on the eve of the New Poor Law we might suggest that alternative employment opportunities contracted further with the collapse of nascent proto-industries. Norwich's worsted production declined in the 1820s.¹² In Northamptonshire the shoe industry was particularly unstable in the 1820s. Allen has argued that the labour released from agricultural enclosure did not find alternative employment opportunities. He states that 'the release of labour from agriculture caused nothing but poverty'.¹³ The failure of proto-industry, especially the collapse of the spinning industry, affected women's earnings especially at a time when women's employment in agriculture was falling. Family incomes were therefore hard hit.¹⁴ Lack of alternative sources of employment also impacted on the mobility of the

¹⁰ Snell, *Annals*, p. 130.

¹¹ On internal migration under the poor law see Redford, *Labour Migration*, pp. 84-101.

¹² D.C. Coleman, 'Growth and Decay During the Industrial Revolution: The Case of East Anglia', *Scandinavian Economic History Review*, 10 (1962), 115-27.

¹³ Allen, *Enclosure and the Yeoman*, p.262.

¹⁴ Snell, *Annals*, pp. 58-66; Armstrong, *Farmworkers*, p. 67; *idem*, 'Labour I: Rural Population Growth, Systems of Employment and Income', in *The Agrarian History of England and Wales, Vol. VI: 1750-1850*, ed. by G.E. Mingay (Cambridge, 1989), pp. 641-728 (p. 685).

workforce. As more labourers became dependent upon poor relief, the right of settlement took on an added value. To venture further in search of an uncertain future only exposed the migrant to the possibility of humiliating removal.¹⁵

The changes outlined did not happen without some recognition of a sense of loss amongst the labouring poor. The sense of hardship is depicted in the works of Cobbett and Clare. The labouring poor found ways of registering their discontent in the rural protests that punctuated the post-Napoleonic period. The 'bread or blood' riots of 1816, riots in 1822 and the Swing revolts were but the most significant outbursts of unrest in the post-war period. Shifts towards modern market-orientated practices were resented and led to sharp protests amongst agricultural labourers who struck against reductions in wages, attacked poor law officers who sought to reduce relief payments and burnt the property and new machinery of innovative landlords. Aided by technological change which presented the agricultural labourer with a tool of protest, the strike anywhere match (readily available from 1830), the early 1830s saw a marked increase in the outbreak of incendiarism. Incendiarism and popular protest provide vivid examples of the polarisation of social relations in rural England that the shift to a market economy heralded. Class antagonisms and tensions appear to mark the period. The veneer and rhetoric of paternalism appeared to be an empty shell. The upsurge in rural protest also indicated a sense of desperation amongst the rural poor. The poor however were not the only ones to feel desperate. Property owners and employers had reason to feel worried too.¹⁶

¹⁵ On the impact of the law of settlement see James Stephen Taylor, 'The Impact of Pauper Settlement, 1691-1834', *Past and Present*, 73 (1976), 42-74; *idem*, 'A Different Kind of Speenhamland: Nonresident Relief in the Industrial Revolution', *Journal of British Studies*, 30 (1991), 181-208; *idem*, *Poverty, Migration and Settlement*; Norma Landau, 'The Laws of Settlement and the Surveillance of Immigration in Eighteenth-century Kent', *Continuity and Change*, (1988), 391-420.

¹⁶ The literature on rural protest is considerable. See for example John E. Archer, 'By a Flash and a Scare': Arson, Animal Maiming, and Poaching in East Anglia 1815-1870

The Swing revolt provides the clearest expression of the transformation in rural social relations, symbolising the increased polarisation within society. The unrest was sharply suppressed, depicting clearly the power of authority and the sources of order.¹⁷ The shock of Swing crystallised the fears of the forces of authority and paved the way for a reassessment of the ordering of rural society.¹⁸ Swing illuminated the perils of relying upon 'surplus labour'. Idle hands disaffected with modernising forces were a source of potential harm and damage. Swing paved the way for poor law reform, for it displayed the bankruptcy of the uneasy combination of free market economics and custom that the old poor law represented. It shook the confidence of rural England's capacity to govern. Swing furthermore illustrated the tensions between farmers and old paternalists. The ageing Duke of Bedford was alarmed at the prospect of unrest which threatened rural Bedfordshire in 1830. He determined that no man should be released from employment on his estates until the turbulence disappeared. Yet to his disgust farmers adopted a less socially responsible role. They sacked labourers and complained that they had no money.¹⁹ The behaviour of farmers during Swing exposed the tensions within the employing class. Farmers blamed the tithe for the labourers' ills and even

(Oxford, 1990); Hobsbawm and Rudé, Captain Swing; Mick Reed and Roger Wells (ed.), Class Conflict and Protest in the English Countryside, 1700-1880 (1990); J.P.D. Dunbabin, Rural Discontent in Nineteenth-Century Britain (1974); Andrew Charlesworth (ed.), An Atlas of Rural Protest in Britain 1548-1900 (1983), pp. 131-163; Barry Reay, The Last Rising of the Agricultural Labourers: Rural Life and Protest in Nineteenth-Century England (Oxford, 1990).

¹⁷ See Hobsbawm and Rudé, Captain Swing, pp. 253-64.

¹⁸ See especially Dunkley, Crisis of the Old Poor Law, pp. 80-112 for an interpretation of the Swing revolt as a key agency in poor law reform. He concludes, 'by 1831 the cabinet had come to see the poor laws in the context of the conflagration of the collapse of social discipline, and this, more than anything else, provided the primary motive, and obstacle, in the Whigs' search for a reform of the relief system'. (p.112).

¹⁹ A.F. Cirket, 'The 1830 Riots in Bedfordshire: Background and Events', Bedfordshire Historical Records Society, 57 (1970), 75-112, (pp. 90-2). For the farmers the high level of indebtedness noted on p. 92 offered a different perspective.

acted with labourers in attacks on clergymen.²⁰ For the landed proprietors the farmers had behaved irresponsibly and exposed the country to turbulence and violence. Furthermore, the relief systems that had worked in concert with labour hiring practices to suppress wages were blamed for the instability. The Swing upheavals provided evidence for those who depicted poor relief and charity as mischievous and unnatural to call loudly for reform of the poor relief system. The unrest exposed the fragility of the agricultural order and called for a reassessment of that order. For order to be imposed, to counteract mischievous manipulation of relief systems, large scale reform was deemed essential. Aware of the incapacity of local administration to rectify the problems, the political class entered into a compact with Benthamite utilitarianism that produced the New Poor Law.²¹ What resulted marked a dramatic shift in the principles and practice of poor relief that had a profound impact upon rural society.

The old poor law, under which relief bills had spiralled upwards, can be characterised as a loose collection of various relief practices pursued by individual parishes. Central to the law's operation was an understanding that the poor had a right to relief in times of economic hardship. As we have seen, the close interplay between wages and poor relief led to parishes using poor relief to subsidise wages. Thus many southern labourers were dependent upon some dole. The nature of the dole was determined by individual parish policy. The form of relief varied including, allowances, make work schemes, roundsman schemes and straight relief. The New Poor Law replaced these informal systems in espousing a clear principle that able-bodied men should not receive any form of out-relief. They would either subsist by their own efforts or receive indoor relief. To receive relief they had to enter the union workhouse.

The union workhouse symbolised the changed ethos of relief administration. It also

²⁰ Hobsbawm and Rudé, *Captain Swing*, pp. 232-6; Archer, *By a Flash*, pp. 90-2.

²¹ Dunkley, *Crisis*, pp. 109-112.

reflected a major administrative reorganisation of rural England. The union workhouse serviced a large geographical area, theoretically a large market town and its environs. Relief policy was theoretically determined by the union board of guardians who met once a week in the workhouse. Parish actions were placed within the broader context of the union, and the union itself was subject to the guidelines and supervision of the Poor Law Commissioners in Somerset House. The New Poor Law replaced a system of local *ad hoc* negotiation by a centralised system of relief administration. It marked a profound shift in the government of rural England. With an alacrity and gusto, which perhaps seemed insensitive, local elites rushed to embrace the new system of poor relief. They rushed to form poor law unions and built workhouses which shocked Assistant Commissioners by their extravagance.²²

The New Poor Law offered clarity and coherence in place of confusion and localism. For the poor the message was frightening and alarming. The New Poor Law, though symbolic of larger sea changes regarding the shift from pre-modern to modern economic philosophies, appeared to mark a sudden rupture in relief practice. The workhouse was dreaded and viewed with fear. Relief had been a function of the old system. In the new, segregation of the sexes, austere rules on diet and leisure time were particularly disliked. The workhouse dominated the thoughts of the poor. Poverty, from being a natural stage in the life cycle which the collective actions of the parish were capable of ameliorating, became a source of stigma and of exclusion. In these circumstances tales of abundance in far off lands, whether from friends, relatives or local newspapers, exercised a powerful influence over the poor.

The changing ethos of relief administration and farming practices concerned the parish

²² On the implementation of the New Poor Law at the local level see William Apfel and Peter Dunkley, 'English Rural Society and the New Poor Law: Bedfordshire 1834-47', *Social History*, 10 (1985), 37-68; Anne Digby, 'The Rural Poor Law', in *The New Poor Law in the Nineteenth Century*, ed. by Derek Fraser (1976), pp. 149-70; *idem*, *Pauper Palaces*, pp. 54-82.

officers. Poor relief had served a useful function in maintaining surplus labourers in times of low labour requirements. The New Poor Law undercut this system of out-relief for able-bodied labourers. There was theoretically no place for the halfway house of occasional out-payments to the 'deserving poor' in the new system. Surplus labourers had to be maintained in the union workhouse which was more expensive for a parish than occasional out-relief payments.²³ If the scale of relief was to continue under the new system and the deterrent effect of the workhouse test failed, then the burden of poor relief upon parishes would increase. Thus in regions where seasonal unemployment was considerable the sudden introduction of a harsh system had broader implications. Furthermore, the Swing outbreaks, wage strikes and endemic incendiarism provided an alarming context in which to introduce a new profoundly changed basis for the administration of poor relief. The immediate response in rural neighbourhoods to the new 'bastilles' was often violent. Riots ensued and workhouses were burnt.²⁴ In this context some way of opening up a 'safety valve' to the combustible mixture of changing styles of governance and surplus labour, imbued with notions of rights and entitlements, appeared worthwhile.

A further context for parochial emigration serves as a reminder that the poor law was not repealed as Malthusian pamphleteers had demanded, but reformed.²⁵ One essential element of the old poor law was maintained; the law of settlement. Under this law, for the purposes of relief administration, poor people belonged to a parish. Despite unionisation extending the unit of relief administration and the ideological charge of poor law reformers against the venality and inefficiency of parochial administration, the parish remained the

²³ Digby, 'Labour market', p. 71.

²⁴ John Knott, Popular Opposition to the 1834 Poor Law (1986), pp. 65-85; Digby, Pauper Palaces, pp. 221-4.

²⁵ Himmelfarb, Idea of Poverty, p. 156.

essential unit of the New Poor Law. The poor were relieved in the union workhouse, but the bills for their use of the facilities were not paid by the union. Parishes had to pay the expenses of their paupers. The union was an umbrella collection of different parishes. It offered administrative efficiency and professionalism, but parishes, until the Union Chargeability Act (1865), were autonomous constituent parts. If parishes had surplus labourers they had to be paid for out of the parish accounts.²⁶ This arrangement played a rôle in the creation of the mid nineteenth-century scandal of 'open' and 'close' parishes which has influenced modern classifications of rural society. The 'close' parish was able, through concentrated land ownership, to restrict poor labourers gaining settlement and dwellings within the parish. At its most extreme the 'close' parish was deficient in labour. Nearby were parishes where restrictions on settlement were limited and surplus labour grew. Surplus labour in 'open' parishes serviced the labour needs of the 'close' parish. The most notorious expression of this labour system was the gang system of west Norfolk. The beauty of the system for 'close' parishes was that their seasonal labour requirements were met from outside the parish. Yet off-season maintenance of this supply of labour did not have to be paid for. The seasonal labourers were chargeable outside the 'close' parish. Recent work on this subject has perhaps done more to confuse than to illuminate the subject of classifying parishes along the lines of 'open' or 'close'. The issue is not helped by contrasting contemporary definitions of the subject which are matched by historians who have attempted to clarify the issue. The fly still appears trapped in the bottle (to use Sarah Banks's terminology).²⁷ Unsurprisingly this study

²⁶ *ibid.*, pp.166-7.

²⁷ B.A. Holderness, '“Open” and “Close” Parishes in England in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries', *Agricultural History Review*, 20 (1972), 125-39; Dennis R. Mills, *Lord and Peasant in Nineteenth-Century Britain* (1980); Sarah J. Banks, 'Open and Close Parishes in Nineteenth-Century England', (Ph.D thesis, University of Reading, 1982); *idem.*, 'Nineteenth-century Scandal or Twentieth-century Model? A New Look at “Open” and “Close” Parishes', *Economic History Review*, 41 (1988), 51-73.

finds a neat classification of parishes equally difficult. The concept of 'open' and 'close' has value in delineating a broad background feature and possible interpretation of parochial assisted emigration. Digby has described administration under the New Poor Law as a 'civil war' between parishes.²⁸ The New Poor Law raised the stakes, and the costs of maintaining able-bodied paupers. It provides a key explanation for why assisted emigration might have seemed a potential solution to rural problems in some parishes.

Having considered the broad structural changes in nineteenth-century rural society we shall turn to an examination of the circumstances of assisted emigration within the regions that have provided our data. The two South Midlands counties of Bedfordshire and Northamptonshire display very different patterns of assisted emigration from Norfolk. Norfolk's emigrants left in the immediate aftermath of the implementation of the New Poor Law, providing in one year (1836) over ten per cent of all poor law emigrants. After the sudden outpouring of emigrants in 1836 and 1837, very few emigrants were assisted to leave Norfolk. The context for Norfolk's emigration is clearly wedded to the introduction of a new system of poor relief. Furthermore we are fortunate to have a substantial body of published statistical data about Norfolk parishes for this time which allows for an investigation of the nature of the emigrating parish. An analysis of Norfolk's emigration might provide clues for interpreting the determinants of assisted emigration for counties which did not embrace the policy so whole-heartedly.

The emigration from Norfolk in 1836 has been described as a 'feverish exodus'²⁹ and an 'emigration fever'.³⁰ Some clues for the preconditions for such a widespread adoption of the policy of assisted emigration may be found in the answers to the questionnaire sent to

²⁸ Digby, *Pauper Palaces*, p.83.

²⁹ *ibid.*, p.102.

³⁰ L.M. Springall, *Labouring Life in Norfolk Villages 1834-1914* (1936), p. 31.

English parishes by the Royal Commissioners investigating the operation of the old poor law. Though only four 'emigration fever' parishes responded to the questionnaire, it provides a useful insight to the circumstances of Norfolk society on the eve of poor law reform. It offers a rare perspective on the mind of the officers of rural England. The questionnaire has been used by Blaug and Boyer to perform econometric analyses of the old poor law. The purpose here is to use the answers to Rural Queries as a source of attitudes and preoccupations of parish officers.

The appraisal of the state of agriculture in Norfolk was essentially gloomy. To question thirty-six about the state of agricultural capital, twenty-six out of thirty-one Norfolk parishes that provided an answer (ten provided no response) noted that agricultural capital had diminished in recent years.³¹ Furthermore the quality of labourers had also declined. Of thirty-two parishes that supplied an answer to question thirty-seven which surveyed opinions on that subject, twenty-five noted a decline and only one an improvement.³² The explanations for a downward shift in the quality of labourers reflect the changing labour hiring practices and the seemingly pernicious influence of the old poor law. Scole's respondent, John Aynho, noted that, 'the certain resource of the Poor's Rates makes them [agricultural labourers] less solicitous to give satisfaction to their employers than they formerly were, when it was considered almost disgraceful to apply for Parish relief.'³³ Redenhall with Harleston's Samuel Davy answered that, 'the industry of the labouring classes is in a great measure destroyed, first

³¹ Question thirty-six asked, 'Is the Amount of Agricultural Capital in your Neighbourhood increasing or diminishing? -and do you attribute such an increase or diminution to any cause connected with the Administration of the Poor Laws?' Answers for Norfolk parishes are in 'Report from H.M.C. on the Poor Laws Appendix (B.1) Part III', B.P.P. 1834 XXXII (44), pp. 306c-330c.

³² Question thirty-seven asked, 'Is the Industry of the Labourers in your Neighbourhood supposed to be increasing or diminishing?' For criticisms of the question see Blaug, 'Poor Law Reexamined', p. 240.

³³ B.P.P. 1834 XXXII (44), p. 321c.

by farmers not keeping servants, leaving the sons of labourers in idleness and unemployed; secondly by the congregating together of the unemployed Men and Boys in gravel-pits & c at low wages where habits of idleness gaming, poaching and robbing are taught.³⁴

For the Norfolk respondents to Rural Queries we find the litany of problems that the New Poor Law sought to rectify: of under and unemployment and of the destabilising social consequences of social change. It is a truism that one of the more studied questions in Rural Queries, question fifty-three, which subliminally attempted to connect the old poor law with rural unrest, did not often elicit an explicit connection between the practice of poor relief and rural unrest.³⁵ For Norfolk only seven out of thirty parishes made an explicit connection between the poor law and rural unrest. Closer inspection of the replies points to explanations rooted in the operation of the local economy and the labour market. Insufficient labour opportunities and wages feature in answers to the question. Sometimes these are combined with outside influences such as a seditious press or outside radicals. The poor law is less explicitly blamed than for the decline of agricultural capital, yet reading between the lines there is a firm indictment of and sensitivity to the problems of surplus labour. Robert Hawes of Coltishall noted that, 'the dreadfully depressed condition of many of the Agricultural Labourers at the time made them quite ready to join in anything'.³⁶ The cocktail of depressed agricultural conditions, changing labour practices and seditious rumours provides evidence of the unstable context to rural social relations in the early 1830s.

³⁴ ibid., p. 319c.

³⁵ Question fifty-three asked, 'Can you give the Commissioners any information respecting the causes and consequences of the Agricultural Riots and Burning of 1830 and 1831?' Hobsbawm and Rudé analysed the response to the question in Swing counties. For Norfolk the three most popular explanations were low wages, unemployment and agitators and beer-shops. The poor law was blamed for unrest explicitly by only five respondents. (See Captain Swing, p.82). For the connection between question fifty-three and the predetermination of the questioners see Dunkley, Crisis of Old Poor Law, pp. 109-111.

³⁶ B.P.P. 1834 XXXIV (44), p. 310e.

More specifically allied to the chronology of pauper emigration from Norfolk are the answers provided to a neglected question of Rural Queries, question forty. It asked: 'What do you think would be the Effects, both immediate and ultimate, of an Enactment forbidding such Allowance [relief to able-bodied labourers], and thus throwing wholly on Parish Employment all those whose Earnings could not fully support themselves and their Families?' The neglect of this question by poor law historians appears rather strange. It elicits a response to a policy similar to that which the New Poor Law established from those who would implement such a policy at the grassroots level. The policy floated sought to end the practice of giving casual out-relief and doles, replacing it with work. It suggested an end to the less rigorous old poor law and the development of some sort of test of less eligibility. As a proposal it lacked the clarity and certainty of the workhouse test, and we must remember the general castigation of parish schemes of employment on roads or gravel pits of which Samuel Davy's remarks provide a good example. Its departure from the principles of out-relief allows us to see it as a less rigorous prototype for the reform of 1834. The answers provide us with further evidence of an awareness amongst the governors of rural England of the difficulties of enacting a change in relief policy. The replies furthermore explain why Norfolk parishes embraced the policy of assisted emigration and migration as supplementary measures to the reform of welfare provision. We might suggest that whatever anxieties were expressed about the introduction of a work test would be much greater about an even more dramatic change in the operation of a system of relief, the workhouse test.

Of twenty-seven parishes that provided a direct answer to the question, only five supported the introduction of such a system unequivocally. Twenty-two noted the difficulties of such a change, of which only ten believed that the policy could be ultimately beneficial. The answers provide some explanation for the continued high level of out-relief payments in

Norfolk in the 1840s and beyond.³⁷ The potential problems of a dramatic curtailment of relief spending is shown by Thomas Brettingham, churchwarden of Brockdish's answer that, 'many would be compelled to starve or rob. The rope and the bayonet would thin our numbers, and in time the survivors might earn their living.'³⁸ The phraseology is intriguing and conjures up an image of the siege mentality that local officials came to adopt. Cockley Clay's spokesman tersely noted: 'No keeping them in order'.³⁹ Robert Hawes of Coltishall, which assisted eight people to leave in 1836, noted the 'great danger' of such a change and explicitly noted the value unprompted of removing surplus labour.⁴⁰ The rector of Denton noted that in the present state of the country that it would be hazardous and as with other respondents noted the need for some special allowances for large families.⁴¹ The answers depict a society fearful of the immediate consequences of a significant change in relief practice, and perhaps doubtful of its ability to implement change. Dersingham's officer noted that, 'it will be difficult to satisfy the people and keep them quiet, and from doing mischief next winter'.⁴² Mattishall's spokesman noted that the result of such an enactment would be 'immediate starvation'.⁴³ Immediate ill-feeling and discontent were predicted by most respondents to the question. In the eyes of the Norfolk poor law administrators, the practicality of introducing a dramatic change in the basis of poor relief administration was clearly questioned. The basis for poor law reform was an assumption that the operation of the old poor law was the principal cause

³⁷ Digby, *Pauper Palaces*, p. 110.

³⁸ B.P.P. 1834 XXXIII (44), p. 306d.

³⁹ *ibid*, p. 308d.

⁴⁰ *ibid*, p. 309d.

⁴¹ *ibid*, p. 311d.

⁴² *ibid*, p. 313d.

⁴³ *ibid*, p. 318d.

of the poor relief problem. The analysis of Senior and Chadwick did not countenance that 'surplus labour' was a specific problem in its own right in large swathes of rural England. The replies from Norfolk parishes to question forty suggest a clear lack of faith that the problem of 'surplus labour' could be spirited away by the introduction of a new relief system. The extent of the 'surplus labour' problem in Norfolk is shown by Blaug's calculation that over three quarters of Norfolk parishes answering Rural Queries had a 'surplus labour' problem.⁴⁴ In Norfolk we may suggest that assisted emigration provided one way of easing the fears of parish and poor about the consequences of the introduction of the New Poor Law. For those fearful of the immediate distress that such changes would produce, assisted emigration offered one way of defusing tensions.

Norfolk parishes were not alone in their less than whole-hearted support for the policy outlined in question forty. Northamptonshire and Bedfordshire parishes expressed doubts about the efficacy of the policy. Perhaps the fears of the dangers to which the ending of out-relief might expose rural society were more explicitly stated in Norfolk than in the South Midlands. A further reason for Norfolk's 'emigration fever' might be found in the agricultural development of Norfolk. It was a land of advanced capitalist agriculture, famous for agricultural innovation and scientific farming methods. Its leading landowner gloried in his reputation as the 'country's first commoner'. Agricultural advancement was associated with the ending of old communal practices, replaced by the rationale of the market; the shift from face to face social relations of service to less personalised wage labour. We may suggest that this process was particularly advanced in Norfolk where farms were large and seasonal labour trends pronounced.⁴⁵ Labourers were but one factor of production. The old poor law had

⁴⁴ Blaug, 'Poor Law Report Reexamined', p. 236.

⁴⁵ For the advanced state of East Anglian agriculture and its contribution to the creation of an 'explosive situation' see Hobsbawm and Rudé, Captain Swing, pp. 83-4.

been manipulated to service the aims of capitalist agriculture, serving as a subsidy in aid of wages. The workhouse test sought to end the manipulation of the relief system by farmers. Out-relief to the able-bodied male was meant to become a thing of the past. Labourers could either subsist by their own labours or go into the workhouse. Yet in the highly seasonal labour market in grain-producing districts of Norfolk the workhouse test appeared to cut across deeply entrenched habits and customs.

Given the dramatic change in relief practice that the New Poor Law sought to introduce, it is unsurprising that Norfolk parishes embraced one solution to the problem of 'surplus labour', a problem which poor law reform did not address directly, assisted emigration. Not all Norfolk parishes adopted the policy. For 1836-7 only one seventh of Norfolk parishes paid for their poor to leave under the facility of section sixty-two of the New Poor Law. Assisted emigration was not evenly spread.⁴⁶ (See figure 3.0). Five poor law unions provided over eighty per cent of Norfolk's emigrants. There were two main groupings of emigrating parishes: one large collection of parishes in the north of the county and a smaller group on the Suffolk border. The north of the county was a region of large farms and

⁴⁶ Of course this discussion of poor law emigration displays only one aspect of the policy of assisted emigration and migration. Poor law statistics give us 100 Norfolk parishes that assisted poor people to leave for North America (1836-7). However, the PLC returns only cover emigrants that left with the PLC's sanction. Hidden from view are the parishes that paid for their poor to leave without PLC sanction and those that paid for emigration before the relatively systematic collection and reproduction of data that the new era of administrative centralisation introduced. For the period 1830-6 there are a number of cases of parochial emigration from Norfolk. We have already noted Stuart's assertion stating the extent of Norfolk emigration at the time he compiled his report. The PLC statistics thus miss Norfolk parishes that assisted people to leave before or in the immediate aftermath of poor law reform, and classify all parishes not recorded by the PLC as 'non-emigrating'. To note all Norfolk emigrating parishes in the old poor law era is impossible. We are reliant on the chance survival of vestry minutes and churchwardens' accounts. The thorough investigation of this type of parish record was made impossible for this author by the closure of Norfolk Record Office as a consequence of a dreadful fire (summer 1994). The discussion of Norfolk 'emigration fever' parishes is thus limited by the PLC's coverage. A further aspect of parish population policy that was practised by Norfolk parishes, internal migration to the manufacturing districts, is not recorded at a parish level. Whether emigration and migration were sponsored by the same or different parishes is impossible to judge.

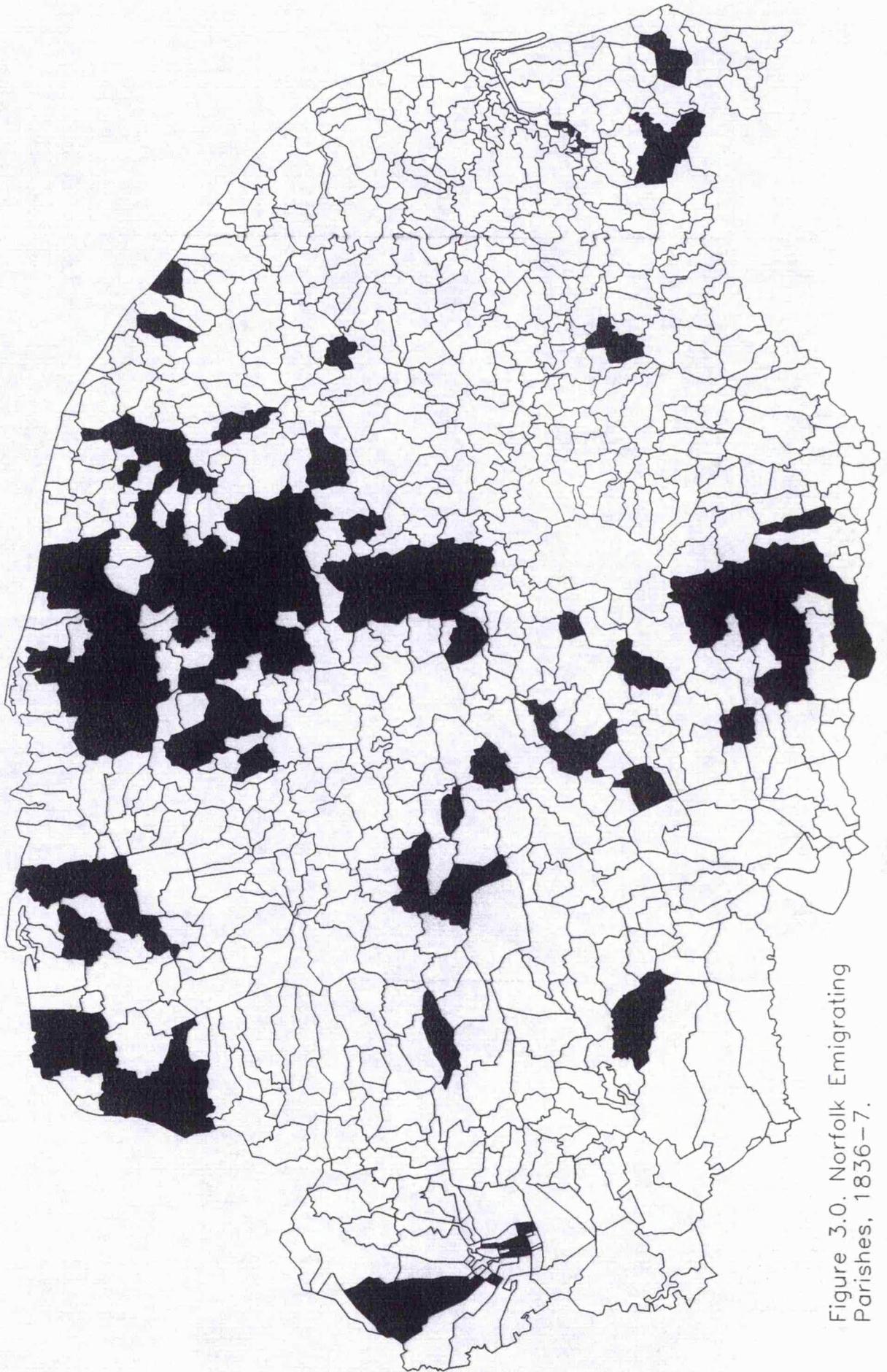


Figure 3.0. Norfolk Emigrating Parishes, 1836-7.

agricultural improvement, the heartland of the Coke estates. It contrasts with the smaller farms of the north east which provided few assisted emigrants, though a number of self-financed yeomen emigrants.⁴⁷ The Norfolk-Suffolk border country was less arable than the north, an area of mixed farming on difficult stiff loams and clays.⁴⁸ The border region was suffering from the contraction of non-agricultural employment opportunities with the collapse of the woollen cloth industry.⁴⁹ It is not surprising that assisted emigration was concentrated in particular regions and that few parishes were completely isolated from other emigrating parishes. Board of Guardians meetings provided a new meeting place for parochial officials to discuss their policies. Ideas about emigration were disseminated at such meetings, as were other issues of social policy. Furthermore the emigrants would not have only known about life in their own parish. Short distance migration was a feature of rural life. In neighbouring parishes relatives and friends might live. Thus the news and ideas of emigration might have spread.⁵⁰

A central question to address is whether emigrating parishes were in any sense distinctive from those that did not assist people to emigrate. The answer hinges on finding an effective way of categorising parishes. This is by no means a simple task as work on 'open' and 'close' parishes has shown. Unsurprisingly this discussion of emigrating parishes can only suggest some influencing factors in the adoption of the policy of assisted emigration by rural parishes, not provide cast-iron explanations.

Tables 3.3 to 3.6 show some of the basic features of Norfolk emigrating parishes.

⁴⁷ For an example of a yeoman emigrant from north-east Norfolk see the letters of John Fisher in Erickson, *Invisible Immigrants*, pp. 110-28.

⁴⁸ Digby, *Pauper Palaces*, p. 16.

⁴⁹ Archer, *By a Flash*, pp. 44, 130-1.

⁵⁰ For the regional concentration of Devon and Cornish emigration to New Zealand in the early 1840s see Dalziel, 'Emigration and Kinship', pp. 115-22.

They were small in population, eighty-five per cent had under eight-hundred people in 1831. They had above average relief expenditure. Over fifty per cent of Norfolk emigrating parishes had relief expenditure of over one pound per head per year in the years before the introduction of the New Poor Law. Emigrating parishes were relatively densely populated, more than half the emigrating parishes had less than five acres per head of population. The rate of population growth was widely distributed.

Table 3.3: Population of Norfolk emigrating parishes

Population (1831)	Frequency
0-199	6
200-399	39
400-599	21
600-799	18
800-999	6
1000-1199	6
1200-1399	4
1400+	1

Source: Census and 2nd and 3rd PLC Reports.

Table 3.4: Relief per head (1834-6) of Norfolk emigrating parishes

Relief / head (£)	Frequency
0-0.495	3
0.495-0.995	38
0.995-1.495	34
1.495-1.995	18
1.995-2.495	5
2.495-2.945	2
2.945+	1

Source: as above.

A consideration of four features of Norfolk emigrating parishes, gleaned from published sources enables us to suggest some common features and influencing factors upon the decision to assist poor people to emigrate. There is a positive correlation between annual relief per head and emigration rate ($R_{sq} = 0.46$). In other words the higher the per capita relief expenditure the greater proportion of poor people assisted to leave. There is a weaker relationship between population density and emigration rate for emigrating parishes (R_{sq}

=0.29). Thus parishes with a high relief burden and with a high population density assisted more people proportionately to leave.

Table 3.5: Population Density of Norfolk emigrating parishes

Acres/ head	Frequency
0-1	1
1-2	4
2-3	15
3-4	28
4-5	18
5-6	16
6-7	10
7-8	1
8-9	1
9-10	2
10-11	1
11-12	1
15-16	1
16-17	1
33.37	1

Source: as above.

Table 3.6: Population Growth of Norfolk Emigrating Parishes (1801-31)

% Population change (1801-31)	Frequency
0-5	4
5-10	4
10-15	8
15-20	9
20-25	6
25-30	9
30-35	6
35-40	7
40-45	9
45-50	9
50-55	7
55-60	6
60-65	6
65-70	7
70-75	1
75-80	1
100+	2

Source: as above.

We might provisionally suggest that the key determinant of assisted emigration was the poor relief burden. As the New Poor Law sought to lower relief payments we might suggest that parishes where relief bills were highest would be the keenest to remove their poor. To test

this assertion the five highest emigrating unions were considered. Parishes within each union were classified as either emigrating or non-emigrating parishes. For these unions there was a clear difference between average relief expenditure of emigrating and non-emigrating parishes. (See Table 3.7). For the Aylsham Union average relief bills of emigrating parishes were fifty per cent higher than for non-emigrating parishes.⁵¹ Clearly in parishes where relief demands were highest and a genuine surplus labour problem existed there was a greater tendency to assist poor people to emigrate.

Table 3.7: Comparison Between Norfolk Emigrating and non-emigrating parishes relief expenditure (1836-7).

UNION	EMIGRATING relief / head (£)	NON-EMIGRATING relief / head (£)	%DIFFERENCE
Aylsham	1.25	0.82	52
Docking	1.18	1.04	13
Erpingham	0.96	0.78	23
Guiltcross	0.98	0.73	34
Walsingham	1.29	0.89	45

Source: as above.

The interpretation of per capita relief figures perhaps suggests that emigrating parishes were the most heavily burdened with poor. We should not, however, dismiss other interpretations. Emigrating parishes might have been traditionally more generous to their poor. Emigration might have been an extension of whatever tradition of parish generosity had existed before. Both parish and poor were aware that the New Poor Law sought a new rationale for poor relief. To both parties less eligibility might have appeared too harsh and too abstract a concept. The more central poor relief had been to the local economy, the more practical a solution poor law emigration might appear.

⁵¹ Two high relief non-emigrating parishes were excluded from the calculations as their relief expenditure was very high though the population was barely in double figures. These two parishes were taken as having too great a distorting affect on the average relief calculations.

Table 3.8: Comparison between Norfolk emigrating and non-emigrating parishes populations.

Union	Emigrating Pop (1831)	Non-emigrating Pop (1831)
Aylsham	497	371
Docking	553	371
Erpingham	477	388
Guilthorpe	850	223
Walsingham	411	418

Source: as above.

Compared with non-emigrating parishes in the same poor law union, parishes that paid for their poor to leave were large in population. (See Table 3.8). To a considerable extent the discrepancy in average size of population between non-emigrating and emigrating parishes is attributable to the low number of sparsely populated parishes that paid for their poor to leave. In other words we know which Norfolk parishes did not pay for their poor to leave: sparsely populated parishes, which might be classified as underpopulated parishes, and might be labelled as extreme examples of 'close' parishes.

Population growth was also higher for emigrating parishes than for non-emigrating parishes. Furthermore, on average emigrating parishes had fewer acres per head of population than did non-emigrating parishes.

A further question of interest is the relationship between rural unrest and assisted emigration. Rural unrest provides the background context to a sense of unease and uncertainty that shaped elite attitudes to 'surplus labour' and poor relief. The difficulty for the historian is to connect specific examples of social protest with social policy responses. The problems are considerable. The reporting of rural unrest was erratic. There were solid reasons for the non-reporting of unrest, as reports might incite others to air their grievances in a similar manner. The central question is whether turbulent parishes were more likely to assist their poor to emigrate than peaceful ones. In a celebrated article J.S. MacDonald argued that in Italy in the early twentieth century there was a choice of what appeared to be

mutually exclusive strategies for the Italian peasantry: emigration or rural radicalism.⁵² MacDonald was looking at competing strategies adopted by the poor. In early nineteenth-century rural England the picture is further complicated by the influence of the elite who paid for their poor to emigrate. In Norfolk, Archer has suggested that there was a strong connection between rural unrest and economic hardship. We have seen that economically depressed, at least in terms of poor relief expenditure, parishes were more likely to assist their poor to emigrate. We might therefore anticipate that the same parishes which assisted poor people to emigrate were those that suffered from rural unrest. Archer has identified a number of 'troublesome parishes' such as Edgefield, Creake, Briston, Saxthorpe, Wood Dalling, Reepham and Haydon which used emigration as a way of alleviating pressures.⁵³ Apfel identified ninety-five Norfolk parishes as Swing parishes⁵⁴. Thirty-five of these parishes assisted poor people to emigrate in 1836-7. Of all Norfolk parishes, only one seventh were troubled by the Swing revolt; but of emigrating parishes, over one third witnessed upheaval during the Swing riots. We might tentatively suggest that Swing parishes displayed a disproportionate tendency to assist people to leave.⁵⁵ MacDonald found that in Italy rural radicalism and emigration were mutually exclusive. This was not the case in Norfolk in the 1830s where some parishes experienced both rural unrest and emigration. Rural unrest might have been a prelude to assisted emigration.

⁵² J.S. MacDonald, 'Cultural Organization, Migration and Labour Militancy', *Economic History Review*, 16 (1963), 61-75.

⁵³ Archer, *By a Flash*, p. 105.

⁵⁴ William Harris Apfel, 'Crisis in Rural Society, 1790-1830: Social Change and Class Relationships in Norfolk, England', (Ph.D dissertation, Brown University, 1984), pp. 507-8.

⁵⁵ If there was no connection between Swing and emigration one would have expected the proportion of emigrating parishes experiencing turbulence in 1830/1 to be roughly the same as for all Norfolk parishes. In fact a Swing parish was more than two times as likely to assist people to emigrate as a non-Swing parish.

The spatial distribution of rural unrest in Norfolk, however, was not as concentrated as for assisted emigration. Pockets of incendiarism coincide with pockets of assisted emigration. The Norfolk-Suffolk border region of the Guiltcross Union saw a high level of assisted emigration and incendiarism, as did the far north-west and north-central region, around Aylsham. The north-east corner of the county assisted no emigrants but this had pockets of incendiarism. To find a neat link between incendiarism and rural unrest and emigration would be perhaps too convenient. However incendiarism does point to the strains within Norfolk society, strains which the New Poor Law in the short term might exacerbate. Within this context parishes, forced to confront the problem of 'surplus labour', and high poor rates, might seek recourse to the 'safety valve' of assisted emigration.

Later Norfolk emigration is on a different scale from the 'emigration fever'. The same volume of people did not go after 1836/7. If parishes assisted people to leave, it was likely to be a single family or even an individual. There is a connection between years of economic hardship and unrest and the chronology of post-1836/7 emigration. However, to gain a full appreciation of the motivations involved it would be necessary to probe deeper into the individual socio-economic circumstances of each emigrating parish than this project has sought to do. Even then the answers might not be especially conclusive. The emigration from Norfolk in 1852 has one additional dimension which further complicates the picture, a different destination, Australia. Previous Norfolk emigrants had gone primarily to British North America. Attempts to persuade Norfolk parishes to emigrate poor people to Australia had failed in 1837.⁵⁶ In 1852 some Norfolk people were assisted to leave for the Australian colonies in significant numbers for the first time. The small number assisted to leave from each parish suggests a different characteristic from earlier emigrations. Families and individuals who met the selection criteria of Australian recruiters were assisted to leave; not

⁵⁶ Digby, *Pauper Palaces*, p. 105.

extended family networks. The availability of free passages, and 1852 was a considerable year for assisted passages to Australia, profoundly shaped the nature of the emigratory outflow.⁵⁷ This is not to say that the emigration was divorced from the socio-economic background. The economic and social conditions, notably a deep depression in prices of agricultural products from 1848-51, increased the preparedness of parishes to pay for poor people to leave, and shaped the wish of the poor to leave.⁵⁸ However, the willingness of the parishes to assist their poor to leave was increased by the limited financial assistance that was required as a consequence of the emigrants receiving assisted passages.

