

North South Divide of the Poor
in the
Staffordshire Potteries 1871-1901

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by

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Abstract

Under the 1834 New Poor Law Act, three parishes, Stoke, Burslem, and Wolstanton, became two unions: Stoke Poor Law Union, consisting of the towns of Hanley, Stoke, Fenton and Longton, and Wolstanton and Burslem Union, consisting of the parishes of Wolstanton and Burslem. Wolstanton and Burslem Union workhouse was situated to the north of the city at Chell, and Stoke to the south, bordering the town of Newcastle-under-Lyme. Both workhouses lay within the industrial area known as the Staffordshire Potteries. However, at its broadest extent the aim of this thesis is to establish if two Poor Law Unions covering one industrial area (the Staffordshire Potteries) with similar socio-economic characteristics treated their poor identically or differently and if so, what influences, either internal or external can be attributed as the cause.

This wide-ranging study covers various aspects of the experiential dynamics of welfare – vagrancy, the treatment of children and the elderly, religion, and health – none of which have received any detailed coverage in secondary literature relative to the North Midlands. With the aid of Local Government Board (LGB) correspondence and press reports, this thesis endeavours to investigate the authority of the LGB and their *Circulars* both locally and regionally. It asks how far, and with what variations two contiguous workhouses only six miles apart governed themselves within the framework set by the LGB and its directives. The study focuses on the policy adopted by the LGB considering the *Crusade* against outdoor relief, and will attempt to determine if this was stringently applied or otherwise.

For a period from the inception of the LGB in 1871-1901 when workhouses became almost a refuge for the elderly and infirm – thinly covered by the burgeoning historiography of the New Poor Law, this case study will afford a detailed insight into the nature of pauper life-cycle experiences on relief whilst also considering the factors driving (and differentiating) the complexities of official practice.

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To my wife

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For her continued patience whilst at study

Abbreviations

BCL.	Birmingham Central Library
COS.	Charity Organisation Society
HA.	Hanley Archives, Stoke-on-Trent
LGB.	Local Government Board
LRO.	Leicester Record Office
PLB.	Poor Law Board
PLC.	Poor Law Commission
PP.	Parliamentary Papers
SA.	Staffordshire Advertiser
SS.	Staffordshire Sentinel
Stoke	Stoke-upon-Trent Poor Law Union (known locally as the 'Spittals')
TNA.	The National Archives, Kew
Wolstanton	Wolstanton and Burslem Poor Law Union (known locally as Chell)

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Chapter 1 - Contextual Review

Introduction

The aim of this thesis is to explore the region of the West Midlands over a period which has been much neglected in the study of the poor law. There is one main consideration of investigation - was the Local Government Board successful in creating a relatively uniform practice of administration at union level or, it was possible under their governance for two contiguous unions to exhibit radically different policies and radically different pauper experiences. Such diversities were expected under the Old Poor Law where parishes were masters of their own administration but this is an area that has remained under investigated in the New Poor Law and even less at the latter end of the nineteenth century.

If we are to explore this broad aim with a comprehensive study there are three main thematic drivers: firstly, meaning and intent of the New Poor Law; secondly, life-cycle experiences of poor law relief; and thirdly the nature of local autonomy under the New Poor Law. The first thematic driver of meaning and intent is fundamental to this study as it pays attention to the nature of administration, workhouse life and the understanding of outdoor relief, particularly in the context of the Victorian *Crusade* against that form of relief. The second is life-cycle which questions and contextualises the identity of individual groups found within the workhouse - vagrants, religious; children, the physically sick; the mentally ill and how the elderly experienced institutional life.¹ Finally the third thematic drivers link these two to evaluate how the policy and directives of the LGB were devolved through the administration of local guardians throughout each life-cycle experience and if they varied between local interpretation and that of national implementation, areas that will be examined throughout this study.

¹ Although vagrancy is not in the same context as a life-style as others, it is nevertheless an important area of study because of the numbers that dominate nationally the discussions on the number of paupers and secondly this has been chosen as it is considered by the vagrants as a life-style choice of the way they lived their lives and therefore as such justified its inclusion.

Sentiment and Meaning

There are three important aspects of sentiment and meaning that informs this thesis; the nature of administration which incorporates perception, authority, policies, finance and staffing; the experiences of poor law welfare and the understanding of the importance of outdoor relief, its criteria's and beneficiaries and particularly in the context of the Victorian *Crusade*.

Margaret Crowther's *The Workhouse System*² is based upon a national study which focuses on the diversities of relief practice which identifies the first aspect.³ Her main argument was that of perception in that the workhouse system was designed to represent a national structure of confinement whereby groups of people were isolated from the wider society. It was this belief of Crowther that the aim of the poor law was to be seen as a deterrent to potential paupers as the last possible place for relief and to the ratepayer concerned with finances.

Crowther argues that the *myth* of the *Bastille* as a description of the workhouse became in itself a deterrent to the poor as many perceived its worst features as a long-term home for the aged, the incurably ill and the friendless child all characterised by harsh and monotonous regimes, physical segregation of families and work discipline. It is these examples that define meaning and intent and how the interpretation of the Poor Law Act was applied, locally, regionally and nationally that this thesis seeks to establish and to what degree experiences were paupers exposed not only at the hands of central authority but also through those of guardians. Given the richness of Crowther's study on this subject, it ought to have been the foundation for a large series of detailed micro-studies relating to the nature of workhouse buildings, workhouse regimes and the experience of the institutional poor which is a second aspect of meaning and intent. Few such studies have emerged.

At the level of general surveys into workhouses, contributions by Felix Driver and

² M.A. Crowther, *The Workhouse System, 1834-1929: the History of an English Social Institution* (London, 1981).

³ *Ibid.*, p.4.

Bernard Harris stand out.⁴ Driver argues that ‘the history of the New Poor Law is in fact about power relations – the power found in texts, the power of institutional design, sometimes the power of community resistance, frequently the power of local change and, for the most part, the powerlessness of the paupers themselves.’⁵ It is in this context that Driver argues that the meaning of workhouse policy reflects an extension of two distinct sets of strategies: those of modern government and those of institutional care.

Driver’s complex analysis of the nature, chronology and meaning of workhouse building and amendments facilitates four observations help form the framework within the three thematic drivers of this study, meaning and intent in the areas of policy and building and how these related to the life-cycle of groups such as vagrants, lunacy and children. The first is that the question of workhouse building was in effect less about economics or underlying poverty problems and more about the nature of relationships with unions and between unions and the central authority. Secondly, Driver acknowledges the lack of power and authority of the central government. Guardians came to realise that workhouse buildings could be effective as a tool to invalidate the reach of the authorities by the design and layout of the workhouses at least in the early stages of the development of the material fabric of the New Poor Law. Thirdly, Driver observes that the workhouse building movement was highly uneven chronologically - much faster and more complete in the south and midlands than it was in the north, west and Wales. In fact, he suggests, later workhouses in the north and west rapidly came to have health care at their very core, something that informs the agenda for chapter six and fourthly Driver was an early observer of the importance of reconstructing workhouses lives, a theme to which we will return. He suggests that workhouses were being viewed as *Bastilles* in the same way as prisons or other institutions, an impression that became too indiscriminate to be able to serve any useful

⁴ F. Driver, *Power and Pauperism, the Workhouse System 1834-1884* (Cambridge, 1992); B. Harris, *The Origins of the British Welfare State in England and Wales, 1800-1945* (Basingstoke, 2005),

⁵ *Ibid.*, p.52.

purpose for contemporary policy makers. Indeed, he concludes that workhouses were ‘full of haunting images, traces of lives which officials tried to organise but so often failed to understand’. It is this theme that forms much of the underlying agenda for this thesis. Bernard Harris also takes up some of these issues referring to the opposition by local authorities to centralisation. As he points out, contemporaries in northern England regarded the construction of workhouses as an inappropriate and expensive solution to the problem of unemployment. This opposition was reinforced by working-class organisations who wanted to defend outdoor relief and prevent the incarceration of the poor in inhuman ‘*bastilles*’.⁶

A second aspect of meaning and intent of the New Poor Law that is central to this thesis is the question of the nature of workhouse life. Steve King has recently argued that to make sense of the debate we ought to focus on the lived experiences of paupers by re-constructing life-cycles of families over time that have frequently experienced periods of difficulties.⁷ In their micro-study of Lancashire, Gritt and Park emphasises the need for further studies to fill the gaps in our knowledge regarding the nature and characteristics of nineteenth-century populations when they discovered how varied they were over time and location.⁸ However, they conclude that their study of census returns alone did not provide sufficient data to determine if trends found in areas of occupations, gender, age groupings were due to demographic differences within a wider population, broad economic conditions, or local policy and felt that only a wider analysis of local records, as King suggests, would produce a definitive assessment of the region.

Micro-studies have addressed the question of pauper understanding of the workhouse. Revisionist work by Alannah Tomkins and Jane Humphries has suggested that workhouse

⁶ B. Harris, *The Origins of the British Welfare State: state and social welfare in England and Wales, 1800-1945* (Basingstoke, 2004). p.49.

⁷ S.A. King and G. Timmins, *Making Sense of the Industrial Revolution* (Manchester, 2001).

⁸ A. Gritt and P. Park, ‘The Workhouse Populations of Lancashire in 1881’, *Local Population Studies* (Vo.86, 2011). pp.37-65.

inmates, particularly children, reflected less negatively on workhouse life when they wrote autobiographical material than might be expected given the iconic role of this institution as a pillar of New Poor Law discipline.

These observations are significant for chapters three and five, suggesting that whatever guardians and central authorities intended, workhouses evolved over time to both the needs of the poor or the agendas of guardians in individual unions. The work of David Green in his interpretation of the administration of the parish poor set within the context of a regional study has changed perceptions of how the poor were treated.⁹ Most importantly Green refers to the modes of resistance that inmate paupers may have adopted ranging from riots, stealing clothes to minor acts of disobedience on a day-to-day basis. His micro-study study of London parishes is the first that attempted to explore the history of the poor law in the nineteenth-century in its geographic and administrative entirety. Green's study was also the first to test the 'significance of the transition' from the Old Poor Law to the New Poor Law referencing the sheer size of London's pauperism and the costs of its relief. Green noted that by 1834 parishes had already begun to move towards an emphasis on 'indoor' relief and the use of deterrents and disciplinary measures such as 'work tests' decades before the new Act.¹⁰

A further study by Jackson on Kent workhouses found the investigations into the workhouse populations had been neglected except for Leicester in 1881, again identifying the lack of micro-studies.¹¹ Nigel Goose's paper on Hertfordshire workhouses also addresses various thematic points including ageing and poverty, explaining in detail the importance of spatial conclusions and that the composition of workhouse populations could vary radically

⁹ D. Green, *Pauper Capital: London and the Poor Law 1790-1870* (London, 2010)

¹⁰ Green, *Pauper Capital*, p.14.