For Norfolk we can see two clear periods of assisted emigration. The first, a frenetic almost panicked response to the changing relief system, was followed by a period of calm when the rulers of Norfolk realised that they could manipulate the new system as they had manipulated the old. The second period of assisted emigration saw the policy applied in an individual and dispersed way. The Norfolk pattern of emigration is dramatic, suggesting the realisation amongst the rulers of rural Norfolk that the New Poor Law, despite the reformers' rhetoric, did not address the issue of 'surplus labour'. The sudden end to emigratory activity suggests the limited capacity of rural leaders to enter into large capital projects. It also suggests, that from their perspective, the operation of the New Poor Law did not call for drastic measures once the teething problems had been overcome.

In contrast to Norfolk neither Northamptonshire nor Bedfordshire saw a panicked 'emigration fever' in the aftermath of the implementation of the New Poor Law. This is not to say that either county was confident of the impact of the New Poor Law. The Duke of Bedford was anxious about the state of public order in Bedfordshire during the Swing revolts

⁵⁷ Of 3127 poor law emigrants that left in 1852 2598 (83%) went to Australian colonies.

⁵⁸ Armstrong, *Farmworkers*, p. 84.

and there was a degree of unrest. Indeed the riot at the Ampthill Union was a celebrated example of rural protest against the New Poor Law where the protesters used women and children in the front line. Perhaps Northamptonshire was less riotous in the 1830s, though this perception might largely be a consequence of the limited state of research on Northamptonshire history. Both counties provide examples of experimentation in poor relief policy and some flirting with emigration and migration; but Poor Law Commission returns and local records only suggest that this was carried out fitfully.⁵⁹ Neither Northamptonshire nor Bedfordshire had easy access to Atlantic bound ports and neither had an Assistant Commissioner like Kay or Parry in Norfolk who was associated with emigration. It appears that in both Northamptonshire and Bedfordshire, parishes waited to see how the New Poor Law would rescue them from the problems of rural society. Where all counties share a common pattern is in a period of sustained non-assisted emigration (1838-42). The mid 1840s saw a number of parishes in Northamptonshire and Bedfordshire assisting poor people to emigrate. This was a period when the South Midlands region assisted between one third and one half of all assisted emigrants.

For the South Midlands the mid-1840s were the key years for the adoption of assisted emigration. As with Norfolk the pattern of emigrating parishes was not evenly spread

⁵⁹ References to Bedfordshire pre-1836 emigration include: B.C.R.O. P28/12/8, Roxton overseers' accounts, 1830; P118/8/1, Woburn vestry minutes, 1 April 1833; P40/18/65-8, Oakley emigration papers, 1831; P112/8/2, Aspley Guise vestry minutes, 15 February 1830; P50/8/3, Riseley vestry minutes, 25 August 1834; P103/12/1, Hockliffe overseers' accounts, 1833. See also Cirket, '1830 Riots', pp. 108-9. Two-hundred and ninety-eight Bedfordshire people were assisted to migrate to the manufacturing districts from 1835-37 (see Redford, *Labour Migration*, p. 108). Northamptonshire references to pre-1834 emigration include: N.C.R.O. 92P/55, Crick vestry minutes, 18 May 1830; 92P/131, Crick overseers' accounts, 30 June 1832; 133P/14, Geddington register of burials; 314P/50, Sywell churchwardens' accounts, 6 January 1830; 85P/155, Cottingham select vestry minutes, 23 April 1829. Only eight Northamptonshire people were assisted to migrate to the manufacturing districts. An example of parish sponsored experimentation in internal migration is 48P/42, Brigstock vestry minutes, 20 November 1834: a motion to pay for two or three people to test the labour market in South Wales.

throughout the two counties. Bedfordshire, a small county of barely one hundred parishes, over the whole period saw over sixty parishes assist some people to emigrate. Given the size of the county it is difficult to form any clear conclusions relating to the distribution of emigration. However we can observe the clustering together of emigrating parishes at particular times. In 1836-7 a clump of parishes to the south of Bedford (Wilshamstead, Elstow and Wooton) assisted families to leave for Canada. Over 1844/5 the focus of emigration from the Bedford Union shifted from the southern half of the region to the north-west. The parishes of Riseley, Bletsoe, Colnworth, Stevington and Bromham all assisted emigrants to leave for South Australia. In the Ampthill Union the main group of emigrating parishes was to the west of the union town. All the emigrants left from 1847 to 1850. All the emigrants from the Biggleswade Union left for Australia in 1852. It is easy to push spatial arguments too far. However, though not distinguishing themselves in terms of demographic characteristics, the pattern of assisted emigration from Bedfordshire provides an interesting illustration of micro-regional emigration. Few parishes sent emigrants acting as an isolated parish. Bedfordshire parishes appear to have had some degree of cross-parochial cooperation. A further reason for the grouping together of emigrating parishes over time and place is the movements of colonial recruiters. Struggling to meet their quotas, it would be natural to use the union as a unit for arranging the distribution of assisted passages.

In Northamptonshire, as with Bedfordshire, we see the mid-1840s as the years of assisted emigration. Given the larger number of non-emigrating parishes the geographical clustering of emigrating parishes is perhaps more obvious. (See Figure 3.1) There are a number of small clumps of parishes in the south of the county and a larger connected grouping towards the north-east in the Kettering region. As with Norfolk's emigration few emigrating parishes are completely isolated. Again different parts of Northamptonshire sent their poor overseas at different times. In the south of the county in the Brackley and Daventry Unions

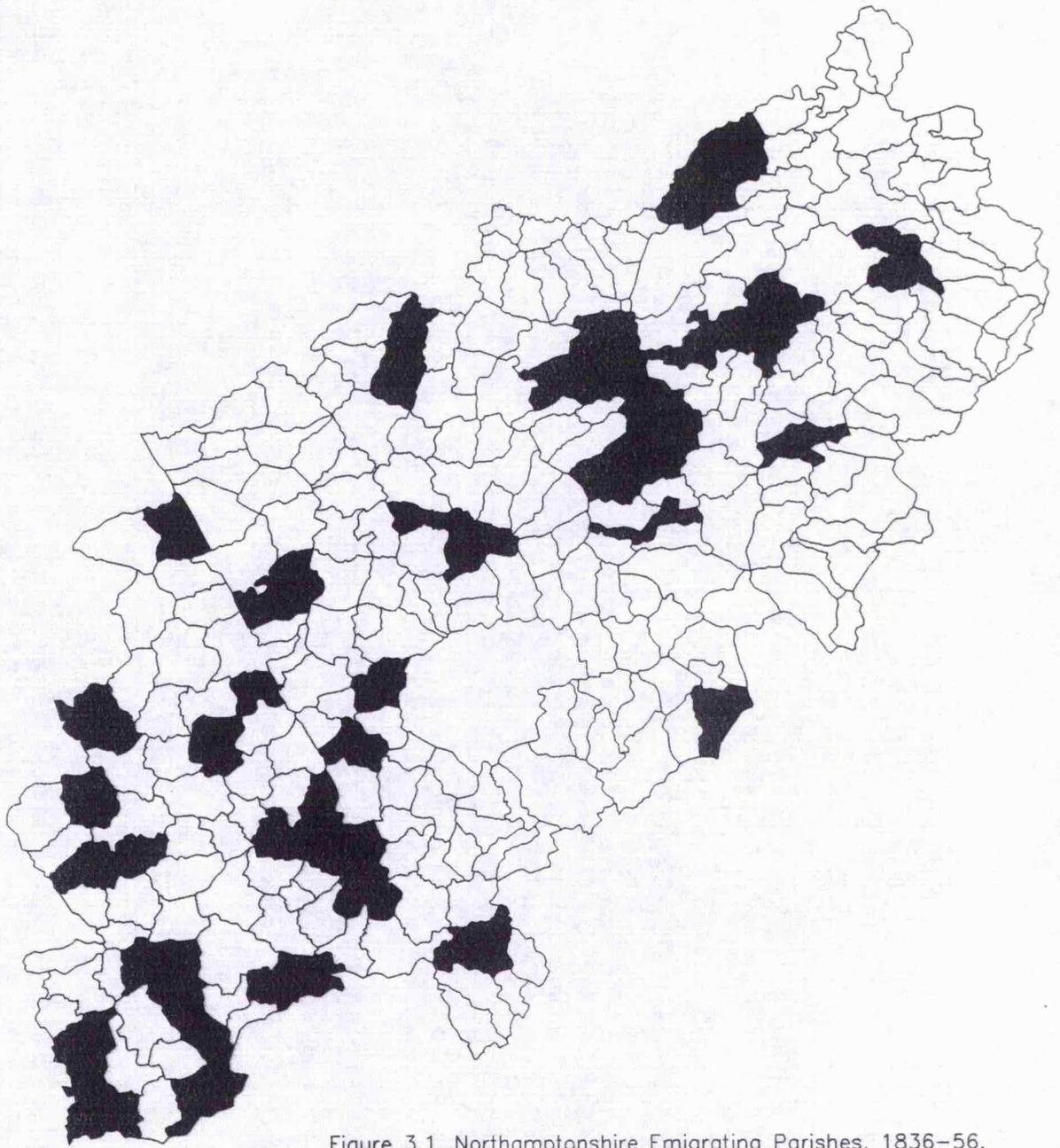


Figure 3.1. Northamptonshire Emigrating Parishes, 1836–56.

assisted emigration was practised in the mid-1840s. In 1844 fifty-three out of eighty-one Northamptonshire emigrants came from the Brackley Union. In 1845 eighty-five out of one-hundred and sixty-nine Northamptonshire emigrants came from the same union. Furthermore within the same union was Aynho which over the period assisted approximately one-hundred people to leave through the financial assistance of the Cartwright family, the dominant landholders of the area, an area known as 'Cartwright corner'. In this part of the county the main type of agriculture was pastoral, with between fifty to seventy-five per cent of land used for pasture in some emigrating parishes. We might suggest that this form of agriculture, less-dependent on seasonal labour than arable farming, made it easier to calculate parochial labour requirements. A further feature of life in the Brackley Union in the mid-1840s was the rise in poor rates. From 1839 to 1844 poor-relief expenditure had remained at around seven thousand pounds for the whole union.

Table 3.9 Amount of Money Expended on Relief in the Bedford and Brackley Unions (1837-46).

YEARS (ended at lady day)	Brackley Union (£)	Bedford Union (£)
1837	5494	9896
1838	6547	10046
1839	6892	10941
1840	6842	10530
1841	6875	10502
1842	6801	10899
1843	7071	10788
1844	7003	11310
1845	7926	12060
1846	7202	11494

Source: 'Poor Law Commissioners 13th Report (1847)', B.P.P. 1847 XXVIII (816), pp. 242, 246.

For the financial year 1844/5, poor-relief expenditure nearly reached eight thousand pounds. This marked increase in poor-relief expenditure might have determined some neighbouring parish officers, ever-sensitive to the demands made upon their pockets, to try to assist their poor to leave. We might also take rising poor-relief bills as an index of economic well being.

For 1845/6 poor-relief expenditure in the Brackley Union returned to just over seven thousand pounds. Emigration from that part of Northamptonshire died down after 1845. In the Bedford Union in the mid-1840s, when a number of people left, relief bills had risen to twelve thousand pounds, when for the late 1830s and early 1840s relief payments had been less than eleven thousand pounds. (See Table 3.9.) In both the Bedford and Brackley Unions a marked rise in relief expenditure saw a rise in assisted emigration. The subsequent fall in relief expenditure was matched by a decline in emigratory activity.

A further contributing feature to Northamptonshire emigration might have been an increased awareness of and concern about the problems of incendiarism. The 1840s appear to have seen something of a moral panic in Northamptonshire about incendiarism.⁶⁰ Yet despite concerns and anxieties about the state of rural society in Northamptonshire, emigration was never adopted as a widespread social policy. For all but five Northamptonshire parishes emigration was a one off experiment. The five heavy emigrating parishes of Aynho, Marston Saint Lawrence, Bugbrooke, Brigstock and Pytchley all share a number of features. Agriculture was primarily pastoral and landholding was concentrated. Furthermore each parish had a keen promoter of emigration in the form of an active clergyman. Reverend Brown of Pytchley and Reverend Harrison of Bugbrooke will receive greater attention in later chapters. The introduction of individuals into the equation suggests that socio-economic circumstances were not the sole determinant of assisted emigration.

The conditions of rural England with its chronic unemployment and underemployment of labour; endemic incendiarism; divisions between rich and poor; low wages and cramped living conditions of the poor who lived life under the shadow of the workhouse, and bills which the rich were reluctant to pay, made emigration a realistic policy option for poor and

⁶⁰ Mandy Preston, 'Rural Protest in Northamptonshire, 1840-49: Arson and Incendiarism' (unpublished BA thesis, Nene College, 1994).

parish ratepayers. Particular times, linked with rural crime waves and higher than average poor-rate expenditure, appeared to see greater interest in assisted emigration than times of quiet and relative economic stability. To pay for their poor to leave, the parish officers appear to have required compelling reasons. The most compelling reasons were those that affected the well-being of the ratepayers, either in terms of property rights or poor rates. The connections between poor rates and public order considerations and emigration are most obvious with the Norfolk emigration fever. Scared of the social and monetary consequences of the New Poor Law, the Norfolk parishes, especially those of higher than average relief bills and some social discord, assisted over three thousand people to emigrate. In Northamptonshire and Bedfordshire the same influences on parish ratepayers are observed, however on a limited scale.

The pattern of assisted emigration even from three rural counties is complex. In fact we are not really examining one policy at all. Assisted emigration meant different things to different people at different times in different locales. Only in Norfolk in 1836 do we see what could be described as an extensive adoption of the policy. In Northamptonshire and Bedfordshire, the scale of emigration was not of the same magnitude and only in a few parishes was a significant portion of the population assisted to leave. However, the emigration of a few people is not without significance. For the people assisted and for those that paid for it the policy must have mattered and must have had some logic. However for the emigration of perhaps one family or one individual it is difficult to form clear explanations rooted in the social and economic circumstances of the time. We can explain why people were assisted to emigrate; but why was only one individual or just one family assisted from a particular parish or town? The erratic nature of the distribution of assisted emigration in the 1850s is difficult to explain. We could suggest that individuals were picked off to reduce the relief bills of the parish. This was the case in some parishes undoubtedly. Yet there might be

another reason which suggests how assisted emigration changed its nature from a palliative for the New Poor Law, to a welfare right claimed by the poor of some benefit to colonial emigrant recruiters. Assisted emigration ceased to be a tool of parish population policy, it became a benefit which would enable the poor to leave for Australian colonies whose recruitment criteria they had fulfilled. The parish had an interest in perhaps ensuring that recipients of assisted passages took advantage of the opportunities presented to them. Yet it appears that little pressure was applied by parishes in the 1850s to remove their poor.

The difficulties of explaining the background to assisted emigration are the problems of connecting one exceptional social policy response to the overall context. More data on parish relief patterns, individual emigrant relief histories and of landownership might draw closer relationships. Yet this chapter has sought to suggest structural factors which might incline people to seek one particular response to a particular situation. As with any causation model, we can only be tentative. We can find parishes which assisted people to emigrate when relief bills were low and all seemed well and vice versa. This chapter has outlined a context which provides a setting for the remainder of the study. It provides a foundation for making sense of the actions of the emigrants and the emigrators. It also suggests that to appreciate the nature of assisted emigration, and perhaps any emigration, we have to move beyond statistics and attempt to extract meaning. In other words, what did assisted emigration mean to emigrants and emigrators? The remainder of this thesis provides some of the answers to these questions.

CHAPTER IV: POOR LAW EMIGRANTS: DEMOGRAPHY AND 'QUALITY'

This chapter presents the available data for emigrants assisted to leave Bedfordshire, Norfolk and Northamptonshire under clause sixty-two of the New Poor Law. Intensive work on the manuscript lists held at the Public Record Office allows us to answer a number of questions about the emigrants. How old were they? How did they travel, as individuals or as family groups? How many were male and female? At what stage in their life-cycle did they travel? The demographic evidence allows us to compare the emigration of poor labourers with other emigrant groups, and can allow some assessment of the quality of the poor emigrants which can be supplemented by qualitative remarks and relief figures that are also available.

Work on PRO MH 12 has garnered data on 4594 emigrants who left the three counties between 1836 and 1857 (See Table 4.1). This is approximately 20 per cent of all the emigrants assisted to leave England under clause sixty-two. The principal destinations of poor law emigrants were the Canadian colonies (mainly Upper and Lower Canada) and the Australian colonies.¹

MH 12 is not an easy source to use for emigration research. The vast majority of material in these bulky files of correspondence between Poor Law Boards of Guardians and the Poor Law Commission (later Board) does not concern emigration at all.

¹ For this thesis 'Australian colonies' covers the destinations of South Australia, Port Phillip, Van Diemen's Land (Tasmania), Western Australia and New South Wales. At the data-processing stage of the investigation the different Australian colonies were kept separate; but there appeared to be considerable confusion amongst local officials as to which Australian colonies the emigrants were sent. On occasions printed returns present a different Australian destination than is found in the manuscripts. For the heavy emigration year of 1852, the PLC record all Australian destinations as 'Australia'. A further reason for lumping all Australian destinations together was the limited amount of data available; only 916 emigrants. Thus comparisons between emigrant flows to the different Australian destinations would lead to tenuous conclusions in this work. With more data such a comparison might be useful; though parish officers and clerks to Boards of Guardians often just wrote down 'Australia'.

Table 4.1 *Destinations of the poor law emigrants (1836-57).*

Australian Colonies	Canadian Colonies	Cape	United States	New Zealand	Total
916	3602	24	48	4	4594

Source: PRO MH 12 for Beds, Northants and Norfolk.

The main concerns of the PLC and Boards of Guardians were with workhouse regulations, smallpox inoculation, the sale of parish property and new valuations. In a material way, leafing through the pages of MH 12 puts emigration in its true place as a minor part of the New Poor Law. In years of low emigration an emigration list might be just one page in a thousand page plus bound collection of correspondence. Faced with such an unwieldy bulk of mostly irrelevant material, though some does help to contextualise the emigrations and one would be churlish to pass too quickly over some of it, the researcher interested in emigration does have a few available short cuts. Poor law emigration figures were printed in the appendices of the annual reports of the PLC/B. These listings noted the county and parish from which the emigrants left, the number of emigrants, the destination and the amount of money authorised to be expended from the parish rates on emigration. Knowing the year and place of origin of the emigration allows one to then call up the relevant box in MH 12. (Each box contains the correspondence between the PLC/B and one poor law union for a number of years [given the bulk of correspondence, usually about two, though this varies].) This method of using published statistics as a guide saves time and also allows for an assessment of the representativeness of the data collected.

Table 4.2 shows the comparison between returns of poor law emigration published in PLC/B annual reports and the number of emigrants found in MH 12. The "clear-up" rates are impressive, indicating the usefulness of MH 12 in covering poor law emigration. Given the necessary resources it should be possible to present a complete picture of poor law

emigration. The reasons for a shortfall in the manuscript reporting of assisted emigration are numerous and shed light on the method used for the collection of data.

Table 4.2. "Clear-up" rate for poor law emigration (1836-58).

	Beds	Norfolk	Northants
Published figures	614	4011	608
Manuscript figures	485	3538	571
% "clear-up"	79	88	94

Source PRO MH 12 and annual emigration returns in PLC/B reports.

The main reason for the failure to match the published statistics is a product of a familiar problem in emigration research, poor quality lists. Eric Richards states, 'the study of emigration is a well-known statistical quagmire, a pit in which several good historians have been lost almost without trace'.² Different criteria as to what constitutes a 'good list' largely explains the disparity between Raymond Cohn's portrayal of English emigration in the first half of the nineteenth century and that of Charlotte Erickson and William Van Vugt.³ Some lists did not display family relationships, being only a confused jumble of names and ages. Others merely noted that a number of people had departed. Still others only listed the names of adult parents, not including the names and ages of children. Hindringham (Norfolk) listed eighteen adult emigrants that left in 1836. The PLC recorded that number in the return. Only in 1837 when the parish requested extra funds to pay for the emigration was the PLC made aware that

² Eric Richards, 'Varieties of Scottish Emigration in the Nineteenth Century', *Historical Studies*, 21 (1985), 473-95 (p. 474).

³ Cohn, 'The Occupations of English Immigrants'. Cohn took at face value lists which contained numerous dittoes under the occupational classification of 'labourer'. Erickson and Van Vugt used a sampling method of replacing a 'bad' list which contained numerous dittoes by a next available 'good list' which contained more detailed occupational information. For a description of this method see Erickson, 'The Uses of Passenger Lists'. Erickson maintains that 'bad lists' are unsuitable for the study of occupational data. When 'labourers' on 'bad lists' have been matched with other sources, the term 'labourer' appears a less than adequate description of the skills of those so listed. (I am indebted to Charlotte Erickson for this point which contrasts with her more equivocal published response to Cohn's article in *Leaving England*, p. 22.)

that children had accompanied the adults, making a total of twenty-eight and a half berths.⁴

This case shows the potential for inaccuracy in the published statistics.

For our purposes a 'good list' is a listing that provides sufficient details as to the family composition of the emigrant parties. In attempting to assess the characteristics of poor law emigration a strong emphasis was placed on the lists providing an indication of the family relationships of those that travelled. Assisted emigrants were classified as being members of nuclear family groups or not. Thus the emigrants are either heads of emigrating units, dependents or single people. We must acknowledge that this form of classification is to a certain extent simplistic. It over-simplifies family relationships into family units, presenting poor law emigration as a movement of nuclear families. Mothers travelling with married children and grandchildren have been classified as single people. Sisters and brothers travelling together have been classified as single emigrants. The main reason for adopting such an approach for the quantification of poor law emigrants was the difficulty of ascertaining such relationships. An unmarried brother travelling with his sister and brother-in-law would be impossible to identify, unless an additional note was made (the sister would have changed her name on marriage). Lists also feature a number of common names (common to the list, rather than common in general). We might assume some relationship between people sharing the same surname; but exactly what is not always (or even often) certain. In determining the nature of familial relationships it was deemed sufficient to associate parents with dependent children as members of nuclear family groups. This follows the practice adopted by parish officers who in the vast majority of cases listed families as nuclear units. If the composition of nuclear family units could be ascertained from the lists, the list was deemed 'good' and forms the basis for this chapter; those where family relationships were

⁴ PRO MH 12/8596, Hindringham list (1836); PRO MH 12/8597, Hindringham to PLC, 29 April 1837.

impossible to deduce were not used.

A further complication for the study of poor law emigration is the drawing up by parish officers of more than one emigrant list. Before the PLC approved the expenditure of parish funds on assisted emigration the parish had to submit a list of prospective emigrants, or to use the contemporary phrase 'a list of people desirous of emigrating'. After the emigrants had departed a second list was filled in, at the request of the PLC, to be used to compile the annual emigration returns. This was a list of actual emigrants. There is sometimes a disparity between the two lists, displaying the way that poor emigrants changed their minds about whether to emigrate or not. Sometimes the names change but the numbers stay the same; sometimes the numbers and the names change. Wherever possible the emigrant list has been used. However 'desirous' lists have not been dismissed out of hand. A second list might not have been submitted because there was no change from the 'desirous' list to the emigrant list. In the case of the Norfolk 'emigration fever' 'desirous' only lists are especially prevalent. Given the chaotic nature of the emigratory process in 1836, with forms and motions being drawn up with an irregularity that would not be tolerated by the PLC/B in future, discarding 'desirous' lists seemed out of keeping with the spirit of the movement. Furthermore the speed of the movement left little time for changes of mind. 'Desirous' lists have been taken as representative when the numbers listed relates to the numbers listed in the PLC annual reports of assisted emigration. Often there is an exact match, suggesting that the 'desirous' list might have been the list used by the PLC in the compilation of figures for assisted emigration. In concert with the published statistics, MH 12 allows us a reasonable guide to the nature of poor law assisted emigration.

Other reasons for a shortfall in the manuscript coverage of assisted emigration and the published statistics are more mundane. In some instances no record for the emigrations could be found in MH 12 or there was a small disparity between the parish list and the figure printed

in the annual return. Despite these technical difficulties MH 12 presents us with a remarkable opportunity to investigate the emigration of rural England's 'huddled masses'.

DEMOGRAPHIC COMPOSITION

Unlike the printed returns in the appendices of the PLC/B reports which grouped emigrants (after 1842) in ages of under seven, between seven and fourteen and fifteen and over, the manuscript lists in MH 12 provide exact ages of the emigrants. How reliable these figures are is questionable. There is sometimes a variation between ages in two list parishes; in these cases the latest list was chosen (essentially an arbitrary choice). On other occasions no age was given for certain emigrants (about five per cent). To counteract this deficiency in the data the age distributions have been weighted to take account of missing values. This largely avoids the problem of presenting a distribution of available ages, rather than of individuals.

A remarkable feature about emigration under the New Poor Law was the large number of children travelling. Nearly fifty per cent of all poor law emigrants from the three counties were under fourteen (see Table 4.3). This is a much higher proportion of children than left England and Wales for the United States as unassisted emigrants in 1831 and 1841. It is also a higher proportion of children than left northern European countries in the nineteenth century.⁵ There is also no marked difference between the age profile of Norfolk 'emigration fever' emigrants and Canadian emigrants who left the three counties between 1838 and 1858.

⁵ Swierenga notes that nineteen per cent of Dutch arrivals in the United States were between five and fourteen. See Robert P. Swierenga, 'Dutch Immigrant Demography, 1820-1880', *Journal of Family History*, 5 (1980), 390-405 (p. 391). Thirty one per cent of Canadian and twenty-five per cent of Australian poor law emigrants were in this age range. Köllmann and Marschalk note that about twenty per cent of Germans leaving Hamburg for the United States were under ten. See Wolfgang Köllmann and Peter Marschalk, 'German Emigration to the United States', *Perspectives in American History*, 7 (1973), 499-554 (p. 530). Thirty-seven per cent of Canadian poor law immigrants and thirty-one percent of Australian poor law immigrants were under ten.

In scale the Norfolk emigration differed from subsequent emigrations, however in terms of the demographic profile there appears to have been little difference. Australian poor law emigrants featured fewer children under fifteen than did Canadian immigrants. A further difference of the poor law sample from Erickson's figures is for the twenty to twenty-nine age group. Emigrants to the United States are over-represented in this category, compared with the 1841 population. Poor law emigrants, by contrast, shadow the 1841 census values quite closely. As with most emigrant populations, there were very few 'old emigrants'. It is interesting to note that a policy associated with the phrase 'shovelling out paupers' saw markedly fewer old people depart than did the free movement of English emigrants to the United States at the same time.

Table 4.3 *Demographic Composition of Poor Law Emigrants by Age (Percentage Distribution).*

Age	Poor Law	English and Welsh (U.S.A.)	
	1836-57	1831	1841
0-14	48.9	34.5	30.1
15-19	10.8	8.5	7.2
20-24	10.3	16.1	17.9
25-29	8.0	12.5	16.7
30-39	13.1	15.8	17.0
40-49	7.1	8.0	6.9
50+	1.9	4.5	4.2
Total	100	100	100
N=	4,594	6,229	5,499

Sources: PRO MH 12 'three county sample' and Charlotte Erickson, 'Emigration from the British Isles to the U.S.A. in 1841: Part I. Emigration from the British Isles', *Population Studies*, 48 (1989), p. 358.

The gender distribution of poor law emigrants is also interesting. Unsurprisingly there is little difference in the ratio between males and females amongst involuntary emigrants, children under fifteen. There is a bulge, common to emigrating populations, in the representation of males in the fifteen to twenty-four age group. Single males outnumber single females by a ratio of just under five to one. This is a comparable ratio with English United States immigrants (see Table 4.6). Given a contemporary discourse about the perils of the immigrant

voyage for single women it is unsurprising that so few single women were assisted to leave.⁶

In a rural context young single men were viewed as potential troublemakers, being the main perpetrators of incendiarism.⁷

Table 4.4 *Comparison of Poor Law Emigrants with 1841 Census.*

Age	Poor Law All	Poor Law Canada	Poor Law Australia	Census 1841	Norfolk 1836-7	Canada 1838-58
0-14	49.0	50.0	42.6	35.9	51.2	49.5
15-19	10.8	10.8	11.9	10.0	10.2	11.3
20-24	10.3	9.6	14.4	9.7	10.5	9.2
25-29	8.0	7.6	10.4	8.1	7.3	7.6
30-39	13.1	13.3	12.3	12.9	11.8	13.6
40-49	7.1	6.7	6.6	9.8	6.5	6.9
50+	1.9	2.1	0.8	13.7	2.6	1.9
N=	4,594	3,602	916	15.9m	2,875	668

Sources: PRO MH 12; U.K. Census 1841.

Despite concerns about young single males in rural England, they did not receive a disproportionate amount of assistance to emigrate. If anything, family emigrants; not solitaries are overrepresented in the emigrant lists. Single men were also let down by the operation of relief and hiring practices that favoured the married couple with children. Single men also did not benefit from the award of allotments which favoured families.⁸ A single man in the workhouse was much cheaper to maintain than a whole family. Furthermore, as single men were reluctant to enter the workhouse the parish received little immediate economic benefit from their emigration. Single men were also more mobile than families and might be able to pay for their emigration without recourse to the parish.

⁶ See Hammerton, "Without Natural Protectors" and Gothard, "Radically Unsound and Mischievous", for accounts of the thorny question of single female emigration. Another way of viewing the question is through the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, *Emigrant Tracts (1-11)* (1850) (especially Tract 1, *A Letter to Young Female Emigrants Proceeding to Australia* sold at 9d per dozen) that noted the perils for a single woman and suggested the ways that a single woman could preserve her reputation: singing, prayer meetings and needlepoint.

⁷ Archer, *By a Flash*, p. 179.

⁸ *ibid.*, pp. 30-33.

Table 4.5 *Percentage of emigrants who were males by age group*

Age	Poor Law All	Poor Law Canada	Poor Law Australia	English and Welsh U.S.A. (1841)	Norfolk 1836-7	Canada 1838-58
0-4	51	49	57	54	51	50
5-9	51	51	54	50	50	54
10-14	53	52	50	57	53	53
15-19	64	68	59	58	67	66
20-24	64	64	64	66	66	64
25-29	54	54	52	68	53	61
30-39	53	51	57	64	53	46
40-49	55	57	58	66	58	56
50+	65	67	57	59	71	62
Total	55	55	56	61	55	54
N= Females	2,067	1,621	403	2,831	1285	306

Sources: as Table 4.3

Table 4.6 *Males and Females Travelling Alone*

	Poor Law 1836-57	English and Welsh U.S.A (1841)	Scots U.S.A. (1841)	Irish U.S.A (1841)
Males travelling alone	477	1152	214	1468
Females travelling alone	98	217	36	797
Total	575	1369	250	2265
Ratio of females per 1000 males among single emigrants	205	188	168	543

Sources: Erickson '1841 part I, p.361; PRO MH 12

Table 4.7. *Females per 1000 males aged 15+ among poor law emigrants*

Poor Law Canada (1836-57)	691
Poor Law Australia (1836-57)	738
U.S. English and Welsh (1831)	537
U.S. English and Welsh (1841)	538
U.S. Irish (1841)	758

Sources: as in Table 4.6.

The age distribution of the single men is highly concentrated in the early twenties with a mean of twenty-two and a median of twenty (see Table 4.8). Again there are very few extreme values. What is perhaps more revealing about the demographic composition of poor law emigration is the way that after the bulge of young single men, the male female ratios are extremely close. (See Table 4.5).

Table 4.8. *Ages of Single Poor Law Emigrants*

Age	Male	Female
0-14	10	5
15-19	154	35
20-24	178	23
25-29	44	5
30-39	16	2
40-49	7	1
50+	9	8
Missing	59	19
Total	477	98
Mean	22	24
Median	20	19

Source: PRO MH 12

Compared with other emigrant flows from the United Kingdom, females were remarkably well represented amongst poor law emigrants. The representation of females in poor law emigration is comparable with the Irish outflow. (See Table 4.7) However, Irish female emigrants were often travelling alone. An interesting point to note is the similarity in gender composition between Australian and Canadian immigrants sent out under the poor law. For adult emigrants there were proportionately slightly more females amongst Australian immigrants than Canadian ones. But given the Australian anxiety about the dangerous effects of a continuing high gender imbalance it is interesting to note that poor law emigration did not counteract that problem. In fact it made the problem worse. National returns for poor law emigration bear out this point (see Table 4.9). In some years Canadian poor law adult immigrants were more evenly distributed between male and female than Australian immigrants. The national figures point to an interesting shift in the changing gender balance of poor law emigration. From 1853 adult females outnumber adult males. We might suggest that single females became targeted beneficiaries of parochial assistance to emigrate. As the policy became less practised, poor single women, perhaps inhabitants of the union workhouse, were assisted to go to the Australian colonies to become servants. Whether we see an absolute

rise in this type of emigration from the mid-1850s is difficult to ascertain.

Table 4.9. Proportion of all adult poor law Australian and Canadian emigrants that were male (1843-58).

Year	Canada (%)	N=Females	Australia (%)	N=Females
1843	66	129	56	28
1844	63	125	60	78
1845	63	96	51	54
1846	63	20	63	15
1847/8	61	93	58	203
1849	57	88	50	237
1850	61	221	59	170
1851	58	155	65	215
1852	58	129	55	655
1853	54	21	39	110
1854	45	11	48	61
1855	36	18	32	34
1856	29	12	37	59
1857	37	38	57	46
1858	50	16	30	72
Total	60		55	
(1843-58)				
females/ 1000 men	666		818	

Source: Annual PLC/B reports.

Single women had always formed a part, though a small one, of poor law emigrants. The increased proportion of single women might have largely been the result of decreased numbers of other emigrants being assisted to leave under the New Poor Law. Nonetheless the changed composition of poor law emigrants does point to the changing function of the policy. The policy ceased to be used as a panacea to ease the problems of rural society by the mid 1850s. In a sense we could date this change much earlier. In Norfolk the scale of assisted emigration after 1836-7 is completely different from the 'feverish exodus' in the immediate aftermath of poor law reform. The number of people leaving each parish is much less. For example in 1836 the PLC reported that 3,068 Norfolk people had been assisted to leave from 91 parishes. This provides a figure for the average number of emigrants per emigrating parish of thirty-four. In 1852, 208 people left 34 Norfolk parishes (average of 6 emigrants per emigrating parish). The point is further emphasised by considering the national figures for poor law

emigration for 1852. These record that 3,127 people were assisted to leave from 474 parishes (average of seven emigrants per emigrating parish). Only twenty-two parishes assisted twenty or more people to emigrate. Assisted emigration became a policy adopted by a large number of parishes; but on a reduced scale. Parishes and poor law unions provided the administrative machinery that facilitated the recruitment of emigrants. Networks of Anglican clergy and contacts established between Boards of Guardians and Australian recruiting agents established the value of using the structure of the New Poor Law's provisions to provide clothing and transport to the port of departure for poor emigrants who had received free passages. Recruiting agents, always willing to boost the number of single women on emigrant ships, could look to the local poor law administration to fulfil their aims.⁹

FAMILY COMPOSITION

Readers well versed in the terminology of emigration demography would have already noted that poor law emigration was a species of 'family migration'. The high proportion of children in the data and the relative closeness between male and female ratios for all but the fifteen to twenty-four age group provides a picture of an extreme case of 'family migration'. This section attempts to test how extreme a case of 'family migration' it is and to interpret its significance.

Table 4.10. *Poor law emigrants according to travelling companions (1836-57).*

	Poor law all destinations	Poor law Canada	Poor law Australia	English and Welsh		Irish	
				1831	1841	1831	1841
Number in family groups	4019	3182	763	4483	3968	1718	3532
Number alone	575	420	153	1367	1551	1121	2432
Percentage in families	87.5	88.3	83.2	76.6	71.9	60.5	59.2
Mean size of family groups	5.29	5.98	4.86	4.40	3.84	3.52	3.13

Sources: PRO MH 12 three county data and Erickson, '1841 Part I', p. 362.

⁹ This point on the operation of Australian emigrant agents is developed further in Chapters VII and VIII.

The vast majority of poor law emigrants were members of family groups (see Table 4.10). The figure of eighty-seven percent of all poor law emigrants from the 'sample' is the highest noted for nineteenth-century European emigration. It outstrips other 'family migrations' of the Dutch, Germans and Danes to the United States by a considerable degree.¹⁰ Poor law emigration is even more an emigration of nuclear families than the seventeenth-century migration to New England.¹¹ The dominance of two-parent families in the data from the three counties is particularly noteworthy. Only thirty-seven one-parent families were assisted to leave. In the operation of a policy one aim of which was to reduce relief expenditure one might have expected more one-parent families to be assisted, especially female headed families, than this number.¹²

¹⁰ Swierenga, 'Dutch Immigrant Demography', p. 397 (Approximately 75 % of Dutch migrated as family units. In contrast with other trends in emigration demography, the Dutch emigration became increasingly familial over time: 1830-9 68.8% of Dutch emigrants were members of family groups; for 1871-80 the figure is 76.4%); Hvidt, *Flight to America*, p. 93 (43 % of Danes travelling to the U.S., 1871-80 were members of family groups); Köllmann and Marschalk, 'German Emigration', p. 536 (60 % of East Elbian emigrants travelling in family groups warrants the classification of 'family migration'.)

¹¹ Virginia Dejohn Anderson, 'Migrants and Motives: Religion and the Settlement of New England, 1630-1640', *New England Quarterly*, 58 (1985), 339-383 (pp. 348-9). Nearly 75% of New England English immigrants were members of nuclear family units. 87.8% of New England immigrants from Anderson's sample were members of some sort of a family grouping. The figure for poor law emigrants is probably marginally higher as the concentration on nuclear units has undoubtedly understated the true familial nature of poor law emigration.

¹² One reason for the small number of one parent female headed families was the PLC's refusal to permit the emigration of deserted wives to rejoin their husbands in the colonies or United States. (See Chapter VIII, pp, 240-3 for a discussion of this issue). Table 4.13. shows that English emigrants to the United States (1836-53) contained over 60 per cent more female headed one parent families than male headed one parent families.

Table 4.11. *Mean age of poor law emigrant household heads (1836-57).*

	Male household heads	Wives
Poor law Canada	36	32
Poor law Australia	31	31
English U.S.A (1841)	34	31

Sources: PRO MH 12 three county data; Erickson, '1841 Part I', p. 363

Table 4.12. *Type of migrating poor law unit, percentage distribution.*

Type of unit	poor law English (1836-57)	U.S.A (1841)
Alone/non-nuclear	43.2	67.2
Couples, no children	5.7	8.5
Couples, with children	48.3	15.1
Males, with children	1.5	3.1
Females, with children	1.3	6.0
N =	1335	2002

Sources: as Table 4.11.

'Family migration' is associated with the earlier period of international emigration. At a time when emigrant passages were relatively expensive, and the journey was long and arduous, family units dominated. It is assumed that people who emigrated in families emigrated to settle. With the development of steam passages, the possibility for single people to respond to the different demands of trans-oceanic labour markets was greatly increased.¹³ The shift from a 'family emigration' to a 'labour migration' is a common theme in the historiography.¹⁴ The notion became a serious issue in the United States, as 'family migration' came to be associated with north western Europe and was deemed good and worthy. Family

¹³ See Dudley Baines, *Emigration from Europe 1815-1930* (1991), pp. 43-49.