¹¹ D.G. Jackson, 'The Medway union workhouse, 1876-1881: a study based on the admission and discharge registers and census enumerators books', *Local Population Studies* (2005), vol.75, pp.11-32; S. Page, 'Pauperism and the Leicester workhouse in 1881', *Transactions of the Leicestershire Archaeological and Historical Society* (1989), vol.63, pp.85-95.

between places and the work undertaken. Hinde and Turnbull,¹² in their study of two Hampshire workhouses, demonstrate that the workhouse population was not simply a product of poverty or destitution, but grew because of much wider considerations, frequently because of policy decisions regarding how to relieve different categories of paupers. Goose, like Hinde and Turnbull suggests that variations in statistics between unions could be a product of policy differences and local economic disparities.¹³ King, on this issue of disparity argues for more research on the north and Midlands through ‘detailed contextualised analysis of both poverty and welfare structures’.¹⁴

The third aspect of the meaning and intent of the New Poor Law important for framing this chapter, and thesis, respects the nature and role of outdoor relief. This is one of the most debated areas of the New Poor Law. Historians have long understood that if the intent of the New Poor Law was to eliminate outdoor relief, then it was almost immediately a failure. This theme is explored in more depth in chapter three, but broadly we see a sharp fall in the costs of overall poor relief and the scale and relative importance of outdoor relief in the immediate aftermath of the New Poor Law. This situation was not to last.

With many northern, Welsh and midland unions failing to build new workhouses until well into the 1850s, outdoor relief remained a consistent component of welfare despite the ideals that it was to be abolished in some places throughout the early years of the New Poor Law. Others such as Brundage have suggested that poor relief costs fell not because of the introduction of workhouses or the restriction of outdoor allowances, but because of improving economic conditions.¹⁵ Crowther argues from a different perspective suggesting that it was the deterrent workhouse system that was set to undermine popular claims on public charity and that

¹² A. Hinde, F. Turnbull, ‘The Populations of two Hampshire Workhouses’, 1851-1861, *Local Population Studies* (1998).

¹³ N. Goose, ‘Workhouse Populations in the mid-nineteenth century: The case for Herefordshire’. *Local Population Studies* (1999), pp.52-69.

¹⁴ S.A. King, *Poverty and Welfare in England 1700-1850* (Manchester, 2000), p.268.

¹⁵ A. Brundage, *The English Poor Laws 1700-1930* (Basingstoke, 2002), p.96

the reduction in costs was as a result of outdoor relief.¹⁶ By the 1860s, there is evidence to suggest a changing sentiment to the outdoor poor and one that is important both as a framework for this thesis and a thematic driver for parts of chapter three. Harris argues the need for outdoor expenditure control at this time was the combined results of firstly the American Civil War in the 1860s whereby the supply of raw cotton was disrupted leading to mass unemployment in the Lancashire textile towns and a subsequent demand for out-relief, and secondly, the higher demand in London for outdoor relief. Historians have thus identified a campaign for a return to the 'principles of the 1834 Act' identified as the *Crusade*.¹⁷ To place this *Crusade* and its importance in the evolution of the New Poor Law in 1834 and again in 1871 its historiography is considered at great length in chapter three.

Much of the revisionist literature on the New Poor Law has presented an impressionistic view of the experience of welfare as it was administered through the workhouse as being more relatively benign and the experiences of paupers rather more diverse than early summaries post-1834 has presented. Nowhere is the revisionist literature more powerful than in recent trends to focus on the detailed experiences of distinct groups of the life-cycle poor, and it is to this theme that we now turn.

Life-cycle

Historians have identified areas of crisis for individuals at various points in their life-cycle which forms our second theme, for example, the young, the aged, the illegitimate, vagrants, the sick and the insane have all been subjected to separate research. The experience of children (those aged 0-14) has attracted surprisingly little attention and yet the aspects of the literature that are available frame this theme (taken up in chapter seven) and thesis.

¹⁶ Crowther, *The Workhouse System*.

¹⁷ Harris, *The Origins of the British Welfare State*, p.57.

Many of the children in workhouses were classed as abandoned. Others came from families which had no alternative but to enter the workhouse.¹⁸ Individual children were frequently sent to the workhouse during hard times or for short periods during the later term of mother's pregnancy to relieve family finances. It may also be the case where the father had found employment in another area and was unable to take his children with him until he had become settled. It is these circumstances that affected the numbers of children in the workhouse and why numbers remained constantly fluid.

Whilst the collective literature of childhood is extensive the study of pauper children has been rather less developed.¹⁹ As the Victorian period advanced, in general, the PLB increased their support for the theory that children were not responsible for their predicament in the workhouses. A further aspect of a child's workhouse experience is the preparation for life upon leaving. In many cases these leaving poor law care would be in a far better position to secure employment and earn a living to stop them becoming permanent paupers and returning as adults into the workhouse. Driver argues that children without parents commanded by far the most official attention during the first fifty years following 1834 when a whole range of schemes were advocated, from the building of huge schools for hundreds of inmate children, to entirely non-institutional solutions such as the policy of boarding out children.

To place the life-cycle of children into context with the objectives of the poor law it is important to assimilate the official policy towards indoor pauper children. The first reference to the care of workhouse children was in 1838 when it was agreed that children deserved more since they were pauperised 'not as a consequence of their errors, but of their misfortunes.'²⁰ Crompton argues that this came about because the upper middle class began to disapprove of

¹⁸ Evidence for this can be found in census returns, creed registers, and admittance books.

¹⁹ P. Horn, *Children's Work and Welfare, 1788-1890* (London, 1994); H. Hendrick, *Children, childhood and English Society 1880-1900* (Cambridge, 1997); J. Humphries, *Childhood and Child Labour in the British Industrial Revolution*, Cambridge (2011); P. Kirby, 'Child Labour in Britain, 1750-1870', *Social History in Perspective* (2003); U.Q.R. Henriques, *Before the Welfare State* (London, 1979); F Crompton, *Workhouse Children* (Stroud), 1997.

²⁰ PP. 4th *Annual Report of the Poor Law Commission* (1838). App. B3, p.228.

the policy of 'less eligibility' when applied to children and in many cases it was found that some children experienced a higher standard of care and education than children of the independent working class outside of the workhouse.

Children were not only separated under the classification rule of gender, but in addition their education was based on gender and the expectations of life's employment. For girls, the only expectation was that of 'service' but for boys the situation was different as future wage earners destined to maintain families. This is illustrated using a diverse syllabus whereas girls undertook subjects such as domestic accounts in preparation for service and boys were taught with its focus firmly on trades. Children's basic education was primary on subjects such as geography, writing, and mental arithmetic as well as singing. But it was in the form of occupational training where substantial gender variations occurred. Girls undertook cooking, washing and ironing whereas boys undertook more practical training in areas that would secure employment such as tailoring, shoemaking, woodwork, gardening, and farming. But for boys, the idea of being trained to play a musical instrument opened different avenues of employment upon leaving the workhouse. Many unions formed drill and fife bands as a form of discipline and at some workhouses, guardians went one step further and formed brass bands employing a bandmaster, based on the assumption that boys being fluent in playing music would easily find positions of employment within the armed forces.

Frank Crompton's dedicated discussion of workhouse children in Worcestershire suggests that while his study contains many illustrated examples of cruelty to children his comments suggest the attitude by guardians and officials towards children and their experiences of workhouse life is more complex than just drawing attention to scandals.²¹ This complexity is based upon the single investigation of children from one individual union thereby presenting only one view and not a comparative evaluation.

²¹ Crompton, *Workhouse Children*.

There are three main themes to be discussed within this subject of children the first is that training which was an integral part of the ideology of the poor law. Opinion differed and by the 1860s ranged from huge training schools to accommodate hundreds of children whereby one workhouse could absorb other children from different union or notions of non-institutional care. The design of the institutions was a critical influence to the success or failure of pauper training.²² The second theme is that of vocational education where Board of Guardians turned their eye to apprenticeships out of the workhouse rather than in-house industrial training. The PLC wanted to end this practice because of the appalling abuses which their officers were unable to control. Guardians too often failed to inspect the places in which pauper children were apprenticed and scandalous cases of cruelty and neglect emerged from time to time.²³

The issue with some unions was that whilst many supported children to become responsible adult's others were more interested in keeping the poor rates low. Ursula Henriques argues that the Commissioners waged a long-drawn-out battle with Boards of Guardians who cared more about rates and not about education, or to have children taught by properly trained teachers.²⁴ This was a fundamental problem for as Driver suggests in his study of Huddersfield that in the early years following the 1834 reform:

the teacher is a pauper who cannot spell and is obviously incompetent. Two children only could read the New Testament. None could read the first commandment. No one knew the name of the Queen.²⁵

The third theme is that of the moral contamination of children. Pamela Horn argues families once admitted into the workhouse and segregated, parents lost control of their children to the care of the guardians with no family support and thereby became open to the influence of others. Horn refers to the serious issues of children exposed to the influence from prostitutes and bad language. She further explores the lack of awareness of children with no family support

²² Driver, *Power and Pauperism*, p.147.

²³ Henriques, *Before the Welfare State*, p.80.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 51.

²⁵ Driver, *Power and Pauperism*, p.147.

in preparing them either for employment in service or for the duties they would have to undertake as wives or mothers.²⁶ Other historians such as Crompton raise the issue of ‘child contamination’ stating that immoral females were considered a dangerous influence on girl paupers, with unchaste women thought to be most dangerous of all.