¹⁴ Contrast Erickson, 'Who were the English and Scots Emigrants to the United States in the Late Nineteenth Century?' with *idem*, 'Emigration from the British Isles to the U.S.A. in 1831', (Both reprinted in *idem*, *Leaving England*). For other north European countries see Köllmann and Marschalk, 'German Emigration', pp. 535, 541-2; Ingrid Semmingsen, 'Norwegian Emigration in the Nineteenth Century', *Scandinavian Economic History Review*, 8 (1960), 150-60; Hvidt, *Flight to America*, p. 99.

groups were committed to a new land in a way that unskilled single labourers from south eastern Europe could never possibly be. 'Labour migration' is also associated with a higher level of return migration, with single men playing the role of target earners for families that remain in the homeland. The extreme family nature of poor law emigration suggests that for these emigrants, the movement was a final farewell to Britain. The movement of relatively large families from one continent to another could not be easily reversed.

An assumption often made about 'family migration' is that it required the emigrants to have some financial resources. Transporting a large family to distant lands was expensive. The extra expense of taking families across oceans accounts for the higher proportion of English emigrants than Irish emigrants travelling as members of family groups to the U.S.A. in 1841. Erickson has attributed the smaller size of Irish emigrant families to the relative poverty of the Irish compared with the English.¹⁵ It is also accepted that wealthier emigrants travelled in larger family groups than poorer ones. Both Van Vugt and Erickson have found that farmers travelled in larger family groups than did labourers.¹⁶ Poor people did emigrate, some in large family groups; but it was difficult as the following report in the Cambridge Chronicle shows.

A family of nine persons left this place [Upwell] on Monday last intending to proceed to America, but whilst they were at Wisbech awaiting to go to Hull an unavoidable addition of one (little one) was made to the party which in all probability destroy the project altogether, as their funds are known to have been insufficient from the first to convey over so many persons to the Western Shores. This is rather a lamentable case, as the head of the party had sold off his cottage and garden to raise money so as to avoid the union house.¹⁷

¹⁵ Erickson, '1841, Part I', p. 362.

¹⁶ Erickson, '1841: Part II', pp. 32-3. Though it is interesting to note that in 1841 building workers and miners were very similar in family composition to farmers (*ibid.*, p. 34). Van Vugt, 'Running from Ruin?', p. 417 (footnote 27); *idem.*, 'British Emigration', pp. 92, 95.

¹⁷ Cambridge Chronicle, 22 March 1851.

The difficulties for poor families to emigrate as whole units explains why parochial assisted emigration targeted families. Single people could scrape together the passage money and were more geographically mobile than families. But it is interesting to note that even in the policy of assisted emigration, families with children were favoured. Poor law emigrants travelled in large family units. The average size of family groups was greater than that of English emigrants to the United States.

Table 4.13. compares poor law emigrants with English emigrants (1837-53) and European farmers and labourers. The contrasts between poor law emigrants and other emigrant groups are striking. There are markedly fewer single emigrants among poor law migrants. The proportion of European labourers travelling as solitaries is almost four times greater than for Canadian poor law migrants. We see how few one parent families were sponsored to leave by their parishes. The difference between married couples is also notable. There were dramatically more couples in the poor law sample than for the flow to the U.S.; while virtually all the poor law couples had children in tow. The U.S. immigrants saw a greater proportion of couples without children travelling than did poor law emigration. The familial nature of poor law emigration is shown by the high proportion of dependent children in the sample. The measures of dependency further show the extreme nature of the family migration of the poor law emigrants.¹⁸

¹⁸ The ratios used are discussed in, Raymond L. Cohn, 'A Comparative Analysis of European Immigrant Streams to the United States during the Early Mass Migration', *Social Science History*, 19 (1995), 63-89 (p. 69). The dependency ratio is calculated by dividing the number of dependents (all women, children and males 'with family') by adult men who were not dependent. The adjusted dependency ratio classes single females and female group heads as non-dependent. It is calculated by dividing the number of dependents (all children, females and males 'with family', and adult women travelling with an adult male i.e. wives) by adult non-dependent men and single females and females heading family groups. Adding unity to the adjusted DR gives the average size of the migrant unit.

Table 4.13. *Migrant-group characteristics*

Category	poor law Canada	poor law Australia	England	European labourers	European farmers
	1836-57		U.S.A. (1836-53)		
MIGRANT GROUP					
COMPOSITION (% of totals)					
Single males, no family	10.0	12.4	22.7	36.8	22.3
Single females, no family	1.6	4.2	12.6	4.6	3.6
Male migrant-group heads	0.4	0.3	2.9	4.4	3.2
Female migrant-group heads	0.4	0.3	4.7	2.2	1.3
Couples: no children	3.3	3.9	9.6	11.8	11.1
Couples: with children	27.8	30.2	11.8	11.8	11.1
Males: with family	4.0	3.8	5.1	5.7	8.5
Females: with family	3.0	3.3	6.1	3.6	6.0
Dependent children	49.5	41.9	25.9	18.9	27.9
Number of Immigrants	3602	916	6586	3745	3904
DEPENDENCY MEASURES					
Dependency ratio (DR)	2.90	2.38	1.75	0.88	1.55
Adjusted DR	2.58	1.92	0.87	0.67	1.27
Children/ couple with children	3.43	2.87	2.64	2.08	2.86

Sources: PRO MH 12 three county data; Cohn, 'Comparative Analysis', pp. 70, 73.

The average size of Canadian poor law migrating units was 3.58; more than double that of European labourers leaving. It was also greater than that of migrating farmers.

The poor law sample also suggests a difference between Canadian and Australian poor law emigrants. Canadian immigrants travelled in larger family groups and also featured fewer single people. Furthermore the male-female ratios for single emigrants were much smaller for Australian migrants than for poor people assisted to go to Canada. We might suggest that the provision of assisted passages which favoured young small family units willing to go to the Australian colonies influenced the different compositions of the poor law migrant flows. This difference between Canadian and Australian emigration is further borne out by the different mean ages for male family heads (though interestingly from our data not women). (See Table 4.11.) Poor law emigrants to Canada were unaffected by outside selection criteria. However we might suggest that the different economic systems of Australia and Canada favoured different migrating units. Under the Wakefieldian design, emigrants to Australia who had no

capital should be capable of providing a solution to a shortage of wage labour; they were to be an imported proletariat. Canadian emigrants, if they believed published letters, could expect to own land in the near future. Australian land policy was directed to prevent too easy acquisition of land, inspired as it was by the mystical notion of a 'correct price' beloved of the theorists of 1830.¹⁹ Large families might provide a useful supply of extra labour for families with little capital engaged in clearing land in the Canadian backwoods.

The demographic evidence of the poor law emigrants from three counties shows the profound influence that the provision of assistance by parish authorities made on the demographic profile of the emigrants. A group of people, undoubtedly poor, emigrated in a style not associated with poor emigrants. The influence of outside assistance influenced the composition of other targeted groups. Peter Robinson's Irish emigrants departed predominantly as members of family groups.²⁰ The emigrants sponsored to leave northern Scotland for Australia by the Highland and Island Emigration Society between 1852 and 1857 display characteristics of 'family migration' and evidence suggests that landlords succeeded in getting the Society to accept the poorest class.²¹

Though not necessarily the most troublesome units in rural society, families were potentially the most burdensome. How potentially burdensome poor law emigrants might become is suggested by the life-cycle table. Just under two thirds of poor law emigrant nuclear families had children all under fifteen years of age. Again this is a higher figure than for English immigrants to the United States for 1841. Poor law families were emigrating with

¹⁹ On the influence of Wakefieldian theory on land policy in the Australian colonies see Burroughs, Britain and Australia. For an attempt to consider questions of emigration differentials between destinations for 1841 see Erickson, Leaving England, pp.167-206.

²⁰ Cameron, 'Selecting Peter Robinson's Irish Emigrants'.

²¹ Devine, The Great Highland Famine, pp. 245-72.

a number of dependents who were not yet at an age (over fourteen) at which they were major contributors to the family economy. It is interesting to note that Keith Snell calculated that thirty-four was the mean age for male examiners for settlement examinations.

Table 4.14. *Family cycle position of nuclear family units among poor law emigrants (percentage distribution).*

Family cycle stage	poor law (1836-57) all destinations	English and Welsh U.S.A (1841)
Couple, no children	9.9	26.5
Couple, with infant	4.0	6.5
Couple with children all under 15	58.9	49.9
Couple with children, fewer over 14	20.5	6.3
Couple, equal number or more over 14	4.3	3.7
Couple alone (over 44), or with all children over 14	2.4	7.1
Total	100	100
N =	677	709
Percentage of couples with all children under 14	62.9	56.4

Sources: PRO MH 12, three county data; Erickson, '1841 Part I, p. 364.

He commented that it was 'the age at which the family poverty cycle cut deepest'.²² As with Erickson's 1841 sample, the mean age of male family heads was thirty-four (though as was noted above poor law emigrants to Canada had mean ages above that figure and Australian emigrants were below).

Another way of thinking about poor emigrants is to consider the age of the youngest child in the nuclear family unit (Table 4.15). This might provide some guide to the fertility of poor law emigrants. Though the size of the families assisted to leave by English parishes was very high by emigration standards, they were not especially large by nineteenth-century standards. We might suggest that parish officers were assisting people who might produce more children in the future, but were not overly burdened by children at the present moment. By not being overburdened with children, poor emigrants also offered the emigrants a chance of saving money. The fewer children people had the cheaper they were to emigrate.

²² Snell, *Annals*, pp. 344, 359.

Table 4.15. *Age of Youngest child of two parent poor law emigrant families.*

Age	Boys	Girls	Cumulative Total (%)
infant	77	86	28
1	75	57	50.7
2	58	53	69.8
3	26	24	78.4
4	16	12	83.2
5-9	39	26	94.3
10 +	17	17	100

Source: PRO MH 12, three county sample.

Table 4.15. clearly shows the youthfulness of the first child in each emigrant party. Over a quarter of emigrant families had a child under the age of one. Over two-thirds of the emigrant families had a youngest child under the age of three and over three quarters had a youngest child under four. Clearly poor law emigrants were likely to increase their family size over time, especially if the South Midlands and Norfolk emigrants were similar in their habits to Kentish agricultural labourers who retired early to bed 'for want of anything else to do'.²³ Sarah Smithers, an emigrant from Titchmarsh (Northants) was twenty-five and had two young children aged two. In five or six months time she was expecting to give birth to another child.²⁴

The age of youngest child data suggests more than just the potential for poor emigrants to extend their numbers. It also suggests a certain recklessness on the part of the emigrants. Between 1838 and 1853 nearly one quarter of infants embarked or born on voyages to Australia would have died.²⁵ Whereas mortality rates for adults were lower on

²³ Barry Reay, 'The Context and Meaning of Popular Literacy: Some Evidence from Nineteenth-Century Rural England', *Past and Present*, 131 (1991), 89-129 (p.116).

²⁴ PRO MH 12/8861, Titchmarsh list 13 July 1838.

²⁵ Shlomovitz and McDonald, 'Babies at Risk'. See also McDonald and Shlomovitz, 'Mortality on Immigrant Voyages to Australia in the Nineteenth Century'; Cohn, 'The Determinants of Individual Immigrant Mortality'; Woolcock, *Rights of Passage*, pp. 275-278.

ships bound for Australia than on land; for young children the pattern was the reverse. However attitudes to death amongst the labouring poor were markedly different from today. Henry Smat, a Sussex emigrant treated the death of his wife in Canada from a bowel complaint in a matter of fact way, not blaming emigration for his wife's death and still recommended that his friends should come out and join him because they 'need not fear the water'.²⁶ For the working class David Vincent has remarked that 'the loss of a close relation was so bound up with the material problems of life that at worst it seemed no more than an intensification of the misery of existence'.²⁷

QUALITY

The question of the quality of emigrants is difficult to answer.²⁸ However it has not stopped others from making assertions about assisted emigrants. Fears of the receiving countries, that the United Kingdom would dump indigent misfits on their shores as an answer to domestic problems, with little thought for the implications of such a policy on the colonies proved influential. R.B. Madgwick, in an influential survey cast doubt on the quality of assisted emigrants to Australia.²⁹ Philip Taylor remarked that, 'those in Britain who

²⁶ Letters from Sussex Emigrants who Sailed from Portsmouth in April 1832, 2nd. ed. (1833), pp. 37-40.

²⁷ David Vincent, 'Love and Death and the Working Class', Social History, 5 (1980), 223-247, (p. 245). See also Erickson, Invisible Immigrants, p. 280 (George Martin's account of the birth and death of his son is told in a matter of fact way). This matter of factness about death is also found throughout Fitzpatrick, Oceans of Consolation and Kamphoefner et al, News From the Land of Freedom.

²⁸ See Cormac Ó Gráda, 'Across the Briny Ocean: Some Thoughts on Irish Emigration to America, 1800-1850', in Glazier and de Rosa (ed.), Migration Across Time, pp. 79-94 (pp. 88-91); Joel Mokyr, Why Ireland Starved: A Quantitative and Analytical History of the Irish Economy, 1780-1850 (1985), pp. 243-7. For an earlier period see the discussion in Bailyn, Voyagers, pp. 147-166.

²⁹ Madgwick, Immigration into Eastern Australia, p. 196.

clamoured for aid to leave would be the least fitted to prosper, or even survive, overseas'.³⁰ In recent years this view has come under attack from detailed research that has gone beyond the printed reports and propaganda of newspapers and official published papers.³¹ This section presents the data available in poor law emigrant lists to investigate the quality of the poor emigrants.

Occupational data, a key tool for the assessment of the quality of emigrants, is not available in a useful form for those assisted to emigrate under the sanction of clause sixty-two. The vast majority of male poor law emigrants are described as 'labourers'. Few indications are available of the diversity of skills that are hidden by that broad term.³² Often dittoes mar the lists, and on occasions no occupational data is given. Artisans, such as a few blacksmiths and brickmakers and two shopkeepers were assisted, as well as a molecatcher. However, no differentiation is made between the type of labouring work that the emigrants did. Occasionally reference is made to shepherds, but this is generally for Australian emigrants and reflects the selectivity of Australian recruitment requirements.

In two respects poor law emigrant lists do provide us with useful ways of assessing the quality of the poor law emigrants. The first indicator is provided by the column on emigrant lists for the amount of relief that the emigrants had received in the year before their emigration. This is not an ideal measure. Relief received reflects as much the generosity of the parish as the quality of the workman, as well as the available opportunities in the parish.

³⁰ P.A.M. Taylor, 'Emigration', in *Population and Emigration* (Dublin, 1976), by D.V. Glass and P.A.M. Taylor, p. 59.

³¹ See Haines, 'Indigent Misfits'; *idem*, "Shovelling out Paupers"; Digby, *Pauper Palaces*, p. 103; Hammerton, 'Without Natural Protectors'.

³² For a discussion of the variety of skills hidden by the term 'labourer' see Raphael Samuel, 'Village Labour', in *Essays in Social History Volume 2*, ed. by Pat Thane and Anthony Sutcliffe (Oxford, 1986), pp. 79-97.

Furthermore, the immediate aftermath of poor law reform, which sought to end out-relief to able bodied males, is not an ideal time to consider out-relief payments. There is the additional problem of incomplete details. Some lists featured no details about relief. These have not been used. Only if it was explicitly stated that no poor relief had been received was it assumed that the emigrating unit had received no relief. Coverage was essentially limited to the Norfolk emigrants of 1836 because other emigrant lists provided so few details about relief payments. (See Tables 4.16.). We might assume that the scarcity of relief figures for later emigrants suggests that poor law emigrants were neither recipients of out-relief nor inhabitants of the union workhouse. Though by no means an absolute picture of the quality of the poor emigrants, the figures suggest that very few Norfolk poor law emigrants were a heavy burden upon the parish rates. Slightly out of keeping with normal statistical practice, no relief has been left as a separate value. This accentuates the point that over one third of Norfolk poor law single emigrants and nearly a quarter of emigrant families had received no relief at all in the year previous to their emigration.

Table 4.16. *Relief per head of Norfolk Emigrants to Canada in 1836.*

Relief per head (£)	Families		Single men		Single women	
	frequency	%	frequency	%	frequency	%
0	85	23.7	77	41.6	9	36
0.05-0.495	82	22.9	21	11.4	1	4
0.495-0.995	57	15.9	13	7.0	4	16
0.995-1.495	45	12.6	16	8.6	1	4
1.495-1.995	35	9.8	15	8.1	1	4
1.995-2.495	24	6.7	12	6.5	1	4
2.495-2.995	12	3.4	8	4.3	1	4
2.995-3.995	16	4.5	8	4.3	2	8
3.995-4.995	1	0.3	6	3.2	1	4
4.995 +	1	0.3	6	3.2	3	12
workhouse	0		3	1.6	1	4
Total	358	100	185	100	25	100

Source: PRO MH 12 Norfolk (1836).

Nearly two thirds of all Norfolk emigrant families received less than a pound per head. By assisting so many people to leave, Norfolk parishes did not focus on targeting indigent

habitual recipients of relief. Those who left were neither a heavy immediate burden nor aged and infirm.

After 1836 the details about relief expenditure are more scanty. For Bedfordshire we only have details for nineteen cases, only six of which received relief in the year before their emigration. The two highest recipients of relief were two single women, receiving £4-15-0 and £6-4-0. Impressionistic evidence suggests that single women emigrants were the highest receivers of relief. For Northants the only single people who received relief before emigration were two women. Six single women were assisted to leave Norfolk in 1852 for the Australian colonies, five received £5-14-0 and the other received £4-7-0.

Apart from one family group assisted from Greens Norton in 1836, that received £30-4-0 relief, the Northants emigrants do not appear an over-dependent group of people. Six families received less than one pound per head. One family of eight had spent some time in the union workhouse. The union workhouse features very little in the relief column of the poor law emigrants. Only the eight Northants emigrants are noted as having spent time in the workhouse.

The evidence on poor relief is unsatisfactory. However it does suggest that very few of the people who received help to emigrate by their parishes were a great burden upon their parish. The small number of high relief receivers perhaps allows us to suggest that poor law emigrants were not paupers; they were poor but were not indigent.

Comments which some parish officers made about the emigrants are also revealing. Frequently the emigrants are described as 'good labourers' and 'strong able men'. The emigrants from Fulmodestone cum Croxton (Norfolk) are described in particularly glowing terms. The list furthermore provides evidence of some of the additional skills that labourers' possessed. John Poppy, a farm labourer and shoemaker is described as 'a good labourer, good character'; Samuel Craske is marked down as 'a very superior man as shepherd and a

good character'; William Crown, a shoemaker and bootmaker is noted as 'a first rate hand at his business'; Robert Gayner, a carpenter is described as 'very good hard steady and industrious and good character'. The rest of the eighty-four emigrants are described in equally glowing terms.³³ Alby's (Norfolk) single male emigrants were described as 'all good moral people'.³⁴ Burnham Thorpe's (Norfolk) emigrants were described as mostly 'good honest industrious labourers'.³⁵ Great Dunham's (Norfolk) emigrants were described as 'men of good characters and industrious'.³⁶

Of course not all pauper emigrants were good moral industrious labourers. In a richly annotated list the overseer for Reepham cum Kerdiston (Norfolk) noted two families favourably. Wakefield was an 'active good labourer'; Samuel Smith had received no relief and was 'a man of good character, able to do any work'. James Rudd, however, was 'not so much respected by the parishioners' and Brent Juby and wife and eight children were 'almost constantly upon the parish'. Robert Roper was described as 'addicted to drinking, but a good labourer'.³⁷ John Frost of Hockering (Norfolk) was described as 'a bad character'. Tivershall St. Mary (Norfolk) only assisted seven people to emigrate in 1836. The officers appear to have agreed with Robert Kirbell of Wymondham's partial support for emigration as a means of getting rid of a 'few bad characters'.³⁹ The parish officers explained the wish to remove these people despite having only received a small amount of relief 'on account of

³³ PRO MH 12/8596, Fulmodestone cum Croxton list, 1836.

³⁴ PRO MH 12/8596, Alby list, 1836.

³⁵ PRO MH 12/8249, Burnham Thorpe list, 1836.

³⁶ PRO MH 12/8502, Great Dunham list, 1836.

³⁷ PRO MH 12/8185, Reepham cum Kerdiston list, 1836.

³⁸ PRO MH12/8474, Hockering list, 1836.

³⁹ See below, Chapter VI, p. 162.

their disreputable characters'.⁴⁰ In the Fulmodestone cum Croxton list James Humphrey was listed as 'a brickmaker and a thief'. Two single men's departure from Gissing (Norfolk) was not mourned. Robert Cuttings was a musician who had cost the parish £7-9-0 and was 'seldom employed, of no use for labour (although athlatic [sic] and not honest'. His co-emigrant was Robert Bangay who had cost the parish £5-13-0, described as 'seldom employed, of an unsettled and sole habit and of suspicious character'.⁴¹ These less virtuous characters stand out amongst the glowing tone of most of the descriptions in the lists (though most of the emigrants are not commented on), but such comments are rare. They do remind us of the range of English paupers and the mixed motives which encouraged parishes to help their poorer members to leave.

The demographic profile of the poor law emigrants offers a striking contrast with other emigrant flows. Assistance was an essential to allow the poor agricultural labourers to leave England for destinations thousands of miles away. The demography provides clues as to why families might be selected and of the potential burdens that they might cause. However, in the world of the parish ratepayer, any poor labourer was a potential burden. The relevant question is whether the most burdensome were assisted to leave? It is a difficult question which we can never conclusively answer. However, the relief figures and the comments on the emigrant lists suggest that poor law emigration saw a certain degree of self-selection amongst the labouring class, whereby the 'better labourers' came forward in search of assistance. The next chapter provides further evidence of that point, in its consideration of the strategies adopted by the poor emigrants.

⁴⁰ PRO MH12/8225, Tivershall St. Mary list, 1836.

⁴¹ PRO MH12/8474, Parish officer of Gissing to PLC, 9, Sept 1836.

CHAPTER V: PAUPER EMIGRANT STRATEGIES

This chapter considers the strategies adopted by poor emigrants assisted to leave England by their parish officers. By investigating the tactics of poor people who gained assistance to emigrate we can approach the question of the character of pauper emigration. Useful insights on the nature of social relations in rural England can be developed from investigating the actions of poor people who sought assistance to emigrate to the New World.

The use of the concept of strategies and tactics of the pauper emigrants conjures up a different picture than is suggested by the phrase 'shovelling out paupers' which suggests that the poor were passive victims of the elite's schemes, thoughtlessly dumped into a new world with little say in the matter. This chapter argues that a number of poor emigrants were not passive victims. They were informed manipulators of the relief mechanisms available, using them to further their own aims in search of a better life.

This perspective supports the findings of recent work on poor English emigrants who journeyed to Australia in the nineteenth century by Eric Richards, Robin Haines and S. Colin Holt. Haines concluded that the Australian assisted emigrants of the nineteenth century were not the indigent misfits of earlier accounts; but 'shrewd operators'. Richards has noted the wide variety of strategies used by poor people to counteract disadvantages of poverty and distance to enable them to reach Australia. Holt showed the importance of friendship and kinship links for Cambridgeshire assisted emigrants to Victoria, who used assistance to reunite with friends and relatives there.¹ Anne Digby, in a brief appraisal of the Norfolk 'emigration fever' stated that, 'Norfolk emigrants were generally enterprising people, who disliked being forced to seek poor relief occasionally, rather than inadequate individuals habitually dependent

¹ Haines, 'Indigent Misfits or Shrewd Operators?'; *idem*, "Shovelling out Paupers"; Richards, 'How Did Poor People Emigrate'; Holt, 'Family, Kinship, Community'. For an interesting example of a poor emigrant 'voice' see Richards, 'A Voice From Below'.

on the Poor Law.²

English parish officers and Assistant Commissioners to the Poor Law Commission, to a large extent, shared this perspective. The hesitancy of parishes to pay for the emigration of their poor, can be partly explained by fears that the better agricultural labourers would leave.³ Assistant Commissioner to Kent, E.C. Tufnell reported on the efficacy of assisted emigration in 1842 and noted that it was the 'adventurous spirits' and good labourers who left.⁴ Despite British anxieties that assisted emigration might cause the departure of better labourers, colonial officials feared that the worst characters would be assisted. Until recently it was the receiving countries' concerns which shaped assessments of the nature of assisted emigration.

By examining the arrangements and strategies of the poor emigrants we can gain a perspective on the character of the pauper emigrant host. There is a wider significance to such an investigation. Eric Richards has suggested that emigration sources have the potential to aid the writing of domestic history.⁵ Through a consideration of the pauper emigrants' efforts to secure assistance we can illuminate a number of questions central to a deeper understanding of nineteenth-century rural society.

Poor people, who gained assistance to emigrate, required the financial support of their betters. Some contact between rich and poor was thus a prerequisite for assisted emigration.

² Digby, *Pauper Palaces*, p. 101.

³ See the discussion of the answers to question 46 in *Rural Queries* in Chapter VI, pp. 161-166.

⁴ 'Report from E. Carleton Tufnell, Esq., Assistant Poor Law Commissioner, on the Counties of Kent and Sussex', Appendix No. 8, 'Eighth Annual Report of the PLC', *B.P.P.*, 1842 XIX (389), p. 143.

⁵ Richards, 'Annals of the Australian Immigrant', pp. 20-22; *idem*, 'Voices of British and Irish Migrants', p. 22.

The details of pauper emigration allow us to explore the basis for this interaction. Peter Mandler has noted that 'the places where rich and poor interacted...remain the most difficult [for the historian] to penetrate'.⁶ The interplay between rich and poor on assisted emigration provides rare insights for the historian of the labouring poor. There is an added piquancy to the study of rich/poor social relations on the subject of assisted emigration. Parochial assisted emigration was facilitated by a clause of the New Poor Law. The law has been heavily criticised by historians for its impact on social relations. For K.D.M. Snell, the law cast a long shadow over the lives of the labouring poor, replacing an epoch of face to face poor relief administered within the parish by a distanced impersonal system of poor relief. He concludes his assessment of the New Poor Law by asserting, 'the law had surely the most harmful and socially damaging effect on rural class relations in the south of any nineteenth-century legislation'.⁷ The picture that emerges from emigration material is somewhat different, suggesting some element of continuity with the old poor law.

Research on the poor's strategies, in response to the old poor law and in defence of their customary rights, suggests that the poor had a highly developed sense of their rights and entitlements.⁸ Snell has gone as far as to suggest that the poor's knowledge of the law of settlement rivalled that of lawyers consulted in parochial settlement disputes.⁹ This legalism is understandable, if the purchasing of a copy of Burn's Justice, by a group of Wiltshire

⁶ Peter Mandler, 'Poverty and Charity in the Nineteenth-Century Metropolis: An Introduction', in Mandler (ed.), The Uses of Charity, pp. 1-37 (p. 1).

⁷ Snell, Annals, p. 137.

⁸ See for example Thompson, Customs In Common, pp. 97-184; J.M. Neeson, 'The Opponents of Enclosure in Eighteenth-Century Northamptonshire', Past and Present, 105 (1984), 114-39; Bushaway, By Rite; Peter King, 'Gleaners, Farmers and the Failure of Legal Sanctions, 1750-1850', Past and Present, 125 (1989), 116-150; Taylor, Poverty, Migration, and Settlement; Snell, Annals, pp. 104-114.

⁹ Snell, Annals, p. 72.

labourers who had earned money growing vegetables in allotments, is any guide.¹⁰ The poor's knowledge of laws that affected them was not just understandable; it was essential. A keystone of the old poor law was the Act of Settlement (1691). By this law every person 'belonged', for the purposes of poor relief, in a parish. Falling foul of the law, by being poor in the wrong place at the wrong time, could be catastrophic for the poor, who faced humiliating expulsion to their parish of settlement if the parish where they lived could secure a removal order.¹¹ Adam Smith, who blamed the law for holding back economic development for its effect on the free circulation of labour, stated: 'There is scarce a poor man in England of forty years of age, I will venture to say, who has not in some part of his life felt himself most cruelly oppressed by this ill-conceived law of settlement.'¹² The law of settlement, however, was not just a source of oppression. Contained within the notion of settlement was a sense of belonging. The right of settlement conferred rights upon the poor. The settled poor were entitled to poor relief, the extent and nature of which was governed by years of tradition and custom. A notion of entitlement to relief educated the poor in their rights. One person's rights are another's obligations. From their exposure to resistance to pauper 'entitlements' by the rich, the poor were made aware of the motivations of their betters. They came to understand their laws and they learnt how to manipulate them. Tactics that the poor used ranged from appealing to poor man's J.P.s over the heads of their parish officers to gain

¹⁰ Peter Mandler, 'The Making of the New Poor Law Redivivus', Past and Present, 117 (1987), 131-57, (p. 137).

¹¹ Snell, Annals, pp. 72-3; Taylor, 'The Impact of Pauper Settlement'.

¹² Adam Smith, The Wealth of Nations, ed. by Andrew Skinner (Harmondsworth edn., 1979), p. 245.

higher rates of relief,¹³ to using 'custom' as a defence against enclosers.¹⁴ The poor did not always win. Contact and struggles with authority taught the poor that they could bargain and negotiate with forces of authority. The poor's conception of their rights contrasted with the emerging free-market individualist philosophies which were appropriated by the supporters of 'progress', who enclosed commons and sought a more rationally defined basis for social relations.¹⁵

The New Poor Law sought a new basis for economic and social relations in which the rules of the market replaced the traditions of custom. Benthamite centralisation and efficiency sought to replace local negotiation. In one sense assisted emigration was a part of this rationale. Clause sixty-two was drafted into the New Poor Law by Nassau Senior who acknowledged his debt to that 'meddling pretender in political economy' Robert Wilmot Horton.¹⁶ The theory behind assisted emigration was undoubtedly a product of Malthusian thought patterns, under which surplus labourers were viewed as a potential source of economic and social dislocation if their numbers expanded unchecked. However, we need to consider the poor's perspective. In their response to emigratory opportunities, we may suggest that notions of rights and entitlements that developed under the old order, amongst the poor, did not disappear under the new. Pauperism still imposed burdens upon the rich. Some of the rich, both for reasons of economy and out of a sense of *noblesse oblige*, sought

¹³ See Peter Dunkley, 'Paternalism, the Magistracy and Poor Relief in England, 1795-1834', *International Review of Social History*, 24 (1979), 371-97 (p. 379).

¹⁴ e.g. Neeson, 'Opponents', p. 117.

¹⁵ See Mandler, 'Poor Law *Redivivus*', pp.137-8; Thompson, *Customs*, pp.185-258; Peter Dunkley, 'Whigs and Paupers: The Reform of the English Poor Laws, 1830-1834', *Journal of British Studies*, 20 (1981), 124-49 (pp. 137-139).

¹⁶ See R.N. Ghosh, 'The Colonization Controversy: R.J. Wilmot-Horton and the Classical Economists', *Economica*, 31 (1964), 385-400 The source of the 'meddling' quote is *Spectator*, 26 February, 1831, p. 207; cited on p. 399 of Ghosh's article.

to assist their poor to leave. The poor were aware of the benefits to themselves of emigration and also of the impact that their departure would make on the poor rates. Despite, or even because of, their poverty, poor emigrants were able to bargain. They could not be compelled to leave. Thus on the question of assisted emigration, which remained the parish's, not the union's responsibility, social relations, though heavily skewed by the dark shadow of the workhouse, were not transformed totally by the introduction of the New Poor Law. Poor people who wanted to emigrate appealed directly to their parish officers. Through face to face negotiation, mutual benefit could be reaped.

The image presented of social relations in rural England by assisted emigration is rather different from that found in other recent accounts of rural society. Recent years have seen historians concentrate on rural social protest.¹⁷ Despite John Archer's stated aim, to bring the history of the rural labourer away from the dramatic incidents of 'Bread or Blood', Swing and agricultural trade unionism, his work focused on dramatic incidents, though of a smaller scale, of incendiaryism.¹⁸ The study of dramatic incidents of social protest has played an important role in dissolving the image of the ignorant passive 'Hodge'. However, the concentration of social historians on social protest, though providing a useful reminder of underlying social tensions in rural society, perhaps overstates and darkens the picture of rural social relations. Furthermore, the rural labourer, though obviously not passive, is portrayed in a monochrome perspective with only one course of available actions, in perpetual conflict with dominant forces of authority. Assisted emigration, and subsequent emigrations that resulted from it, indicates that the rural labourer did have other options. Emigration can be classified as an act of social protest. Voting with their feet, poor agricultural labourers, turned

¹⁷ See, for example, Reed and Wells (ed.), *Class Conflict and Protest*; Hobsbawm and Rudé, *Captain Swing*; Dunbabin, *Rural Discontent*; Charlesworth (ed.), *Atlas of Rural Protest*; A.J. Peacock, *Bread or Blood* (1965); Jones, 'Thomas Campbell Foster'; Archer, *By a Flash*.

¹⁸ Archer, *By a Flash*, pp. 1-2.

their backs on rural society, out of disgust with the meagre rewards that it offered them. However, the aspirations of the poor emigrants were not those of class solidarity. Emigration offered the pauper the possibility of land ownership and independence. Through emigration the poor could find access to the market; not as wage slaves but as market producers. To attain their goal of emigration, the poor had to interact with the elite. This required the poor to adopt a number of different strategies which ranged from threats to subtle manipulation.

A further reason for exploring pauper emigrant strategies is for the light that they shed on the broader emigratory process. The documentary richness of material on pauper emigration contrasts with the scant record of unassisted emigrants. Careful work on American ship passenger lists has given us a clearer picture of the identity of the English immigrants to the United States in the nineteenth century.¹⁹ However both emigrant letters and ship passenger lists were created in the receiving, not the donor, country. In these sources the emigrant has already become an immigrant. Over the course of a long ocean voyage a process of psychological justification and re-invention has been undertaken. Immigrant letters were not neutral attempts to keep in touch with friends and relatives left behind. They were one way by which the author mediated between the Old World and the New.²⁰ Furthermore immigrant letters were written to friends and relations who had bid farewell to the emigrants before departure. The recipients of immigrant letters had a good idea why the immigrants had left. A recapitulation of the reasons for departure was unnecessary in letters from emigrants to their friends and relations. Thus immigrant letters are of limited value in assessing motivations for emigration.²¹ Even seemingly neutral listings

¹⁹ See Erickson, *Leaving England*, pp. 87-206; Van Vugt, 'Running From Ruin'; *idem*, 'Prosperity and Industrial Emigration'; *idem*, 'British Emigration'.

²⁰ See Fender, *Sea Changes*, pp. 64-75.

²¹ Erickson, *Invisible Immigrants*, p.22.

of occupations found in 'good' ship lists may reflect the aspirations, rather than the social status, of the immigrants upon arrival. This may partly explain the very high proportion of agriculturists listed as 'farmer' in Van Vugt's listings.²² The difficulties of using material generated in the receiving country were noted by J.D. Gould, who expressed a preference for material created in the donor country for investigating emigration.²³

Sources for the study of assisted emigration were generated in the parish from which the emigrant left. This allows us to consider the decision to emigrate and the strategies adopted to fulfil that aim. Some idea of the influence of information about emigration, a central explanatory tool in emigration historiography, can be gained.²⁴ We can also attempt to try to explore reasons why people did not emigrate.

A cautionary note to what follows, however, should be added. Even well recorded emigrations, such as those carried out under the New Poor Law, are not evenly recorded. Many emigrations are just recorded in standardised forms which record the bald facts of a decision to assist people to emigrate and a listing of those who left. What was involved in these emigrations is unknown. More details are found in accounts of emigrations which were problematic. Problems generate correspondence, and through correspondence a pauper emigrant voice emerges. Having criticised other rural historians for their focus on social conflict, it may appear strange that conflict between rich and poor plays a large part in this account. However conflict, or threatened conflict, is the extreme end of any form of negotiation. The conflicts between rich and poor about emigration did not threaten property rights. Unlike rural riots and incendiarism, the motivation for potential pauper emigrants was

²² Van Vugt, 'Running from Ruin'.

²³ J.D. Gould, 'European Inter-Continental Emigration 1815-1914: Patterns and Causes', *Journal of European Economic History*, 8 (1979), 593-679 (pp. 601-605).

²⁴ Baines, *Migration in a Mature Economy*, pp. 4-7, 87, 127, 141-3, 166, 172, 176-8; Erickson, 'Emigration in 1841, Part II', p. 27.

not rejectionist, something more positive than the registration of disapproval was sought. To present a corrective to the image of the passive poor emigrant, which is conveyed by the phrase 'shovelling out paupers', we will look at occasions when the paupers appear to have exerted some element of control over their destinies. This reading of poor law emigration is undoubtedly shaped by the distribution of the evidence, whereby some extra note, in addition to the standard filling-in of forms, has been made. Its representativeness of pauper emigration is difficult to assess. We have perhaps focused on the interesting and more colourful incidents buried within poor law correspondence files to present a dynamic picture of interaction between poor and parish. However this chapter marks an attempt to view the pauper emigrants through their own words and actions, providing a useful perspective from which to view the English agricultural labourer.

Pauper emigrants were not passive victims of the elite's schemes. They actively chose to leave. Pauper emigrants often initiated the emigratory process by informing the parish officers of their wish to leave. From the records surveyed the requests of paupers for assistance started the emigratory process. In response to these requests, emigration meetings were held at which the parish worthies determined the efficacy of assisting poor people to emigrate.

In letters from parish officers to the PLC, it was clear that the poor who were assisted wanted to leave. Holt's parish officer wrote that 'several poor persons belonging to this parish have expressed a wish to emigrate to Canada'.²⁵ Beeston cum Little Billing's (Norfolk) parish officer requested emigration forms from the PLC after applications had been received from several families wishing to emigrate.²⁶ John Parmeter of Reepham cum Kerdiston (Norfolk)

²⁵ PRO MH 12/8296, Holt to PLC, March 9 1843.

²⁶ PRO MH 12/8474, Beeston cum Little Billing to PLC, n.d. (received 28 March 1835).

noted: 'The paupers queue each others turn to be placed upon the list, such is the desire of settling in Canada that more than two hundred have determined upon going so soon as the proper information is obtained...so great is their dread of it [the New Poor Law] and its regulations.'²⁷

To avoid entering the workhouse, poor people sold what property they had and worked for low wages. The workhouse system cast a long shadow over the lives of the poor. While healthy and in employment they could retain their liberty. However, their economic position was precarious. Ill health or sudden loss of earnings could force a family onto poor relief. Examples of economic insecurity are provided by the Norfolk emigrant lists. William Tarrow, a carpenter and blacksmith assisted to leave Thurning was described as 'late an apprentice but his master has absconded.'²⁸ Two Banningham heads of household had been in regular employment for ten years with William Robinson, whose death had caused them both to lose their jobs.²⁹

In PRO MH 12 a number of petitions from poor people requesting help to emigrate can be found. The letters were mostly written by Norfolk agricultural labourers in 1836 and 1837. They were written in the aftermath of the 'emigration fever' of spring/summer 1836. The poor people who wrote wanted to emigrate. Their explanations and modes of expression were governed by their perceptions of the audience. The institutional setting needs to be borne in mind when considering their value as sources. However, in these letters we see something of the motivation for the poor emigrants. Scratched out in painfully contorted prose these letters depict the hardship faced by the agricultural labourer in Norfolk in the

²⁷ PRO MH 12/8249, Parmeter to PLC, 24 February 1836.

²⁸ PRO MH 12/8185, Thurning list, 1836.

²⁹ PRO MH 12/8185, Banningham list, 1836.

1830s.³⁰

The parishioners of Besthorpe sent two letters to the PLC requesting assistance for emigration:

Gentlemen,

I take the liberty of writing to you these few lines to inform you that we are Disposed to Emigrate for America for we are Labouring under the Galling yoke of Oppression and poverty frome for want of employment and when employed Receiving such small Remuneration for our Labour that we our wives and children are in a state of Half Starvation therefore we are unable to Extricate ourselves from this state the Officers of the parish are Willing that we should Emigrate but they Do not Seem willing to raise the Money for the purpose therefore we your Humble petitioners wish you to inform us by what means we can go if you please pray excuse my Bad way of expressing Myself for I have Writ as Well as my Weak Capacity will allow

William Jessop [and the names of several others]³¹

The petitioners received no reply to the above. They wrote again in the hope that the PLC would provide some advice:

Gentlemen, Excuse the liberty we take in troubling you with a 2nd letter not Hearing anything from the first We are in Great Suspense not knowing wether you Received it. Therefore we now take the Liberty in writing to you again upon the subject of Emigration to Emerica for we are quite tired of this country and we should be glad to know wether there be any probability of leaving it for the Thought of being ushered into A Workhouse with our wives and children and the Miseries of Starvation and Poverty makes us quite tired of our Native land for we know we cannot be Worse of than we are at all Events For the Farmers are Employint the threshing mechnes and other mechnery so that there are from 6 to 12 of able men that are able to work that cannot get employment.