Englander argues that the charge of immorality which was believed to be proven in many women by the fact they had mothered a bastard child may not have led to the child itself being discriminated against in the children’s ward.²⁷ He continues to make this point that unmarried mothers were to bear the shame of their offspring alone. No attempt would be made by poor law authorities to sue the putative fathers for maintenance because to have done so, would serve ‘to extend the rights of matrimony to the unqualified and undeserving’. However, because of public pressure this rule was abandoned in 1844 thus enabling unmarried mothers to sue the punitive father for an affiliation order in a magistrate’s court and empowered guardians to proceed for maintenance of the mother.²⁸

This assessment demonstrates that the lack of detailed micro-studies leaves the question open of how guardians and officials viewed children and with what consequences children experienced the New Poor Law. Current literature identifies the complexity of the subject of children but within these assertions there lacks no single conclusion. There is, however, rather more work with regards to the aged poor, a group whose experiences are discussed in chapter eight of this thesis.

Returning to the main chronology of this thesis we see that the material living standards in England fluctuated mostly up to the decline of trade until 1908 when the state pension was introduced. Many contemporaries maintained that, because of workers’ increased incomes in late Victorian England, poverty was no longer a major issue for the aged. The debate extends

²⁶ Horn, *Children’s Work and Welfare*.

²⁷ Crompton, *Workhouse Children*.

²⁸ D. Englander, *Poverty and Poor Law Reform from 1834-1917* (Abingdon, 1998), p.18.

further into the fabric of society in relation to the elderly who lived with their children but were in receipt of poor relief. Such people wished to remain independent and took advantage of the law to protect their position. Digby argues that despite outdoor relief being set at a level that was insufficient to prevent starvation many of the elderly preferred to remain in their homes with the support of their families rather than enter the workhouse.²⁹

In 1871 more than one-third of persons aged sixty-five and over was in receipt of poor relief and even by 1901 a quarter in this age group remained in receipt of poor relief. It was not until 1890 that the LGB collected statistics with regards to the number of aged paupers receiving poor relief thereby the only evidence on numbers is that available through the use of admittance registers and creed books census returns.³⁰

Pat Thane's study of the history of ageing suggests that the claims of the aged poor continued to be acceptable in the eyes of ratepayers and officials for most of the New Poor Law period.³¹ Considering the continued interest of the aged poor both in the workhouse and the wider pauper population, it is of no surprise that this section of the inmate population remains a subject of intensive research. While the *Crusade* against outdoor relief witnessed the hardening of attitudes influencing policy towards most of the poor including the aged, Thane concludes that the aged poor maintained an ability to shape their experience and trajectory under the New Poor Law. Referring to the guardians specifically, she examines the various attitudes regarding the treatment of the aged in institutional life suggesting several areas of investigation of those institutionalised.³²

There are four aspects to the experiences of the aged that form a part of the historiography. The first is discussed by Thane who draws attention to the dilemma experienced by the elderly and the pressures placed upon them to provide for their own old age. It was suggested that by

²⁹ Digby, *Pauper Palaces* (London, 1978), p.164.

³⁰ For many union's admittance and discharge registers have not survived.

³¹ Thane, *Old Age in English History*.

³² *Ibid.*

the third quarter of the nineteenth century the treatment of the elderly was improving with the small gestures of comfort being offered, but also that the wider concerns of the elderly were under closer examination by philanthropists, ratepayers and the government to address the growing problem in society. A second aspect is the debate with regards to the physical make-up of the workhouse populations and the third aspect is that of the diversity of the treatment that paupers could experience across different unions which is discussed by Digby. The fourth aspect is that of the wider issue of the elderly who struggled to remain independent but dependent upon public welfare.

Thane takes the view that the role of the workhouse should be seen as a grim deterrent designed to force young and elderly to save for old age. In practice, little of this was possible. Over a hundred years ago, Drage argued that for the casual labourer wages were too low to enable him to make provision for old age. He makes this point to support the case for state pensions on the basis of statistics stating that women had little opportunity to save for old age after deductions against sickness, death and hospital clubs were deducted from their wages.³³ The prevalent attitude towards the aged, in Thane's view, was benign only in comparison to the treatment of the able-bodied and she rightly points to the national standard of elderly care and if variations could be identified; the task of saving in preparation for old age and finally how the aged could manipulate the system of the poor law to their advantage.

Thane is portraying here the reality of life for paupers arguing that poor-law officials in the late 1830s expected families to support older relatives and not the state. On this issue of family versus the state, she contends that elderly people themselves could manipulate the system to maintain their independence quoting examples up to the 1880s. The same area of study has been reflected upon by David Thompson who argues that despite the poor law providing financial support for the elderly poor in the 1830s and 1840s, it continued a long-

³³ G. Drage, *The Problem of the Aged Poor* (London, 1895), p.42.

established practice that children would only offer little maintenance to their parents in old age. Inter-generational support for the elderly was limited and the law to enforce this was rarely used until the 1870s.³⁴

The second aspect regarding that of workhouse populations is taken up by Stephen Page in his paper on the Leicester workhouse based upon the enumerators' census returns for 1881. Here, Page, distinguished various groupings by age, gender, and social and marital status, thus creating a graphic picture of the physical make-up of the workhouse, pointing the way to future research. Page points to several conclusions from his analysis in that there was no set pattern of inmates but its composition fluctuated in line with that of trade. As the predominant occupation of the town changed from hosiery to foot-wear related, so too did the occupations of inmates. What Page concluded was that as the poor law progressed over the years, it changed from mere provider of relief in extreme cases of destitution to that of including a greater social welfare function to inmates found within institutions.³⁵

Observation by Hinde and Turnbull, who in 1996 published a substantial study of two Hampshire workhouses, Winchester, and Basingstoke, traced the dynamics of the workhouse population by the criteria used by Page.³⁶ Their work shows that Winchester and Basingstoke fitted the general pattern of a small number of able-bodied males and families resident in the workhouse, but the majority consisted of aged men and children. A further study by Nigel Goose addressed various additional points including ageing and poverty, women's work, and farm service.³⁷ Using the 1851 census for the Hatfield Union, Goose could determine the composition of the workhouse population, arguing that his findings produced statistics similar

³⁴ D. Thompson, 'The welfare of the elderly in the past: a family or community responsibility', in M. Pelling; R.M. Smith, (eds.) *Life, Death, and the Elderly: Historical Perspectives* (London, 2003), p.32.

³⁵ S. Page, 'Pauperism in the Leicester Workhouse in 1881', *Transactions of the Leicestershire Archaeological and Historical Society* (1989), pp.93, 94. This was based on the enumerator's census returns on the pauper population in the Leicester workhouse.

³⁶ Hinde, Turnbull, 'The Population of Two Hampshire Workhouses'; S. Page, 'Pauperism in the Leicester Workhouse in 1881'.

³⁷ Goose, *Workhouses in the Mid-Nineteenth Century*, pp.52-69.

to those found in Winchester and Basingstoke. The findings of Goose will be used to assimilate variations in chapter eight.

The third aspect with regards to the treatment of the elderly is taken up by Digby who identifies the variability of treatment found across different unions. Some unions treated the elderly according to the rules of classification while others provided additional benefits to improve the quality of life³⁸ such as allowances for as tea sugar and tobacco and even separate sleeping accommodation for elderly couples which were noted by Harris.³⁹ This sense of spatial variability is referred to later in the current chapter and reaffirms the over-riding rationale for this thesis.

Larger workhouses undertook a three-part role which will be considered as themes. Firstly, they provided accommodation for the poor inmate, secondly, they provided medical care for sick by the provision of infirmaries, and thirdly they provided accommodation for the mentally ill. The first theme covers that of general health which includes such areas as the accommodation of lunatics; of illness and epidemic and their treatments; the appointment of staff; training of nurses and finally mortality. Each subject under the sub-heading of health requires a comprehensive evaluation of historiography and primary material to illustrate the complexity both of subject and variation.

The first theme discusses the importance of infirmaries as provided under the 1834 Act although in the first instance they were only considered to accommodate those inmates who became sick. Driver explores the later importance of the buildings by the mid-1860s when the government recognised that these buildings were inadequate for the number of inmates and agreed to spend £2.9m on the building of one hundred and fifty-five workhouse infirmaries.⁴⁰ The care that was administered in the infirmaries is the second theme. Digby views that care in

³⁸ Digby, *Pauper Palaces* (London, 1978), p.165.

³⁹ Harris, *The Origins of the British Welfare State*, p.51.

⁴⁰ Driver, *Power and Pauperism*, p.88.

the first place found in workhouses was considered piecemeal until 1847⁴¹ reliant upon inmate nurses, whilst Marland considers that the 1834 Act was the beginning of improved services.⁴² Loudon on the other hand argues that the initial treatment in workhouses should not be found harsher than the poor would otherwise receive elsewhere.⁴³ Crowther argues that from 1867 the workhouse medical services still maintained a second-class reputation.⁴⁴ The issue of inconsistency in the appointments of nursing staff and the implications this had in its relationship between guardians and the LGB will be analysed so too will the spatial diversity found in the structure and training of nursing between union.

For the final theme of treatment Ruth Hodgkinson argues the wretched situation of the thousands of insane within the workhouse system left to the mercy of guardians for protection. Hodgkinson describes the appalling state of care for the insane in workhouses and focuses on the need to remove lunatics from workhouses, where they were frequently mixed with ordinary inmates, and placed into asylums.⁴⁵ Bartlett judges the system less harshly, citing the fact that the Lunacy Commission recommended that roast meat and beer should form a part of the diet and that a moderate allowance of tobacco should be made available.⁴⁶

These are interesting and important perspectives, but it is clear from an analysis of the historiography that before a recent study by Suzuki⁴⁷ research on the policies and experiences of lunatics in the union workhouse had been limited. There is currently a strong impetus for more studies of how guardians dealt with the lunatic poor who did not enter or who were returned from asylums, and, even more, to show how these practices and experiences varied between proximate poor law units as found within the Staffordshire Potteries. As David Green

⁴¹ Digby, *Pauper Palaces*, p.166

⁴² H. Marland, *Medicine and Society in Wakefield and Huddersfield, 1780-1870* (Cambridge, 1978), p.70.

⁴³ I. Loudon, *Medical Care and the General Practitioner, 1750-1850* (Oxford, 1986) p.234-240.

⁴⁴ Crowther, *The Workhouse System*, p.13

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p.577.

⁴⁶ P. Bartlett, 'The Asylum and the Poor Law: the productive alliance' in *Insanity, Institutions and Society 1800—1914*, Melling and B. Forsythe (eds.) (London, 1999), pp. 128-129.

⁴⁷ A. Suzuki, *Madness at Home: The Psychiatrist, the Patient, and the Family in England, 1820-1860* (USA, 1960)

has found in London, the relationship between ‘place and policy’ was dependent on agendas of individuals involved in the poor law such as guardians and overseers.⁴⁸ Consequently, and nowhere more so than in attitudes towards lunatics, there was found a wide variance in practice across London. This theme is developed further in chapter six. The casual poor and vagrancy form an important topic of this study.

Recently there has been an increase of interest in this life-cycle stage as part of a new emphasis on micro-experiences of workhouse life.⁴⁹ It is this area of interest which has generated a plethora of secondary literature on a subject that had overwhelmed many unions in the past and yet, for others, they remained almost untouched by the numbers of vagrants roaming the country. The dilemma remains that there are two separate themes, the first of how vagrancy was perceived by the public and the guardians, and secondly, how vagrants were treated.

For contemporaries, the problem of vagrancy more generally, so-called ‘casuals’ consumed an enormous amount of central authorities and local guardians time. Aspects of the available literature on vagrancy are important encompassing areas of numbers, treatments and workhouse accommodation. Numerically, vagrants formed the largest group of paupers in many unions moving through the workhouse during the period from the 1840s until the First World War. Urban-industrial unions that form the basis of this thesis faced an intense and continuous daily challenge of how to accommodate this group of casuals keeping them separate from the rest of the pauper inmates.

To place the subject of vagrancy into context it is necessary to view each of the two themes in order taking first that of perception which frequently defined treatment. Catherine Pope reflects on Victorian attitudes to the poor. She argues that as well as making the workhouse

⁴⁸ Green, *Pauper Capital*.

⁴⁹ The inclusion of vagrancy as a life-cycle is that for many, vagrancy was the only experience of life that they had known and formed a special category that by their numbers changed policy and dictated considerable additional facilities to be provided for this classification.

less appealing, the principle of segregation was designed to have a contraceptive effect: pauperism was viewed as a disease perpetuated through reproduction of the 'pauper host'.⁵⁰

It is important to view comments by contemporaries to establish the overall impression that vagrants made on society at the time thereby creating a basis for further discussions in chapter four. It was considered by Lionel Rose that once a transient had been relieved in a certain union and was content with his treatment, it followed that particular union became a target for additional clamorous and belligerent scroungers who could make the relieving officer's life unbearable.⁵¹ Digby argues that in an attempt to overcome increasing numbers some union's detained vagrants for two nights in order to set them to hard labour for a day and some Boards prescribed tasks that were virtually impossible in order to discourage them.⁵² Brundage presents a similar image of vagrancy, arguing that they were a highly mobile population, who roamed the country in search of work or whatever legal or illegal opportunity they could exploit. He contends that the public perception was initially that of an itinerant labourer, but was increasingly overshadowed by the image of the 'tramp', slovenly, drunken, wily, and unwilling to work but always ready to engage freely in whatever criminal opportunity might present itself.⁵³ It is evident that the general consensus of vagrants is compelling and that authorities were engaged with this group on a spectrum from resigned to the issue through to those advocating aggressive moral reform.

The second theme is that of how this group of travellers were treated by unions. Englander argues that as vagrants they were considered less deserving than the settled poor subsequently their diet was inferior to those of other inmates.⁵⁴ Snell also draws attention to the fact that vagrants were not treated equally with regards to the quantity of stones set for vagrants to break

⁵⁰ L. C. Berry, *The Child and State, and the Victorian Novel* (Charlottesville, 1999), p.29.

⁵¹ L. Rose, *Rogues and Vagabonds' Vagrant Underworld in Britain 1815-1985* (London, 1988), p.21.

⁵² Digby, *Pauper Palaces*, p.148.

⁵³ Brundage, *The English Poor Laws*, p.117. This point of view is typical of the Victorian attitude to vagrancy.

⁵⁴ Englander, *Poverty and Poor Law Reform*, p.32.

in return for accommodation as there appeared no central directive to regulate the process.⁵⁵ For Vorspan, vagrants represented both the most controversial class of pauper and an increasingly menacing problem for the foreseeable future. He argues that the routine procedure from the point of admission into the workhouse, involved ritual bathing, searching, segregation of the sexes and the application of a special diet, was frequently seen to highlight the seriousness of the problem.⁵⁶ He further argues the need for appropriate vagrant wards and discusses the consequence of the 'deserving' and 'un-deserving' being placed in the same ward, emphasising the importance of segregation even of vagrants.

A concerning aspect of the system according to Green, was the extent to which changes were implemented unilaterally by unions in terms which often differed from those of national policy and the ambiguity in the classification of paupers, particularly those classed as able-bodied. Guardians, he suggests, had discretionary powers to dispense relief in ways contrary to the wishes of the central commissioners.⁵⁷ Yet, for a group of such numerical importance, vagrants and casuals have attracted surprisingly little historiographical study. However, what remains uncertain is if and why proximate unions varied in their treatment of casuals as suggested by Green. The prime objective of this investigation in chapter four is to distinguish the treatment of vagrants within a set locality to gain a wider perspective of diverse application of the law either through location, directives of the central authority or within the realm of guardians.

The Nature of Variation

It has become clear in a general sense there is considerable spatial variation found within union policy and the consequent experiences of paupers under the New Poor Law. Three aspects are important for framing this issue: the nature of the Old Poor Law and its continuation into the

⁵⁵ K.D.M. Snell, *Parish and Belonging – Community, Identity and Welfare in England and Wales 1700-1950* (Cambridge, 2006), p.283.

⁵⁶ Vorspan, 'Vagrancy and the New Poor Law', p.51.

⁵⁷ Green, *Pauper Capital*, p.15.

New Poor Law; the sense that there was an inevitable geography to the experiences of the poor law; and the sense of modern historians that even as the New Poor Law developed, considerable spatial variations remained.

The debate regarding variations stems from the parochialism established under the Old Poor Law and is not a consequence of post-1834 whereby the New Poor Law found itself superimposed upon a system of local interpretation. One of the aims therefore of the 1834 Act was that the use of directives, inspections, and legal amendments issued to local unions would provide a more uniform, country-wide, system of poor law welfare that was not based upon old established traditions of pre-1834. The object of this section is to evaluate the success or otherwise of the LGB directives in creating a unified system of the treatment of vagrancy.

Throughout this thesis, we begin to unfold the dilemma whereby the previous authority of the select vestry administering the Old Poor Law was set against limited resources of the New Poor Law Board creating a situation whereby local variations of the past continued relatively unaltered under the New Poor Law as guardians wished to retain their independence. In other words, spatial variations in poor law practice and outcomes of the old system of administration remained ingrained into the New Poor Law. It is therefore against this complex mix of old traditions versus an unstable New Poor Law that theoretically, it was possible for two contiguous unions to follow radically different lines of approach to poor law policies. Paupers it is evident could have a very different experience of welfare even though in spatial terms they might be separated by a mere handful of miles something that this thesis investigates.

Indeed, the intense debate between Steve Hindle⁵⁸ and Steve King⁵⁹ on the nature and meaning of spatial dynamics of welfare has helped to shape the study of the Old Poor Law for more than a decade. In general terms, Hindle considered that the local poor law system may

⁵⁸ S. Hindle, 'Not by bread only'? common right, parish relief and endowed charity in a forest economy, c1600-1800, S.A. King, A. Tomkins, (eds.) *The Poor in England 1700-1850, A Economy of Make-shifts* (Manchester, 2003).

⁵⁹ King, *Poverty and Welfare*.

have varied according to local finances, personalities, the nature of the poverty problem and undefined variables including the weather and local demographic crisis. This view of Hindle suggests that England and Wales could be characterised by fifteen thousand or so separate administrative areas of parishes and townships following few central administrative policies which may have been the situation in practice even between adjacent unions separated by no more than a few miles.

Several authors have illustrated the dilemma of variations within the poor law suggesting that it is as diverse as those found in industrialisation, wages rates, the enclosure movement or even coal mining where historians have come to appreciate that there is an over-lapping consequence in the relationship of space and time. It is this fluidity that scholars such as James Scott describe. This forms the second aspect of this section here.⁶⁰ Scott suggests that although areas may be distinct from London and other capital cities by distance or difficult terrain they can produce similar cultures or economics from those found nearer to home. For Doreen Massey, it is the variations found in relationships and networks. She considers how disconnected an area can be regarding distance, transport, letter writing, religious or trading networks such as those areas found in West Lancashire noting the fact they could have more in common with areas found in South Wales despite the considerable topographical divide.⁶¹ Brundage reflects in his studies for the post-1834 period recording complex political manoeuvrings at local levels asking the question of how much centralisation was associated with major reform such as the 1834 Act and expressing his view that the workhouse was designed to produce submission and conformity.⁶²

Welfare historians have increasingly wrestled with the problem of variations found in New Poor Law practice, both regarding outdoor and indoor relief and this study revolves around

⁶⁰ J. Scott, *Domination of the Art of Resistance – Hidden Transcripts* (New Haven, USA, 1990).

⁶¹ D. Massey, 'Geographies of Responsibility', *Geografiska Annaler, Series B. Human Geography* (2004), pp.5-18.

⁶² Brundage, *The English Poor Law*, p.7.

this debate with regards to a system which was introduced to bring national uniformity to the administration of the poor law. This forms the third aspect. Historians such as Englander, Brundage, Harris, Kidd and Crowther⁶³ all suggest that because of the unstable relationship between guardians and the central authority unions followed their own agendas regarding LGB directives. This problem of uniformity is summed up by Anne Digby, who argues that poor law administration locally remained based upon parochial identity and not upon that of the central authority which accounts for spatial variations.⁶⁴ It is this fundamental argument of variation and parochialism found in core literature that underpins this current chapter which should be read alongside chapter two in which a broad chronological survey of the development of the New Poor Law exposes the difficulties of transition from the Old Poor Law regarding power and authority.