³⁰ Twenty-three petitions have been located from Norfolk labourers requesting help to emigrate: PRO MH 12/8616, five from Attleborough, (24 June 1836, 14 March 1837, 23 March 1837, 4 May 1837, 22 July 1837); four from Besthorpe, (20 December 1836, 6 March 1837, April 1837, 18 June 1837); one from Hangham, (28 February 1837); four from Rockland Saint Peter (13 March 1837, 23 March 1837, 30 April 1837, 14 May 1837); one from Stow Bredon (19 March 1837); PRO MH 12/8356, one from Carlton Forehoe (April 1837); one from Morley Saint Peter (23 March 1837); PRO MH 12/8430, one from Kings Lynn (9 July 1839); PRO MH 12/8250, one from Thornham (16 April 1837); PRO MH 12/8356, two from Deopham (16 April 1837 and 6 May 1837); PRO MH 12/8356, one from Barnham (7 April 1837); PRO MH 12/8394, one from East Harling (24 April 1837).

³¹ PRO MH 12/8616, letter addressed to the PLC from the parishioners of Besthorpe, 6 March 1837.

Do we Remain your Humble Petitioners³²

Other writers complained of 'scanty employment and scant wages'³³, that they 'cannot get the Common Necessaries of Life and should be glad to Alter Our Condition'³⁴, 'want of work'³⁵, 'our wages will not admit of hardy necessaries'³⁶, 'we are all in a Starved Condishen and would be glad to lave'³⁷ Samuel Cooper of Besthorpe complained that he had not worked for some time. When he had the opportunity to work he had 'no victuels to eat so i had not the power to do it'.³⁸

In the words of the poor we have a clear description of the expulsive force which is conventionally described as the 'push' factor in emigration studies. However a simple hardship model for emigration lacks analytical bite. The material can be presented as an explanation for poor people's wish to emigrate. However, the petitions expose a number of other issues which are worth exploring.

The petitions were addressed to the Poor Law Commissioners, the supposedly distant Benthamites in Somerset House. For the poor petitioners, at least, the PLC appear to have been viewed as a source of salvation, a fount of kindness. The notion persisted that beyond the parish boundary, as in the days of the poor man's J.P., there existed a higher authority which could remedy local wrongs. Whether this view persisted long after the implementation

³² PRO MH 12/8616, petition from the parishioners of Besthorpe, April 1837.

³³ PRO MH 12/8356, Stephen Barnard (of Morley St. Peters) to PLC, 15 April 1837.

³⁴ PRO MH 12/8356, petition from parishioners of Deopham, 6 May 1837; See also PRO MH 12/8616, petition from the parishioners of Attleborough, 23 March 1837 which complains of low pay, 'by no means equal to their support or the obtaining the common necessaries of life'.

³⁵ PRO MH 12/8616, petition from parishioners of Attleborough, 14 March 1837.

³⁶ PRO MH 12/8616, John Parker (Hangham) to PLC, 28 February 1837.

³⁷ PRO MH 12/8616, petition from parishioners of Stow Bredon, 19 March 1837.

³⁸ PRO MH 12/8616, Samuel Cooper to PLC, 20 December 1836.

of the New Poor Law is difficult to assess. The distribution of pauper petitions relating to emigration appears to be heavily skewed towards the immediate aftermath of the introduction of the new law. The parish, not wishing to appear less than generous, may have suggested that emigration was the responsibility of the PLC. The poor clearly felt that the PLC could do something. They had witnessed hundreds of people leave for America. They had perhaps heard tales of a land of abundance and plenty and thought that the PLC could help them to reach it. Two petitions suggest that the aspiring emigrants believed that their parish was not providing them with the correct information. They hoped that a direct appeal to a higher authority would be fruitful. Petitioners from Attleborough complained that they could get 'no information from the Board of Guardians in the Union'.³⁹ East Harling's petitioners wrote to the PLC believing that a reply to an earlier petition had been sent to the parish; but the 'authorities of this town refuse to let us know the contents'. They wrote again to the PLC hoping for a reply which would prevent them from 'being kept in ignorance'.⁴⁰

The letters from the poor to the PLC were humble in tone, yet expected a reply. The persistence of the writers suggests a belief that eventually some relief would be given. To modern minds the letters may appear naïve. The petitioners received short shrift from the PLC. The PLC stated that it had no powers to intervene. The petitions from the Norfolk poor do indicate how assisted emigration was viewed by the poor. There is little in these petitions to suggest that Helen Cowan was correct to state that poor people found receiving 'a handout from strangers who wanted them to go humiliating' or that S.C Johnson was right to assert that emigrants were 'often very loath to set out burdened with the cloak of pauperism'.⁴¹ The Norfolk letter writers were determined to leave. J.B. Plumton, an

³⁹ PRO MH 12/8616, petition from the parishioners of Attleborough, 23 June 1836.

⁴⁰ PRO MH 12/8394, parishioners of East Harling to the PLC, 24 April 1837.

⁴¹ Cowan, *British Emigration*, p. 209; Johnson, *History of Emigration*, p. 94.

Attleborough blacksmith, even offered to work his passage.⁴²

The petitions of poor people suggest that emigration was looked on favourably by the recipients of assistance to emigrate. The typicality of the petitioners as part of the pauper emigrant host is questionable. The PLC, faced with persistent demands for assistance to emigrate, did enquire as to the state of the labour market and the character of the letter writers. John Briggs of Thursford was described by his parish as a 'young man up to all schemes to swindle people out of their belongings'.⁴³ Samuel Cooper of Besthorpe was also viewed with scepticism by his local parish officer. It was reported to the PLC that it was his own fault that he was out of work. He had turned down work and after finally accepting to work clearing snow had not turned up till the work was finished. His dealings with the Board of Guardians had been marked by the use of inflammatory language.⁴⁴ Wayland Board of Guardians reported that John Parker, who had collected the opinions of every ratepayer in the village in his determination to gain assistance to emigrate, was not as poor as he claimed. 'He is in receipt of ten shillings a week. He is an honest hard working man, but has unfortunately had it instilled into him that the parish may be compelled to send him to the colonies and his mind has consequently been in an unsettled state ever since the departure of emigrants from the neighbourhood last year'.⁴⁵

Some people who wrote to the PLC were dismissed by parish officers not wishing to help them to emigrate as opportunists. Not all were successful in gaining assistance to emigrate. However, their requests are suggestive of the poor's relationship with authority. They were aware of the imbalance in power. This explains the humble phraseology. Yet there

⁴² PRO MH 12/8616, Plumton to PLC, n.d. (received 15 March 1837).

⁴³ PRO MH 12/8596, Thursford to PLC, 18 March 1835.

⁴⁴ PRO MH 12/8616, Wayland Board of Guardians to PLC, 13 January 1837.

⁴⁵ PRO MH 12/8616, Wayland Union to PLC, 14 March 1837.

is a stylised quality to the phraseology of the petitions. All profess the humility and powerlessness of the authors. The repetition of such phrases as 'we your humble petitioners' and 'we most humbly beg' suggests the adoption of a certain mode of expression which is indicative of an attempt, on the part of the writers, to play a role within the accepted order of things and a capacity to operate within an institutional setting. Despite their self-professed powerlessness, there is an assertiveness and definite quality to pauper requests for assistance. The paupers accept and even overplay their station as 'humble petitioners'. However, despite their poverty and lack of power, they asked for help on the assumption that it would be given.

Implicit in pauper petitions and in the poor's requests for assistance is an awareness of the obligations which the rich have towards the poor. By playing on these obligations, the poor, despite their weakness, were able to discover a strength. For the ratepayers, 'surplus labourers' caused higher poor rates. Poor people, wishing to emigrate, offered the ratepayers an option which might reduce their relief bills. The poor appear to have been aware of the advantages which their emigration might offer the rich and were capable of bargaining and making threats to achieve their aims.

Wright Thompson, of Carlton Forehoe, petitioned the PLC for help to go to Australia. If he received no assistance, he stated, 'I must leave my family to the mercy of your Honourable Gentlemen'. Despite the niceties of his letter, in which humility and apology are intertwined, this threat to leave his wife and children constitutes an expression of pauper power. If he left alone, the ultimate relief burden would be greater, with the parish having to maintain his wife and children, than if his emigration was paid for by the parish.⁴⁶

A number of poor men did desert their families, causing parish relief expenditure on the families to rise. In their letters back to the parish requesting that the parish send out their families, the departed husband and father, in two cases, showed an awareness of the

⁴⁶ PRO MH 12/8356, Wright Thompson to PLC, April 1837 (received 13 April 1837).

advantages to the parish of effecting an emigration.

John Foster, formerly of Hempnall (Norfolk) wrote to his parish officer from Dewitt,

New York:

Dear Sir, I have the opportunity of sending you these few lines to inform you that I am now in North America, and if you please to send my wife and family over to me this coming summer, I shall be happy to receive them and keep them free from any expense to you after they are over here. I would go to New York to meet them. I am now living 320 miles from New York and if you do not choose to send them over to this country they will be living at the expense of the Hempnall parish as long as they live. Do the best you can. Please to write to me and let me know what you mean to do, for if you do not intend to send them over in the early part of this summer I shall go a few thousand miles further back in the country and bid you forever farewell.⁴⁷

There is no apology, in Foster's letter, for leaving his wife and children behind at the mercy of the poor rates. He is offering the parish a simple choice of sending his family out or maintaining them without a head of household. If the parish decline to pay for the emigration, from Foster's perspective, it is the parish's loss and he will move inland, and the opportunity for the parish will not return.

George Fewins was even more assertive in his dealings with the parish of Cheriton Bishop (Devon) in a second letter requesting that it pay for the emigration of his wife and children:

I love my wife and children, but if you love to keep them there and maintain them you can do so and be damned. I offer you a fair chance only to send them to New Orleans, where I would have received them. That would be the last expense ever I would have caused you. Now you have to maintain [her] for years- and the children after grown up may be a burden on the parish, God only knows. If you will not send them to New Orleans you may keep them there. I am not coming there for them, you can take my word for that, and as far as you too talk about having to send me back you can kiss my arse. I am now in America living in the land of the free.⁴⁸

⁴⁷ PRO MH 12/8233, copy of letter written by John Foster to Hempnall parish, dated 3 March 1853. Copied and sent to PLC by Depwade Union 6 April 1853.

⁴⁸ George Fewins to the Overseers of Cheriton Bishop, Devon, January 1851 in Erickson (ed.) *Emigration From Europe*, p. 129.

Such assertiveness was displayed by other people requesting help to emigrate. William Hearning of Farthinghoe (Northants) offered the select vestry a choice of one of three ways of offering him relief: work, money to learn the nail trade or money for emigration to North America. He was refused 'absolutely'.⁴⁹ To offer the parish a choice of three options probably smacked too much of opportunism. However through Hearning we see that emigration had entered the consciousness of the rural poor, as one of a number of options which they might seek.

Other poor people exploited their parish to gain maximum assistance. For the parish of Loys Weedon (Northants) the Abbott family were ideal subjects for assistance to emigrate to a far off land. Joseph Abbott, aged forty-nine and the father of seven children 'had been a pauper all his life'. Last year the parish had spent sixteen pounds on him and his family in out-relief payments. His brother, wife and young child had cost the parish six pounds in the previous year. The Abbott brothers were accompanied by their mother, aged sixty-five who had received five pounds relief in the previous year. The Abbotts managed to persuade the parish to pay for their passage to the United States, although this was contrary to the regulations of the New Poor Law which specified that British colonies were the only permissible destinations for pauper emigrants. Their success in extracting maximum help from their parish did not stop there. Accompanied by a parish officer, entrusted with supervising a satisfactory departure, the party arrived at Liverpool. Joseph Abbott demanded more money from the parish before he set sail. The parish officer refused, informing Abbott that he had been well provided for. Abbott was adamant that he wanted more money. If he was not successful in his demand, he threatened not to leave and to return to the parish and be a burden once more. The parish officer capitulated and the Abbott party set sail.⁵⁰

⁴⁹ N.C.R.O. 123P/26, Farthinghoe vestry minutes, 25 January 1830.

⁵⁰ PRO MH 12/8879, Loys Weedon to PLC, 4 August 1836.

Some pauper emigrants threatened not to leave, in order to extract additional sums from their parish. The emigrants of Kenninghall received clothing for the voyage to the New World. Just before the departure date, the party threatened not to leave, unless they received a further ten shillings per head. Rather than merely accept the parish's relief and doff their caps in gratitude, these paupers appear to have been aware of a certain amount of leverage which they could exercise over their parish officers.⁵¹ Two examples from Norfolk indicate how the poor took advantage of gifts for emigration. The overseers' accounts for Guestwick include a payment of £8-15-0 to the parish of Foulsham for a Richard Bruse and two daughters who were to emigrate but 'absconded'.⁵² Robert Doughty scandalised the parish of Holt by continuing to wear the clothes provided for emigration to Australia, paid for by the parish, after he had declined to leave.⁵³

The poor could not be coerced to emigrate, though the workhouse test had coercive qualities. The refusal of people to emigrate suggests that those who chose to go were not 'shovelled out'; but actively chose to leave.

The emigrant petitions, with their complaints of hardship, provide an explanation for why poor people might consider emigration. However, hardship alone does not explain why poor people decided to leave the land of their birth for an uncertain future thousands of miles away. Undoubtedly the economic situation for agricultural labourers (especially in Norfolk in the immediate aftermath of the enactment of the New Poor Law) appeared desperate. Desperate times lead to desperate measures. However some information or knowledge of the world to which they would journey was necessary, before a feeling of economic hardship converted itself into a wish to emigrate.

⁵¹ PRO MH 12/8394, William Wells to PLC, 16 May 1836.

⁵² Norfolk Record Office PD 5/33, Guestwick Overseers' Accounts, 1835-8.

⁵³ PRO MH 12/8297, Erpingham Board of Guardians to PLC, 14 April 1846.

We may suggest that the pauper emigrants had some knowledge, however biased and distorted, of life in the New World. The source of this image of a better life might have been letters received from friends or relatives who had journeyed to the New World. Parish officers and clergy at times played an active role in promoting emigration, collecting emigrant letters and reading out news from those who had left.

The poor were a receptive audience to tales of lands where there were no tithes or taxes, meat was eaten three times a day, fruit grew on trees waiting to be picked and a poor man could shoot whenever and whatever he liked.⁵⁴ John Buckley wrote of the impact of one emigrant letter which arrived at 'Claywick'. It was read 'in almost every cottage. It was read at the village inn and at the Methodist chapel every Sunday until it was nearly worn out.'⁵⁵ 'An Emigrant', who opposed emigration to Canada, claimed that on hearing an emigrant letter, the parishioners 'went emigration mad'.⁵⁶ He also challenged the amount of knowledge which the poor labourers had about emigration. He claimed a group of emigrants who arrived at Yarmouth, went home disappointed when they could not see America in the distance.⁵⁷

Other emigrants appear to have been better informed. A family from Woburn

⁵⁴ This is an example of what Fender, *Sea Changes*, p. 39 has identified as a 'political' aspect to emigration letters. Fender (p. 74) states that 'satire of the Old World seems to have been a necessary component of the psychology of emigration'. For examples in emigrant letters see Erickson, *Invisible Immigrants*, pp. 110-28 letters of John Fisher. Fisher writes 'we have nothing to pay the parsons or poor' and 'the rigours of taxation are unknown' (p. 114); 'Here is no tithes, taxes, no poor rates' (p. 122). William Cobbett, *The Emigrant's Guide in Ten Letters* (1830), p. 7 noted low taxation as a reason for emigration. Letter number four noted that 'taxes are unknown' and that 'rabbits and pigeons are in fresh abundance' (pp. 50-1). These themes and issues were tackled by the poor labourers who wrote home in letters published in various guides conveniently reproduced in Snell, *Annals*, pp. 9-14.

⁵⁵ J.C. Buckmaster (ed.), *A Village Politician: The Life-story of John Buckley* (1897), p. 48.

⁵⁶ An Emigrant, *Hints and Observations on the Disadvantages of Emigration to British America* (1833), p. 19.

⁵⁷ Emigrant, *Hints and Observations*, p. 6.

(Bedfordshire) presented the vestry with a copy of a prospectus for the New Zealand Land Company.⁵⁸ A group of emigrants from Marston Saint Lawrence (Northants) first expressed a wish to go to Ohio. A guide to life there was available locally.⁵⁹ We may suggest that the prospective emigrants had come across the guide. Within the small world of the parish, emigration was not hidden. Nonconformist congregations prayed for those who departed for the New World.⁶⁰ At 'Claywick' an all night service was held before the departees left. A similar ceremony was held at Yardley Hastings in 1851.⁶¹

News from earlier emigrants stimulated further requests for assistance to emigrate. On emigrant lists it is occasionally noted that people wanted to leave to join their relations who had left a few years before. We may assume that they had received news of their relations, who were prepared to meet them on their arrival in the New World.⁶² A family from North Elmham (Norfolk) asked for assistance to go to Canada where their son had settled a few years earlier. Perhaps this family had hedged its bets and waited to hear how their single son had succeeded in the New World before asking for help to leave.⁶³

Old people, on occasions, managed to gain assistance to be reunited with their kin. Thomas Durrant and his wife Elizabeth were aged sixty-one and sixty-two respectively when they were assisted to leave Holt (Norfolk) in 1849. The parish officer felt that some

⁵⁸ Bedfordshire Record Office P 118/8/1, Woburn vestry minutes, 26 August 1841.

⁵⁹ PRO MH 12/8673, Marston 'desirous' list, 1844. D. Griffiths Junior, Two Years in Ohio (1835), was advertised in the Northampton Mercury, 18 April 1835 as being available to buy from the author, a resident of Long Buckby.

⁶⁰ Albion M. Urdank, Religion and Society in a Cotswold Vale: Nailsworth, Gloucestershire 1780-1865 (Oxford, 1990), pp. 135-6.

⁶¹ Buckmaster (ed.), Village Politician, p.48; Northampton Mercury, 10 May 1851.

⁶² e.g. PRO MH 12/8185, Heydon list, 1836, accompanying note stated that 'many of their relatives being already there'; PRO MH 12/8185, Hackford-next-Reepham: 'two to three families wish to go to the U.S. because friends and relatives already there'.

⁶³ PRO MH 12/8475, North Elmham to PLC, 29 March 1837.

explanation for placing them on an emigrant list was required.

Two of the persons included [in the emigrant list] are rather advanced in years, but as they have several sons in Canada, who have requested them to go out, and have promised to support them when there the parish has consented to defray the expense of sending them out...I may add that Thomas Durrant is still hale and hearty and capable of labour, and that it is by his own earnest solicitation and that of his wife that the parish have agreed to take this step, that they may end their days among the children from whom they have been so long separated.⁶⁴

The explanatory note emphasises the role of assisted emigrants in lobbying for their parish to pay for their departure. The parish officer's stance is noteworthy because he is at pains to make clear that no compulsion was applied by the parish. Though old people might become a burden on the poor rates, his justification for the emigration is on compassionate grounds. Furthermore the stress on the ability of the children to take care of the parents suggests that one group of Holt emigrants had been successful. The emphasis on family reunion however does point to a darker side to emigration for families; break up and separation: a pain which for many poor people left behind would not be alleviated by a responsive parish.⁶⁵

Parish officers noted that earlier emigrants who had sent back good reports had stimulated others to ask for assistance to emigrate. News of successful pauper emigrants did not just have an impact on the poor. Bugbrooke (Northants), from where three large groups of poor people were assisted to leave, saw fifty people, 'mostly tradesmen', leave by their own efforts.⁶⁶ The census enumerators of 1851 noted that the population had declined in the parish

⁶⁴ PRO MH 12/8298, Holt to PLB, 5 March 1849.

⁶⁵ PRO MH 12/8599, Walsingham Union to PLC, 31 May 1844, explains the emigration of James and Elizabeth Clarke, aged sixty-eight and seventy respectively, from Gunthorpe in similar terms. They were leaving with children and grandchildren to be reunited with other family members who had emigrated earlier. If they had stayed behind no other relatives would be in Norfolk. 'It is therefore natural that they should wish to be amongst their family as they will have no relatives left behind them in this country'.

⁶⁶ PRO MH 12/8782, Harrison to PLC, 4 March 1845.

of Hevingham (Norfolk) which had paid for its poor to leave in the 1830s. They attributed the decline in population to unassisted emigration, in the 1840s. We might suggest that the earlier assisted emigration had stimulated others to emigrate at their own expense.⁶⁷ The way emigration could excite a small community is shown in the biography of Joseph Ashby of Tysoe. Uncle William, after feeling disgraced after having been placed in the local asylum decided to leave his family and go to the United States. His departure made others think about emigration. It reminded those left behind of earlier emigrations, some of which had been paid for by the parish. One incident of emigration appears to have reconnected the community to a tradition of emigration which included the activities of the parish.⁶⁸

Evidence of the possible usefulness and extent of kinship and friendship networks is provided by a grateful letter received by Kettering vestry from James Twigg who had been assisted to leave with his wife and family in 1837. On arrival at New York, he was met by a friend who had emigrated two years earlier and who gave Twigg some money and advice before he went inland to meet up with his brother-in-law's family in Ohio. There Twigg was helped to find a place to stay and work was found for his eight children.⁶⁹

The presence of family and friendship networks for poor emigrants suggests how far down the social scale emigration, as a solution for socio-economic ills, had penetrated. The extent of these networks also explains the poor's role in initiating the emigratory process. Emigration was not just an abstract concept to many of the poor. It was something about

⁶⁷ Census 1851, for Hevingham, Norfolk. Census comments are difficult to interpret. Only if population had declined was emigration noted. Most 'emigrating parishes' were not noted by the census authorities. 'Emigration' furthermore might mean migration. Census comments are another way of discovering parishes from which people emigrated at their own expense. On occasions, as with Thenford and Cranford (Northants) we can identify parishes which lost population through emigration and which neighboured poor law emigrating parishes.

⁶⁸ M.K. Ashby, Joseph Ashby of Tysoe, 1859-1919 (Cambridge, 1961), pp. 87-8.

⁶⁹ Northampton Mercury, 10 June 1837.

which they had some knowledge and personal experience. Given this knowledge and continued hardship at home, it is little surprise that the poor looked for a new life overseas.

We may suggest that the role of the paupers in initiating the emigratory process had an impact in determining the type of people who received assistance. We have seen that most poor emigrants were described as 'good labourers' and received little or no relief in the year preceding their emigration. They might have been classed by local worthies as 'model' villagers but they were also perhaps more ambitious and adventurous than their fellow labourers. The system for assisted emigration benefited those who sought to actively improve their lot.

The system of assisted emigration was favourable to the well-informed poor, prepared to bargain with the parish authorities. The poor who had family already overseas had an advantage in the eyes of the parish officers. With relations prepared to look after emigrants on their arrival in the New World, the poor emigrant was more likely to succeed. Many parish officers were not callous in their attitudes towards their emigrants; they wanted them to succeed. Furthermore, parish officers considered it humane to encourage family reunions. The poor, whose relatives had already left, were perhaps more determined to leave and ask for help. A letter from an Australian emigrant suggests how the poor, left behind, might have been encouraged to look for assistance from outside agencies. The writer informed the family that they should apply for a free passage, which would provide the emigrants with everything they might need 'free of expense to yourselves'. They could even manipulate the system if they were really short of funds by getting their children sent out as orphans.⁷⁰

Information flow appears to have been important in stimulating poor people to look for assistance to emigrate. Those who could read and write had greater access to information and the aptitude to take advantage of it. Haines has calculated extraordinarily high literacy

⁷⁰ N.M., 9 June 1849.

rates for people who gained assisted passages from Australian agencies.⁷¹ The data for Australian parish-assisted emigrant literacy, a sub-group of Haines' sample, is not currently available (though the potential exists for nominal record linkage of English and Australian data). However, we may suggest that some of the emigrants who received help from their parish could read and write. To gain an Australian free passage direct applications had to be made to the colonial authorities by the emigrants. In the case of Pytchley (Northants), and a number of other parishes, the local parish officer filled in the forms on behalf of the emigrants. But even these forms required the emigrants to consent to their being filled in, on the emigrants' behalf. On other occasions it seems that the poor people applied for free passages. Once granted they then approached their parish for assistance to travel to the port of departure and for some clothing. The system required considerable initiative from the emigrant and a strong conviction of the benefits of emigration. The selection criteria which the emigrants faced, requiring good character references, the correct demographic profile and a competency in a required skill, further determined the character of assisted emigration to Australia. Those who could not read or write well might have used a local scribe. Elizabeth Ashby of Tysoe performed such a role for the emigrants from Tysoe in the 1870s, writing on the instructions of potential emigrants to the Canadian agent. Ashby recalls, 'they could read well enough, but had never handled a pen since they left school'.⁷²

Free passages from Australian governments were not the only way by which poor people were able to raise the cost of the emigrant fare. Relief figures for assisted emigrants are low, suggesting that some, though low paid, were not completely destitute. Work on

⁷¹ Haines, 'Indigent misfits', pp. 232-5. J.D. Marshall, 'Some Aspects of the Social History of 19th-Century Cumbria: (1) Migration and Literacy', Transactions of the Cumberland and Westmoreland Antiquarian and Archive Society, 69 (1969), 280-307, noted the connection between literacy and education and migration, suggesting that migrants had also received an 'injection of ambition and desire for better things'. (p. 294).

⁷² Ashby, Joseph Ashby, p. 88.

pauper inventories suggests that some poor people under the old poor law had some possessions.⁷³ Before emigration, this property had to be sold. The poor could not afford to take furniture to the New World. Delays in the PLC sanctioning emigrations from Norfolk in 1836 caused parish officers to note that speed was essential as the poor had 'begun to sell and dispose of furniture'.⁷⁴ The value of these goods is unknown. However, the proceeds from their sale would have given the poor additional funds for settling in the New World. The poor however did not use their own money when ships were delayed. The burden fell upon the parish.

The property of the poor was not the sole fund for financing their emigration. Some received money from friends and neighbours. A deserted wife was allowed to appeal directly to the parish once the PLC had made it clear that her emigration could not be carried out under its sanction.⁷⁵ Assistance to emigrate appears to have been treated as a negotiable subject, between parish and poor. William Buck of Hockering (Norfolk) entered into an engagement with the parish to pay back his emigration expenses of five pounds within two years of his landing in Canada.⁷⁶ Robert Ostrick of Knapton (Norfolk) expressed a wish for the parish to provide him and his family with fifteen pounds to go to Canada. For a family of five this was a low sum. He claimed that his friends would provide him with the rest.⁷⁷ Samuel Woodrow, of the same parish, his wife and six children, said that if the parish gave him thirty-five pounds, 'he could manage (with the aid of some friends) to take him and his

⁷³ Peter King, 'Pauper Inventories and the Material Life of the Poor in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth centuries', unpublished paper (1995).

⁷⁴ PRO MH 12/8596, Langham list; PRO MH 12/8185, Woodnorton and Hackford next Reepham list.

⁷⁵ B.C.R.O. P22/8/1, Wilshamstead vestry minutes, 13 April 1854.

⁷⁶ PRO MH 12/8474, Hockering list, 1836.

⁷⁷ PRO MH 12/8294, Knapton list, 1836.

family to Canada'.⁷⁸

From these examples the poor emigrants appear resourceful and enterprising. They appear unashamed to ask for help to leave; but not prepared to rely entirely upon the parish. By looking for, and using, other sources of finance, they managed to stack the odds of emigrating in their favour.

Like other prospective emigrants, poor people could change their minds and decide to stay at home. We have seen how threatening not to leave could be one way by which poor emigrants could extract more money from their parish before they left. Poor people retained the final say on whether they emigrated or not. The retention of the final say by the poor emigrants emphasises the view that assisted emigration was not forced, or transportation by other means. The poor who left, actively chose to do so.

Reasons for sudden changes of mind remind us of the delicate nature of the decision to emigrate. Sudden changes in personal circumstances could trigger emigration. This was the case with a Norfolk man who deserted his wife 'because she toke with another man'.⁷⁹ Changes in circumstances could also scupper plans for emigration. Some people, as with the case of a number of Bedfordshire poor whose parishes arranged for money to be raised or borrowed to meet emigration expenses, were rejected by the colonial authorities. Others were ready to leave but changed their minds. The emigration lists are indicative of changes in mind.

⁷⁸ *ibid.*

⁷⁹ PRO MH 12/8293, Erpingham to PLC, 27 April 1835. We know of this case because the overseer wrote to the PLC having attempted to pay for the emigration of the man's son, as the man had sent for him. The boy had refused to go 'we think through his mother's advice'. As the boy had refused relief in the form of assisted emigration, the parish declined to pay any further poor relief. The family was threatening to return to the parish and come to the overseer's house until relief was restored. This example shows how the poor declined assisted emigration. It also suggests some of the tensions which were connected with the subject. In some parishes, as with this case, we see a process of threat and counter-threat. In miniature this case might be taken as an example of what was happening in Norfolk in the era of the introduction of the New Poor Law. Assisted emigration was offered to the poor; but if they declined it they would no longer be able to receive out-relief.

'Desirous' lists sometimes diverge dramatically from those listing actual emigrants. Sometimes more complete reasons are given for non-emigration.

William Hicks, a thirteen year old boy, planned to leave Brackley Saint Peter (Northants) with his family in 1844. Just before the date of departure, he changed his mind when he got a job as a musician in the army.⁸⁰ Ill health could prevent or delay emigration. A family from Field Dalling (Norfolk) returned to the parish because the family head was too ill. The parish reported that if he should live 'it is doubtful the woman be persuaded to go'.⁸¹ The Scarfe family of Banham (Norfolk) returned from Yarmouth because of the sickness of the wife. Eventually they sailed a month later than had been planned.⁸² Being sent to prison was another reason for not leaving in an emigrant ship; Robert Utton of East Barsham (Norfolk) lost his place for that reason.⁸³ On other occasions there is just a bland comment stating that the parties changed their minds at the last minute. For a number of sudden changes of mind not to leave, opportunities were taken by others who were eager to leave. Robert Utton's place was taken by a family from a neighbouring parish.⁸⁴ The disparity between original lists and printed returns can partly be explained by sudden changes in mind. Central bureaucracy could not keep up with the sudden changes of mind of emigrants.

Some poor people clearly had long term plans to emigrate. On occasions their persistence paid off. Seven years separate the first listing of the Faulkners, in the Pytchley emigration papers, as desirous of emigrating to South Australia from the listing which marks

⁸⁰ PRO MH 12/8673, Brackley St. Peter list, 1844.

⁸¹ PRO MH 12/8596, Field Dalling list, 24 March 1836.

⁸² PRO MH 12/8393, Banham list, 1836.

⁸³ PRO MH 12/8596, East Barsham to PLC, 11 October 1836.

⁸⁴ *ibid.*

their eventual departure.⁸⁵

At the point of departure the pauper emigrants, noted as being in high spirits in the Norfolk press of 1836, disappear from view.⁸⁶ On leaving the land of their birth there is little sense of regret. N. Scott who accompanied the Aynho emigrants of 1845 reported to his patron that he left them in 'good health and spirits and hearts full of gratitude...There was not an individual either sick or sorry'.⁸⁷ Simpson, an emigrant from Pytchley, in a letter written from Deptford, painted a picture of joyful eating and drinking before the departure of the emigrant ship. He displayed no sense of regret that he had received assistance to emigrate: 'I am thankful I have heard on Board for another Country for I was tired of England Sir.'⁸⁸

We leave the emigrants, hopeful and expectant of a better life, and are left only to wonder as to their fate. They leave the institutional setting, which they manipulated with skill and enterprise, and become once again 'invisible immigrants', just a small part of the remarkable flow of millions of European born people who moved to the New World in the nineteenth century. A few of their letters found their way into the local press and in local collections, reporting success in their new land. Parish officers and Boards of Guardians contended that they wrote good reports of their new lives.⁸⁹ However, their success or failure is beyond the direct scope of this thesis. For our purposes, the achievement of the poor labourers, noted by E.H. Hunt as unlikely migrants or emigrants, was to gain assistance to

⁸⁵ See Chapter VII for a detailed account of the Pytchley emigrations.

⁸⁶ See Chapter VI, pp. 178-79.

⁸⁷ N.C.R.O. CA Box 85, Scott to Cartwright, 1 April 1845.

⁸⁸ N.C.R.O. NPL/1714, S. Simpson to Brown, July, 1850.

⁸⁹ For a less positive appraisal of how pauper emigrants fared see Rainer Baehre, 'Pauper Emigration to Upper Canada in the 1830s', *Histoire Sociale-Social History*, 15 (1982), 339-67.

leave.⁹⁰ In so doing they displayed a resourcefulness and native wit which would equip them well in the New World. Eric Richards notes that, 'there is a strong and recurrent theme in the literature about the nineteenth century that emigration was fundamentally the means by which Britain and Europe were ridged of the "losers" in the process of the Industrial Revolution'.⁹¹ England's 'uprooted' do not appear to have shared that perspective.

⁹⁰ E.H. Hunt, Regional Wage Variations in Britain 1850-1914 (Oxford, 1973), pp. 253-4.

⁹¹ Richards, 'How Did Poor People Emigrate', p. 254.

CHAPTER VI: THE EMIGRATORS

The previous chapter argued that poor people who took advantage of assisted emigration actively chose to leave. The poor emigrants were skilful manipulators of relief systems who adopted a number of strategies to fulfil their aims. They were, however, reliant upon the consent and financial assistance of their betters. This chapter investigates the thoughts and motivations of the people who paid for their poor to emigrate.

Assisted emigration does not appear to reflect well upon the people who paid for and implemented it. Its origins were rooted in Malthusian notions of surplus labour and redundant population. Sadler's fierce critique of pauper emigration and Buller's phrase 'shovelling out paupers' rest on a clear moral judgement. There are strong echoes with the emotive phrase 'Highland Clearances'. Yet the previous two chapters do not square with an entirely negative reading of assisted emigration. The demographic characteristics of poor law emigrants are singularly unspectacular. We do not see large numbers of aged, infirm people being assisted to leave. The qualitative remarks made by parish officers indicate that most emigrants were good labourers willing to leave. Furthermore, the emigratory process was not a one-sided expulsion. It involved negotiation and bargaining. We may even suggest that we see a certain amount of intimacy between rich and poor, working together towards their mutual benefit. The previous two chapters reveal that something more subtle than a mere policy of 'shovelling out paupers' was involved in assisted emigration. This chapter considers the policy from the perspective of the parish officers. Chapter three showed the difficulty of finding clear economic determinants of assisted emigration and suggested that emigration should be viewed as an idea. This chapter attempts to construct the meaning of assisted emigration to those that paid for and promoted it.

This chapter consciously adopts the perspective of those who paid for assisted emigration, attempting to enter their mental universe. It is an easy policy to condemn on a visceral level. Paying for people to go away appears to be an odious social policy, especially when performed by people who had manipulated the operation of the old poor law and the labour market to pursue their own economic aims at the expense of their labourers. However, this chapter seeks to see whether there was a more developed notion of assisted emigration amongst the emigrators than a wish to reduce poor rate bills. Boldly stated, the central question is, did they care about their emigrants? Did they just 'shovel out paupers' or was the policy more considered than it might first appear?

This chapter is almost as much an exercise in recovery work as the previous one. Rural parish officers, as with the rural poor, have been neglected by historians. We know little about how they acted, and even less about what they thought. From snatched fragments, scribbled comments and occasional correspondence this chapter attempts to investigate what assisted emigration meant to the people who paid for it. What and how they wrote was shaped by certain restrictions. They could not coerce poor people to leave. Thus in their dealings with the PLC, which regulated their emigratory activities, we see parish officers on their 'best behaviour'. We do not see many flashes of absolute callousness in terms of parish attitudes to the poor. What emerges is an attitude to assisted emigration which suggests the complexity of the subject to the people who paid for it. By focusing on what parish officers said about assisted emigration, by separating the thought from a purely economic framework, we are viewing them on their terms, through their conception of their social responsibilities. How they made sense of assisted emigration provides an interesting perspective on how authority figures made sense of their role in the era of the New Poor Law.

An invaluable introduction to the attitudes of the governors of rural England to

assisted emigration is provided by the answers to question forty-six of Rural Queries. The question asked, 'What do you think would be the effect of an Enactment enabling Parishes to tax themselves in order to facilitate Emigration?'.¹ The question elicited a range of responses. Answers varied on four main points: whether it was a good idea or not; who should go; whether those who left should lose their right of settlement; who should pay for it.

Some parishes admitted to having already carried out emigration and believed that some benefit had been reaped.² Others were enthusiastic, displaying more than a hint of desperation about the current problems of surplus labour. George Ovenley Fenwicke of Kempston (Beds) stated, 'The only remedy which could effectually help us would be Emigration'.³ John Brett of Dersingham (Norfolk) echoed those sentiments, 'it seems to be the only present means of getting rid of superfluous population'.⁴ William Kemp of Gissing (Norfolk) noted, 'In very many Parishes this is absolutely necessary, otherwise the whole property in the Parish will be taken for the maintenance of the poor'.⁵ Other parishes opposed such a plan outright. K.M.R. Torpley of Flore (Northants) believed, 'that it would not be attended with any good effect'.⁶ John Sargeant of Easton Mawdit (Northants) condemned the measure as, 'Impracticable; but if practicable, bad because the ruinous resource of a

¹ 'Reports from Commissioners on the Poor Laws: Appendix (B.1.) Part V', B.P.P. 1834 (44) XXXIV, p. 1e.

² Puddington (Beds) and Aynho (Northants): ibid, pp. 7e, 331e. This discussion of Rural Queries only covers the three counties that provide the bulk of the data for this thesis.

³ ibid, p. 4e.

⁴ ibid, p. 313e.

⁵ ibid, p. 314e.

⁶ ibid, p. 334e.

spendthrift'.⁷ The majority of valid answers to the question amongst Bedfordshire, Northamptonshire and Norfolk parishes were broadly in favour of assisted emigration. (Norfolk 20/24, Beds 9/12, Northants 7/10) but many of the answers were riddled with qualifications and reservations.

One problem that exercised parish officers was the question of the quality of the emigrants. J.J. Goodall of Bromham (Beds) noted that, 'all the industrious labourers would be far more willing to emigrate than the idle'.⁸ Charles Lorgnet Higgins of Turvey (Beds) believed, 'That we should in many cases get rid of our best and most efficient labourers'.⁹ Despite noting the necessity of such a measure, William Kemp of Gissing (Norfolk) suggested caution, 'lest we lose our best workmen'.¹⁰ Thomas Brown of West Rainham (Norfolk) noted that the 'efficient Labourer goes, leaving the profligate behind'.¹¹ If poor quality labourers could be persuaded to leave, other parishes warmed to the subject. Robert Kirbell of Wymondham (Norfolk) remarked that emigration 'answers, as far as [it] relates to getting rid of a few bad characters'.¹² William R. Rose of Harlestone (Northants) expressed caution, noting that 'the best Labourers only can be prevailed on to go'. He supported the policy, 'if the dissolute and idle would turn out'.¹³

On the question of the quality of the poor emigrants we see clearly articulated the

⁷ *ibid.*, p. 333e.

⁸ *ibid.*, p. 2e.

⁹ *ibid.*, p. 8e.

¹⁰ *ibid.*, p. 314e.

¹¹ *ibid.*, p. 319e.

¹² *ibid.*, p. 330e.

¹³ *ibid.*, p. 336e.

sentiments of parish officers that caused colonial governments such concern. If parish officers saw emigration as a means of removing the worst labourers, then colonial fears were justified. Read another way, the fears of some parish officers that their best labourers might leave points to the selectivity of emigration. Not all depressed people were likely to take advantage of it. Those who actively sought independence were those who sought assistance.