Christine Bellamy questions the powers held by the central authority concluding that although they continued to hold extensive control through district audit or through loan sanctions, the approval of workhouse diets, powers over bed spaces and extensions to buildings was rather more than historians thought they had but found that these rules were hardly applied.⁶⁵ Crowther expresses her concern that the poor law offered a striking example of central policy against local independence drawing attention to the thousands of volumes of correspondence between guardians and the central authority that stand as memorials of these struggles held at the National Archives and County Record Offices.⁶⁶ King further adds to the debate when he explains his conclusions found between the north and the south in the administration of the poor law. In the north-west, he found that paupers living under the false notion of respectability within their community would almost starve to death before applying

⁶³ Englander, *Poverty and Poor Law Reform*; Brundage, *The English Poor Law*; Harris, *The Origins of the British Welfare State*; A. Kidd, *State, Society and the Poor in 19th Century England* (New York, 1999); Crowther, *The Workhouse System*.

⁶⁴ Digby, *Pauper Palaces*.

⁶⁵ C. Bellamy, *Administering central – local relations 1871-1919* (Manchester, 1998), p.150.

⁶⁶ Crowther, *The Workhouse System*.

for a few pence from the relieving officer. By contrast, in the southern and eastern counties, welfare dependents turned to the parish for support at every opportunity.⁶⁷ Similar examples of pride have been found in the Staffordshire Potteries resulting in death through destitution.⁶⁸

King then refines the debate further suggesting that once we allow for ‘noise’ – that is local variations which are driven by short-term issues, such as a smallpox outbreak – we can and should observe noteworthy regional variations. It is the evidence that has created an increased interest in both the study of regions and localities whereby King argues that ‘more detailed work is required before we can draw wide and definitive conclusions as to the impact of the poor within a locality.’⁶⁹ A far greater impact is made when King asks ‘did England have several poor laws systems and not one’ concluding that those who lived in the south and the east of the country were likely to be more generously treated than their peers in the north and west and to be assisted sooner as they descend into pauperdom.⁷⁰ It is this synopsis by King that provides the key elements of this thesis in establishing the divisions between two neighbouring local poor law unions to determine if there were one or two poor laws operating in the Staffordshire Potteries? L

Local Historiography

Local historiography can be extensive or limited and contributions may challenge or corroborate established localised patterns. Early historiography of poor law welfare in the Staffordshire Potteries is lacking in both quantity and detail or for the period of this study. Nor is there any historiography for the wider area of north Staffordshire as no previous studies have been undertaken except a record of the existence of workhouses found in local pamphlets. It is this absence of detail that justifies the investigation of two contiguous unions which relate to the same industrial conurbation sharing similar economic, social and historical backgrounds as

⁶⁷ King, *Poverty and Welfare*, p.268.

⁶⁸ S.A. 18 March 1856, p.5

⁶⁹ King, *Poverty and Welfare*, p.249-50.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, pp.257-9

it may be assumed that outcomes and administration could be considered as identical for this area without evidence to suggest otherwise.

The only serious contribution is that of Marguerite Dupree, who focuses on the area of Stoke-upon-Trent taking its data consisting of 6,700 individuals from the 1861 census.⁷¹ Her main argument is based on the structure and complexities of families and kinship. Within her study, she takes time to reflect on institutions including workhouses, on their effects on paupers once admitted concerning family life and on the subsequent outcomes for those involved once home and possessions were lost. Dupree argues that her statistical information regarding paupers' welfare and the social implications of outdoor relief and its unfair administration provide a valuable contribution to debate on the *Crusade* in respect of local welfare under the poor law. The other relevant works are two local history books published several years before the Poor Law Amendment Act refer almost as a casual comment from the mid-1800s onwards. The first, a *History of the Staffordshire Potteries* by Simeon Shaw, makes no reference to the parish workhouse at Burslem; but, under the heading for the district of Penkhull in the parish of Stoke-upon-Trent, Shaw provides a general comment with no detail of its overall provision for paupers or its reference regarding its provision of care within the community:

The parish workhouse is on an elevated spot, and will be inspected with pleasure by the philanthropist for the cleanliness and comfort here afforded to the aged and the infirm, the weak-minded and the destitute. In fact, all the attention of humanity is supplied to them.⁷²

The second publication, dated 1843, is *The Borough of Stoke-upon-Trent*, compiled by John Ward, a solicitor from Burslem. Ward's work, based upon his extensive knowledge of the Staffordshire Potteries, is the only record of the period, but like Shaw he makes little reference

⁷¹ M. Dupree, *Family Structure in the Staffordshire Potteries* (Oxford, 1995).

⁷² S. Shaw, *The Staffordshire Potteries* (Hanley, 1829), p.65. This quote refers to the old parish poor-house situated in the village of Penkhull. It was replaced with the Stoke workhouse by the parish in 1832. The old workhouse in Penkhull was then converted into some cottages and a show which remained until demolished in 1965.

to the parish workhouse of Stoke located to the south, or Burslem, to the north of the city. In relation to Stoke, Ward mentions only the previous workhouse at Penkhull and the cost of the new workhouse erected in 1832 at the Spittals for the parish of Stoke-upon-Trent. (Fig.1.1) At the time he was writing (1843), Stoke workhouse had been open for eleven years, yet Ward, so as not to implicate his sponsors, makes only a fleeting reference to it or its role within the larger framework of local or regional poor law welfare:

The Parish workhouse was formerly established in the village of Penkhull but in 1833 the select vestry erected a commodious building at a place at Stoke within half a mile of Newcastle, at an outlay of about £3,000 and when the provisions of the New Act were adopted, a further expenditure of from £3,000 to £4,000 became necessary to adapt it to the model which the commissioners deemed needful. This large Hotel d'Industrie will contain 500 inmates, but not more than 300 have at any one time tenanted its walls.⁷³

Little can be gleaned from Ward's writing concerning the administration or the welfare of inmates. He impresses upon the reader his feelings that an establishment is a place of recreation with the cynical use of the phrase 'Hotel d'Industrie'.⁷⁴

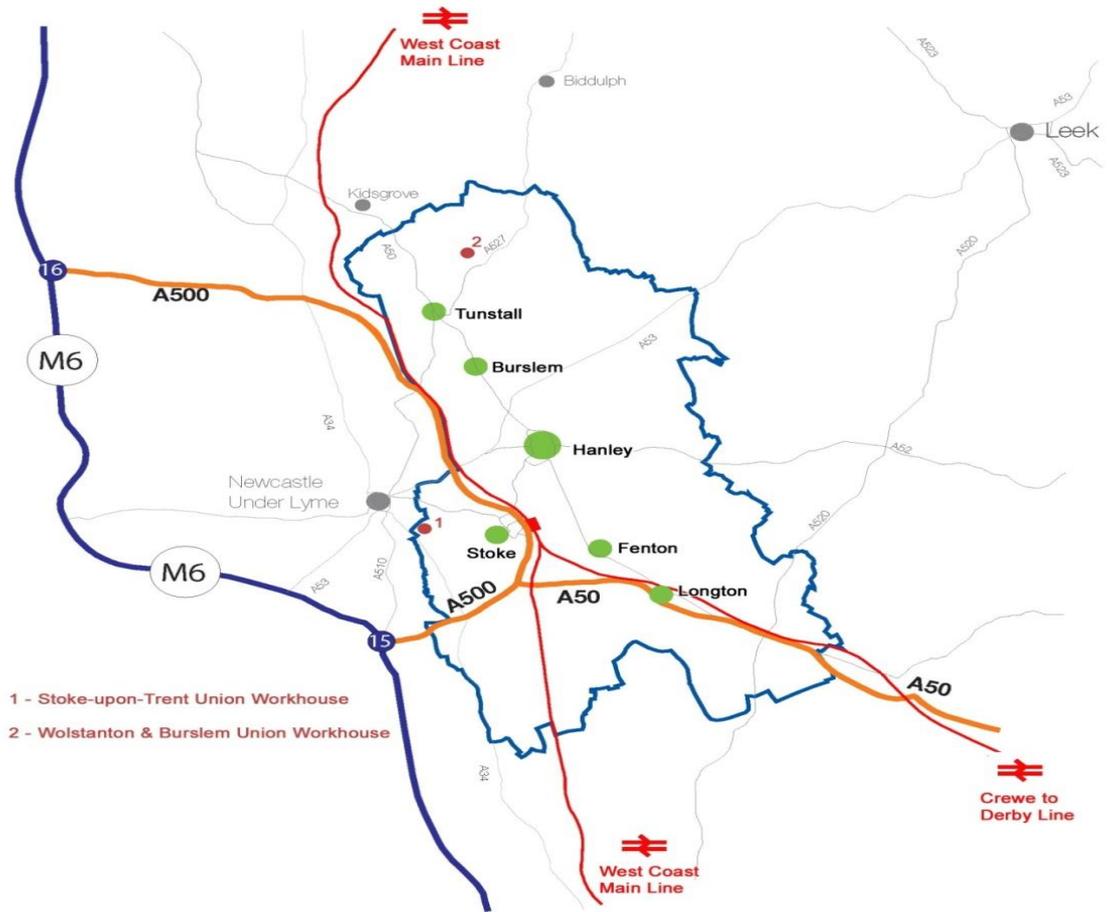
These two short accounts from the Victorian period reveal two important issues: firstly, the lack of any real concern for the poor, and, secondly, the almost casual way in which both authors describe their plight. Arguably, the circles in which Shaw and Ward moved were receptive only to positive, complimentary remarks such that would please readers among the townspeople. Subsequently, both, therefore, restricted their comments as not to implicate sponsors in the poor treatment of paupers.⁷⁵

⁷³ J. Ward, *The Borough of Stoke-on-Trent* (London, 1843), p.492.

⁷⁴ Suggesting here that the treatment of the poor was too good and implying that the paupers had contributed to their own downfall.

⁷⁵ Both publications refer to local benefactors of public buildings and to the benevolent ways in which employers treated their employees. It is these references that sponsors encouraged to reflect their status.

Fig. 1.3 Map of the Staffordshire Potteries – Stoke-upon-Trent



The six towns and the locations of the two workhouses – Wolstanton and Burslem to the north and Stoke to the south, situated six miles distant from each other.

Courtesy of Stoke-upon-Trent Archaeology Service/ Stoke-upon-Trent City Council (originally reproduced with permission of H.M.S.O Licence No. 100024286).

The local volume of the *Victoria County History* provides early references to both workhouses; Burslem had erected a workhouse by 1741, while a second workhouse, replacing this was later built at Greenhead in 1780 being enlarged in the 1830s to accommodate three hundred paupers, although in 1838 it only accommodated one hundred and fifty two.⁷⁶ In the adjacent parish of Wolstanton, a smaller cottage type poor-house was founded in 1838 but

⁷⁶ J. G. Jenkins (ed.), *Victoria County History*, vol. viii (London, 1963), pp.129-30.

following the amalgamation of these two neighbouring parishes, Burslem, and Wolstanton, to form the Wolstanton and Burslem Poor Law Union a new workhouse was built three miles to the north of Burslem in a district known as Chell to accommodate the inmates from the previous two workhouses. (Fig.1.2) Ward summarises as follows:

Now proceeding on a very large scale near to, the situation being distant above three miles from Wolstanton, and two from Burslem, and certainly not very convenient for the guardians to assemble at their meetings; but it may perhaps answer the design of the legislature, to suppress indiscriminate pauperism, by throwing the utmost difficulty in the way of applications for relief by dealing it out with niggard hand and by the prison-like discipline to which claimants must submit, whose necessities oblige them to avail themselves of the House of Refuge.⁷⁷

Ward again expresses his feelings towards the working class in general and the treatment of the poor in his anticipation that the style of architecture would suppress applications for poor relief - for they would be 'treated as prisoners'. Ward appears more concerned with the distance that the Guardians, the upper-class professionals and manufacturers of the town would have to travel to the workhouse, than with the plight of those members of society desperate for the bare necessities of life. Charles Shaw wrote his account of the new workhouse at Chell from personal experiences of his time there:

If we could have seen what was driving us so reluctantly up that hill to the workhouse ('Bastille,' as it was bitterly called then), we should have seen two stern and terrible figures, Tyranny and Starvation. No other powers could have so relentlessly hounded us long. None of us wanted to go, but we must go, and so we came to our big home for the time. The very vastness of it chilled us . . . Everybody we saw and spoke to looked metallic as if worked from within by hidden machinery. Their voices were metallic and sounded harsh and imperative. The younger ones huddled more closely to their parents, as if from fear of these stern officials. We finally landed in a cellar, clean and bare, and were grim as I have since seen in prison cells. We were told this was the place where we should have to be washed and put into our workhouse attire. I was ushered or shoved into a large room which I found was both dining room and schoolroom . . . I saw hungry-looking lads, with furtive glances, searching everything and everybody, and speaking in subdued whispers. I saw a stern, military, cadaverous-looking man, who was said to be the schoolmaster. I

⁷⁷ Ward, *The Borough of Stoke-on-Trent*, p.271. Here Ward is indicating his sympathies with the well-to-do Guardians who were no doubt a part of his social circle.

noticed his chilling glances, carrying menace in every look ... I was hungry, but that bread! That greasy water! Those few lumps of something which would have made a tiger's teeth ache to break the fibres of! The strangeness, the repulsiveness, and the loneliness made my heart turn over, and I turned over what I could not eat to those near me, who devoured voraciously all I could spare.⁷⁸

This personal description of Shaw's experiences at the new Chell workhouse reflects similar passages found in Dickens.⁷⁹ Not only does Shaw use the word '*Bastille*', but he further emphasises his point by the term 'we must go': inferring there was no other alternative. He illustrates his initial impressions of the 'house' in vivid, immediate language: the voices; the coldness; the looks; the younger children huddled together and the indignity of being washed and placed into workhouse clothes. He concludes with the description of the attendant - stern, military, cadaverous-looking, with only whispers for conversation - and a final evocation of the repulsiveness and the loneliness of the place.

Ward, on the other hand, does not leave his brief summary of the two workhouses in the Staffordshire Potteries without some statistical record of the financial pressures involved in the maintaining of the poor by residents in the form of poor rates.⁸⁰ For Stoke parish, Ward summarises the expenditure for the period from 1765 until 1832, two years prior to the introduction of the New Poor Law Act 1834.⁸¹ These figures illustrate the huge increase of expenditure in the maintenance of the poor from £762 in 1765/6, to nearly £20,000 in 1831/2 – a figure which strongly identifies the need for a change of policy as the influx of former agricultural workers into towns as the industrial revolution evolved creating a series of demands upon the poor rates that was not sustainable.

⁷⁸ C. Shaw, *When I was a Child* (London, 1903), pp.99-100. Shaw recollects his experiences of the Wolstanton workhouse in c. 1843 and is the only one that presents a picture of life in Wolstanton workhouse.

⁷⁹ C. Dickens, *Oliver Twist* (London, 1838).

⁸⁰ The church rate was a personal charge imposed on the occupier of land or of a house in the parish, and, though it was compulsory, much difficulty was found in effectually applying the compulsion. This was especially so in the case of Nonconformists, who had conscientious objections to supporting the Established Church; and in Ireland, where the population was preponderantly Roman Catholic, the grievance was specially felt and resented.

⁸¹ The figures for 1765-1832 reflect the period of expenditure for the old parish poor-house in Penkhull, which was replaced, by the Select Vestry.

Sources

The availability of data concerning the poor law in the Staffordshire Potteries is limited both in its range of subjects and its quantity. The minute books of the Board of Guardians for Stoke-upon-Trent Union and the Wolstanton and Burslem Union collectively amount to some fifteen thousand pages.⁸² A limitation in their use is reflected in the number that has survived. Stoke minute books commence in September 1876 as earlier records have been destroyed.⁸³ For Wolstanton and Burslem Union there is a complete set of guardian minute books from 1871 to 1900. Earlier minute books have also been destroyed. In addition, for Wolstanton, the visiting committee minutes (1873-94), one creed register (1887-97) and a register for burials and baptisms are available.⁸⁴ These limitations of workhouse records have determined the chronological range of this study.

The National Archives hold one of the largest and most complete of Victorian poor law union sources in record series MH12/. The Stoke-upon-Trent and Wolstanton and Burslem Union correspondence files comprise around forty thousand documents for the years 1870-1900.⁸⁵ Correspondence from 1871 under the control of the LGB include a wider appraisal of the area, as the additional responsibilities of governance include all local administrative affairs, annual public health reports of infectious diseases, vaccination, civil epidemics, sanitation, deaths and public amenities such as schools, markets and swimming baths, as well as correspondence relating to the Poor Law Unions.⁸⁶ This collection is unique and offers wide-ranging opportunities to develop debates and provide answers to a broad range of questions.

In an endeavour to overcome the shortfall of data for the early years prior to the

⁸² Minute books contain the Minutes of the fortnightly meeting of Guardians. They include engagements, cases of abuse, settlements, education, emigration, staffing, health and buildings.

⁸³ Such as Visiting Committee minutes, Creed Registers and admissions, discharge books, lists of appointments or medical records.

⁸⁴ All are located at the City Archives, Bethesda Street, Hanley.

⁸⁵ Located at the National Archives, Kew.

⁸⁶ The list reflects only a short version of the material found under the series of MH12/.

commencement of union minute books, published reports of guardian's fortnightly meetings found in local newspapers will be used to supplement the gaps in information.⁸⁷ The benefit of such reports is that they can reflect a different interpretation of actual meetings than those conveyed by the official minutes. Comments relating to guardian's personal views are frequently recorded or supplemented by qualifying additions such as 'laughter' or 'moans'. Such background information can be an invaluable tool for interpreting the mood of guardians over a wide range of subjects.

In addition, Parliamentary Papers will be used to support guardians' minute books and correspondence records to provide a valuable additional source of material that will illustrate and equate comparisons in data, especially concerning deaths, education and emigration of children, and poor law policy.⁸⁸ Enumerators' census returns for the period 1871-1901 are also used where appropriate. The combined use of these records affords the opportunity to study a defined area in greater detail, and to answer more specific questions. In this connection, it may be observed that works by Crowther, Dupree, Digby, Driver and others, although setting the parameters of research, frequently fail to address the need for a more focused approach.

Key Questions

The nature of the key questions is to explore that of spatial diversity using a case analysis of two unions situated side by side in an under-researched region and period. The aim therefore is first to establish the process whereby the area of the Staffordshire Potteries developed into a major industrial conurbation as a base for this thesis and secondly what does this tell us about the nature and causes of spatial variations. Once the background of the area has been established key questions can outline the relevant changes in the poor law which when summarised shows how the poor law in the Staffordshire Potteries developed within the national framework for the period

⁸⁷ Hanley Archives maintain micro-film copies of the local newspapers, *The Staffordshire Sentinel*, and the *Staffordshire Advertiser*.

⁸⁸ Parliamentary Papers and Reports are available online.

leading up to 1871. Further questions identify early developments and parochial allegiance of each union and relevance of early experiences found in diversity under the Old Poor Law.

It is the answers to these points that are fundamental to this study and reflect upon the main considerations of investigation. This information will then show if the LGB was successful in creating a relatively uniform practice of administration at union level or whether it was possible under their governance for two contiguous unions to exhibit radically different policies and radically different pauper experiences. It is therefore important to focus on these key thematic drivers of the meaning and intent of the New Poor Law; life-cycle experiences of poor law relief and the nature of local autonomy under the New Poor Law from the LGB.

Chapter four is the first under the life-cycle subjects that discusses classification and vagrancy. To fill the gaps in literature questions can firstly point to the agendas of the guardians in dealing with the demands of classification and secondly how they attempted to solve the problem of vagrancy? Other questions will include: to what extent was the problem of vagrancy recognised nationally and by both unions and what steps did each Board of Guardians take to eradicate or curtail the scourge of vagrancy, what influences formed part of the decision-making process and did they implement central directives?