Hesitancy towards the policy of assisted emigration echoed Malthusian fears that any vacuum created by the removal of people would soon be refilled. Henry Bebb of Cardington (Beds) noted that 'any vacuum created by emigration would soon be filled again'. Bebb, however, did support emigration as a measure allied to reform of the poor laws.¹⁴ Uncertainty about emigration in present circumstances, was shown by Robert Hawes of Coltishall (Norfolk). He remarked, 'the habits of many of the Poor must improve materially to live even in a new country'. Under the present circumstances he found this unlikely.¹⁵ John Culley of Costessey (Norfolk) made a similar point, 'while men are supported by Parishes, they will not emigrate'.¹⁶ Should the poor law be reformed, some parish officers would view the policy in a new light. If the cycle of degeneracy and dependency, that the old system was blamed for, was broken, then assisted emigration could play a useful role, in a similar way to which Brougham had envisaged. The clearest support for a measure in this context was made by Richard Dening of East Rudham (Norfolk) who stated that, 'Emigration might be employed as a safe and powerful auxiliary in the abolition of the Poor Laws'.¹⁷ Brereton of Little Massingham (Norfolk) thought that emigration under the current system was of dubious

¹⁴ *ibid*, p. 3e.

¹⁵ *ibid*, p. 309e.

¹⁶ *ibid*, p. 310e.

¹⁷ *ibid*, p.322e.

merit, but suggested that it might be useful to 'facilitate a change of system'.¹⁸

A further point of disagreement amongst parish officers was over the question of whether poor emigrants should lose their right of settlement if they returned. The problem of the returning emigrant was the nightmare scenario for parish officers. To spend money on emigration only for the emigrant to once again burden the parish, filled parish officers, for whom emigration was a time-consuming and expensive measure, with dread. We have some evidence that poor emigrants had returned to their parish.¹⁹ John Cooper of Potterspury (Northants) had informed the Select Committee on Agriculture (1833) that in some cases emigrants had only returned to burden their parishes once more.²⁰ There was an obvious gap in the logic of some parish officers who wanted to export their worst labourers, yet were fearful of their return. Better labourers were more likely to succeed in a new land; 'bad labourers' might fail and return. Yet the knowledge that poor labourers would lose their birthright of settlement if they were paid to leave might make them less likely to emigrate. Most Norfolk parishes that offered an opinion on whether the emigrant should lose his right of settlement believed that he should. Ellis Burroughs of Saxlingham (Norfolk) even suggested that a clause should be inserted in any measure of parochial emigration that would give 'the power of punishing such persons, who having been once sent out, should again return to be a burden upon the Parish'.²¹ A wish to punish those that returned indicates a lack of sensitivity that critics like Sadler and Cobbett had complained about.

Others were more subtle in their understanding of the relationship between settlement

¹⁸ *ibid.*, p. 317e.

¹⁹ See Chapter II, p. 57.

²⁰ 'Report from the Select Committee on Agriculture', *B.P.P.* 1833 (612) V, p. 451.

²¹ *B.P.P.* 1834 (44) XXXIV, p. 320e.

and emigration, and of the general sensitivity of the subject. Thomas Pearce of Westoning (Beds) noted that, 'the strongest prejudices prevail against emigration among the poor'.²² John Boileau of Thursford (Norfolk) thought that depriving the emigrant of his settlement would be unfair: 'If you compel or induce him to try unsuccessfully to support himself elsewhere if he does not succeed it would be nugatory to legislate for his return to Pauperism. It would probably have the effect too of enacting prejudice against Emigration'.²³ William Cartwright of Aynho (Northants) thought it 'unjust and impolitic to deprive an Emigrant of his settlement'.²⁴ The responses to the question of the poor emigrant's right to settlement if he returned indicate a certain callousness about the poor. However the respondents who showed a deeper, more sensitive appreciation of the subject indicated something more than a wish to remove surplus labourers, suggesting a deeper understanding of the subject than might be expected of rural officials. Furthermore, we must appreciate a distinction between answers to an abstract question about a proposed measure of social policy and practice. In cold calculation emigration might serve as an answer to the problems of surplus labour. The answers however indicate other problems and concerns that shaped the development of the policy: the political sensitivity of the subject; the tensions between those who might willingly emigrate and the need to retain good labourers; the fear of the return of the emigrants. Allied to these issues was the expense of emigration. Tenant farmers were too poor and only held short leases and were thus reluctant to pay for emigration. Respondents who addressed the question of payment suggested that the landlords, not only the tenants, should be encouraged

²² *ibid.*, p. 9e.

²³ *ibid.*, p. 326e.

²⁴ *ibid.*, p. 331e.

to pay.²⁵ East Haddon's (Northants) respondent even called for a national system of emigration on a 'liberal scale'.²⁶ In operating and implementing the policy of assisted emigration, these factors had to be considered. How contrasting and conflicting imperatives were resolved and how parish officers conceived their actions form the subject of the next section of this chapter.

To assess parish officers' ideas of assisted emigration we shall consider three elements of the subject: parish officers' justifications for assisted emigration, their principles of selection and rhetoric and style.

Assisted emigration was expensive and time consuming for the amateurs of local government. To undertake such a policy required a conviction that the policy was essential for the well-being of the parish. In the explanations that parish officers gave, we see a firm commitment to the policy. The problem of surplus labourers, and the desperation as to what to do with them, drove parish officers to pay for their poor to leave. Reverend Harrison of Bugbrooke (Northants) claimed to 'know of no other remedy for the difficulties [of surplus labour] but emigration'.²⁷ Fulmodestone cum Croxton's (Norfolk) parish officer justified sending out emigrants by noting 'we are very much burdened with poor'.²⁸ The parish of Shimpling stated that, 'from redundancy of population and scarcity of employment [emigration is] highly beneficial to the owners and occupiers'.²⁹ Docking Board of Guardians

²⁵ On the problems of paying for emigration see answers from: Kempston (Beds), Lidlington (Beds), Haynford (Norfolk), Worstead (Norfolk), Stoke Albany (Northants), Wilbarston (Northants): *ibid.*, pp. 4e, 5e, 315e, 329e, 339e, 340e.

²⁶ *ibid.*, p. 335e.

²⁷ PRO MH 12/8782, Harrison to PLC, 2 March 1843.

²⁸ PRO MH 12/8596, Fulmodestone cum Croxton to PLC, 12 March 1836.

²⁹ PRO MH 12/8225, Shimpling to PLC, August 1837.

echoed Harrison of Bugbrooke by explaining that parishes 'are induced to believe that Emigration is the only resource to reduce the expenditure of the poor rates'.³⁰ The Duke of Bedford's Woburn estate agent, Thomas Bennett, wrote of the 'great good' that was done by emigrating poor labourers from Oakley in Bedfordshire.³¹ Those that adopted policies of assisted emigration had a conviction and faith that emigration would be a remedy to the problems of rural society. For a more detailed appreciation of the policy we shall turn to the question of the selection of emigrants.

An investigation of the selection criteria of parish officers sheds important light on the operation of the policy. It allows us to consider whether, to meet the economic problem of surplus labour, parish officers removed the most burdensome parishioners or whether other considerations shaped their selection policy. We have seen that the respondents to Rural Queries expressed a wish that the worst labourers should leave and a fear that the better ones did. Chapters four and five suggest that the fears of the respondents were borne out. The question is whether the result was carried out by accident or design.

We can find examples of 'bad labourers' being assisted to leave, and a certain glee at their departure. William Cartwright of Aynho (Northants) annotated one emigrant list:-

Spires a v good riddance
Robbins ditto
Watts ditto
Anstell ditto ditto ditto³²

The parish of Greens Norton (Northants) informed the PLC that it had held a meeting 'to consider the propriety of assisting certain paupers of indifferent character...to emigrate to

³⁰ PRO MH 12/8299, Docking Board of Guardians to PLC, 20 May 1851.

³¹ B.C.R.O. R3/4314, Bennett to Russell, 27 November 1840.

³² N.C.R.O. Cartwright (Aynho) Box 85, n.d.

America'. The success of its selection criteria was shown by only one ratepayer opposing the subsequent emigration; the publican, annoyed at the loss of two of his best customers.³³ A group of Norfolk emigrants was assisted 'on account of their disreputable characters'.³⁴ An indication of the sort of calculations made by parish officers is provided by a costing made by the parish of Eydon (Northants) for the emigration of a deserted wife, Mrs Willoughby, and her seven children. The parish calculated that the cost of emigrating the Willoughbys was only one and a half times the annual total of relief received. For the parish, their emigration marked a worthwhile investment.³⁵ The wish to reduce poor rates by assisting poor people to emigrate was clearly a key force in the adoption of the policy.

Yet, as we have seen, the comments made by the parish officers about their poor emigrants were more likely to be along the lines of 'good labourer' and 'solid and trustworthy'. The amount of relief received by the poor emigrants in the year preceding their departure was remarkably small. We may suggest that pauper emigration was a rare phenomenon. What took place was the emigration of poor people; not paupers. Anne Digby suggested that, 'East Anglian ratepayers encouraged the worst characters to emigrate and were dismayed when large numbers of good workmen grasped this opportunity to vote with their feet'.³⁶ This comment displays the clear tension between those who were encouraged to leave and those who actually left. It also suggests the limited amount of control exercised by parish officers over the selection process. We might suggest that in the frenzied atmosphere of the 'Norfolk emigration fever' that parish officers might have panicked at the

³³ PRO MH 12/8879, letters from Greens Norton to PLC, n.d. 1835 and 6 May 1835.

³⁴ PRO MH 12/8225, Tivershall St. Mary list, 1836.

³⁵ N.C.R.O. 120P/186, Eydon emigration papers, 1849.

³⁶ Digby, *Pauper Palaces*, p. 105.

narrow window of opportunity presented by the short emigration season and the fear that surplus labourers would have to be housed, at considerable expense, in the union workhouse. However, the evidence indicates that parish officers knew who they were sending. They had to fill in lists of their emigrants. We might suggest that parish officers willingly and knowingly sent out their 'better labourers'.

Despite the wish of some parish officers, occasionally irritated by the changes of mind of the poor emigrants, emigration could not be forced. Henry Stuart's report to the Royal Commission on the Poor Laws noted one case of coercion used to persuade Norfolk poor to emigrate to America, before the reform of the poor law.

In one parish from which two families were sent, they were both men of desperate character, and were compelled to go, by being informed that if they did not accept the offer of the parish, they would be tried for felonies of which they had been guilty, and which no doubt could be brought home to them. The parish calculated that if they were transported, their families would become chargeable, which would entail a heavier expense than if they were to get rid of them altogether. These unwilling emigrants were conveyed to the place of embarkation by the assistant overseer, and so averse were they to the undertaking, that on reaching the port, they refused to come down from the coach, and the overseer was obliged to knock them off with his constable's staff.³⁷

No comparable example has been unearthed from the records surveyed.

The difficulties faced by the parish in its efforts to coerce felons to leave points to the limits to the power of authority figures in rural England. These limits are easy to forget. Endemic social protest, whether in the form of incendiarism or poaching, marked the limits of authority's power. An awareness of the knowledge that local elites ruled by consent is shown by the reluctance of farmers to employ threshing machines in the decades after Swing.³⁸

³⁷ B.P.P. 1834 XXVIII (44), p. 376a.

³⁸ E.J.T. Collins, 'The "Machinery Question" in English Agriculture in the Nineteenth Century', Research in Economic History, Supplement 5 (1989), 203-17.

Authority figures did not have complete freedom of action to do what they wanted, they had to consider the reaction that their actions would elicit. Some of the respondents to Rural Queries had noted the sensitivity of the issue of assisted emigration. Stuart provided another entertaining example of the difficulties faced by a parish's attempt to coerce people to leave. An overseer complained to Stuart of the problems he had met whilst transporting reluctant emigrants. The overseer 'was not only interrupted, but threatened with violence by the inhabitants of the towns through which he passed, as being engaged in transporting people who had not been guilty of any offence'.³⁹ Stuart also reported the 'habitual and almost natural hostility' between accompanying parish officers and emigrants. The lack of coercive power restricted the power of choice that parish officers had wished to possess over who would receive assistance to emigrate. The workhouse undoubtedly offered a strong coercive push; yet the coercive push appears to have had a significant impact upon hardworking labourers, fearful of a future lived under its dark shadow.

Deprived of coercive power, parish officers had to accept whoever volunteered to be assisted to leave. In the previous chapter we suggested an element of self-selection amongst poor agricultural labourers. Those with some information or a willingness to seek a better life were those who stepped forward. The strategies adopted by the poor emigrants suggest a certain level of manipulation and enterprise on their part. The poor's strategies and ability to bargain, furthermore, illustrate that the power of the emigrators was restricted and that the poor could manipulate their betters to serve their own ends. In the explanations parish officers gave as to why they wanted to assist some people to leave, we see something of a sense of gratitude towards the poor who offered to emigrate. Dodford (Northants) assisted three 'industrious young men of good character' who had been 'continually at a loss for

³⁹ B.P.P. 1834 XXVIII (44), p. 376a.

employment...because they are the first who have offered themselves'.⁴⁰ Parish officers knew the characters of their emigrants; they sometimes wrote glowing testimonials in the margins of emigrant lists. They also rationalised their granting of assistance to their labourers. The rationalisations indicate a pragmatism at the heart of the adoption of parochial emigration policy that displayed an acknowledgement of the limits to parish officers' powers of selection.

The most common form of rationalisation displayed an inversion of the vacuum argument against assisted emigration. The introduction of the New Poor Law undercut the vacuum argument against assisted emigration. The New Poor Law theoretically attacked the features of the old system that had encouraged idleness and moral fecklessness. By ending the allowance system the incentive for families to increase in size was reduced. Thus if people left a parish, there were no incentives for poor people to fill up the vacuum created. The vacuum would only offer opportunities for those currently out of employ to find work. Connected to this argument was a certain environmentalism; that poor people were not irredeemably idle if they had opportunities to work. Emigration created space for those out of work to find employment. Given employment, the moral character of the unemployed would improve. Thus it did not matter who left, as long as some people left. The parish of Diss (Norfolk) supported the emigration of a family who had 'a great inclination to emigrate' to 'make room for another family [currently] in the workhouse'.⁴¹ Sporle with Palgrave (Norfolk) explained the emigration of some people who had been no expense to the parish because 'they would create openings for others'.⁴² All Little Snoring's (Norfolk) emigrants were described as 'well-behaved and good labourers' in constant employ. Their departure

⁴⁰ PRO MH 12/8712, Dodford to PLC, n.d. 1845.

⁴¹ PRO MH 12/8539, Diss to PLC, n.d. 1837.

⁴² PRO MH 12/8539, Sporle with Palgrave list, 1836.

would make room for 'others that have been on the parish'.⁴³ Bressingham's (Norfolk) parish officer offered a similar explanation for the emigration of a family.⁴⁴ If poor people offered to leave from parishes that were inclined to help their labourers to emigrate, it appears that parishes were happy to help them. 'A great inclination to emigrate' was a sufficient principle for help from the parish. The parish, far from forcing people to leave was facilitating the fulfilment of the poor's aspirations.

A second way that parish officers found to justify assisting 'good labourers' to emigrate provides evidence of the broader significance of assisted emigration. Assisted emigrants were not isolated from the wider village community. Emigrants retained their links with relations and neighbours by writing to them. 'Good labourers' were more likely to succeed in foreign lands than 'bad labourers'. Furthermore unsuccessful emigrants might write back complaining of hardship, casting a delicate social policy in a negative light. Even worse, they might return and once more burden the parish. Despite the support for depriving assisted emigrants of the right of settlement amongst the parish officers that answered Rural Queries, assisted emigrants did not lose their right of settlement. Successful emigrants would avoid the problems of returning paupers. They might also encourage others to follow, perhaps at their own expense. Assisted emigration marked a speculative investment on the part of the parish officers. They had to evaluate which poor emigrants would give them the best return: people who might return or fail; or people who might succeed and induce others to follow. Great Creaton's (Northants) officer explained the parish's selection of seven 'industrious good labourers' to emigrate to Western Australia in 1840 because it judged them 'the best to send out as the most likely to succeed and send home good accounts which we

⁴³ PRO MH 12/8596, Little Snoring list, 1836.

⁴⁴ PRO MH 12/8393, Bressingham list, April 1836.

feel will operate to stimulate some of our young men to emigrate without expense to the parish'.⁴⁵ Reverend Harrison of Bugbrooke noted the success of the emigrations which he had sponsored by remarking that 'news from emigrants has induced forty individuals, mostly tradesmen to emigrate under their own resources'.⁴⁶

A further reason for assisting 'good labourers' to leave was never explicitly stated by the emigrators, however the experience of assisting unreliable 'bad characters' suggests that 'good labourers' made parish officers' lives easier. Emigration was time consuming and expensive to arrange. We have seen the bargains that the indigent Abbott family made with the parish of Loys Weedon in threatening not to leave. We shall see in the next chapter the problems that emigrants changing their minds and getting lost caused parish officers. Reliable people who actively wanted to leave made parish officers' lives much easier.

The selection of suitable recipients of assistance to emigrate was influenced by a number of factors, that extended beyond a mere wish of parish officers to remove their worst labourers. Selection policy was shaped by the broad social framework of interaction between poor and rich. Emigration policy was a function of the social reality. Its process reflected the relationship between rich and poor. Parish officers were not distant strangers to the poor. The New Poor Law might have distanced social relations between rich and poor by introducing the union workhouse as the place where decisions about relief were made; but the parish was still responsible for the poor relief bills and it was the parish that had the central role in determining emigration policy. The continued vitality of the parish as a source of poor relief policy meant that the focus of attention remained the small ancient boundaries of small village communities. Thus an element of face to face relations remained in the interpretation

⁴⁵ PRO MH 12/8690, Great Creaton to PLC, 6 April 1842.

⁴⁶ PRO MH 12/8782, Harrison to PLC, 4 March 1845.

of a policy of assisted emigration. The continued power of the parish had a profound effect in determining the characteristics of assisted emigration. Armchair theorists, such as Ellis Burroughs of Saxlingham, might talk of a wish to punish the poor; yet there was a distinction drawn between the poor and the parish poor. The poor were an abstract threatening mass. The parish poor were different.⁴⁷

The changes in economic and social relationships were not necessarily welcomed wholeheartedly by all authority figures. Surplus labour was a problem that they faced. They could not provide enough work for their labourers. It was a problem for which no one was blamed and no easy solutions were available. The existence of surplus labour marked a challenge to the self-identity of the ruling order; that they could not provide for their inhabitants. Assisted emigration offered one way by which they could assert some element of positive power, some way of improving the lives of their poor. The closeness of the relationship between rich and poor on the question of assisted emigration was shown by the way poor people asked their parish officers for help directly and how they negotiated the amount of assistance that they were given. A further indication of the close relationship between rich and poor was shown by the detailed comments that the parish officers wrote about prospective emigrants.

The descriptions sometimes extended far beyond the names and ages and amount of relief received by the emigrants. The parish officer of Ingoldisthorpe (Norfolk) described the Cross family as 'very necessitous tho' strong and industrious for want of employment. They are quite unable to provide for themselves. They will soon become a serious burthen to the

⁴⁷ The difference between the parish poor and the poor in the minds of the people in authority is in part shown by the popularity of myths about incendiarism that depicted incendiaries as outsiders and foreigners; not people of the village. (See Archer, *By a Flash*, pp. 170-7).

parish. Will emigrate in view to better their condition'.⁴⁸ The motivation for the parish in effecting such an emigration was obvious; the family would soon become a burden. The description of the family, however displays more than a casual knowledge of the difficulties that the family faced. Brigstock (Northants) parish displayed similar knowledge of a family it assisted to emigrate. Eli Badger, a fourteen year old boy was described as 'deformed but a v shrewd boy and we believe him to be v useful to the family and likely to be a good scholar'.⁴⁹ When applied at the local level in some parishes, assisted emigration lacked the overt application of political economic principles. It was a way of helping your poor neighbours to a better life.

A further indication of the function that parish officers performed concerned the sponsoring and development of family reunions. Apart from the Norfolk 'emigration fever' of 1836 we see little wholesale emigration. We see parishes assisting one or two families to leave- or sometimes a few individuals. On some occasions these people already had relatives who had emigrated. Bugbrooke (Northants) assisted four brothers to leave in three different parties. The only emigrant it paid for in 1847 was a sixty-four year old man being reunited with his family.⁵⁰ The parish of Pytchley (Northants) paid for the emigration of a family to South Australia, at considerable expense, although the family was not eligible for a free passage. This would facilitate a family reunion⁵¹. Parishes happily stated that their poor emigrants were going out to meet relatives who were doing well.

The various principles of selection that parish officers used suggest that assisted

⁴⁸ PRO MH 12/8249, Ingoldisthorpe to PLC, 5 May 1836.

⁴⁹ PRO MH 12/8862, Brigstock list, 1845.

⁵⁰ PRO MH 12/8781-3, Bugbrooke emigration lists.

⁵¹ See Chapter VII for a full discussion of the Pytchley emigrations.

emigration, at the local level, was a far more complicated issue than the mere shovelling out of paupers. It was something about which parish officers gave some thought and was deeply rooted in the realities of the state of rural England. Another way of considering the policy is by attempting to construct an ideology of assisted emigration. In other words, how did parish officers perceive their actions when they paid for poor people to leave? Clues to a broader appreciation of the subject amongst parish officers are found in the selection criteria that they adopted, and the interpretation of the selection criteria informs our assessment of the ideology. The ideology reflects back and validates our appreciation of the practice of assisted emigration. It will be argued that parish officers' involvement in assisted emigration marked a constructive process in the rebuilding of rural society, and that those who pursued such a policy had a developed sense of what they were doing.

We should approach the question of an ideology of assisted emigration with a degree of scepticism. A prime reason for its development was defensive. Assisted emigration was a sensitive issue and criticism did not stop with Sadler and Cobbett. It was one of a number of plans for rural renewal that were part of a general discourse about reform of the poor law, and what after the Poor Law Amendment Bill was passed became known as the 'condition of England' question. The diversity of reform programmes was famously summed up by Sydney Smith.

A pamphlet on the Poor Laws generally contains some little piece of favourite nonsense, by which we are told this enormous evil may be perfectly cured. The first gentleman recommends little gardens; the second cows; the third village shops; the fourth a spade; the fifth Dr Bell, and so forth. Every man rushes to the press with this small morsel of imbecility; and is not easy till he finds his impertinence stitched in blue covers.⁵²

Some writers incorporated a range of remedies that included emigration. For other

⁵² Sydney Smith, *Edinburgh Review*, 1820; cited in Poynter, *Society and Pauperism*, p. 330. Poynter's work provides ample evidence of the diversity of competing schemes.

pamphleteers emigration was undesirable. They would compare their policies against the anti-social resonances of emigration. The Vegetarian Society offered an opinion on the subject: it was unnecessary if everyone gave up eating meat!⁵³ The Labourer's Friend Magazine which campaigned for allotments was lukewarm about emigration and published some hostile articles.⁵⁴ It also published 'Lines written by a Young Lady on hearing of the numerous emigrations to America and the practical efforts of spade husbandry in the neighbourhood of Ross':-

British patriots, arise! and no longer survey
Your pride, and your wealth, and your strength torn away.
Shall the sons of Great Britain be sent from her shores,
When her soil such a plenteous exuberance pours?
Let them till her waste lands, turn them up with the spade,
And none will complain of depression and trade.⁵⁵

In some quarters ways of retaining population were valued over emigration. Thomas Brown of West Rainham (Norfolk) thought the cultivation of waste lands was preferable to assisted emigration.⁵⁶ The Northants grandee Sir James Langham opposed the plan of his agent, William Dean to assist the emigration of some of his tenants, '[I] cannot consent to remove perhaps the most valuable part of the population'.⁵⁷ The notion that poor labourers were a vital part of the population proved enduring and surfaced in the Norfolk press's reporting of the large number of departures by agricultural labourers in 1836. There is a sense of loss and sadness in a report of emigrants leaving Kings Lynn. 'It is lamentable to see the

⁵³ Shepperson, British Emigration, p. 128.

⁵⁴ e.g. L.F.M., No. 19 (1835), p. 285; August (1839), pp. 116-18.

⁵⁵ L.F.M., (1834), p. 121.

⁵⁶ B.P.P. 1834 (44) XXXIV, p. 319e.

⁵⁷ N.C.R.O. Langham (Cottesbrooke) 1192, draft letter Langham to Dean, 18 March 1831.

"bold peasants" who were once "England's pride" now driven from her shores by hundreds and thousands to seek their bread in a foreign land'.⁵⁸

The unease about assisted emigration provided a general context to which people who sponsored it had to respond. More specifically, the emigrators had to answer charges that their emigrations were unsuccessful. A letter from Montreal, published in the Norfolk Chronicle, claimed that Norfolk and Suffolk labourers had 'been landed much too poor' and without the intervention of Canadian charities would have 'experienced the severest privations'.⁵⁹ A letter from a Richard Henshaw who had emigrated from Holt with his wife and family circulated through Norfolk. It depicted sickness and death and the miseries endured by the poor emigrants who landed at Quebec and, unable to obtain employment, wandered with their families through the 'wild woods of Canada perishing in the woods through hunger and want'. The letter attacked the oppressive poor laws that drove 'so many wretches from their home and country' and offered a corrective to people who 'may be deluded by the pretended letters representing America as a paradise which are got up by interested parties to deceive the unwary and tear them from their homes'. We only know about this letter because its claims were answered in detail by Jas Shalders of Holt. He countered that the letter was a forgery and claimed that 'the emigration from this part of the country [north Norfolk] has arisen entirely from the inclination of the persons going out, and neither from compulsion nor the solicitation of parish authorities...The desire of bettering their condition has been the principal cause of the removal of so many of our cottage families, and it has been excited...by the communications from friends and acquaintances, who had previously endured the perils of the voyage, and been compensated by plenty and

⁵⁸ Norfolk Chronicle and Norwich Gazette, 6 April 1836.

⁵⁹ ibid., 23 September 1836.

independence'.⁶⁰

The vigorous defence of assisted emigration by Shalders displays a touchiness amongst the elite about the subject of assisted emigration. It reveals one plank of the ideology of assisted emigration; that poor people benefited from it, being rewarded with 'plenty and independence'. Brutal and cynical the policy may have appeared to its opponents, but those who paid for their poor to leave were convinced that they were helping their poor. Robert Marsham of Stretton Sherby (Norfolk) spoke for many when he explained his expenditure on emigration to the PLC. 'My object in incurring this expense is because from all reports I receive of those sent out I am conferring the greatest good I can upon them'.⁶¹ The most effective way of supporting claims like that was to report the success of poor emigrants that had been sent out. The Docking Union reported the success of emigration; noting that the 'most gratifying reports have been received', that 'any number of families may do well by emigration'.⁶² Lord Stradbrooke addressed the Board of Guardians of the Blything Union and also spoke of 'the most gratifying accounts received of migrants and emigrants' who 'are obtaining very high wages and enjoying comforts which they had hitherto been strangers to'.⁶³

A powerful prop to a positive notion of assisted emigration was the news of the success of the emigrants. In justifying their policy decisions to the PLC, emigrators stressed that they had received good news from earlier emigrants. They celebrated the achievements and gratitude of poor emigrants by publishing their letters. Published emigrant letters have

⁶⁰ ibid., 23 July 1836.

⁶¹ PRO MH 12/8185, Marsham to PLC, 22 February 1837.

⁶² Report From The Chairman of the Docking Union (Kings Lynn, 1836), found in MH 12/8249.

⁶³ Bury and Norwich Post and East Anglian, 18 January 1837.

long been mistrusted for their reliability, often being used as support for propaganda campaigns for colonies or in the case of assisted emigration as a defensive device against criticism. For our purposes the published emigrant letters have a value, despite being put into print by paternalists who wanted to encourage their fellow property-owners to sponsor assisted emigration. They illuminate what people who paid for people to emigrate thought that they were achieving. In a sense the reputed bias and selectivity of these printed letters has the benefit of allowing us to view them as ideologically tainted propaganda and as part of a contribution to a debate and discourse on assisted emigration. Published emigrant letters bolstered the convictions of those who paid for assisted emigration and present a picture of the results that were reaped.

Officers of Kettering vestry sent the Northampton Mercury a grateful letter from an emigrant that they had assisted to leave. The letter clearly showed the thanks that the emigrant, James Twigg, felt towards the people who had helped him to leave. He described the help that he had received as 'the greatest blessing you could have bestowed upon us'.⁶⁴ The publication of the letter indicates how parish officers attempted to glory in the reflective glow of the success of their emigrants and possibly stimulate others to undertake similar policies. Scott F. Surtees of Banham (Norfolk) published a collection of letters from emigrants to convince his parishioners of the value of emigration. He addressed his parishioners, 'You may considerably better yourselves and rise to independence in the Colonies'. The success of the Banham emigrants was shown by the transformation of their fortunes in the colonies. Labourers who 'worked as labourers alongside of you a few years since, now have "well-stocked" farms of their own and write to you about the rate of wages

⁶⁴ N.M., 10 June 1837.

they give their labourers'.⁶⁵ Two letters in the collection were concerned with James Spurling who had done well for himself. Spurling had been sent out under clause sixty-two of the New Poor Law to South Australia and was not known for his industry. Surtees asked, 'if a notoriously inferior workman like Spurling can thus be employed at such liberal wages what might some of you hardworking men earn?'.⁶⁶ A feature of the letters was the independence and high wages that assisted emigrants could attain. Surtees' collection of letters and his comments have the additional value of being the work of an obscure local clergyman. He was not a professional pamphleteer, just a local churchman who had played a role in encouraging his parishioners to emigrate. He represents what Kitson Clark memorably called 'the intellectual small change of the day' and allows us to see how a local figure viewed assisted emigration.⁶⁷ Poulett Scrope's collection reported the availability of land in Canada; William Clements, a day labourer from Corsley (Wiltshire) reported his purchase of a fifty acre farm.⁶⁸ James Treasure advised all to come, 'for we are all free from the anxiety as to getting on'. He concluded, 'I seem now to want to tell this, that and the other story about men who came here without a single shilling but have now good farms of their own but they would be too numerous'. Philip Anstell (a day labourer from Corsley) proclaimed:

Here you can go and shoot wild dear, Turkeys, Pheasants, Quails, pigeons any other sort of game and catch plenty of fish without molestation whatever; here you can raise everything of your own that you want to make use of in your

⁶⁵ Scott F. Surtees, Emigrants' Letters from Settlers in Canada and South Australia Collected in the Parish of Banham Norfolk (Norwich, 1852), p. 3.

⁶⁶ ibid., p. 4. Spurling's wife's letter notes 'we have a sovereign whence then we had not a shilling' (p. 7).

⁶⁷ G. Kitson Clark, Churchmen and the Condition of England 1832-1885: A Study in the Development of Social Ideas and Practice From the Old Regime to the Modern State (1973), pp. 8-9.

⁶⁸ Poulett Scrope, Extracts of Letters, p. 11.

family. You can make your own soap, candles, sugar, treacle and vinegar without paying any duty...it is a land of liberty and plenty.⁶⁹

The above reports of life in the emigrant destinations are typical of the genre of published emigrant letters. They paint a picture of abundance and opportunity. It is interesting that members of the elite published letters that implicitly criticised the status quo of rural England. To hunt or fish 'without molestation' clearly attacked one symbol of the elite's power, the Game Laws. Tales of abundance and opportunity clearly contrasted with the lack of opportunities in the society from which the emigrants came. These damning subtexts were ignored by those who published them, or they found some way in their minds of divorcing themselves from any sense of responsibility for the condition of rural England.

The use of personal testimonies of poor emigrants by emigrationists in the construction of a case for assisted emigration is revealing. The benefits of the policy were not viewed in terms of abstract economic theory; they were viewed on the personal level. Through individual accounts, the value of assisted emigration was shown. On one level we might suggest that emigrant testimony was relied upon to communicate directly to potential emigrants who could relate to and share in the aspirations of the letter writers. The use of emigrant letters also reveals the perception of the policy of those that paid for it. Emigrants' image of the policy appears to have been highly personal. It was not applied to the poor, it was applied to individuals and families who were poor. The motivation for the policy was strongly shaped by the wish to reduce relief expenditure; but it was conceived as a face to face interaction between parties that knew one another.

Detailed listings of the poor, a wish to sponsor family reunions and the initiation of the emigratory process by the poor, show that parochial assisted emigration reflected a continued

⁶⁹ *ibid.*, p. 15.

closeness in social relations between rich and poor in rural England. The use of emigrant letters suggests that concern for the individual emigrants did not disappear after they had left the parish boundaries. Personal testimony displays the scale on which some emigrators viewed their actions. On one level, the image of assisted emigration in human individual terms shows a limited conception of the policy, as one form of limited charity. In another way the conceptualisation of emigration as an aid to individuals gives it additional depth and development, because those that helped the poor to leave had a sense of the impact of their assistance. Applied to this model of the life that the poor would achieve were moral concepts of the influence of regular work and opportunities on the well-being of the poor. Surtees' use of the case of James Spurling shows the moral benefits that emigration gave the poor. In a new environment, freed of the constraints of the old world, an 'inferior workman' had been transformed into a hardworking individual who was economically successful. The colonies could transform the feckless into independent citizens.

The moral effects of life in the open spaces of the colonies were stressed by philanthropic agencies involved in the assisted emigration of London slum children to the colonies.⁷⁰ Rural officials were also aware of the moral benefits of emigration. The clerk to the Aylsham Board of Guardians explained the Board's wish to assist two young illegitimate women living in the workhouse to go to Australia: 'It being considered that it might be an advantage to them to remove them from evil associates especially as their conduct has been very good in the workhouse'.⁷¹ The explanation is revealing. It shows how the policy of assisted emigration was aimed at individuals. We also see the moral benefits of the policy-to offer the young women a better environment, away from evil associates. Furthermore,

⁷⁰ Hadley, 'Natives in a Strange Land'.

⁷¹ PRO MH 12/8192, clerk of Aylsham Board of Guardians to PLB, 15 August 1849.

assisted emigration is not viewed as a punishment; but as a reward. The good conduct of the women has marked them as worthy recipients of assistance to emigrate.

The positive messages about the impact of emigration upon the lives of the poor enhanced the conviction of the elite that they were benefitting their labourers. A further influencing factor in support of emigration was the experience of some Anglican clergy in the British colonies. The interest of the people of Titchmarsh (Northants) in emigration to South Australia was stimulated by W. Littleton Powys, the incumbent, who had a son there who had 'no doubt induced some of his parishioners to fund their steps thither'.⁷² The influence of Anglican clergy was important in the development of parochial emigration policy. In one sense this reflected the high Anglicanism about which Kitson Clark wrote. It also reflects the sense of Christian mission which has always been connected with British imperialism.

A positive conception of the receiving countries was a key rock on which assisted emigration was built. Parish officers wrote about the value of empire, suggesting a broader conception of the policy than a wish to remove people. G.H. Orchard of Steventon (Beds) thought that emigration to the Canadas would help to ensure a return to stability as the new settlers would be 'nationalized to our govt'.⁷³ Parish officers also attended meetings that expressed the value of the British colonies. At one such meeting in Northamptonshire they were told of the promise of South Australia. Fife Angus, described as 'well known as a gentleman of enlightened philanthropic principles' spoke for two and a half hours on the benefits of colonisation. He spoke of 'green hills and downs and plains for flocks and herds'.⁷⁴

The association between imperialism and assisted emigration points to a broader

⁷² PRO MH 12/8861, Thrapston Board of Guardians to PLC, 3 July 1838.

⁷³ PRO MH 12/22, G.H. Orchard to PLC, July 3 1838.

⁷⁴ N.M., 8 March 1845.

design to parochial emigration. A convergence of domestic problems and colonial needs could produce a mutually beneficial result. The knowledge that labourers would benefit from emigration, gave the emigrators some confidence. A further aspect of the ideology of assisted emigration involved an appreciation of the domestic symbolic value of the design; that assisted emigration could help to rebuild the social relationships of rural England.

The clearest, most explicit statement of this belief was made by J.P. Kay, Assistant Commissioner to the PLC for Norfolk. He had been offered the job at the suggestion of Nassau Senior so that he could 'exchange the darkest and most foul parts of the cities for long daily journeys in the open air of the rural districts'.⁷⁵

Kay, with the Earl of Stradbroke, chair of the Blything Union (Suffolk), lobbied for central government to provide a boat to help to emigrate Norfolk and Suffolk poor. His explanation provides an insight to the concerns and expectations of the emigrators. For Kay, emigration and migration were one way of restoring a spirit of paternalism in rural England. Kay's support for the policy displayed something of the multiple benefits of assisted emigration. Benefit for the parish was sought, but the benefit could be greater than the simple removal of people. Assisted emigration had positive benefits for the overall morale of the rural population. The philosophy of assisted emigration was larger than a mere attempt to lower relief bills; it provided one device for the reconstitution of rural society.

Kay explained that migration and emigration had offered 'considerable relief to the rates from the removal of the most burdensome families'. However this was only one effect of the policy. For Kay, a more positive dimension, and one worth emphasising, was the 'moral impression which the resort to so paternal provision for the exigencies of the

⁷⁵ B.C. Bloomfield (ed.), The Autobiography of Sir James Kay Shuttleworth (1964) [based on 1877 manuscript], p. 19.

pauperised population has produced on the minds of all classes'. He continued:

The nature of such aid cannot be estimated simply by the relief which would be afforded to many over-burdened parishes by the increasing facilities for the emigration of their surplus labourers but the moral effect produced by the exhibition of so paternal care in the direct interference of the Government to emancipate the working classes of these highly pauperised counties from the manifold miseries entailed upon them by the recent administration of the law would spread a spirit of contentment, if not of hopeful and active enterprise through these districts, which would provide a signal advantage to the Board of Guardians in the several unions in the laudable and persevering efforts to correct the evils which have sprung from the abuse of the law.

In Kay's view a powerful signal was required to indicate that some measure of amelioration was being attempted. Somewhat dramatically he claimed that, 'the offer [of assistance] would be brought to the fireside of every labourer in these two counties [Norfolk and Suffolk] and with the offer a conviction that the Government of the Country exercised a paternal care over the welfare of its meanest subjects'.⁷⁶

Assisted emigration in East Anglia was a sign of concern, a way of sweetening the workhouse pill; a way out of a cycle of despair that had caused serious ructions in an increasingly dysfunctional society. It may be portrayed as 'shovelling out paupers'- a way of dismissing people as expendable and redundant. However, there were genuine hopes that emigration offered a better life for the poor. The opportunities available for the emigrant in a new land, opportunities which required independent labour and industry, were just the ones which the emigrators believed had been denied the labourer at home. For those left behind, other opportunities presented themselves. In Kay's words, 'I attach the greatest importance to the moral effect which so cheering a conviction would produce on the peasantry in encouraging them, under the pressure of existing necessity to the development of those active virtues by which their social condition may be improved'.

⁷⁶ PRO CO 384/41, Kay to PLC, 13 February 1836.

By removing the surplus population, Kay argued that employment opportunities would be available to the poor who would then improve themselves. The extent of Kay's design was considerable. The poor would be helped by their new life as emigrants. Even those not directly helped would be impressed that some help was given and by the improved opportunities available for them with a reduced population. Better opportunities would lead to an improvement in morals and habits. Kay's ultimate aim was to use emigration as a way of weakening resistance to the application of the regulations of the New Poor Law by the employing class. Emigration would remove 'every objection from their minds to the application of the most stringent clauses of the law'.

The connection in Kay's mind between assisted emigration and the introduction of the New Poor Law does cause negative associations. The New Poor Law with its workhouse test was a harsh measure. Yet the harsh measures were introduced, so the poor law reformers thought, to improve the lot of the poor. Deprived of the guarantee of out-relief, poor labourers would be encouraged to change their relationship with relief agencies and move to a state of independence. In parishes where the New Poor Law alone could not provide the remedy, emigration offered an opportunity to parish officers, uncomfortable with the expense and expression of impotence that the resort to the workhouse implied.

Kay was an enthusiast for the Benthamite cure. Emigration was a device by which others would be persuaded to embrace the remedy. The support for his broader vision of assisted emigration was in part shown by the idea, mouthed by parish officers, that the emigration of good labourers would create room for others. Kay may be taken as one of the Benthamite vanguard increasing the province of the legislature by his activism.⁷⁷ He was

⁷⁷ David Eastwood, "Amplifying the Province of the Legislature": The Flow of Information and the English State in the Early Nineteenth Century', *Historical Research*, 62 (1989), 276-94.

encouraging and educating the employing class in the benefits of poor law reform. He was encouraging farmers to rely on the market as the arbiter of economic relationships and to free themselves from 'the mischievous traditions and most injurious legislations' to which he believed them enslaved.⁷⁸

Enthusiasm for the brave new world of workhouse tests which Kay represented was not, however, the sole route to support assisted emigration. Not all those who opposed the 'entrepreneurial ideal' and the rise of market philosophies, like Sadler and Cobbett, associated assisted emigration with such a design. The Romantic conservative, Robert Southey, supported assisted emigration yet opposed the New Poor Law.⁷⁹ In Norfolk, a prominent opponent of the New Poor Law was J.B. Morris, Rector of Shelfanger. Kay called him, 'one of the most subtle enemies of the law'.⁸⁰ Yet he held a strong conviction in support of the benefits of assisted emigration from his neighbourhood. He requested that he would be entrusted to explain to agricultural labourers the benefits of emigration.