A prime example of gaps in current literature is that of religion. This is not necessarily a life-cycle experience but an experience that could affect the life of an inmate. Historiography sets the scene in broad terms but fails to enquire into the divisions of the time between the Established Church and Non-conformity.⁸⁹ Crowther makes little reference regarding the appointments of chaplains, neither does Crompton. The use of primary sources however identifies issues such as the question of creed book allegiance, worship patterns, appointments

⁸⁹ J. Walvin, *English Life 1776-1851* (London, 1984); J.D. Gay, *The Geography of Religion in England* (London, 1971); A. Everitt, *The Pattern of Rural Dissent: the Nineteenth Century* (Leicester, 1972); K.D.M. Snell, *Parish and Belonging - Community, Identity and Welfare in England and Wales 1700-1950* (Cambridge, 2006); K.S. Inglis, *Church and the Working Class* (London, 1963)

and power struggles between denominations and how these differences articulated themselves in the daily lives of inmates, an area previously not investigated.

About health and lunacy within the workhouse unlike that of religion there is an abundance of secondary literature outlining their complexities. However, there remain gaps in literature regarding the availability of accommodation and the growth of workhouse infirmaries and what medical treatments were available and the control of epidemics at a local level. The question of the use of inmates as nurses will be addressed so too regarding the policy towards the appointments of staff and that of suitable training.

The important issue of lunacy within the workhouse will be investigated using questions that identify care in the home, the workhouse and the part asylums played in the care of lunatics. Also, what was the policy of guardians towards lunacy, were they sympathetic or did they move the problem elsewhere. Was provision provided for lunatics in the form of separate wards and adequate staffing and finally how did guardians respond to inspections and recommendations by the LGB? The question of mortality completes the subject whereby it is analysed as a comparative study regarding the causes of sickness and death.

Currently there is a lack of secondary literature about the welfare of pauper children and this is a subject with huge untapped potential for investigation. The same applies to the subject of the emigration of children and the work by Kershaw and Sacks which lacks the input of local studies.⁹⁰ There are others areas of children's welfare that have remained un-investigated such as external activities, occupational training and the diversity of external experiences, music and culture. Chapter seven therefore seeks to address these issues through several key questions to the kind of education and occupational training offered; whether guardians considered young inmates as children, with corresponding needs that supported and stretched enquiring minds; if

⁹⁰ R. Kershaw, J. Sacks, *New Lives for Old. The story of Britain's child immigrants* (Richmond, 2008); E. Boucher, *Empire's Children: Child Emigration, Welfare, and the Decline of the British World, 1869-1967* (Cambridge, 2014); M. Kohli, *The Golden Bridge: Young immigrants to Canada, 1833-1839* (Canada, 2003).

either workhouse showed a compassionate caring attitude for the wellbeing of the child and was there outside influences that contributed a better workhouse experience? A final question relates to emigration, an area of significance throughout the whole poor law structure that draws attention to its purpose. All structures of this scheme will be investigated within the parameters of a local micro-study to answer questions on local consequences; why the need for this; how was it accomplished; what was the response of children to a new life and what input was there to the scheme from the LGB, questions that will fill gaps in current literature.

The final section to investigate under the heading of life-cycle is that of the aged. Although there is currently an abundance of secondary literature there is a lack of contemporary literature dealing with this age group. Despite the resurgence of interest in the elderly, there remains an abundance of statistical work to be carried out within the area of workhouse populations especially for the latter half of the nineteenth century. The key aim of chapter eight is therefore to establish whether the workhouse was an institution for the elderly and if this perception had a factual base.

To decipher fact from fiction of the life for the elderly in the workhouse, several key questions are asked; did the two Boards of Guardians approach the care of the elderly in the same way, and, if not, what or who made the difference? Further questions investigate diet; couples' privacy; homely wards; pastime activities such as reading, board games, crafts, and music all areas of workhouse life that affected the care of the elderly. Questions will further establish what steps the Visiting Committee and the Board of Guardians took to improve the experiences of inmates with day trips, entertainments, and Christmas festivities and ask the important question whether the contribution of influential residents helped to improve the quality of the intuitional life of paupers.

The third aspect of the meaning and intent of the New Poor Law which is important for framing this chapter and thesis is that of the nature and role of outdoor relief. This is one of the

most debated areas of the new poor law. Historians have long understood that if the intent of the New Poor Law was to eliminate outdoor relief, then it was almost immediately a failure.

Conclusion

The existing secondary literature provides the framework for this thesis but in doing so exposes gaps and the need for further detailed investigation to clarify the complexity of current historiography. This review of the literature has identified the relevant areas where further research is necessary and illustrates variances in the experiences of the relief of the poor and establishes therefore the need to investigate how the New Poor Law operated in the Staffordshire Potteries.

The overall aim of this chapter is to introduce the subject from the first perspective of how the Staffordshire Potteries came about from its original communities scattered along a winding lane from the north to the south of north Staffordshire. It is from this base line that the thesis seeks to evaluate the development of the Old Poor and its localised complexities as it moves into the period firstly of the New Poor Law and on to the period of investigation. The aim of this thesis is therefore to explore both the region of Staffordshire and the period which has been greatly neglected in the study of the poor law in general. To achieve this there are two important considerations for investigation, firstly if the LGB was successful in creating a relatively uniform practice of administration at union level and whether it was possible under their governance for two contiguous unions to exhibit radically different policies and radically different pauper experiences.

We have looked at the three main thematic drivers, meaning and intent of the New Poor Law; life-cycle, and experiences of poor law relief and thirdly the nature of local autonomy under the New Poor Law. The first sentiment and meaning contains the thread that informs this thesis throughout in areas such as administration which incorporates perception, authority, policies, finance and staffing; the experiences of poor law welfare and the understanding of the importance

of outdoor relief, its criteria's and beneficiaries and particularly in the context of the Victorian *crusade*.

Historians have presented a comprehensive well-researched narrative of the poor law and the investigation into these fail the test of localism. A paradigm shift came with the publication of Williams's *From Pauperism to Poverty*, which presented a new interpretation of old views. Twenty-six years later, Elizabeth Hurren challenged the interpretation put forward by Williams in her *Protesting about Pauperism*. Other writers such as Crompton, in *Workhouse Children*, and Thane, in *Old Age in English History*, provide a welcome diversity, shifting the focus from general welfare to more specific areas of investigation.

The second thematic driver is the reconstruction of life-cycle experiences using micro-studies that will provide answers to those gaps found in literature that currently fail to identify the daily routine of the nature and meaning at a local level of the New Poor Law more widely. It is these studies that will provide the spatial variations between the two unions and what these variations have shown. It is this section that questions and contextualises the identity of individual groups found within the workhouse - religious, children, the mentally ill, the physically sick, how the elderly experienced institutional life and the complex issue of vagrancy.⁹¹ It is these subjects that are aimed to encompass the whole spectrum of life-cycle experiences of pauper inmates and an invaluable contribution to the understanding of the meaning of localism in its entirety.

The third thematic driver links the previous two together to establish how the policy and directives of the LGB were devolved through the administration of local guardians throughout each life-cycle experience and if they varied between local interpretation and that of national implementation an area that will be examined throughout this study.

⁹¹ Although vagrancy is not in the same context as a life-style as others, it nevertheless a significant subject because of the numbers that dominate nationally the discussions on the number of paupers and secondly this has been chosen as it is considered by the vagrants as a life-style choice of the way they lived their lives and therefore as such justified its inclusion.

Fig.1.1 View of Stoke Workhouse at the turn of the century. Picture taken from the hill of Clayton looking to the West aspect over-looking the main highway A34



Fig.1.2 Wolstanton and Burslem Union Workhouse built 1842



Chapter 2 – The Poor Law Political Landscape

Overview

This chapter provides the background to the concept and model of poor relief and importantly identifies the dilemma in which the early years of the New Poor Law found itself - a constant position of change. Indeed, it is this endless demand to meet new challenges that the poor law had to adapt to meet the ever-challenging requirements of society. Viewing the political landscape provides the necessary background of the transitional period from the Old Poor Law through to the New Poor Law and up to 1871. It is however important to reflect to the early seventeenth century to establish the base-line of parish poor relief under the Old Poor Law and the impending implications of the industrial revolution as it developed bringing with it migration thereby increasing the plight of the poor in most industrial areas. This introduction therefore reflects upon the transformation of the Staffordshire Potteries from a largely agrarian seventeenth-century society to the beginning of the industrial revolution and through to the end of the nineteenth century drawing attention to the necessity of change as the cost of relief in its original parochial form became impossible to sustain.

As industry increased the dependence upon farming steadily diminished and brought with it the need for rural populations to leave the land in the hope of finding employment within manufacturing towns. These radical changes in social structure and population demographics had the effect, especially in urban communities, of placing an intolerable financial burden on the parochial system. As a consequence, the Old Poor Law of 1601 became an inadequate tool in adapting to the new configuration of society and so the New Poor Law came into being in 1834 bringing with it the greatest upheaval upon communities

since the dissolution of the monasteries.¹

This chapter will investigate the social implications and challenges of the New Poor Law, the mounting public opposition and the move to set up a Royal Commission to examine the plight of the poor and the overwhelming need for reform. It will identify the policy-makers who influenced change and assess the social pressures which moved politicians to seek solutions to the growing problem of the poor in society. Finally, it will examine the opposition to and the failures of the 1834 Act and the mounting pressure for further change in 1871 together with the subsequent transfer of responsibility for poor relief to the LGB. Once this background of administration to 1871 is established the investigations moves on to the implication of poor law welfare in the Staffordshire Potteries.

The coming of the New Poor Law

Concerns for the poor provided the subject-matter of forty-four parliamentary debates between 1750 and 1834 which resulted in the demand for the abolition of the Old Poor Law.² Despite rapidly escalating costs and the rising number of paupers, Tory governments were reluctant to interfere with the poor laws or to revoke what was perceived to be the right to receive poor relief.³ Nevertheless a Royal Commission to enquire into the poor laws was established in 1832.

The Commissioners argued that paupers' relief under the current system was given irrespective of merits on the basis that large families received most which encouraged improvident marriages. Other arguments noted that women claimed relief for their bastard children which encouraged immorality and labourers seeing that the most worthless idler in the parish could get more from relief than could be earned through honest labour thereby

¹ P. Slack, *The English Poor Law 1531-1782* (Oxford, 1990).