Kay's explanation for assisted emigration points to the broader social implications of the subject. For Kay, assisted emigration was one way of reconstructing the relationship between the governed and the governors. He was not alone in that broader mission. Assisted emigration represented the continued power of the parish state to respond to the demands of its poor. There are few greater displays of power than the ability to send people half way around the world to improve their material well-being. Assisted emigration was not the quiet removal of people to new lands. As we saw in Chapter V, the departure of poor people was

⁷⁸ Bloomfield (ed.), *Autobiography*, p. 22.

⁷⁹ David Eastwood, 'Robert Southey and the Intellectual Origins of Romantic Conservatism', *English Historical Review*, 104 (1989), 308-31 (p. 321).

⁸⁰ PRO MH 32/49, Kay to Lefevre, 19 October 1837. PRO MH 12/8394, Kay to PLC, 19 October 1837, records the Kay/Morris interview.

an event. Processions and special services were held. For authority figures, the departure of poor people presented one arena in which they could perform to the poor. By playing an active role in assisted emigration, authority figures were displaying their power and generosity. They donated Bibles, and the necessities for the emigrant voyage. We can interpret these actions of public performance as a display of authority and power.

As a measure of public policy, parochial assisted emigration was a fragile flower. In Norfolk, by the end of 1836 enthusiasm amongst the employing class had waned. The Norwich Mercury reported in July 1836 that the Harleston Fair was attended by a 'greater number of agricultural labourers...than had been noticed for several years past'. The labourers were 'expecting to obtain higher wages for getting in the harvest than with their usual employers on account of the increased emigration of labourers in the spring of the year'. The reporter remarked that this had proved delusory; but added that agricultural wages had increased by twenty per cent.⁸¹ Thomas Coke of Holkham assisted no emigrants from his lands after 1836, having displayed some generosity in his support for the subject in the early 1830s. His agent thought that emigration had been 'carried too far' and that the most industrious had been assisted to leave. This contrasts with Coke's early enthusiasm for emigration, which he saw as a positive result of the New Poor Law, 'the lower class of people having absolutely taken fright of it'.⁸² The boat for which Stradbroke, Kay and Morris lobbied arrived in 1837 to take agricultural labourers to Australia. Only three Norfolk families were on board, even though the boat, at the request of the farmers, came after harvest. 'Surplus labour', as Digby has remarked, was less a quantitative problem than a qualitative

⁸¹ Norwich Mercury, 2 July 1836.

⁸² R.A.C. Parker, Coke of Norfolk (Oxford, 1975), pp. 167-8.

one.⁸³ The immediate aftermath of the New Poor Law offered a narrow window of opportunity for the Norfolk poor to emigrate. Once the immediate anxieties, about the potentially astronomical relief bills and social problems that the new system of poor relief would introduce, eased, the window closed. Morris blamed this on the selfishness of the farmers who found ways to manipulate the New Poor Law to serve their own ends, as they had manipulated the old poor law.⁸⁴

The suddenness of the collapse of support for assisted emigration in Norfolk does suggest the fragility of some of the sentiments outlined above. However the demand for assistance to emigrate amongst the Norfolk poor might have also influenced the abrupt end to the policy. Morris noted that it was difficult to persuade the poor to leave. Perhaps the Norfolk 'emigration fever' was the product of a panic amongst labourers and employers, who feared (for different reasons) the consequences of the new system of poor relief. Petitions from poor people requesting help to emigrate have not been located in MH 12 after 1838. The scale of assisted emigration from Norfolk and the demographic characteristics of the emigrant parties (primarily family groups) perhaps meant that most of those who wished to leave, left when they had the chance.

Dirk Hoerder, writing more generally about nineteenth-century intercontinental migrations asked, 'Would societally responsible rather than economically profitable investments have slowed down the process of out-migration?'.⁸⁵ Essentially Hoerder is depicting emigration as an expression of moral failure on the part of the employing class. The

⁸³ Digby, *Pauper Palaces*, pp. 103-5.

⁸⁴ PRO MH 12/8394, Morris to PLC, 22 May 1837. For an example of Morris's continued attacks on the operation of the New Poor Law, thirteen years later, see PRO MH 12/8397, Morris to PLB, 29 April 1850.

⁸⁵ Cited in Erickson, *Leaving England*, p. 3.

question is especially apt when we consider the actions of people who paid for their poor to go; not attempting to slow down the process of out-migration, but actively attempting to speed it up. In the language of classical political economy the emigrants were redundant and surplus to the country's needs; they were expendable.

Daniel Cook signed the following memorandum:

I Daniel Cook of the Parish of Saxthorp of Co of Norfolk on receiving £23 from the parish funds of Felmingham in Co of Norfolk to leave England for Jamaica and to take with me my wife and her 7 children, & that the same shall not in any way become chargeable to the Parish of Felmingham from the date of the agreement.⁸⁶

For a mere twenty-three pounds he agreed to renounce his claim on the parish and to leave the land of his birth. The understated simplicity of the agreement somehow adds to the poignancy and Hoerder's question appears unresolvable.

Parish officers, driven by a wish to reduce poor rates, sought to remove their population. Once emigration was no longer of value, no assistance was given. To modern eyes the underlying assumptions of the policy appear callous and brutal. Even the concept of independence, that parish officers claimed to be helping their poor towards in distant lands, has questionable undertones. Independence in the colonies was distant and unchallenging to the social order. In an old world setting, independence had many meanings, not all of which were palatable to authority figures. Independence from relief was desirable. A vigorous domestic independence for the labouring class was viewed with suspicion. The independence that Norfolk labourers sought at the Harleston Fair, of freedom of contract and work for a 'market price' was not supported. Independence, in the form of individual allotments for labourers had unsettling consequences. Labourers might become too independent, expending

⁸⁶ Norfolk Record Office, PD 399/55, Felmingham emigration agreement, 5 January 1836.

time and energy on their own plot when they should be labouring in the employer's field. They might even use the financial fruits of their independent labours to purchase a copy of Burn's Justice! Independence in the colonies was safe and distant, and a reasonable way of preventing undue burdens being placed on the poor rates. Assisted emigration was driven by twin fears. For the labourers, the workhouse stimulated outward movement; for the employers, fears of high poor rates caused them to pay for people to leave.

We should not forget the context of a transformed relief system, founded on new rationales of less eligibility and administrative centralisation. Assisted emigration was a product of its times. However to depict assisted emigration as just another piece of class legislation deprives it of interest and a number of revealing shades. This chapter has attempted to view the subject through the words of those that paid for it. The sources are limited. We are reliant on those parish officers who took the trouble to make an extra comment here or there to explain their actions. That said, the overall picture coheres with our perspective of the viewpoint of those that were assisted to leave.

Parochial assisted emigration was not 'shovelling out paupers'. It was the result of mutually beneficial arrangements entered into freely between rich and poor. The ratepayers retained the ultimate say on whether anyone would be assisted or not. Yet they did not have carte blanche to do what they wanted. They had no direct coercive power and were reliant on people requesting assistance to leave. Assisted emigration was shaped as much by the limitations of authority as by its power. It was also a function of relationships between rich and poor. In the world of the parish, the poor had an identity that was more specific than that of an abstract burden on the poor rates. This is not to diminish the importance of poor rate expenditure in the equation; more to display that other dimensions shaped the operation of the policy when applied at the local level. At the local level, assisted emigration displayed the

continued face to face nature of social interchange. To some extent, parish officers conceived the action of emigrating their poor as societally responsible and constructive. They had a developed sense of what they were doing that suggests a level of thought and consideration of the implications of the policy. Within their conception of the social ideal, emigration was a beneficial action that helped their poor. It was a positive active sign of the continued capacity of local government to offer hope and moral improvement to the poor. The basis of the emigrators' perceptions might appear flawed and uncomfortable to modern eyes. Yet we have sought to examine the operation and theory of assisted emigration when applied at the local level, viewing it through the perspective of those who paid for it. Our purpose is neither to condone nor condemn their actions, but to consider assisted emigration on the terms that the emigrators set and to suggest a multiplicity of meanings that were attached to the policy.

CHAPTER VII: ASSISTED EMIGRATION: ITS NATURE AND ORGANISATION

The previous chapter considered what people who paid for their poor to leave thought that they were doing. This chapter investigates what was involved on a practical and material level in assisting poor people to emigrate. Investigating the arrangements and procedures involved in organising assisted emigration provides another perspective from which to consider the actions of the parish officers. The evidence presented supports the argument that assisted emigration was not just a simple matter of parishes ridding themselves of their poor in a ruthless cynical way. The preparations required for assisted emigration made the policy a less than simple process. Assisted emigration was time consuming and complicated to arrange. Money had to be raised; tickets had to be bought; poor emigrants had to be provided with the necessities for the long voyage. At each stage in the process things could go wrong. The emigrants could change their minds; costs might rise; forms might be returned because they were incorrectly completed. The organisation of assisted emigration required parish officers to tread through a minefield of bureaucracy and potential complications. To cope with these potential difficulties required a commitment to the value of the policy amongst those that paid for it. How parish officers coped provides the subject of this chapter.

Apart from adding to a fuller appreciation of poor law emigration, studying the procedures and arrangements involved sheds light on two important broader issues: the nature of early nineteenth-century emigration and the capacity and effectiveness of local government. The first issue illustrates one of the strengths of studying assisted emigration in the context of other work on emigration history. The problem for the historian of emigration is the lack of good quality sources. To a large degree this study is limited by the fragmentary nature of the recording of parochial emigration. However, assisted emigration was well recorded in

comparison with unassisted emigration. Emigrants who travelled without any form of assistance made their own arrangements for their journey from these shores. The receipts for the expenses that they incurred would have been taken with them to their destination and presumably thrown away at some stage. We therefore have very little idea of the preparations that unassisted emigrants made before they left. Assisted emigrants were not the only party involved in preparing for their departure. Parishes raised money to pay for the departure of assisted emigrants and played a key role in purchasing tickets and making the necessary arrangements for the departure of poor people. The officers that made the arrangements were accountable to the ratepayers, the union auditor and ultimately the Poor Law Commission. Every expense incurred in the emigratory process had to be accounted for and justified. The institutional setting of assisted emigration thus provides us with rich details of the emigratory process. The process depicted in this chapter has an obvious significance for the description and assessment of poor law emigration. However, the details provided by this small scale emigration can shed light on the emigratory process undertaken by unassisted emigrants.

The benefit of the documentary richness of organised emigrations is shown in Philip Taylor's account of the Mormon emigration. Emigration is presented as a complicated difficult undertaking, in need of thorough and careful preparations.¹ This point is further illuminated by the study of the arrangements made on behalf of poor law emigrants. To stress the difficulties and complications of transatlantic emigration might seem an obvious point. However, it is a basic point that provides a useful perspective on econometric work on European emigration. Recent econometric work has presented emigration as a simple action determined by relative economic conditions. Though claiming to unlock the 'inner secrets' of late nineteenth-century emigration, this approach runs the risk of presenting emigration as

¹ Taylor, *Expectations Westward*

a simple process.² The details of early nineteenth-century assisted emigration suggest that for the poor law emigrants and their parish officers, emigration was not a simple task.

A second justification for studying the process of parochial emigration is for the light that it sheds on the operation of English local government. Section sixty-two of the Poor Law Amendment Act gave parishes the right to raise or borrow money against the security of the poor rates to pay for poor people with settlements within the parish to emigrate to the British colonies. For English parishes this was not a new policy. Parishes had been paying for their poor to leave since the end of the Napoleonic Wars; but for the first time assisted emigration carried out by English parishes was officially sanctioned by an act of Parliament.³ In the context of poor law reform, with its gospel of administrative centralisation and efficiency, the empowerment of parishes to organise assisted emigration appears deeply ironic. The English parish was reputedly corrupt and venal; its actions had corrupted the Elizabethan poor law. Yet new powers were being given to the English parish at the same time as administrative centralisation was undercutting the viability of the parish.

Sidney and Beatrice Webb asserted, 'It is not too much to say that with the passing of the Poor Law Amendment Act of 1834 . . . the parish, as a unit of local government in England outside the Metropolitan area came virtually to an end.'⁴ David Eastwood has recently supported the Webbs' contention.⁵ Classic texts on nineteenth-century local

² Timothy Hatton and Jeffrey Williamson, 'What Drove the Mass Migrations from Europe in the Late Nineteenth Century?', National Bureau of Economic Research, Working Paper Series on Historical Factors in Long Run Growth, 43 (1992).

³ See Chapter II, pp. 55-8 for examples of parochial emigration before the reform of the poor law.

⁴ Sidney and Beatrice Webb, The Parish and the County (1906), p. 172.

⁵ Eastwood, Governing Rural England, pp. 264-5.

government practically ignore the rural parish after the centralisation of the 1830s.⁶ The power of the parish to assist its poor to emigrate does not appear to square with an account of the rapid decline of the parish's power. This is not to diminish the dramatic change in the organisation of local government that the New Poor Law introduced; but to suggest that in one area of social policy the parish remained an important arm of government.

The villains of R.B. Madgwick's account of early nineteenth-century emigration from England to Australia were the parish officers who sent their 'worst labourers' out to Australia with little concern for the well-being of the receiver colonies. However, throughout Madgwick's account the parish performs an important administrative role in the recruitment of immigrants.⁷ The administrative capacity of the nineteenth-century State was not sufficiently developed. The ancient parish contained personnel with a vested interest in reducing poor rates but also with a concern for the well-being of the poor. Parish officers possessed a knowledge about the poor and could play a key role in meeting the recruiting requirements of emigration agents. They were a natural point of contact for recruiting agents and were capable of meeting their demands and of disseminating information. Evidence about the nature of assisted emigration points to an enduring function of the rural parish that suggests a continued vitality and spirit of enterprise remained at the heart of rural local government long after the centralisation of the 1830s.

An introduction to the process of assisted emigration is provided by the extensive

⁶ See for example Joseph Redlich and Francis W. Hirst, The History of Local Government in England (1900), ed. by Bryan Keith-Lucas (1970); K.B. Smellie, History of Local Government (4th edn., 1968).

⁷ Madgwick, Immigration, p. 215 notes that parishes would attempt to 'rid themselves of their worst paupers'. On pp.95-6 he notes that 'it was inevitable that the Government should have welcomed the support of the workhouses and charitable organisations...they kept Administrative costs low'. See Haines, 'Government Assisted Emigration', pp. 125-6 for a more benign view of the role of workhouses which she describes as acting as 'collection points', not just for poor law assisted emigrants.

emigration papers of one incumbent of a small Northamptonshire parish, Reverend Abner Brown of Pytchley.⁸ Strictly speaking Brown's papers do not concern the main focus of this thesis. On only one occasion did Brown seek the sanction of the Poor Law Commissioners, and that was for a single emigrant.⁹ Pytchley's emigrations were financed by voluntary rates agreed to by the ratepayers. The parish therefore did not require the sanction of the PLC to effect assisted emigration. Pytchley's emigrants do not appear in the quantitative analysis in Chapter IV. The Pytchley emigration papers show that some parishes assisted their poor to leave independently of the PLC as parishes had previously done before the transformation of administrative arrangements for poor relief. They remind us that poor law emigration represents only the most visible aspect of assisted emigration. It is difficult to assess how many other parishes assisted poor people to leave outside the supervision of the PLC. Brown's papers will be used to display the process of assisted emigration for a small parish. They offer a unique insight into the organisation of assisted emigration and display the diligence and care with which one local clergyman approached his task.

Other published work on assisted emigration has focused on the work of major landlords. This work provides useful details of the procedures and preparations involved in assisting poor people to leave. Yet it is perhaps easier to anticipate Earl Bruce or Earl Egremont exercising 'paternal care' over the emigration of a large number of their tenants than the incumbent of a small parish.¹⁰ Brown's papers take us further down the social scale than the celebrated cases of assisted emigration and allow us to see what was involved for the parish officers and local clergymen who played a central role in the sponsorship of emigration.

⁸ N.C.R.O. NPL/1651 to NPL/1729. More detailed references follow in text.

⁹ PRO MH 12/8753, Pytchley to PLB, 29 April 1852.

¹⁰ See Baker, 'A Migration of Wiltshire Agricultural Labourers'; Cameron, 'The Petworth Emigration Committee'.

Brown was perhaps an especially diligent man. Over thirty documents remain concerning his attempts to improve his living.¹¹ He seems to have been assiduous in the keeping of receipts on emigration matters. No comparable number of emigration papers have been located for parochial emigration from the three counties surveyed. On three occasions he organised emigrations from Pytchley: 1838, 1844 and 1850. On each occasion the preparations made were thorough and careful, indicating a level of care and involvement not conveyed by the phrase 'shovelling out paupers'.

The first emigration from Pytchley took place in 1838. Before the emigrants departed Brown compiled a list of parishioners who wished to emigrate to South Australia. Unfortunately not all those who expressed an interest in emigrating were eligible for assistance from the South Australian Emigration Commission. Single men were not eligible for free passages to a colony that Robert Torrens boasted would have 'no surly old bachelors, whose hearts were never touched by the delightful pleasures of domestic joy' or 'melancholy maidens'.¹² Other potential emigrants were marked on Brown's list as 'doubtful'.¹³ The family of Abraham Faulkner fell into this category, but in six years time it would be ocean bound. Eventually two families of ten and six people, the Flavels and the Daintys were accepted.¹⁴ The South Australian Emigration Department was reluctant to accept the Flavels as both parents, aged forty and thirty-nine, were above the age criteria set down by the South Australians. In allowing the Flavels to receive an assisted passage, the Emigration

¹¹ N.C.R.O. 275P/49 (1-39), Brown's parish papers, 1836-52.

¹² D.C.R.O. Catton MSS WH 3048, report of the South Australian Commissioners' dinner on board the *Coromandel*, 1837.

¹³ N.C.R.O. NPL/1697, draft list, 1838.

¹⁴ N.C.R.O. NPL/1673, 'Memoranda of Joseph Flavel's Emigration', 1838.

Department informed Brown that future exceptions to its rules would not be tolerated.¹⁵ Two months after the Flavels and Daintys had been put forward by Brown, the South Australian Commission could see 'no opportunity for sending out the intending emigrants from your [Brown's] neighbourhood'.¹⁶ Two months later Brown received a request from the Emigration Department asking for a 'list of emigrants capable of getting to London to sail on the Prince George to sail for South Australia in a fortnight's time'.¹⁷ On the twenty-fifth of August the party left for South Australia, nearly half a year after Brown had received a list of prices from the emigration outfitter John Dixon.¹⁸ For a long time the potential emigrants and Brown had been in limbo waiting for a definite date for the departure. When the official acceptance came, it left the parish and the emigrants only a fortnight in which to make their final preparations. In preparing for the emigrants' departure, Brown appears to have left no stone unturned. He requested that the emigrant outfitter should provide 'full neat price lists' and receipts for future reference, suggesting that further emigrations were entertained.¹⁹ The wishes of the emigrating women were taken notice of. Brown made detailed inquiries about flannel petticoats; rejecting ready-made petticoats as the women had expressed a wish to make their own. The emigrant outfitter was also instructed by Brown to pack the parcels of bedding and clothing for each emigrant family separately 'to avoid disagreements afterwards'.²⁰ The thoroughness of Brown's preparations is all the more impressive in the

¹⁵ N.C.R.O. NPL/1710, Emigration Department (South Australian Commission) to Brown, 28 April 1838.

¹⁶ N.C.R.O. NPL/1710, Emigration Department to Brown, 15 June 1838.

¹⁷ *ibid*, Emigration Department to Brown, 10 August 1838.

¹⁸ N.C.R.O. NPL/1684, Dixon to Brown, 7 March 1838.

¹⁹ N.C.R.O. NPL/1690, Brown to Dixon, 1838.

²⁰ *ibid*; N.C.R.O. NPL/1692, Brown's jottings, 1838.

light of his remark that 'the expenses in a small parish like this have fallen heavy'.²¹ Brown also gave each emigrant family small gifts for their journey: lace, thread, needles, soap and 'sundry matters' for the women.²² The spiritual lives of the emigrants were also considered. The Daintys received a 'pretty good Bible', 'a very good Common Prayer' and 'one testament and two small prayer not very good'.²³ Even Brown's careful preparations did not supply the emigrants with all the belongings that they required. In Brown's papers concerning the 1838 party there is a receipt for plates and cutlery (worth just over one pound) bought from the Emigration Depot at Deptford.²⁴

The next party to leave Pytchley was drawn up over 1843/44. The core of this group was the Faulkner family (husband, wife and five children) and two young children under the protection of the family. As with the emigration of 1838, Brown entered into lengthy correspondence about the eligibility of his proposed emigrants. A condition of the Faulkners' acceptance was the presence of a young woman to help them to take care of their young children on the long voyage. John Shearhog gained acceptance on condition that he married. As others did to gain a free passage, Shearhog married and he and his new wife left for Australia. As usual Brown attempted to gain acceptance for a number of emigrants who were rejected by the Emigration Commissioners. Brown was informed that William Waring, an unmarried man over thirty years of age, could not receive a free passage. No provision was made in the regulations for widows or widowers.²⁵ As with the first party from Pytchley there

²¹ N.C.R.O. NPL/1707, Brown to Dixon, 20 August 1838.

²² N.C.R.O. NPL/1703; NPL/1704, emigration accounts.

²³ N.C.R.O. NPL/1696, emigration papers.

²⁴ N.C.R.O. NPL/1705, receipt from E.M. Mears.

²⁵ N.C.R.O. NPL/1658, Carter and Bonus to Brown, 8 March 1844; NPL/1661, Strange to Brown, 1843.

was a false alarm that the emigrants would not be able to leave.²⁶ Brown also had to rush around to provide copies of the necessary documents to enable the emigrants to leave: proof of marriage and date of birth. This was a complicated task as a number of the emigrants had not been married or born in the parish. Samuel K. Webster, rector of neighbouring Isham remarked that he had had difficulties finding baptismal cards for one emigrant.²⁷ Brown made enquiries about rail connections for the emigrants and also corresponded with emigrant outfitters, as he had done previously.²⁸ The fifty-six pounds raised for emigration purposes by a voluntary two-penny owners rate and a two-penny occupiers rate was spent on: travel to the port; refreshments taken en route to the port; pocket money for the families; boxes for the emigrants' possessions; the expenses of Mr Spencer, the accompanying parish officer; tools for the agricultural labourers to use on their arrival in Australia; London outfit and bedding; clothing and shoes; lace and thread.²⁹

As with the first party to leave Pytchley, gifts of books were given by Brown. Mrs Faulkner received a large Bible, a large prayer book and a book about Pytchley with plates. George and William Faulkner (aged ten and nine respectively) received a Bible and prayer book each. Their younger siblings received a testament and prayer book each. All the emigrants were given a copy of 'a memoir', the spoken catechism, the Pytchley Sunday school hymns with spelling books. The listing of the individuals' gifts partly reflects Brown's assiduous record keeping. It also reflects that emigration was viewed by Brown as the departure of individuals with different requirements. Younger children did not receive exactly

²⁶ N.C.R.O. NPL/1663, Strange to Brown, 14 February 1844.

²⁷ N.C.R.O. NPL/1665, Webster to Brown, February 1844; NPL/1659, H.M. Spence to Brown, n.d. 1844.

²⁸ N.C.R.O. NPL/1667, estimates for rates and charges for travel from Pytchley to London, February 1844.

²⁹ N.C.R.O. NPL/1657, emigration expenses.

the same gifts as older children. Some element of thought was involved in determining who would receive particular gifts.³⁰

Before looking at the largest emigration from Pytchley, it is instructive to consider Brown's emigration-related activities in years which saw no departures from the village. Brown appears to have performed an almost quasi-official role in providing people for the British Empire. It is interesting to note that Australian sponsored officials placed a large amount of responsibility for the selection of emigrants in the hands of parish officials. Madgwick was critical of the role and motives of parish officers involved in the recruitment of poor emigrants. The evidence from Brown's papers suggests that Australian emigrant recruiters were only too happy to use the parish and poor law union structure as a method for the recruitment of emigrants. The reliance that Australian recruiters placed on parish officers is understandable given the limited resources available to the Australian colonies to pay for the employment of recruiters and emigration agents.

Brown appears to have had a particularly close relationship with emigrant recruiters. He did attempt to stretch recruiting regulations by suggesting the names of former prison inmates. He also attempted to gain acceptance for families which had too many young children. Yet he did not try to deceive the emigration officials. The Colonial Land and Emigration Commission appreciated his work and hoped that he would not feel let down by the rejection of some candidates. It stressed that the demand for free passages outstripped supply so the commissioners could 'attach the greatest importance to the character' of the proposed emigrants. The Colonial Land and Emigration Office explained that 'Kettering and the adjoining neighbourhood had been more favoured in this respect [the provision of assisted passages] than many other districts'.³¹ Brown's honesty and diligence were appreciated by

³⁰ N.C.R.O. NPL/1662, list of what Abner Brown gave in 1844.

³¹ N.C.R.O. NPL/1674, CLEO to Brown, 17 April 1850.

colonial recruiters. A potential emigrant from Pytchley was a Sarah Tirrell. Brown informed the CLEO that she had given birth to three illegitimate children in three years and had been in the workhouse on at least five occasions in the past year.³² The shipping agents thanked Brown for the information about Tirell. As a consequence of Brown's information, Tirell was not accepted because the shipping agents, Carter and Bonus, were 'extremely anxious that such characters should be excluded from our vessels'.³³ There were benefits to Brown in being honest with recruiting agents and furnishing them with what Carter and Bonus called 'explicit and candid statements'.³⁴ George Waring who was rejected at an earlier stage of Brown's enquiries because he was too old to be accepted as a single man was accepted to leave in the 1844 Pytchley party because Brown had 'taken so much trouble computing these [emigrant] parties'. The Emigration Office would 'take our chance of providing a single female from some other quarter' to balance out the gender ratio.³⁵

On a number of occasions, recruiting agents wrote to Brown, providing him with details of ships and requesting that he spread the word about assisted emigration amongst the shepherds and agricultural labourers in his neighbourhood. He also received six copies of a guide How to Get to South Australia and information about the Cape.³⁶ Thus Brown served as a useful point of contact to emigrant recruiters.

The last emigrant party to leave Pytchley, for which Brown kept detailed accounts, left in 1850 for South Australia. This was by far the most expensive and largest emigrant

³² N.C.R.O. NPL/1666, Brown to CLEO, February 1844.

³³ N.C.R.O. NPL/1658, Carter and Bonus to Brown, 21 February 1844.

³⁴ *ibid*, Carter and Bonus to Brown, 12 January 1844.

³⁵ *ibid*, CLEO to Brown, 5 March 1844.

³⁶ N.C.R.O. NPL/1651, CLEO to Brown, 28 January 1846; NPL/1655, South Australian Colonial Office to Brown, 12 November 1839; NPL/1683, CLEO to Brown, October 1849.

party to leave the village. Thirty-five people left at a cost of three hundred and seventy pounds.³⁷ In fact the thirty-five emigrants left in three separate parties on three different ships. The expense was caused by the rejection of the Flavel family by the emigration office as both senior members were 'well past forty' and neither were 'robust'.³⁸ Denied a free passage, Brown and his parishioners paid for the family to leave. The assistance given to the Flavels points out one of the many intriguing pitfalls with emigration statistics. The Flavels were emigrants assisted by their parish, too poor to pay for their own passage. Yet they would not be classified as 'assisted emigrants' in the Australian statistics, as they received no assistance from the colonies. They would thus appear as unassisted emigrants in the Australian statistics.

For the 1850 party Brown kept a meticulous notebook listing what each emigrant possessed and what they needed for the voyage. Samuel Simpson was found to have a 'tidy suit and waistcoat, 3 shirts, 3 stockings, 1 shoes, hat and cap, 1 good box, tools- stock axe, spade, 2 chopping axes, 2 draining tools'. He needed a 'trousser and jacket, 3 shirt and three stockings'. His wife needed 'three chemises, 4 stockings, 1 gown, 1 pantihose and one flannel petticoat'. These details were recorded for each potential emigrant. Each emigrant had different particular needs. George Williamson needed a shag waistcoat and trousers. The requirements of the emigrants were not especially great. However few had boxes in which to keep their belongings and a number did not possess more than one pair of shoes. Again this shows the scale on which Brown viewed his assistance; as assistance applied to individuals each of whom had particular needs.³⁹

An additional expense for the 1850 party was extra money given to families to enable

³⁷ N.C.R.O. NPL/1668, list of expenses, 1850.

³⁸ N.C.R.O. NPL/1674, CLEO to Brown, 17 April 1850.

³⁹ N.C.R.O. NPL/1712, Brown's notebook, 18549-50; NPL/1713, Brown's lists, 1850.

them to clear their debts. The sale of their furniture had only produced a 'mere trifle' and did not enable them to 'pay off all that want of work and the high prices of 1847 had brought on them'. The money to clear debts was raised by the parish buying the emigrants' 'unsaleable articles at the last and giving them to their parents and c; or by adding a little money to enable them to compromise with those that they owed'. The amount of money used in this way was not large. Of six families for whom this action was taken, three were given less than one pound, two just over one pound and one family six pounds.⁴⁰ The indebtedness of the Pytchley labouring class suggests that economic hardship exerted some influence on the decision to emigrate and shows the essential value of parochial assistance in converting a desire to emigrate into action.

Brown's endeavours on behalf of his emigrants were reproduced by countless other parish officers who sought to assist poor people to emigrate. For the parish officer, assisted emigration was not a simple policy option. It involved 'detailed preparations and a complicated process of form filling. Thomas Brookes of Flitwick (Bedfordshire) noted in his diary that he had spent all day filling in the requisite forms and getting things ready for a small party of emigrants that his parish sponsored to leave.⁴¹

Brown's activities provide a good vantage point from which to reconstruct the nature of assistance that assisted emigrants received. Even for the sixty or so people assisted from Pytchley, there was a considerable difference between what each family received. In the case of recipients of free passages, assistance from the parish essentially covered the cost of transport to London and whatever clothes they required for the ocean voyage. The Flavels who left in 1850 received much more than other Pytchley emigrants. Not being eligible for

⁴⁰ N.C.R.O. NPL/1669, emigration accounts.

⁴¹ Richard Morgan (ed.), *Diary of a Bedfordshire Squire: Sir Thomas Brookes of Flitwick, 1794-1858* (Bedford, 1987), p. 114.

a free passage, they received the necessities for the voyage and the cost of the journey. The Flavels would have been much cheaper to emigrate to Canada (steerage passages to Canada averaged £3 compared with £15 to go to Australia). However the connections between South Australia and Pytchley persuaded the parish to pay for the more expensive journey. A further influencing factor for the Flavels' choice of destination was the earlier emigration of a brother (in the first Australian bound Pytchley party). The brother's death had been reported in 1841.⁴² The case of the Flavels supports Haines' argument that parishes were prepared to borrow (or raise) large sums of money to pay for ineligible people to go to Australia if they expressed a wish to do so.⁴³ The willingness of parishes to pay over the odds for their poor to leave suggests that assisted emigration was not always a purely economic calculation. Assisted emigration in the case of the Flavels was an example of helping people known in the parish to go where they had no means of travelling under their own resources.

Pytchley's largesse shows the diversity of assistance that poor law authorities gave their poor emigrants. Haines has drawn attention to the range of payments given to poor emigrants. Using the PLC published statistics she has identified single emigrants receiving as much as £56 to settle in Canada. She has also calculated that Australian emigrants received on average two pounds less per head than Canadian emigrants. This suggests that a large number of Australian emigrants received help from assisted passages to transcend the disadvantages of distance and expensive passages that worked against Australia as a potential emigrant destination.⁴⁴

The PLC/B published figures for emigration expenses need to be treated with extreme caution. The appendices do not list the cost of emigration; they list the amount of money

⁴² N.C.R.O. NPL/1686, W. Gibbon to Brown, 28 May 1841.

⁴³ Haines, "Shovelling out Paupers", p. 44.

⁴⁴ *ibid.*, pp. 44, 64-5.

authorised by the PLC/B to be raised or borrowed by the parish. The money authorised to be raised or borrowed was not necessarily spent at one go. The PLC/B returns are littered with references to emigrations paid for out of money raised in earlier years. If we refer back to the published emigration return for the year in which the money was originally raised we see that emigrants also departed in that year. Thus emigrant costs are spread between the two years. The proportion of money distributed to each party is not given. It is therefore not possible to calculate average costs of emigration for parishes which raised one sum of money and sent emigrants, paid for out of this sum of money, over the course of more than one year.

The practice of paying for emigration out of a sum of money sanctioned to be raised earlier was especially prevalent in the 1850s. Money raised for the emigration of a few individuals could languish in parish accounts for over half a century. Haynes (Bedfordshire) set up an emigration fund in 1848. Money left over was used to assist people to emigrate in 1904, 1906, 1907 and 1908.⁴⁵ The practice of gaining authorisation to raise money for emigration but then paying for no emigrants to leave was also common in the 1850s.⁴⁶ We might suggest that the potential emigrants changed their minds or were ineligible for assisted passages. For the 1850s any calculations of emigration expenses would be even more crude than for the earlier period.⁴⁷ However Haines' figures, by showing average costs paid to Australian emigrants to have been lower than Canadian emigrants, do make a significant point about the characteristics of poor law emigration to Australia. Australian poor law emigrants,

⁴⁵ B.C.R.O. P/6/24/1-6, Haynes emigration fund papers, 1848-1927.

⁴⁶ See 'Third Annual Report of the PLB', *B.P.P.*, 1851 XXVI (1340), p. 147. Of nine Bedfordshire parishes listed in the return for poor law emigration, four were authorised to raise money in 1850 but sent no emigrants; three sent emigrants paid for out of money raised previously; and only two sent out emigrants paid for out of money authorised to be expended on emigration in 1850.

⁴⁷ A further problem with the figures is the need to adjust the figures to take account of the lower costs of children and to account for the distance that the emigrants travelled from their parish to the port.

by and large, qualified for assisted passages. As the Australian officials refused former felons or habitual recipients of relief we might suggest that the quality of the poor law emigrants sent out to Australia was relatively good. Furthermore, the function of parochial aid to Australian emigrants was to top up the assistance that the emigrants received from alternative agencies, rather than to pay the whole costs.

The PLC drew up guidelines for parishes in 1837. The rules were constructed because 'the former regulations...have not been found adequate for the protection of the rate-payers from lavish expenditure'.⁴⁸ The idea that parishes might have been too generous to their poor emigrants provides an interesting perspective on the policy. Instead of the original rules that imposed minimum sums of money to be given to the emigrants, the new rules imposed a maximum amount of money that could be spent on the clothing of the emigrants.⁴⁹

Within this framework the variety of assistance was considerable. Basic assistance involved the cost of passage (covered if the emigrant had managed to gain an assisted passage from an Australian colony), travel to the port of departure (the PLC restricted this to three pence a mile for adult emigrants and half that amount for emigrants under seven years of age), outfit and some spending money. Spending money was a grey area with assisted emigrants. The PLC/B were highly sceptical of the ability of emigrants to spend this money prudently. This fear was largely stimulated by reports from the Agent General for Emigration for Quebec, A.C. Buchanan, which suggested that emigrants who had been given money to spend on their arrival in their new land had spent it on drink or gambling and arrived poor and unprepared. Thus spending money became increasingly entrusted with colonial banks which would pay the emigrants their money on their arrival in the colony.

Emigrant outfits differed considerably. For the parish, emigrant outfitters provided

⁴⁸ 'Third PLC Report', *B.P.P.* 1837 XXXI (546), p. 57.

⁴⁹ *ibid.*, p.58.

information of the necessary belongings which were required for the voyage. The Australian authorities were also strict in listing exactly what each emigrant should bring for their voyage. South Australian emigrants were provided with new mattresses, bolsters, blankets and counterpanes, canvas bags, knives, forks, spoons, metal plates and drinking mugs as part of the cost of their passage. The men had to provide their own clothing, which as a minimum was listed as: six shirts, six pairs of stockings, two pairs of shoes, two complete suits of exterior clothing. The women had to bring: six shifts, two flannel petticoats, six pairs of stockings, two pairs of shoes and two gowns. In addition to these items they had to bring a supply of sheets, towels and soap.⁵⁰ Eating utensils were not always provided by the emigrant ships, even to the Australian colonies. Receipts have been located which show that parish officers paid for tin mugs, plates, crates for carrying emigrant belongings and other items of clothing which may seem excessive, including neck ties and London outfits. Hard and fast rules as to what emigrants were given are difficult to formulate. The goods which emigrants were given depended on the generosity of the parish officers and the needs of the assisted emigrants. Some assisted emigrants would have furniture to sell. All would have some clothing, though the amount and quality would vary, which would be adequate for the voyage. A group of emigrants from Little Harrowden (Northants) received only one pound each because they had 'sufficient sums from other sources'.⁵¹ Others, in their efforts to avoid going into the workhouse, might have already liquidised these assets and would have required more assistance towards equipping themselves for the voyage. This was undoubtedly the case for a party of emigrants that left Burnham Thorpe (Norfolk). The parish spent £8-10-0 on clothing for the emigrants who were described as 'really destitute'. The parish officer

⁵⁰ 'Fourth Annual Report of the Poor Law Board for 1851', B.P.P. 1852 XXIII (1461), pp.34-5.

⁵¹ PRO MH 12/8961, Little Harrowden emigration list, 1852.

explained that 'it would be cruel to send them away without a proper covering to their backs'.⁵²

Bedford Poor Law Union used surplus clothes made in the workhouse by boys performing tasks of tailoring and shoemaking and girls knitting and sewing for poor law emigrants.⁵³ This was a neat solution to the difficulties raised by the workhouse having few legitimate avenues for the employment of able bodied labour which did not affect the labour market or inspire revulsion. After the Andover scandal the employment of workhouse inmates for bonecrushing was no longer a politically acceptable option for Boards of Guardians.⁵⁴

One item which emigrants assisted to leave were not entrusted to provide for themselves was food for their journey. In the words of the Poor Law Commissioners:

Individuals who avail themselves of parish assistance to emigrate are seldom of prudent and economical habits; and being inexperienced in everything relating to shipping, they are not persons who can be safely entrusted with the custody of provisions and stores for their voyage. Having been unaccustomed to rely on their own resources, they are careless of their stores, and frequently waste in a few days the stock put on board for as many weeks; they observe the crew are daily victualled, and in the spirit of reliance on others, which has marked their early career, they expect the same stock will afford them subsistence when their own provisions are gone.⁵⁵

This essentially condemnatory tone about the fecklessness of the pauper emigrants contrasts with the gushing tones with which Goderich defended the emigrants from the savage criticism of the Van Diemen's Land Immigration Committee who were reluctant to accept pauper emigrants in 1831. The English political class lacked a consistent approach to their pauper emigrants. Their audience determined their characterisation of the poor. If people were

⁵² PRO MH 12/8249, Burnham Thorpe to Pinnock, 24 March 1836.

⁵³ B.C.R.O. PUBC 2/6/2, Bedford Union to PLB, return of employment in the union workhouse, 17 February 1853,

⁵⁴ PRO MH 12/25, Bedford Union to PLC, 16 February 1846.

⁵⁵ B.P.P. 1837 XXXI (546), pp. 59.

reluctant to accept them they were hard-working; if people wanted to provide them with money or food for their voyage the poor were feckless and irresponsible.

The first stage in arranging assisted emigration was finding poor people who wanted to leave. Exactly how this happened is less than clear. From the motions in vestry minute books and in the correspondence between parishes and unions and the PLC it appears that the poor often initiated the emigratory process by requesting assistance to leave, either at a vestry meeting or by talking directly to a member of the parochial elite, often the clergyman. The standard form of describing the reason for calling a vestry meeting to consider the propriety of raising or borrowing money for emigration purposes noted that some poor persons had expressed a desire to leave. Parish motions have a standardised quality about them, often copying the example of set forms which were set out by the PLC, and at a later period using standard blue forms on which the emigrants' desire to leave was very clear. These forms may reflect the reality of parish/poor interactions; but they also served to ensure that any possibility of assisted emigration becoming confused with coerced emigration was avoided.

The poor's role in initiating the emigratory process was considered in Chapter V. Undoubtedly, especially in parishes where a commitment existed in favour of assisted emigration, the parish also played a role in informing the poor about their prospects in a new land. This could take the form of holding meetings at which the poor could come forward and ask for assistance to leave. The initial reason for calling the meeting might have been one pauper family's request for assistance. The parish would then open up the possibility of assistance to the other labourers in the village who might also like to leave. Meetings, and their notices placed on the church door, provided one way by which the villagers were informed of the possibilities of a world outside their parish. The guidebooks kept by Brown were kept by other parish officers and information was available for the poor who might have expressed an interest in emigration. More active promotion of emigration was also practised.

At least one Norfolk poor law union paid for the publication and distribution of emigration information to each parish in the union.⁵⁶

Parishes on occasions coordinated their actions with neighbouring parishes willing to pay for their poor to emigrate. East Barsham (Norfolk) sent out one emigrant in 1836. He took the place of a potential emigrant from neighbouring Fulmodestone cum Croxton who had been imprisoned.⁵⁷ Saxthorpe's (Norfolk) parish officer apologised for not gaining the requisite permission from the PLC because he did not know when the party would leave as the arrangements had been carried out by a neighbouring parish.⁵⁸ North Norfolk saw sixteen parishes join together to commission three ships in 1836.⁵⁹

After due notice for a meeting to discuss raising or borrowing money for emigration purposes had been given, a meeting was held and a decision made. The meeting had to decide on the amount of money to be raised or borrowed for emigration purposes. Before such a meeting was held some idea of the expense for emigration was needed, as future extensions in raising money required further meetings. Thus negotiations with shipping agents and colonial emigration agents would often have been carried out before an emigration meeting was held. In the case of free passages the emigrant may have already obtained one through his own efforts, or the assistance from the parish might be conditional on the emigrant being awarded a free passage or the parish officers might have to apply for free passages on behalf

⁵⁶ Nor.R.O. C/GP20/2, Wayland Board of Guardians' Minutes, 26 June 1837. On receiving information from the PLC about the availability of free passages from East Anglia to Australia the Guardians voted 'that one hundred bills relative to the Emigration to Australia be printed and circulated amongst the several parishes'.

⁵⁷ PRO MH 12/8596, East Barsham to PLC, 11 October 1836.

⁵⁸ PRO MH 12/8185, Saxthorpe to PLC, 15 June 1835. Other examples of cross-parish arrangements include Letheringsett and Holt (1836) and Corpestry and Sall (1836); PRO MH 12/8185.

⁵⁹ PRO MH 12/8185, Edgefield to PLC, 23 March 1836.

of the emigrant.

Once the motions had been passed, the Poor Law Commission was sent copies and the parish had to wait for approval from the Commissioners before proceeding any further. When approval had been given, the parish had to engage in a contract with a reputable shipping agent which had to be scrutinised and approved by the PLC/B. This accomplished, the arrangements for emigrant departure could continue.

Apart from emigrant passages and clothing, parishes had to convey their emigrants to the port of departure. This was not a task taken lightly by the parish. Coaches and third class compartments on trains were booked for emigrant parties. Generally an overseer or other willing parish officer accompanied the emigrants to the port. He was entrusted with a sum of money to pay for refreshments en route and to make sure that the emigrants came to no harm before they left the country. We may also suggest that a parish officer also accompanied the emigrants to make sure that they actually left. To prevent abuses by paupers using emigrant goods even if they decided to change their minds and not emigrate, clothing was allowed on the condition that it was put on the ship and could only be used once the ship had set sail⁶⁰. There was however a concern that pauper emigrants were not capable of coping with the difficulties and complications of crossing a large city. Emigrant agents and the passenger trade was hardly the most trusted line of business in England at the time. Various scandals had caused Parliament to act on abuses carried out by emigrant agents on emigrants at British ports.⁶¹ The following case shows that even the best plans could go awry.

Brackley St. Peter (Northants) arranged for the emigration of a party of thirty-four

⁶⁰ e.g. B.C.R.O. P50/8/3, Riseley vestry minutes, 8 September 1835. A man was awarded shoes and some shirts on the condition that they were put on the ship before he sailed.

⁶¹ See MacDonagh, *Pattern*, pp. 22-53 for a consideration of the frauds perpetrated by the emigrant trade.

emigrants to leave for Australia. They chartered wagons to take them to Wolverton railway station where they would catch a train on which they had ensured a vacant third class carriage would be available. For some reason the wagons did not get them to the station on time and they missed their train. Eventually they arrived on a later train in London. On arrival in London they were to be met by the emigrant agent John Marshall who would arrange for their travel across London to Vauxhall Station. Marshall had already left with the bulk of the emigrants arriving for Australia from other parishes leaving his son behind to wait for the Brackley party. Marshall Junior placed the emigrants on carriages and arranged to meet them at Vauxhall. While crossing London one of the emigrants insisted that the carriage stop so that they could have a drink. When they reassembled they continued on to Vauxhall Station and then to Deptford. On arrival at Deptford they realised that one of the party, a young boy, was no longer with them. He had got off the carriage whilst the others were having a drink and had not rejoined them. Eventually he would be reunited with the emigrant party after two days wandering around the streets of London on his own.

The case was an embarrassment to Marshall who only received the second half of his money for conveying the emigrants after the parish and union had registered a strong protest. William Cartwright, the chair of the Brackley Union, was especially severe about the lack of care which had been taken, emphasising the special vulnerability of poor people unfamiliar with London.⁶²

Travel to the port of departure also involved extra costs for the parish. A party which left Oakley (Bedfordshire) in 1831 was provided with food and ale at the Horse and Crown Inn, Northampton. This cost sixteen shillings. Even more expensive fare was enjoyed at Braunston where they again had food and ale, this time costing a pound. Further receipts for

⁶² PRO MH 12/8673, Brackley correspondence, 1844.

their Braunston stay include brandy, gin and tea.⁶³

Norfolk parishes incurred extra expenses when the ship that they had chartered was delayed. The emigrants had to be provided with food and lodging at Yarmouth while they waited for the ship to arrive. The parish of Gunthorpe complained that a fortnight's delay had caused them to 'pay very dear for everything'. Bale's emigration expenses were raised by forty pounds as a consequence of the delay.⁶⁴ Contrary winds a year later caused the Swanton Novers overseer to pay an extra fifty-five pounds to the emigrants awaiting the ship's departure.⁶⁵

Assisted emigration did not generally involve the simple business of just giving money to poor people to go away. Though in the early days, before the PLC came to exert a strong supervisory influence this may have occasionally happened. The only reference to the emigration of a man and wife from Roxton (Bedfordshire) refers to the payment of two pounds to Charles Dishes in distress and wife 'to leave country for America and not to trouble this parish any more'.⁶⁶ Under the New Poor Law the care taken with assisted emigration appears to confirm Helen Cowan's assertion that assisted emigrants were perhaps better provided for than a large number of the unassisted emigrants who arrived in Canada in the 1830s.⁶⁷

Central government, after Horton's experiments, had decided that emigration was too expensive a measure to be carried out on a large scale at national expense. Parishes who complained of the pressures of the poor rates were not necessarily best equipped to meet the

⁶³ B.C.R.O. P 40/18/65 and P 40/18/68, Oakley emigration papers, 1831.

⁶⁴ PRO MH 12/8596, Gunthorpe to PLC, n.d. (1836), Bale to PLC, 2 June 1836.

⁶⁵ PRO MH 12/8597, Swanton Novers to PLC, 23 August 1837.

⁶⁶ B.C.R.O. P 28/12/8, Roxton overseers' accounts, 25 October 1833.

⁶⁷ Cowan, *Emigration to Canada*, p. 207.

challenge of paying for emigration costs. However, the diligence with which they conducted the emigration of their poor was matched by the ingenuity with which they raised the money to pay for it.

The New Poor Law provided parishes with a mechanism to raise money to pursue independent policies: the sale of parish property. Over many years parishes had accumulated plots of land and buildings for which the new era of unionisation did not have a role. The parish was to be just an administrative unit within a wider structure of centralised relief administration. One of the rhetorical justifications for the New Poor Law was that the parish was too small and too corrupt to manage relief efficiently. Thus parish property seemed an anachronism in the face of the process of centralisation which the New Poor Law heralded. Parishes were encouraged to divest themselves of their assets as no future relief or financial role existed for them. Parishes were also faced with large bills for the construction of the new workhouses. The building of the new workhouse further emphasised the superfluous nature of parish buildings which were often used as homes for the poor. Thus resources existed for the parish to provide money to pay for workhouse construction. Some parishes had historically accumulated a significant amount of property, the value of which exceeded their obligations towards paying for the union workhouse. For these parishes the sale of parish property offered them an amount of money to support independent policies. One such policy could be paying for their poor to emigrate.

This is an aspect of the New Poor Law which has been little considered. The change from the parish workhouse to the union workhouse has been noted. Dunkley and Apfel have described the process by which the sale of parish property led to the financing of somewhat extravagant workhouses in Bedfordshire. For them the sale of parish property and the enthusiasm displayed for the large workhouse suggests an embrace of the new relief order by the local farmers and landowners, indicating an almost unhealthy rush towards this new

system at the expense of the old.⁶⁸ The other uses for parish property have not been considered. However, the money from the sale of parish property gave parishes a certain level of flexibility to pursue independent policies. This new facility was combined with the new powers for parishes to pay for the emigration of poor people with settlements in the parish. Thus the English parish could pay for the emigration of poor people, a responsibility which central government had shirked.

Thus the end of the parish as an arm of government, which historians see heralded by the reforms of the 1830s, was not that swift. Historians of local government have essentially ignored the rural English parish after 1834. Poor law historians have been sharper to point to the slower pace of centralisation, focusing on the State's lack of administrative capacity to supervise local policy effectively. The concentration of local studies on the divergence of local practice from central directives has almost become a historical cliché. It caused Karel Williams, in his critique of local studies of the poor law to remark that, 'only in Utopia is there absolute power, transmitted with 100 per cent efficiency through a complex institutional structure'.⁶⁹ However historians who have emphasised the localism, and even the parochialism of the localities and the New Poor Law have tended to view the parish or the union as a source of obstruction and delay. Undoubtedly this was the case. With the Assistant Commissioners being only able to visit the unions twice a year, the supervisory role of the PLC/B was limited. If the influence of central directives had been more successful there would have been no need for the crusade against out relief in the 1870s. However, with assisted emigration we can see one example of the English parish acting in a creative, even positive, way after the passage of the Poor Law Amendment Act, and using the mechanisms of the New Poor Law to solve its own problems.

⁶⁸ Apfel and Dunkley, 'English Rural Society', p. 43.

⁶⁹ Karel Williams, *From Pauperism to Poverty* (1981), p. 68.

Ultimately the sale of parish property led to a reduced role for the parish. The victims of the sale of parish property were often the poor who inhabited the property that was sold. Carbrooke (Norfolk) raised £300 from the sale of a 'house somewhat out of repair and in the occupation of paupers'.⁷⁰ Winfarthing (Norfolk) raised £496 from the sale of 'a large building and two low cottages'. The buildings were 'occupied entirely with paupers and it is with difficulty that any Rent can be obtained from them'.⁷¹ Sedgeford (Norfolk) raised £100 from the sale of 'dilapidated' property inhabited by paupers.⁷² One mechanism of parish support for the poor was removed by the sale of parish property. Property that was in practice rent-free for the poor was removed from the parish's control. The previous inhabitants of the parish properties were evicted and expected to find alternative accommodation, for which rent would be expected. The parish was in effect withdrawing one traditional form of assistance from its realm of responsibilities. Future paupers in need of shelter from the parish would only be faced with the union workhouse, removed from friends and neighbours. In the short term the sale of parish property allowed the parish to make a significant gesture of its power to still have a direct impact upon the lives of its poor. There are few more significant expressions of power than the ability to send people half way around the world.

Some parishes sold their property with the direct intention that it would be used to pay for the emigration of poor people. Emigration costs feature in the explanations for the sale of parish property published in the appendices of the PLC/B reports. The standard phraseology for justifying such a sale was that the proceeds would be used 'for the permanent benefit of the parish'. At first this appears to suggest a conviction on the part of the parish officers that emigration offered a significant benefit for the parish. This indeed may have been

⁷⁰ PRO MH 12/8616, Carbrooke to PLC, 11 May 1836.

⁷¹ PRO MH 12/8394, Winfarthing to PLC, n.d. (1837).

⁷² PRO MH 12/8250, Sedgeford to PLC, n.d. (1837).

the case but it also shows the way the language of the Poor Law Commissioners was adopted by parish officers to justify actions which they took. This suggests one of the ways by which bureaucracies impose their own way of thinking and language upon those who have to deal with them. Other parishes appear to have been more interested in selling their property to pay for the construction of the workhouse. This is the main justification which features in the Appendices of the PLC Annual Reports. However, as mentioned above, sometimes the contributions which the parishes had to make towards the union workhouse were less than the amount of money which they liquidised by selling their property. This money was kept in approved investments, generally government stock though sometimes shares in canal companies. Sometime later parishes would use those assets for paying for emigration. The method of financing assisted emigration used by Marston Saint Lawrence (Northants) shows the sustained use of parish investments. In 1836 the parish sold tenements to pay for the emigration of poor people. The remainder of the parish funds was invested to buy stocks in a canal company. In 1844 and 1848 these investments were withdrawn to pay for emigrations. Marston St. Lawrence also borrowed money to pay for emigrations. In 1851 the parish raised a half-penny rate to help to clear up a debt incurred in paying for an emigration it had financed six years earlier.⁷³

Not all parishes had property to sell, or if they did, their obligations towards paying for the union workhouse more than covered the money which could be raised by selling parish property. Then their options for paying for emigration were limited to raising money either by setting a rate or by borrowing money against the security of the poor rates. Parishes borrowed money from a variety of sources: private individuals; local banks; or the Exchequer Loan Commission. Sometimes the two former sources would be used in the occasionally

⁷³ N.C.R.O. 205P/49, Marston St. Lawrence vestry minutes, 12 April 1836, 19 January 1844, 30 June 1848, 21 March 1851.

lengthy interim period between passing motions and receiving the Exchequer Loan Bills. The amount of money which parishes could borrow was limited to half the average expenditure on poor relief by the parish. Loans theoretically had to be paid back over three years out of the poor rates. However there is some evidence that loans were often not paid back within the period; debts appear to have lingered for up to ten years after the emigrants had departed. Roydon (Norfolk) still owed £170 borrowed from the Reverend Temple for emigration expenses incurred in 1830 and 1832 in 1847. Shelfanger (Norfolk) requested information about repaying a loan borrowed ten years earlier to pay for assisted emigration.⁷⁴

Other sources for the payment of emigration costs were large landowners with interests within the parish. Notable donors include the Russells, the Cokes, The Duke of Grafton, Earl of Orford, the Marquis of Northampton. Their donations appear to have been conditional on the rest of the parish making a contribution. Often their donations were in relation to their property holdings within the parish. Occasionally grandees turn up in accounts making a small contribution.

A further way of meeting emigration costs was by private subscription. This was often a device operated for emigrations if the sanction of the Poor Law Commissioners could not be obtained. This was particularly the case if parishes overspent on emigration. Though in the early days of assisted emigration a voluntary emigration society could be formed. In Thrapston (Northants) this involved over sixty people making contributions ranging from ten pounds to a few shillings.⁷⁵

For the clergymen and local officials assisted emigration was a demanding task. The arrangements that they made on behalf of the poor emigrants were time-consuming and at

⁷⁴ PRO MH 12/8397, Roydon to PLC, 3 April 1847, Shelfanger to PLC, 26 April 1847.

⁷⁵ N.C.R.O. 315P/165, Thrapston vestry minutes, 23 March 1832.

times frustrating. To assist poor people to leave required a level of commitment to the value of the policy. The emigratory process required an active concern about the well-being of the poor. The process of organising assisted emigration provides further evidence of the policy adopted by parish officers as something more involved than the banishment of poor people from the world of the parish.

The details of the emigratory process, however, suggest that only parish officers committed to the value of the policy would undertake the complicated financial arrangements and time-consuming work involved in the implementation of the policy. The process in part explains why few parishes did pay for their poor to emigrate. It also offers a perspective on why assisted emigration remained a panacea for domestic problems that was only fitfully undertaken. The practicalities of implementing assisted emigration, in terms of expense, time and complications, all worked against the policy. It remained a policy easier to call for than to implement. Given the difficulties, the achievement of parish officers is testimony to their concern and to their continued capacity to influence the lives of their parishioners.

CHAPTER VIII: SUPERVISING ASSISTED EMIGRATION

Though parish officers were entrusted with the power to raise or borrow money to pay for the emigration of their poor, they were not given free rein to proceed however they pleased. Like any other part of the New Poor Law, assisted emigration carried out by parish officers was subject to the rules and supervision of the Poor Law Commission, the supervisory agency created to oversee the implementation of the new law. Parish officers did not operate in a vacuum; they had to follow the procedures laid down by the PLC/B. The supervisory activities of the PLC affected all aspects of the emigratory process. It governed parish voting procedures, financial arrangements, the destinations of the emigrants and the 'quality' of the poor emigrants.

The parishes and the central supervisory agency did not necessarily share the same perspective on assisted emigration. The parishes had a simple agenda, to remove people who wanted to leave. The PLC's agenda was more complicated. The PLC attempted to ensure that assisted emigration was carried out in a proper way. The nature of PLC supervision was determined by an understanding of the peculiar delicacy of assisted emigration as a matter of public policy. We have seen how the question of governmental involvement in paying for poor people to leave was a sensitive issue. For radicals, such as Cobbett, assisted emigration marked a damning admission by the elite that it could not provide for its agricultural labourers. Transportation was still a component of penal policy. Assisted emigration could easily be portrayed as transportation by other means. Assisted emigration, as scandals over female emigration to Australia in the 1830s and juvenile emigration in the 1850s would show, remained a thorny subject. The PLC wanted to avoid scandal. Unsuccessful emigrations could rebound on the central agency. The consequences of the inquiry into the Andover scandal (1846), which saw the PLC swept away and replaced by the Poor Law Board, showed

the vulnerability of central agencies to charges of incompetence. PLC supervision was bolstered by two interpretative frameworks that stigmatised the English parish's capacity to manage emigration effectively. Colonial officials were suspicious of the type of people English parishes would attempt to send out. Poor law reformers had explained the need for centralisation of the poor law by emphasising the failings of parish officers, who were caricatured as corrupt, venal and irresponsible. Given these suspicions, it is no wonder that the PLC supervised parochial emigration with an eagle eye.

This chapter considers the effectiveness and impact of centralised supervision of parochial emigration. Through the study of centre/local relations on assisted emigration, we can see the interaction between new bureaucracy and amateur local government. A consequence of this interaction was the education of local government in the ways of modern bureaucracy. Not all local authorities learnt the lesson at the same speed. We shall largely focus on episodes in centre/local relations when a dysfunction occurred. These episodes display tensions between centre and locality. Their resolution is perhaps suggestive of the nature of the distribution of power between centre and locality which the New Poor Law introduced.

This chapter is not solely concerned with the issue of centre/local relations. Centre/local relations provide a framework for the more specific question of how central supervision of parochial emigration affected the character of assisted emigration. In a negative sense, it made the business of assisted emigration extremely bureaucratic and complicated, certainly from the parish's perspective. We may suggest that parishes were reluctant to assist people to emigrate, as a consequence of the seemingly unnecessary regulations of the PLC. Restrictions on personnel and destinations caused a number of people not to be assisted to emigrate. On a more positive note, we may suggest that PLC supervision ensured that minimum standards were kept; parishes were not cheated by unscrupulous

shipping agents; financial irregularities were kept to a minimum. As a result of PLC supervision, parochial assisted emigration avoided a number of the problems which were associated with other schemes of assisted emigration.

Furthermore, the study of the interaction between centre and locality on the issue of assisted emigration adds to our understanding of the emigratory process. It offers another perspective on the priorities and preoccupations of the parish officers with respect to the policy. It also offers an opportunity to investigate the issue of who should be assisted to emigrate.

PLC supervision focused on three broad areas of pauper emigration: destinations, procedures and the eligibility of the poor to emigrate. We shall start our discussion by investigating the PLC's impact on the destinations of the poor emigrants assisted to leave under its sanction.

The rules for the destinations of parish emigrants were clear and straightforward. They could only leave for a British colony. However a number of emigrants were assisted to leave for the United States under the sanction of the New Poor Law in the first few years of the law. After 1838 no poor people were assisted to go to the United States with the PLC's approval. We might suggest that the early emigrations to the United States were partly a result of a lack of uniformity in practice amongst the clerks of Somerset House. By 1838 central supervision was sharper and more rigorous.

From the parish's perspective there was no reason not to send poor people to the United States. It was natural, as emigration could not be forced, to send people to the destination of their choice. Emigrants who particularly wanted to go to a specific destination might have friends and relatives already there who might assist the emigrants to leave through remittances, thus lessening the financial burden for the parish. Furthermore friends and relatives might help the emigrants to adapt in their new land, lessening the likelihood that the

emigrants might return out of failure and once more burden the parish.

The Poor Law Commissioners were more lenient about emigration to the United States in the first two years of the New Poor Law. They even provided advice to Kettering vestry about the cost of passages to New York, sympathising with the vestry that passage prices had risen too high for a proposed emigration to the United States to take place.¹ Evidence that the paupers had chosen to leave for the United States was sufficient for the Commissioners to overlook the destination in the case of a few Northamptonshire and Norfolk parishes. The PLC noted their disapproval of emigration to the United States of a family from Loys Weedon (Northamptonshire), but allowed it as it was stated, 'it is their wish to go'.² As late as 1837 the PLC were prepared to accept the emigration of a Norfolk family to the United States on the grounds that the emigrants had relatives who owned a farm in Orleans County, New York. In this case the arrangements for drawing up contracts for the passage which the PLC had to approve, before parish expenditure was sanctioned, were difficult for the parish. The vestry clerk complained that New York shippers were 'ignorant of the forms' and as a result the parish was caused 'an infinity of trouble and expense in postage'.³

After 1837 future proposed emigrations to the United States were treated less sympathetically. Any mention of the United States received a sharp notice from the PLC that it was unable to sanction emigration. 'America' was not an acceptable destination.⁴ The PLC demanded a definite destination, reminding the parish that a British colony was the only possible destination for pauper emigrants. Any destination that a clerk in Somerset House did

¹ PRO MH 12/8749, PLC to Kettering, 30 August 1836.

² PRO MH 12/8879, PLC to Loys Weedon, 14 April 1836.

³ PRO MH 12/8475, Cramworth to PLC, 30 April 1837.

⁴ e.g. PRO MH 12/8675, PLB to Evenley, 9 March 1852; PRO MH 12/58, PLB to Biggleswade Union, 31 August 1849.

not recognise warranted a quick query. Glapthorne (Northamptonshire) listed the proposed destination of its emigrants as Kingston; the PLB immediately queried Kingston's location.⁵ Any special pleading was treated with a crisp response that only a British colony could be approved.⁶

Mitford and Launditch Union (Norfolk) attempted to persuade the PLB of the need for flexibility in the rules for emigration of poor people to the United States in the case of Martha Pelling and her six children who wanted to emigrate to the U.S. This emigration would only cost the parish of Hockering eight pounds. The husband and father of the family had emigrated two years before and had 'ever since been endeavouring by his labour to raise a sufficient sum of money to enable them [his wife and family] to join him.' The man had sent twenty-two pounds to assist the family reunion, 'apparently conceiving that sufficient for the desired purpose'. Unfortunately for the Pellings this sum was not sufficient, though the parish did not think that this shortfall was intentional. The union clerk continued: 'It is extremely desirable that the parish should be relieved from this heavy burthen, and the wife be restored to her husband, now that so eligible an opportunity is afforded for effecting that object'.

As far as the union and parish were concerned, 'the transmission of so large a sum of money by the husband evinces his desire to repair the injury caused by his former desertion of his family'. The union officer remarked that the parish's expenditure on the Pellings was between forty and fifty pounds a year, and requested that the parish be permitted to send the

⁵ PRO MH 12/8812, Glapthorne list, submitted 5 May 1850; PLB to Glapthorne, 25 June 1850.

⁶ See for example responses from PLC/B to the following Northamptonshire parishes: Harpole, 1 March 1845 (PRO MH 12/8782); Nassington, 23 March 1850 (PRO MH 12/8812); Harringworth, 14 March 1837 (PRO MH 12/9806); Kettering, April 1852 (PRO MH 12/8753); Woodford, 28 February 1844 (PRO MH 12/8712).

family.⁷ However despite pressure from the union and the parish, including one letter which suggested that Pelling had contributed to his family when in the United States (in contradiction to the original estimate of parochial expenditure on the Pellings of approximately forty pounds per year), the PLB remained firm and sanction for this emigration to the United States was withheld. A local Norfolk gentleman, John Walsham, complained of the 'Rhadaminthian rigidity' of the rules relating to emigrant destinations. He also related a case where the PLB had been equally inflexible. A poor ex-sergeant major had requested to leave for the West Indies. The man was certified as requiring residence in a 'warm climate to save his life'. His emigration could not be sanctioned by the PLB.⁸

Apart from the first two or three years of the New Poor Law, the PLC/B was effective in preventing pauper emigrants from going to the United States directly. Though a number of emigrants landed in Canada with the intention of crossing immediately to meet with friends and relatives in the United States. The most blatant example of parishes sending their poor to a Canadian port with the intention of the immigrants crossing to the United States is found in a letter from the parish of Finmere (Oxfordshire) to the PLB. Three poor families were assisted to go to the United States to meet up with relatives previously settled there. The shipping agent had arranged for the emigrants to land at Quebec and receive the necessary money to enable them to travel to New York.⁹ The rule preventing poor law emigrants from

⁷ PRO MH 12/8479, Charles Wright (clerk of Mitford and Launditch Union) to PLB, 6 May 1850.

⁸ PRO MH 12/8479, John Walsham to PLB n.d. (received 14 May 1850); Letters from Wright to PLB with PLB draft replies for 7 May 1850 and 11 May 1850.

⁹ PRO MH 12/8673, Finmere to PLC, 29 June 1844. The letter from the parish to the PLC is primarily a complaint against the shipping agent, Humphrey Bull, for not ensuring that the emigrants' journey to New York was as smooth as the parish and the emigrants were led to believe. The journey from Montreal to New York took the emigrants fifteen days to complete; and the emigrants' resources for such a journey were limited.

leaving for the United States was clear cut and difficult to get around. The supervision of passenger contracts made the destination of emigrants difficult to falsify. We might suggest that the lack of flexibility from the PLC about destinations provides one reason why so few people were assisted to leave England. Not all emigrants were as flexible concerning destination as Mary Ann Lovell who left Cardington (Beds) for the Cape in December, 1845 after the PLC had recommended that the emigration season was too advanced for her proposed Canadian emigration in August of the same year.¹⁰ Finmere's emigrants were adamant that they would only leave for the United States. Parishes appear to have been happy to send their poor to whichever destination they wanted. It was the PLC which sought to limit the direction of the flow. The motivation for the PLC's wish to control the flow of emigrants away from the United States was rooted in a dual wish not to strengthen a rival country and the United States' reluctance to accept poor emigrants.

Scrutiny of destinations for emigrants did not stop with attempting to prevent them from going to the United States. Towards the end of the period Australia became a less than suitable destination. News of the money which could be made in the gold fields caused the PLB to suggest that all emigrants could find their own way to the Southern Hemisphere, causing the parishes to provide special reasons as to why they were proposing to assist people to leave.¹¹ The parish of Husborne Crawley (Bedfordshire) proposed to send a family to Australia in 1854. On receiving the relevant forms, the PLB replied, stating that 'the present state of the Australian colonies is such to offer much attraction to able bodied male labourers and thus render unassisted emigration more probable than heretofore'. The PLB wondered

¹⁰ B.C.R.O. PUBC 2/5/1, PLC to Bedford Union, 13 August 1845, Bedford Union to PLC, 8 October 1845.

¹¹ PRO MH 12/9810, PLB to Gretton, 17 February 1855.

whether there were any 'special reasons' for assisting people to leave.¹² The clerk of the union negotiated this hurdle with aplomb by stating that the 'agricultural labour market was overstocked'. The emigration to Australia subsequently went ahead.¹³

Emigrant destinations were only one consideration for the PLC. Every stage of the emigratory process had to conform to its rules and regulations. This close supervision contrasts with the independent *ad hoc* process of parochial emigration which had taken place before the New Poor Law. To assist parishes in the emigration of their poor, the PLC produced printed notices and forms to complete. However parishes did not always fill these in correctly. Failure to complete forms in the appropriate way could have dire consequences for the parish. Marston St. Lawrence mistakenly submitted a motion requesting permission to raise money, when the parish wanted to borrow money. The PLC refused to allow the parish to change its motion.¹⁴ If insufficient notice was given for a meeting to discuss the raising of money for emigration purposes the parish was returned the form and instructed to hold another meeting.¹⁵ If the value of the three year aggregate of parochial relief expenditure was mistakenly filled in with the average value the forms had to be resubmitted. It seems that the severity of central supervision increased over time. In 1836 a PLC clerk took Burnham's three year aggregate of £650 to be a mistake and sanctioned the emigration motion.¹⁶ On later occasions forms were returned.

Only if parishes proceeded in the suitable way for organising assisted emigration could

¹² PRO MH 12/128, PLB to Woburn Union, 24 July 1854.

¹³ PRO MH 12/128, Clerk of Woburn Union to PLB, 31 July 1854.

¹⁴ PRO MH 12/8673, PLC to Marston St. Lawrence, 13 May 1845.

¹⁵ e.g. PRO MH 12/4, PLB returns Pulloxhill's forms because of insufficient notice, 6 January 1849.

¹⁶ PRO MH 12/8596, PLC to Burnham, 1836.

money expended on emigration be sanctioned by the PLC. If emigration was carried out without the PLC's approval the parish was not allowed to raise or borrow money to pay for it. Astwell and Falcott (Northamptonshire) did not wait for the emigration contracts to be approved by the PLC. The result was that over one hundred pounds which had been paid for the emigration of twenty-three people, on the expectation that the costs would be paid out of the poor rates, had to be paid by private subscription. The reason for the irregularity in emigration procedures adopted by Astwell and Falcott vestry sheds further light on the way that poor people wishing to emigrate called the tune. The poor emigrants decided to leave on hearing good reports of America. They only made up their minds to leave a week before the ship on which they left departed. Having made up their minds to leave, the emigrants insisted on leaving on the earliest ship 'to secure to themselves on the other side of the Atlantic as much of the summer as possible'. The parish claimed to have no alternative but to send the emigrants when they wanted to go. It was with some relief that the parish assisted their poor to leave. The poor emigrants were seldom employed and when they were employed they received low wages. To supplement their income the emigrants had resorted to begging and vagrancy. The special pleading of the parish officer was all to no avail. The PLC was unforgiving of the irregular procedures adopted. Though the emigrants departed, paid for by the parish, Astwell and Falcott's emigration is not recorded in the published statistics. As far as the PLC were concerned, as the emigration happened without its sanction, the emigration did not happen.¹⁷

As with the question of sending emigrants to the United States, the PLC appear to have been more lenient in the early years of the New Poor Law. Norfolk parishes swept along

¹⁷ PRO MH 12/8673, Astwell and Falcott list, 23 May 1845, PLC to Astwell and Falcott, 29 May 1845, Astwell and Falcott to PLC, 21 June 1845, PLC reply, 30 June 1845.

in the 'emigration fever' of 1836 protested that they were pressed for time and that if they did not send their poor in that year, sometimes in specially chartered boats, they would not get another chance to take advantage of emigration. The parish of Gooderstone (Norfolk) was informed by the PLC that its proposed emigration of seventeen emigrants to Canada in July 1836 could not be carried out as 'the season is too far advanced'. The parish informed the PLC that the emigration had taken place from Kings Lynn as the parish feared it would have 'no other opportunity and the emigrants were anxious to go'.¹⁸ The irregularities in procedure which the 1836 emigration saw were noted and marked down as exceptions, not to be repeated. Astwell and Falcott sent their poor in 1845. The PLC was not so forgiving.

PLC regulations did not offer the parish much flexibility. If the money voted at a parish meeting was insufficient to cover the costs of emigration, the PLC could offer no assistance to the parish. Expenditure incurred by an increase in the number of emigrants or by a rise in the cost of emigrant passage could not be offset by the raising of more money, unless extra money was voted for at a separate meeting held before the party left. A second meeting had to be approved by the PLC. Thus parishes had to be extremely careful in estimating the cost of an emigration from the parish. Extra expenses incurred by the sudden demands of emigrants, delays in the departure of the vessel, or any number of factors which caused emigration costs to rise, had to be met by private subscription.¹⁹ Auditors who scrutinised union account books zealously disallowed any unsanctioned expenditure of the

¹⁸ PRO MH 12/8539, PLC to Gooderstone, 13 July 1836; Gooderstone reply, 21 July 1836.

¹⁹ e.g. PRO MH 12/25, Stevington (Beds) to PLC, 26 January 1846, claimed that fifteen pounds was insufficient for an additional number of emigrants. Reply from PLC, 31 January 1846, recommended private subscription; PRO MH 12/8882, Cold Higham (Northamptonshire) to PLB, 10 December 1851, complained that they had spent £12 over the amount sanctioned. The PLB, 23 December 1851, could only recommend subscription.

poor rates by parishes. Occasionally parishes attempted to gain PLC sanction for unlawful expenditure, but despite persistent petitioning received little sympathy or understanding from the PLC.

Parishes were not beyond attempting to deceive the auditors about additional unsanctioned money which they spent on emigration, attempting to keep putting in claims in the hope that their persistence would pay off.²⁰ Generally they were not fortunate. The discovery of deception earned offending parishes a stern rebuke from the PLC.²¹ Central scrutiny also included the generosity of parishes towards their poor emigrants. Here we see a clash of roles. The parish attempted to provide its poor with the necessaries for the emigrant voyage. Aware of the individual requirements of their poor, parishes sometimes indulged their emigrants with extra money and clothing. The PLC saw its duty as protecting parish ratepayers from extravagance. A further concern existed that poor emigrants might be incapable of spending money in a sensible way. The PLC explained the need for caution in generosity towards emigrants to a sceptical Harning (Norfolk) vestry. 'The need [for regulations] was shown by A.C. Buchanan's reports of the Allendale. Each person was given £2-5-0 on going on board. On their arrival the emigrants had no money left as spirits had been sold by the crew at exorbitant prices.'²²

Excessive generosity was noted by the PLC. However, on this question it was more

²⁰ Persistence paid off for the parish of Flore. On at least three occasions the parish appealed to the PLB. Eventually money expended on emigration in early 1851 was allowed in 1852. See PRO MH 12/8715, Flore to PLB, 27 February 1851, 14 April 1851, 16 October 1851; PLB to Flore, 20 February 1852.

²¹ e.g. PRO MH 12/8882, PLB to Towcester, 12 June 1850. Towcester was rebuked for trying to get unauthorised emigration expenses past the union auditor on two occasions in 1848 and 1849.

²² PRO MH 12/8616, PLC to Harning, 18 April 1837.

difficult to disallow expenditure once it had taken place. The PLC could point out the inconsistencies in arrangements and suggest that they should in future be different, but as money had been raised and emigrations arranged, there was little that it could do to prevent overspending on emigration, as long as the money spent was less than the amount sanctioned to be raised or borrowed. One family from Bircham Magna (Norfolk) cost the parish one hundred pounds to emigrate to Australia. The PLC suggested that this was a large amount of money to pay for the emigration of one family. It suggested that the family could be emigrated under the Bounty system. However it appears that the family were not eligible for Bounty payments; thus they were emigrated at the expense of the parish, despite the reservations of the PLC.²³

The PLC consistently sniped at the over-generosity of parishes towards their poor. The sharpness of this supervision is seen by their rebuke of Kelling parish (Norfolk) for giving a single man two pounds rather than one pound landing money.²⁴ The PLB considered that fifteen pounds expended on a single female to leave Geddington (Northamptonshire) was excessive.²⁵ However central authority could only snipe. Only if parishes mistakenly requested approval for more generous payments could the PLC/B have an impact. Brackley St. Peter (Northamptonshire) vestry was pleased that it had managed emigration expenses in such a way that it had money left over from the sum which it had raised. The vestry asked the PLC for permission to use the surplus money for providing the emigrants with additional sums. The PLC resisted this demand. It informed the parish that the sums of money calculated for emigrant spending were a maximum and more than adequate for immediate

²³ PRO MH 12/8250, PLC to Bircham Magna, n.d. 1837?

²⁴ PRO MH 12/8293, PLC to Kelling, 31 March 1837.

²⁵ PRO MH 12/8752, PLB to Geddington, 1851.

landing expenses. The ratepayers, not the emigrants, should benefit from the parish's prudent management of emigration expenses. Even though the vestry was united in the wish that the emigrants receive extra funds, the PLC opposed this.²⁶ The parish of Thelmetham (Norfolk) wanted to give a small sum of landing money to a poor man about to leave for Australia. The parish officer stated that 'from my experience in emigration that a small sum of money is indispensable'. This again shows that the concerns of the emigrators extended beyond the mere removal of their poor to the colonies. Despite this request, the PLB replied that landing money was not required.²⁷

A further area where central authority circumscribed the freedom of movement of the parish was over the financial arrangements for emigration, particularly when these concerned the sale of parish property. As we have seen, the sale of parish property offered the parish a degree of freedom in the operation of policy. However the PLC had certain notions about how property should be used. For the PLC the prime purpose for the sale of parish property was for the sums raised to be used to clear the debts incurred as part of the parish's contribution towards the construction of the union workhouse. The parish of Raunds (Northamptonshire) wanted to use the sale of parish property to pay for the emigration of poor people who had requested help to leave. The PLC noted that the parish still had an outstanding debt for workhouse construction. Money raised from the sale of parish property therefore had to first of all be used to clear that debt. As a result of this decision no emigrants were assisted to leave Raunds.²⁸

²⁶ PRO MH 12/8673, Brackley to PLC, 7 May 1844, PLC to Brackley, 8 May 1844.

²⁷ PRO MH 12/8559, E.H. Sawbridge (Thelmetham) to PLB, 24 July 1852; PLB reply, 30 July 1852.

²⁸ PRO MH 12/8863, PLC to Raunds, 29 June 1847.

Even if parishes had no outstanding debts to pay towards the cost of building the union workhouse, the PLC sought to restrict the application of sale produce. The PLC did not consider it right that the proceeds from the sale of parish property should be the sole method of paying for emigration. The ratepayers who were to benefit from such expenditure should also make a contribution. This rule applied even to the parish of Pytchley whose ratepayers, by private voluntary subscription, had paid for the emigration of over sixty people at a cost of over three hundred pounds. The PLC insisted that money from the sale of property should not constitute the sole method of payment for the emigration of one man²⁹. The parish of Evenley (Northamptonshire) succeeded in paying for the emigration of six people solely out of money raised from the sale of parish property. The PLB's supervision had slipped. However, it warned that 'it will not allow a similar irregularity to occur again'.³⁰

Applying money raised by the sale of parish property for emigration purposes was not a simple task. The PLC/B insisted that money had to be first borrowed against the security of the parish's assets. The borrowed money would pay for the emigration. The debt incurred by emigration expenditure could then be paid off by the liquidation of parish assets.³¹

PLC supervision of financial procedures largely ensured that emigrations which it sanctioned were carried out with a degree of financial probity. The supervision was dependent on what the parish officers told the PLC. The PLC clerks appear to have been sharp to spot any irregularities. The parishes exposed their failings to the PLC by requesting additional funds. Unless the PLC approved the raising of additional monies, the local auditors

²⁹ PRO MH 12/8753, Pytchley to PLB, 29 April 1852, PLB reply, 17 May 1852. See also PRO MH 12/25, PLB to Bedford Union, 29 November 1845, concerning the use of Milton Ernest's sale produce for emigration purposes.

³⁰ PRO MH 12/8675, PLB to Evenley, 21 September 1852.

³¹ See PRO MH 12/8397, PLB to Blo' Norton, March 1848.

would disallow any unsanctioned expense. It was the local auditor whom the parishes had to fear. Doubtless on occasions auditors were duped by creative accounting by parish officers. The sanctions which the PLC possessed over inappropriate emigration financing were limited. They could withhold their sanction for the raising of money for emigrations which had already taken place. In extreme cases, as with Astwell and Falcott, the emigration could go unsanctioned by the PLC and thus be outside its jurisdiction. PLC sanction was not an essential for emigration to take place. It was only essential if the poor rates were to be accessed to pay for it. Falling foul of PLC procedural regulations would involve the parish in finding alternative methods for financing emigration, largely by private subscription. Emigrations not financed by the poor rates were not the concern of the PLC. How many parishes assisted poor people to leave without PLC sanction will never be known. We can suggest that it was a significant figure.³²

A third area of PLC scrutiny concerned the eligibility of poor people to receive parochial assistance to emigrate. Their concerns covered a number of different categories of poor people: widows, orphans, deserted wives, wives of convicts, single women, artisans, people currently in employ. For each category the PLC/B had separate concerns. The level of scrutiny with which they supervised emigrant lists and correspondence is shown by their quick response to anything irregular or unusual.

A principle of pauper emigration which the PLC attempted to impose was that people assisted to leave should be in receipt of relief and unable to provide for themselves. In imposing this policy the PLC/B was largely ineffective. Parish officers found a loophole for this requirement by claiming that emigrants assisted to leave would create space for people

³² For Northamptonshire alone we have records of over two hundred people being assisted to leave from three parishes: Pytchley, Aynho and Yardley Hastings.

who were currently on relief to fill up.³³ Only one vestry, in the three counties investigated, appears to have fallen foul of the PLC/B in proposing an unsuitably well-to-do emigrant. Kettering vestry sought to assist Thomas Oakley who was currently in employment but who had a large family to go to South Australia where a brother of his was 'doing very well'. Even though the man had been ill and a burden on the poor rates two years ago, the PLC informed the vestry that assisted emigration was not intended to pay for the emigration of people who could provide for themselves. The vestry wrote back stating that the man might be a burden once more if he fell ill again. The PLC were not swayed by this special pleading. The refusal of the PLC to sanction the emigration of Oakley taught the Kettering vestry to be less forthcoming in the provision of information about emigrants to the PLC. The next poor family that they proposed to emigrate did not receive such a glowing testimonial.³⁴

The influence of assisted passages to Australia further undercut the desire of the PLC to restrict pauper emigration to people who were in receipt of relief. The Australians insisted that people who received assisted passages should not have received relief in the year before their emigration if they were to receive an assisted passage. The PLC was not in a position to block these emigrations as assisted passages substantially reduced the costs of emigration.

The occupations of emigrants were not beyond the gaze of the clerks at Somerset House. Blakeney (Norfolk) proposed a bricklayer for emigration to Canada in 1836. Artisans, especially those with large families, were possible beneficiaries of the internal migration scheme to the manufacturing districts. This was obviously a cheaper way of tackling the surplus labour problem. However the requirements for poor law migrants were

³³ See Chapter VI, pp. 172-3.

³⁴ PRO MH 12/8750, Kettering to PLC, 20 November 1837, PLC reply, 24 November 1837. Benjamin Mitchell who received parochial assistance to go to South Australia was listed as a 'farm labourer [who] wishes to emigrate to benefit [his] large and young family'.

more stringent than for emigrants to Canada, who required no reference except the willingness of the parish to send them abroad. The PLC wondered whether the brickmaker might gain work in the manufacturing districts. The parish suggested that they could not give the man a suitable reference; 'his character is such that we supposed we cannot write with propriety to give him a recommendation, and therefore supposed that it would be useless to endeavour to find employment in the manufacturing districts for him'.³⁵ Thus the PLC's query was unsuccessful. The thrust of PLC intervention again appears to have sought to limit parish funded emigration to only essential cases. Generally the parish was able to construct a suitable reason to support its policy decision.

The PLC was especially diligent in its supervision of 'vulnerable' emigrants. For the parishes and unions, the emigration of orphans was seen as a useful way of removing burdensome people who inhabited the union workhouse. The PLC/B appears to have supported steps taken for their emigration. It was particularly supportive when consideration seems to have been given to the new lives of the young. For example one Norfolk union arranged for twenty orphans to be transported to the Cape under the supervision of the wife of a man settled out there who could provide employment for the children. The PLC/B insisted that the nearest surviving relatives of orphans should provide written support for their emigration.³⁶ With children's emigration the parish and union were especially at the mercy of colonial requirements.

Bedford Union was keen to assist the emigration of young people living in the workhouse for whom it was difficult to find permanent employment. However the workhouse

³⁵ PRO MH 12/8596, PLC to Blakeney, 30 March 1836, reply, 8 April 1836.

³⁶ PRO MH 12/8430, Kings Lynn Union to PLC, 2 August 1842; PLC reply, 4 August 1842.

inmates were assisted to leave only when colonial demands were for young people. The Colonial Land and Emigration Commission did not accept young male inmates of the Bedford workhouse for free passages because it believed that 'boys brought up in the workhouse must necessarily be inferior emigrants'. There was generally an oversupply of single male emigrants. Workhouse inmates were viewed negatively compared with people who had managed to avoid entering the workhouse. Orphan girls offered the Australian recruiters an opportunity to counteract the gender imbalance of Australian immigration. Subject to medical inspection by a selected surgeon, orphan girls were accepted to go to Australia. Orphan girls' upbringing in a workhouse was thought to have supplied them with the training that would make them good servants. For boys brought up in the workhouse it was a different story.³⁷

Women not living with partners were subject to close scrutiny by the PLC/B. Widows were acceptable subjects for assistance, especially if they were travelling out to live with brothers or fathers. However, deserted wives seeking to be reunited with their husbands were not deemed worthy of assistance. The PLC/B on seeing a woman travelling without a husband on an emigrant list would enquire of the parish whether the woman was widowed or deserted. If she had been left by her husband, the parish was not permitted to assist her to leave. Again we see a clash of priorities between local officials and central authority. Eydon parish (Northamptonshire) calculated that it would be cheaper in the long term to reunite Mrs Willoughby and her six children with her husband in America than to keep the woman and her family on relief. The cost of passage was under one and a half times the annual expenditure on the Willoughbys. The PLB however was not supportive of this rationale.³⁸ A number of

³⁷ PRO MH 12/26, CLEC to Bedford Union, 21 October 1848.

³⁸ N.C.R.O. 120P/186, 'agreement to send Willoughby's family to America', 1849; PRO MH 12/8674, PLB to Eydon, 18 March 1849.

married men had deserted their wives and children to find their fortunes in the New World causing expense to the parish. Poor people appear to have viewed this as a legitimate strategy. Having established themselves in their new country they sought to negotiate with the burdened parish for some payment towards the cost of the family reunion. The PLC did not accept this as a legitimate tactic and felt that no encouragement should be provided for it.³⁹ However, the only people to be assisted to leave Norfolk in 1839 under the PLC's sanction were the Birds of Roydon. At the cost of £100 to the parish Lucy Bird and her nine children, who had received £24 relief from the parish the year before, were sent to Canada where they were to be met by Cornelius Bird, the father of the family who had sent for them.⁴⁰ Parishes, concerned with the immediate burdens which deserted families had placed upon their resources, were more flexible. In the case of the Willoughbys the parish lost out to the demands of Somerset House. For the Pelling family of Hockering, the large contribution which the husband was prepared to make for the emigration of his family swayed the parish to act in the role of topping up emigration expenses, though the PLC remained adamant that this should not happen.⁴¹

³⁹ See for example PRO MH 12/746, William Reeve of Outwell's letter to the PLB, 24 January 1852 which complains of the costs caused by the departure of Samuel Collings to America which had caused his wife and children to seek poor relief. Reeve notes that 'we have several cases where the man has absconded'.

⁴⁰ PRO MH 12/8395, Roydon list, 25 April 1839.

⁴¹ The payment by parishes of deserted wives' passages might have been part of the traditional behaviour of the parish. The parish of Cranbrook (Kent) advanced fifty pounds to pay for the emigration of Benjamin Cotton's wife and seven children to go to America in 1828. In a calculation similar to that made by Eydon vestry, concerning the proposed emigration of the Willoughbys, the parish estimated that the Cottons would cost the parish thirty pounds a year 'at the very least'. See Elizabeth Melling (ed.), *Kentish Sources: IV The Poor* (Maidstone, 1964), p. 177. How many parishes unofficially assisted deserted wives to emigrate is impossible to assess. In the context of this chapter the clash of priorities between parish and PLC/B is the main area of focus.

PLC restrictions on the issue of family reunions undoubtedly influenced the characteristics of poor law emigration. Table 4.15 showed that one parent families were rare in the three county sample and furthermore that the number of female-headed and male-headed one parent families was roughly the same. This contrasts with the two to one ratio of female-headed one parent families to male-headed one parent families that was present in the wider emigrating population. The PLC restricted the options available to the poor and to the parish by withholding official sanction from one type of emigration .

In the case of a woman, Sarah Mays, of somewhat questionable virtue who wanted to leave the parish of Holt (Norfolk) the PLC appear to have been supportive of her emigration. This woman had never married, yet she was the mother of four children by two different men. Both fathers were living in Canada. One father of two of Mays' children had written to her from about ten miles north of Toronto off Young [sic] Street. He was prepared to receive Mays and her children. He offered to send some money and instructed Mays to contact his father who would also make a contribution. He offered detailed advice about the journey to Toronto and hinted at a new-found prosperity by expressing a hope that he would have a farm in the summer, hence an instruction to Sarah to bring out '2 or 3 pounds of fresh turnip seed'.⁴² Such a letter expressing a wish to be reunited with his children and future wife might have seemed convincing evidence that Mays and her brood would be well provided for in Canada. This was not sufficient for the PLC who wanted to be sure that the father of two of the children would take care of the two children which he had not fathered.⁴³ On learning that the father would look after all of the children, the PLC were happy to support the

⁴² PRO MH 12/8296, copy of letter Joshua Moore to Sarah Mays, 23 January 1843, enclosed in correspondence from Erpingham Union to PLC, 4 April 1844.

⁴³ *ibid.*, PLC to Erpingham Union, 18 April 1844.

emigration.⁴⁴ This case reveals one dimension of the PLC's supervision of parochial emigration; a concern for the fate of the emigrants and a wish that future scandals would not ensue from assisted emigration. Yet in terms of fulfilling the rules which prevented the Willoughby's from emigrating, this case suggests that consistency was not a feature of PLC supervision.

An interesting variation on the question of deserted wives is the question of deserted children. The parish of Marsham (Norfolk) proposed to emigrate six children of William Shreeve. Shreeve had emigrated at his own expense the previous year but had written to the parish to say that he was prepared to receive the children. The PLB expressed hesitancy about supporting the emigration of the children, stating that family reunions were generally opposed. However the PLB found a way of justifying this emigration by noting that two of the children were in their twenties. A note of compassion was expressed as the PLB stated that it was not desirable to separate members of families.⁴⁵

A different reason for the separation of husbands from wives was viewed more sympathetically by the PLC: transportation of their husbands in convict ships to Australia. Women who had been left by husbands who paid for their own passages to the New World were penalised by the PLC. Women whose husbands had committed crimes were viewed as suitable recipients for parish largesse. In providing an explanation for this apparently bizarre contradiction of values we can only make some tentative suggestions. The premeditated quality of husbands deserting wives in the expectation that someone else might pay for the emigration of their wives and children was not something which the PLC wanted to encourage. Forced emigration (no matter the element of free will involved in committing a

⁴⁴ *ibid*, Erpingham Union to PLC, 7 May 1844.

⁴⁵ PRO MH 12/8191, PLB to Aylsham Union, 12 April 1848.

crime) was viewed as something for which the convict's family should not be penalised. It seems strange that convicts' families were rewarded and separated families were not. Somehow transportation came to be seen as an undue punishment on the families of the convict. Perhaps the local poor law authorities had some impact in changing central perceptions of transportation. Much attention has been centred on the implications for Australia of convictism, however we may suggest that there were also domestic considerations involved in the ending of 'an unclean thing', as Molesworth and his supporters characterised transportation to Australia. Ampthill Union drew the attention of the PLC to the problem of convicts' wives receiving short shrift from the poor law and wondered whether they could be classified in the same category as widows.⁴⁶ In response to this and other expressions of concern the PLC investigated the extent of the problem of convicts' wives in England, sending out a questionnaire to Poor Law Unions in spring 1846. The PLC stressed that this investigation did not constitute a guarantee of assistance.⁴⁷ However throughout the late 1840s and 1850s some convicts' wives were assisted to join their husbands in Australia. The Australian authorities were prepared to pay half the cost of passage out as long as the wife and family could provide the cost of the outfit and the other half of the emigrant passage.⁴⁸ A prime source for extra money in such cases was the parish.⁴⁹

The question of transported women introduces a second central agency with which the parishes and unions had to work, colonial agencies. Their priorities sometimes converged

⁴⁶ PRO MH 12/2, Ampthill to PLC, 12 May 1842.

⁴⁷ B.C.R.O. PUBC 2/5/1, PLC to Bedford Union, 21 May 1846.

⁴⁸ B.C.R.O. PUBC 2/6/1, CLEO to Bedford Union, 22 January 1852.

⁴⁹ As with most questions connected with assisted passages, colonial finances determined the extent of the policy. In November 1846 the CLEO informed Bedford Union that there were no funds available to pay for the emigration of convicts' wives to New South Wales, B.C.R.O. PUBC 2/5/2, CLEO to Bedford Union, 5 November 1846.

with those of the PLC, as in the case of the assisted emigration of convicts' wives. For the Australians, convicts' wives provided one way of counteracting the imbalance of the sexes that was believed to be a prime underlying cause of the social problems of vice and immorality which middle class Australians felt themselves besieged. Through the Colonial Land and Emigration Office colonial requirements were fulfilled. However, as we saw with Abner Brown of Pytchley, the colonial requirements did not always intersect with those of parish officers. Colonial emigration agencies were prepared to use networks of parish officers and unions to provide them with potential emigrants, although they retained a right of veto if the proposed emigrants did not meet the required quality.⁵⁰

This right of veto could sometimes offset the efforts of the parish. A Bedfordshire parish attempted to assist a family to leave for the Cape and mistakenly thought that the submission of a list of emigrants conferred upon them the right of a free passage for their poor. However when it became apparent that the ages of the emigrating family had been falsified the Colonial Land and Emigration Commission withdrew the tentative support they had given for the proposed emigration. This left the parish high and dry with less than happy poor inhabitants deprived of the chance to leave for the Cape.⁵¹ As we have seen with Brown's conduct of emigration from Pytchley, the rules for assisted emigrants were sometimes stretched, but a number of potential emigrations from rural England were stopped because the emigrants did not meet the approved qualities set out by the receiving countries.

⁵⁰ In early 1848 the CLEO sent representatives to an emigration meeting of the Bedford Union to provide information, B.C.R.O. PUBC 2/5/2, CLEO to Bedford Union, 13 January 1848.

⁵¹ B.C.R.O. PUBC 2/5/2, CLEO to Bedford Union, 30 March 1848. The ages of the children of the Arnold family had been given as: 13, 10, 8, 5 and 2. The CLEO found that the ages were actually 12, 9, 7, 4 and 2. Four children under ten disqualified the family from a chance of a free passage.

For the parish officers, attempting to arrange the emigration of their poor people, PLC and CLEO requirements could be extremely frustrating. Norfolk parishes despaired of the delays which the PLC caused by tardily returning their emigration forms. Great Ryburgh's parish officer wrote a 'hurry-up letter', claiming 'the money, the ship, the people are all ready and we are waiting for the power [to borrow money]'.⁵² The PLC's regulation of assisted emigration did, however, have positive effects.

The PLC provided information and advice to parishes about emigration. From 1834-6 J.D. Pinnock was a point of contact between parish officers, the colonial office and emigration agents. The PLC's commitment to the provision of information about assisted emigration is brought into question by Pinnock's constant complaints of insufficient funding. Pinnock chartered boats for parishes who wanted to emigrate large parties of emigrants. Most parishes did not want to take responsibility for specially chartering a ship. For these parishes Pinnock provided information about destinations and fares. Pinnock's letter books are testimony to the number of parishes which sought advice from him. His advice was highly standardised, providing little more than information about the cost of emigrant passages, however he provided a useful initial contact for parish officers. After Pinnock's resignation in 1836 no one replaced him, as a named point of contact.⁵³ Advice however was provided by the PLC in reply to parishes that made preliminary inquiries about emigration. The advice showed some knowledge about the nature of the emigrant trade, including suggestions about the best seasons for travel to particular destinations.

The PLC helped to coordinate the recruiting drives of colonial emigration agents, by

⁵² PRO MH 12/8596, Great Ryburgh to PLC, n.d. (1836). See also PRO MH 12/8249, North Creake to PLC, n.d. (1836), 'the ship is waiting; not a moment to be lost'.

⁵³ PRO CO 385/9 and 10, J.D. Pinnock's letterbooks, 1834-6.

directing them to areas where 'surplus labourers' and supportive local officials could be found. It responded to the requests from Stradbroke and Kay to provide a government ship to provide passages for surplus labourers to go to Australia in 1837, though ultimately this enterprise was unsuccessful.

Information was not the only service which the PLC provided. It offered a regulatory structure which served to prevent abuses in assisted emigration from being carried out. We have seen how the PLC investigated the reception which the step-children of a common-law father would receive. It enquired as to the probity of a Norfolk parish assisting two aged people to emigrate to Canada. It suggested that certain emigrations to Canada should wait until the next spring, rather than be effected in the late summer as some parishes proposed. The PLC did not encourage parishes to coerce poor people to leave. On occasions it served to remind parishes that assisted emigration could only be carried out if poor people wanted to leave. The PLC offered the parishes a sound mechanism for dealing with emigration agents. Emigrations could only be sanctioned by the PLC if signed contracts between parish and shipping agent were placed with and approved by the PLC. The shipping agent reported back to the PLC about the success or failure of the emigration. Only after receipt of a successful report was the parish obliged to make a second payment to the emigration agent. By this mechanism parishes avoided being cheated by unscrupulous shipping agents.

The effectiveness of correspondence between shipping agents and PLC and parish in ensuring that assisted emigration was carried out successfully is difficult to assess. The words of the shipping agent and the quick settling of emigration bills are the only signs we have of satisfaction about the emigratory process. From an administrative angle, assisted emigration appears to have been carried out with a level of care that was in part the product of parish wishes and centrally prescribed rules. Of course the best rules, and even the best intentions, could not legislate for every eventuality. Before the PLC supervised assisted emigration, the

parish of Deddington (Oxfordshire) assisted fifty people to emigrate to New York in 1832. The passage on the Brutus was poor and the majority of the emigrants died of cholera before reaching their destination.⁵⁴ Thirteen years later the Bedfordshire parishes of Colnworth, Great Barford and Bolnhurst sent parties of emigrants on the Cataraque bound for Port Phillip. The emigrants never arrived; the ship was lost at sea.⁵⁵

This chapter has considered the influence of PLC supervision on the impact of assisted emigration carried out under its sanction. The episodic nature of the reporting of the process makes a complete assessment of the process rather difficult. However the interaction between centre and locality at moments of tension and negotiation reveal interesting aspects of different priorities on the question of emigration. The role of the parish again appears to reveal a direct relationship between parish officers and their parishioners. Parish officers were not abstracting off 'surplus labourers'; they were assisting individuals to emigrate. This is shown by the details that the parish officers provided for the PLC and the determination that the parishes displayed in attempting to gain acceptance for their poor. If the poor expressed a wish to leave, and the parish supported that wish, the emigrators appear to have been prepared to meet the wishes of the poor, no matter the particular rules and regulations that the PLC put down. In some cases we have seen that the whims of the poor exercised more direct influence on the parish officers than the regulations of the PLC.

A close study of the interaction between one branch of officialdom and another will always reveal some inconsistencies and some frustrations and what seem like examples of bureaucratic pettiness. The rigour of new rules and standardised procedures was a new discipline for the parish officers of rural England to learn. Essentially they appear to have

⁵⁴ Eastwood, Governing Rural England, p. 179.

⁵⁵ PRO MH 12/25, emigrant lists, 1845.

learnt the lesson well. For every interesting episode of confusion and disagreement between centre and locality there were many emigrations that were processed in a routine matter of fact way. All we know of these emigrations is provided in the standard blue forms held in MH 12 files and filled in by the parish officers. The potential complications and the decisions that went on in the 'uneventful' emigrations can only be suggested by the breakdowns in communication on which we have concentrated.

The character of PLC supervision indicates both strength and weakness. The sharpness of the clerks in Somerset House at spotting irregularities is impressive and the ultimate recourse of not sanctioning emigration was on occasions used. Occasionally there were lapses and inconsistencies but that was inevitable. The interventions of the PLC indicate that parishes' freedoms to do whatever they wanted had partly disappeared under the New Poor Law. On an unofficial level parishes, if they could get away with it, still had some freedom of policy options, especially if they had spare money to spend.

A recurrent theme of local studies of the New Poor Law is the emphasis on the difference between central directives and local practice. We can see this in the operation of the emigration clause. We can also see how colonial circumstances undercut and influenced the shaping of selection criteria of emigrants. At the same time we can also see how central directives shaped the character of the migratory process, and in part, as with other interactive processes between centre and locality, educated local bureaucracy in the ways of modern bureaucracy. The limits of central power are evidenced by emigrations that slipped through the net of the clerks' gaze; of emigrants that left for British colonies in name only; of deserted wives paid to emigrate to reunite with their husbands; of emigrants who left with too generous an allocation of parish funds; of emigrations paid solely out of proceeds from the sale of parish property. Furthermore we are left with the question, what could the PLC do about supervising assisted emigration. In practice the answer is very little. The PLC could only set

down outline procedures and processes for emigrating authorities to adopt. If its procedures and principles were not adopted it could attempt to rectify the situation by providing advice and withholding its sanction. However with continued flexibility at the parish level, and the availability of alternative sources of finance for emigration, notably private subscription, the PLC could not control all assisted emigration. In effect the PLC only controlled emigrations that it sanctioned. PLC emigrations were listed in annual Poor Law Reports. As we saw with Astwell and Falcott, emigrations that parishes undertook as formal poor law emigrations could end up as parish emigrations. The PLC could absolve itself of all responsibility for such emigrations; however lack of PLC recognition did not prevent the emigration from taking place.

Even for unofficial poor law emigrations, the advice and the model of PLC regulations shaped the behaviour of the parishes. (Astwell and Falcott thought that they were undertaking poor law emigration.) The PLC established standards and codes of conduct for parishes, to protect the parish and the emigrant. The rules did not always work, and sanctions applied by the PLC were limited. The process, as a consequence of the introduction of a supervisory agency, was not always easy (especially if rules were broken and meetings had to be held again and forms resubmitted) for the parish officers. Poor law emigration appears to have been conducted in a sound and secure way. The scandals which plague the subject's history appear to have been avoided. This is not to suggest that all poor law emigrants were successful or that all English parishes carried out emigration in a sensible way, rather to place poor law emigration within a wider context, that perhaps does some credit to parish officers and central supervision. The policy was unambitious and highly localised. Through the combined workings of centre and locality, through the interaction of ancient local government and new bureaucracy, individuals' lives were transformed.

CHAPTER IX: CONCLUSION

British emigration history is an underdeveloped area of historical research. The limitations of the available sources, in part, explain the limited amount of attention which has been paid to the subject. This thesis has taken one small aspect of British emigration to show the value which emigration material possesses to help us to make sense of the past. Some historians tend to think in terms of narratives and in the completion of a story. In that framework, emigration studied alone is only one part of the narrative. Emigration is usually coupled with a destination. The process of emigration is usually only a prelude to the broader question of immigration and assimilation. The focus of this study ends when emigrants leave their parish, presenting the act of departure as the final act, not the start of a new life. This study has addressed the circumstances which led to that act, not its consequences. In so doing, this thesis has consciously used emigration as an entry point for the exploration of English history. In terms of recreating the life-stories of the emigrants, this study has been deliberately limited; but in terms of using assisted emigration as a wedge to approach other questions, this has been an ambitious work.

A central part of this project has been the attempt to combine a number of historiographical traditions: emigration history, social history, imperial history and political history. The result of such an enterprise is to expose tensions between different traditions. A central tension exists between two different ways of viewing emigration. In a way, these different approaches revolve around the old dichotomy of 'push' and 'pull' reasons. The standard account of pauper emigration, placed within a British context, places considerable emphasis upon the 'push' factors, of the New Poor Law with its harsh workhouse test, of chronic underemployment and of low wages and a loss of common rights. Out of desperation and disappointment, the poor left for an uncertain future in foreign lands, deprived of their birthright. This is the exile motif which is associated with Irish emigration; a sense of

expulsion, not just choice.¹ However, there is an alternative reading of emigration which Fender has claimed to be the 'dominant discourse' of emigration to the United States. This could be called the 'pull' interpretation which presents emigration in terms of hopes and opportunities.²

As with all simple dichotomies, 'push' and 'pull' are not as separate as they might first appear. The tendency of emigrants to resort to a satire of the old world in their letters, to justify and make sense of their life in the New World, suggests the close interplay between 'push' and 'pull'. In emigrant accounts the New World is associated with abundance; the old with scarcity. Another split refers to the civilisation of the old world which contrasts with the natural beauty and opportunity of the New.³ In assessing emigratory movements the historian seeks to balance the 'melancholy hue' of people leaving the land of their birth with opportunities which were available for the emigrant in their adopted country. Different historiographical traditions place different emphases on the departure of people.

Within a British context, emigration has long been associated with hardship. We need look no further than the Irish famine or the Highland Clearances for a connection between emigration and social dislocation. Even Chambers and Mingay, historians often accused of being apologists for landlords and progressive agriculture, note the emigration of farmers in the early nineteenth century as an indicator of hard times.⁴ Subconsciously, the poor

¹ See Miller, Emigrants and Exiles. For an overview which shares this perspective see Handlin, The Uprooted.

² Fender, Sea Changes, p. 9. John Bodnar, The Transplanted: A History of Immigrants in Urban America (Bloomington, 1985) offers a forceful overview of the 'pull' position.

³ Fender, Sea Changes, pp. 71-5.

⁴ Chambers and Mingay, Agricultural Revolution, pp. 128-9. Another rural historian to include emigration as a symptom of depression is Horn, The Rural World, p. 75.

collection of emigration data by the expanding British state shows a process of denial. In an increasingly statistical age emigration remained a process left uncounted and largely unacknowledged. Emigration marked a clear vote of no confidence in the available economic opportunities in an age named 'the age of improvement'. Our understanding of that term and of that period is tempered by the knowledge that progress was achieved in part because four million souls left the country in the course of the nineteenth century.

Domestic concerns, however, are only one part of the subject. Departure is always a sad event. Arrival in a new world conjures up visions of excitement and opportunity, of an expanding individualistic economy rich in opportunities for people capable of earning a living, freed of the class structures and restrictions of tradition. Emigration is in part a reflection of the increased mobility of labourers to take advantage of the opportunities of a global economy. Emigration is not just a response to hardship, it is an expression of freedom and choice. The frustrations for the emigration historian are that the movement of people was largely unrecorded. The poor recording was partly a result of official neglect; but it is also symbolic of something more powerful, of a freeing from old world constraints and regulations by the emigrant.

This thesis has concentrated on a small subset of the English emigratory flow; a subset whose departure was remarkably well recorded. The detailed records of poor law emigrations have provided rich perspectives on the emigratory process. The emigrants have been located in their parish of origin and their preparations for the long voyage have been traced. The time-consuming nature of planning emigration has been revealed in all its petty details: of collecting estimates for emigrant outfits, of gaining information on internal transport, of the difficulties for country folk having to negotiate a capital city which they might never have visited before, of buying emigrant outfits and negotiating passage costs. The material culture of emigration has been displayed in precise detail, down to the purchase of soap, needles and

thread and flannel petticoats! Emigration was not a simple action; it was an action which required detailed preparations. If the poorest emigrants to leave England had to be equipped with a range of materials for their departure and had to arrange for the settling of old debts, and the sale of their possessions, we can only speculate as to what additional preparations unassisted emigrants might have made.

The attention paid to the details of poor law emigration helps to define emigration as a process; not a sudden impulsive departure. Aspects of the decisions taken by the poor suggest the fragility of the decision to emigrate, of the influence of sudden changes of mind, ill health and alternative job opportunities. The changes of one emigrant list to the next show the way people changed their minds about emigrating and how others took hold of emigratory opportunities at very short notice. The delicate nature of the emigratory decision is often stressed, hence the difficulty of finding clear macro-economic determinants of emigration. However, this thesis has offered rare examples of how in some parishes people rushed to leave at the last minute and how others declined to go at the last minute. What PRO MH 12 has offered is a rare insight into the dynamics of decision-making. Again, as with the question of the preparations necessary for emigration, if these issues are raised for the assisted emigrants we can only guess the delicate nature of the decision amongst those with some money.

One of the strengths of this thesis is the opportunity which it presents for the consideration of the process of emigration. It is asserted that similar processes were undertaken by unassisted emigrants, as assisted emigrants. We have been able to observe how news from abroad and the news of friends and neighbours influenced the emigration of people within local communities. From this small study aspects of the emigratory process have been investigated in greater depth than is usual.

In describing emigration as a process we have attempted to draw out some of the

broader themes in the study of emigration: the elusive nature of the decision-making process and the practical difficulties of transporting friends and families from one continent to another. Poor law emigration, by virtue of the substantial documentary record, has been ideally suited for that purpose.

By emphasising the connections between poor law emigration and unassisted emigration, a contribution has been made to the understanding of nineteenth-century emigration. However, by stressing the comparability of poor law emigration with unassisted emigration, the version of poor law emigration presented has challenging implications. By emphasising the strategies of the poor, and the demographic quality of the poor emigrants, the emigrants assisted to leave are described as autonomous individuals who had some access to information. They were not propelled from their homes but made an active choice to leave. Indeed, they displayed ingenuity in the ways that they attempted to access funds to finance their emigration. This version of poor law emigration confirms, and adds additional detail and depth to Robin Haines' depiction of assisted emigrants as 'shrewd manipulators' of relief systems. Furthermore the process of interaction between rich and poor provides additional detail in a different context to the growing interest in the strategies of the poor. Movement has always been deemed a legitimate strategy. The manipulation of relief systems to accomplish that aim, or to perpetuate separation from home-town, has a long history.⁵

The argument that poor law emigrants chose to leave is borne out by the evidence. Vestry meetings were called as the result of poor people drawing the attention of an overseer or local worthy to their wish to leave. The nature of assisted emigration, with the exception of the Norfolk 'emigration fever', was not comparable in scale or extent with the Highland Clearances. From most parishes the numbers of people assisted to leave was small. In demographic and relief terms the number assisted to leave, officially, was almost

⁵ See Taylor, 'A Different Kind of Speenhamland'.

inconsequential. Assisted emigration was the act of one or two families, or a few single men being assisted to leave the parish. It was not a wholesale expulsion of large numbers of paupers. Those who gained assistance from the parish in the case of Australian bound emigrants, who dominate the later period of poor law emigration, would have also had to comply with the recruitment requirements of Australian emigrant recruiters who were subsidising their expenses.

To describe emigration as an act of will on the part of the poor rescues them from the passivity with which the phrase 'shovelling out paupers' brands them. The details of this thesis present poor emigrants as anything but passive. Arguing that poor people chose to emigrate does not eliminate the 'push' argument. There is strong evidence to suggest that agricultural labourers were suffering considerable distress and deprivation during the period. The departure of labourers, normally noted as being reluctant to leave their neighbourhood, required exceptional circumstances of considerable expulsive force. In Norfolk, the New Poor Law undoubtedly presented the poor with some stark choices. The workhouse test was a severe change for the Norfolk poor who had received wage subsidies on a regular basis as seasonal employment patterns had become clearer and alternative forms of employment had declined. For the Norfolk poor the move to the new union workhouse represented a migration of its own. Parish relief was theoretically ended for the able-bodied male. Parish property in the form of the old parish poor house was sold off and used to pay for the new distant workhouse about which stories of terror were told. Some money raised by the sale of parish property was used by some parishes to pay for the emigration of their poor, symbolising the connection between assisted emigration and the ending of traditional forms of poor relief.

The choice for the rural poor might have appeared between the lesser of two evils; emigration or the workhouse. That 'shrewd operators' and not 'indigent misfits' took

advantage of the opportunity to emigrate does not lessen the damning admission that agricultural labourers had to resort to an uncertain future thousands of miles away rather than stay in the land of their birth. If anything, the failure of rural society to provide for its 'good labourers' appears even worse. The use of emigration as a social policy, and its vigorous adoption in areas of Norfolk suggests that in one county at least, and the same could be said of Suffolk, Kent and Sussex, 'surplus labour' could not be spirited away by tougher poor relief policies. The poor law reformers had misinterpreted the signs and produced a message, which for the emigrating poor was all too clear. They were redundant and should seek a life elsewhere.

The 'push' factor in poor law emigration is all too clear and painful. However, there was a powerful pull which is easy to ignore. Emigration offered the agricultural labourer opportunities which they did not have in their homeland. Their manipulation of relief systems to gain assistance, their development of friendship and kinship networks to realise their aim, their response to information and news of far off lands, their scratched petitions pleading for assistance, all point to a wish to emigrate. Their wish to emigrate, though shaped by fears of the workhouse and genuine economic hardship and uncertainty also contained hope and a visualisation of a better future, of a life in which they could eat meat three times a day, seven days a week, hunt and fish and shoot whatever and whenever they liked.

This language of emigration and opportunity was seized by those who paid for their poor to leave. The emigrators collected and published accounts from their emigrants and used them as propaganda. The creation of propaganda out of emigrant letters perhaps contains an admission that there was something unconvincing about emigration as a social policy, that justifications of assisted emigration contained an element of self-delusion and special pleading amongst those that sponsored it. One could argue that if they had paid their labourers a 'decent' share of their profits it would not have been necessary to assist them to emigrate.

Assisted emigration was a palliative to smooth the introduction of the New Poor Law, described by Ursula Henriques as, 'part of a body of class legislation based on selfishness and class interest'.⁶ The limited use made of the policy, notably in Norfolk once immediate fears of dislocation had subsided, suggests that the policy was operated to serve the needs and wishes of authority. The painful petitions of the Norfolk poor for assistance to emigrate in 1837 are testimony to how quickly the 'safety valve' was closed.

The underlying economic and social context shaped the adoption of assisted emigration. Without economic hardship and a 'surplus labour' problem the solution would not have been attempted. If we return to assisted emigration as a process, the practical operation of the policy, which furnishes such rich detail on pauper emigrant demography, decision-making and emigrant preparations, does present interesting perspectives on the employing class. For those that paid for it, assisted emigration was not just a process of expelling unwanted labourers. The care and diligence with which Abner Brown completed his arrangements on behalf of his emigrants suggests a level of involvement and interest in the emigrants as something more than just surplus labourers, but as fellow humans. In its practical operation assisted emigration appears more benign and developed than it might first appear. Undoubtedly, for some emigrators, and especially those who took the trouble to make additional queries of the PLC or kept careful records, assisted emigration was a benevolent act.

This thesis has attempted to use assisted emigration as a tool to explore the operation of local government, the clashes between centre and locality and social relations. These are key issues for our understanding of nineteenth-century society. What light poor law emigration sheds on them is explored in the relevant chapters. The key object of the thesis

⁶ Ursula Henriques, 'How Cruel Was the Victorian Poor Law?', *Historical Journal*, 11 (1968), 365-71, (p. 371).

has been to try to make sense of poor law emigration. The stance adopted has been sanguine, attempting to draw a bridge between the deep tensions of the subject, between ‘push’ and ‘pull’. There is no easy resolution. If anything, deeper research further develops the ambiguities of the subject. This thesis marks one attempt to try to make sense of what English emigration represents within a British context.

Viewed from a twentieth-century perspective assisted emigration does appear brutal and harsh. Sadler’s emotional critique appears to contain essential truths. Horton’s ‘preparations to show’ display the casuistry of a minor ‘meddling pretender in political economy’. The way we remember both Horton and Sadler speaks volumes for our understanding of assisted emigration. Both men claimed to support the betterment of the common man. Yet Sadler’s life is commemorated by a statue built in Leeds, paid for by the subscriptions of his former constituents. Horton, if remembered at all, is known as the man jointly responsible for the destruction of Byron’s memoirs.

Whether this is a fair way to remember a minor politician is open to question. But remembrance and memory are not about fairness. Myths are neither fair nor forgiving. M.K Ashby wrote of the emigrations from Tysoe in the late nineteenth century. He depicted a great community effort to facilitate the departure of the emigrants. Despite one man changing his mind and returning from Southampton pushing his ‘painfully gathered outfit on a wheelbarrow’ the emigrations continued.

The men and boys who left tended to be the more forceful and bright characters, the darlings of the families. For the village to say goodbye to ten, twenty, thirty good fellows seemed a calamity. It “would never be the same again”. Looking back over the years it could be seen that emigration had taken several of the ablest families. Maybe Tysoe has indeed never recovered.⁷

The sense of loss in the few lines above is painful. This is the popular memory of emigration

⁷ Ashby, *Joseph Ashby*, p. 89.

in a small community not unlike many of the parishes whose poor people were assisted to leave.

'Memory believes before knowing remembers'. (William Faulkner, Light in August).

SELECT BIBLIOGRAPHY

A. MANUSCRIPT SOURCES

Note on Manuscript sources. The main source for this thesis has been PRO MH12. This source has provided the demographic data and the bulk of the correspondence material. The list of MH 12 documents only refers to documents which provided demographic data or examples cited in the text. Parish records have only been cited when they help to illuminate the wider process. Often they replicate the material available in MH 12, and survival and access to parish sources is more erratic. The listing below of parish sources is by no means a comprehensive record of all parish sources concerning assisted emigration. It is a list of parish records cited in the text. Most of the parish sources cited are for the old poor law era, for which no central records exist.

1. PUBLIC RECORD OFFICE

Colonial Office Papers

PRO CO 385/9 and 10: J.D. Pinnock's Letterbooks, 1835-6.

PRO CO 384/41: Colonial Office North American and Australian Emigration Correspondence, 1836.

PRO MH12 series, correspondence between poor law unions and PLC

Bedfordshire:

Amphill Union: MH 12/1 (1834-7); MH 12/2 (1837-42); MH 12/3 (1843-46); MH 12/4 (1847-50).

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Biggleswade Union: MH 12/58 (1847-50); MH 12/59 (1851-5).

Leighton Buzzard Union: MH 12/79 (1843-7); MH 12/80 (1848-53).

Woburn Union: MH 12/126 (1834-42); MH 12/127 (1843-49); MH 12/128 (1850-55).

Cambridgeshire:

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Huntingdonshire:

St. Neots Union: MH 12/4766 (1848-51); MH 12/4767 (1852-5).

Leicestershire:

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Oxfordshire:

Banbury Union: MH 12/9584 (1850-1).

Norfolk:

Aylsham Union: MH 12/8185 (1834-6); MH 12/8186 (1837-8); MH 12/8190 (1846); MH 12/8191 (1847-8); MH 12/8192 (1849-50).

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Depwade Union: MH 12/8224 (1834-6); MH 12/8225 (1837-8); MH 12/8228 (1843-4); MH 12/8229 (1845-6); MH 12/8231 (1849-50); MH 12/8232 (1851-2); MH 12/8233 (1853-5).

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Erpingham Union: MH 12/8293 (1834-7); MH 12/8294 (1837-8); MH 12/8296 (1843-5); MH 12/8297 (1846-7); MH 12/8298 (1848-9); MH 12/8299 (1850-2).

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Forehoe Union: MH 12/8356 (1834-7); MH 12/8359 (1847-51); MH 12/8360 (1852-5).

Freebridge Lynn: MH 12/8375 (1834-7); MH 12/8379 (1852-5).

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Kings Lynn Union: MH 12/8430 (1839-42); MH 12/8432 (1849-52).

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Smallburgh Union: MH 12/8578 (1835-8); MH 12/8581 (1848-53).

Walsingham Union: MH 12/8596 (1834-6); MH 12/8597 (1837-9); MH 12/8599 (1843-6); MH 12/8600 (1847-50).

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Northamptonshire:

Brackley Union: MH 12/8672 (1840-2); MH 12/8673 (1843-6); MH 12/8674 (1847-50); MH 12/8675 (1851-4); MH 12/8676 (1855-58).

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