² S.A. King, *Women, Welfare and Local Politics 1880-1920:- We might be trusted* (Brighton, 2006), p.5.

³ *Ibid.*, p.8.

had little incentive to work hard and be thrifty.⁴ Green argues that the government did not wish to intervene in what was considered as a parochial problem:

Even though it was to a greater or lesser extent a national system, prior to 1834, the central government was reluctant to interfere in local affairs which resulted in parochial control over poor relief became accepted as paramount.⁵

The final report of the Commission was published in 1834, making several recommendations to Parliament. Thus, the Poor Law Amendment Act was passed, stating that:

- No able-bodied person was to receive money or other help from the poor law authorities except in a workhouse.
- Conditions in workhouses were to be made very harsh to discourage people from wanting to receive help.
- Workhouses were to be built in every parish or, if parishes were too small, in unions of parishes.
- Ratepayers in each parish or union had to elect a Board of Guardians to supervise the workhouse, to collect the Poor Rate and to send reports to the Central Poor Law Commission.
- The three-man Central Poor Law Commission would be appointed by the government and would be responsible for supervising the Amendment Act throughout the country.
- Small parishes and townships were to be amalgamated to create Poor Law Unions.⁶

Pamphleteer William Cobbett warned the legislators in the House of Commons that ‘they were about to dissolve the bonds of society’, and that to pass the law would be ‘a violation of the contract upon which all the real property of the kingdom was held’.⁷ Cobbett particularly objected

⁴ M.A. Crowther, *The Workhouse System 1834-1929 the History of an English Social Institution* (London, 1981), p.12. In many respects working people today would draw the same conclusion from the current welfare state and benefit system.

⁵ D. Green, *Pauper Capital - London and the Poor Law 1790 -1870* (London, 2010), p.2.

⁶ PP. *Report from His Majesty's Commissioners for inquiring into the Administration and Practical Operation of the Poor Law* (1834).

⁷ R. Wells, ‘Mr William Cobbett, Captain Swing, and King William IV’ in *The Agricultural History Review* (1997), Vol. 45, pp. 34-48. W. Cobbett (9 March 1763 – 18 June 1835) was an English pamphleteer, farmer, and journalist, who was born in Farnham, Surrey. He believed that reforming Parliament abolishing the ‘rotten boroughs’ would help to end the poverty of farm labourers.

to the separation of families and to workhouse inmates being forced to wear badges or distinctive clothing arguing that workhouses would become ‘prisons from the purpose of terrifying applicants from seeking relief’.⁸

One of the main principles of the Act was the reduction of outdoor relief as this was the major concern of the time in response to the growing pauper population nationally. This belief was framed in the Goschen Minute of 1869 whereby the new Act embodied the ideals to significantly reduce costs under the title of the *Crusade* an area that will be discussed fully in chapter three.⁹

Christine Seal suggests that the main principle behind the 1834 Act was that of centralisation,¹⁰ whereas Fraser argues that ‘the power of discretion remained in local hands’,¹¹ while Kidd was firmly of the opinion that guardians possessed a certain amount of local autonomy with respect to the day-to-day management of the poor.¹² It is these comments by Fraser and Kidd regarding locality made prior to the New Poor Law being passed that identified the issue of parochialism. Fraser was firm in his belief of locality and parochialism and that ‘uniformity and centralisation were more image than reality’.¹³

It is these historiographical views to the background of the New Poor Law and the ways in which guardians responded to the new layer of authority that will be considered within this thesis. The Poor Law administrations over the period from 1834 to 1871 attempted to create a system of regulated and standardised relief across all regions in England and Wales driven by a requirement for consistency, as Fraser states:¹⁴

⁸ J.B. Gordon, "" Booked for Passage" on Cobbett's Rural Rides: Ecology as Revolution." *Nineteenth-Century Prose* (1992), 19.3, p. 60.

⁹ J. Platt, *Paternalistic, Parsimonious, Pragmatists: The Wigan Board of Guardians and the Administration of the Poor Laws 1880-1900*. Ph.D Thesis (Leicester University, 2011).

¹⁰ C. Seal, *Poor Relief, and Welfare: a comparative study of the Belper and Cheltenham Poor Law Unions, 1780-1914*, Ph.D Thesis (Leicester University, 2009), p.9.

¹¹ D. Fraser, *The New Poor Law in the Nineteenth Century* (London, 1981), p.19.

¹² A. Kidd, *State, Society and the Poor* (Basingstoke, 1999), p.2.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p.21

¹⁴ K.D.M. Snell, *Parish and Belonging - Community, Identity and Welfare in England and Wales 1700-1950* (Cambridge, 2009), p.233.

The administration of the poor was to be uniform. The pauper was not to be pampered in one union and starved in another. Every statutory or administrative rule should be rigidly carried out in every part of the kingdom.¹⁵

Re-organisation and Victorian Attitudes

It is important to place the Act of 1834 in the context of contemporary thought and at the same time evaluate Victorian attitudes towards the poor in respect of their treatment assessing, firstly a national system of poor law relief with paid officers and secondly with the writings of commentators such as Engels, Rose, Englander and Harris.¹⁶ Friedrich Engels is to the point when describing the feelings of the people from Newcastle to Dover, who '[spoke] in one voice of hatred.'¹⁷

One of the assumptions behind the new policy was that poverty was a voluntary and, therefore, reversible condition. The pauper was not so much the victim as the perpetrator of his distress. Poverty, the commissioners, insisted, arose from 'fraud, indolence or improvidence. The abolition of outdoor relief and creation of a deterrent poor law system, it was thought, would force paupers from the workhouse to find whatever employment they could in the open market.'¹⁸

The New Poor Law was designed to be capable of distinguishing the indigent from the merely poor. To achieve this the Commissioners argued that 'the first and most essential of all conditions, was the principle that the situation of the pauper shall not be made really or apparently as eligible as the situation of the independent labourer of the lowest class'.¹⁹ The best way to achieve this ideal was by abolishing the distribution of outdoor relief to able-bodied persons and their families and ensuring that 'individuals only qualified for relief if they agreed

¹⁵ D. Fraser, 'The English Poor Law and the origins of the British Welfare State' in W.J. Mommsen, W. Mock, (eds.), *The Emergence of the Welfare State in Britain and Germany* (London, 1981), p.20.

¹⁶ F. Engels, *The Condition of the Working Classes in England* (London, 1892), First published (Germany, 1845); M.E. Rose, *The Relief of Poverty 1834-1941* (London, 1972).

B. Harris, *The origins of the British welfare state: state and social welfare in England and Wales, 1800-1945* (Basingstoke, 2004)

¹⁷ Engels, *The Condition of the Working Classes*, p.288.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p.12.

¹⁹ PP. *Report from His Majesty's Commissioners for inquiring into the Administration and Practical Operation of the Poor Law* (1834).

to enter a workhouse'. It was claimed by the commissioners that such a system would provide an infallible test of genuine destitution.²⁰ The Poor Law Amendment Act embodied the principle recommendations of the Royal Commission's Report. In summary, at local level, parishes were re-organised into Poor Law Unions with resources sufficient to maintain a well-regulated workhouse with elected Boards of Guardians and paid permanent officials. Each parish remained responsible for the maintenance of its paupers, and, until the 1860s, no consideration was given to the inequality of burdens as between poor and rich parishes within the same union. Overseeing all was a central board of three Poor Law Commissioners guided by Secretary Edwin Chadwick and supported by an inspectorate of assistant commissioners seeking to impose uniformity of standards and practices through numerous regulations and directives.²¹ To prevent the intrusion of party politics the Poor Law Commission was made independent of Parliament, without accountability or representation.²² This un-regulated overview of the local administration resulted in the establishment of a central board of administration. Englander emphasises the importance of this step:

These two recommendations were among the most important legacies of the Royal Commission, representing a major change in the history of central-local relations in the nineteenth century.²³

Opposition to the New Poor Law

On the day the new policy was introduced, 30 April 1835, there were disturbances at the village of Bapchild, where the relieving officer and a guardian were mobbed, and the officers' books destroyed. At Milton, guardians were stoned as they rode away from their weekly meeting.²⁴

At the same time, the New Poor Law witnessed entrenched resistance via considerable protests

²⁰ Harris, *Origins of the British Welfare State*, p.47.

²¹ The aim of imposing uniformity of standards and practices was never achieved by either the Poor Law Board or, following 1871, the Local Government Board, as both lacked Parliamentary authority to enforce rules.

²² D. Englander, *Poverty and Poor Law Reform in 19th Century Britain, 1834-1913* (London, 1998), p.13.

²³ *Ibid.*, p.48.

²⁴ J. Knott, *Popular Opposition to the 1834 Poor Law* (Kent, 1986), pp.66-67.

nationally due to its implementation.²⁵ Driver makes the assumption that the protests were linked to Chartism, 'yet popular opposition to the New Poor Law does need to be seen in the more general context of popular agitation in Britain during the Chartist era.'²⁶ Strong opposition broke out among not only labourers but also the gentry in Suffolk and the north. Wales promoted strong opposition as much against the New Poor Law as it was against the English.²⁷

Opponents of the New Poor Law were repelled by the prospect of the workhouse being used as the universal test of relief for all able-bodied applications.²⁸ Fraser argues that critics of the workhouse test would depress wages and force the poor to emigrate. Self-respecting labourers 'would accept starvation wages' or emigrate to 'fine countries' rather than submit to 'imprisonment' in the Bastille.²⁹ But, as Fraser demonstrates, not all northern hostility was unanimous citing Manchester, Doncaster, Selby, Goole and Chorley as towns where little anti-poor law activity was seen.³⁰ The anti-poor law committee tried a new strategy by appealing directly to the Establishment in an attempt to gain support³¹ whereby Mr. John Prout, secretary of the Anti-Poor Law committee, wrote directly to Bishops for support but had no succour from that quarter owing to his refusal to recognise the House of Bishops as part of the 'Establishment'. The Bishop of Norwich responded regardless of Mr. Prout's convictions of the House of Bishops concluding:

I look to the introduction of this invaluable measure as a national blessing; and it is inconceivable to me how any influential member of society, who has only the good of his fellow countrymen at heart, but more especially a minister of the Gospel, can do otherwise than, to the utmost of his power, support a law which has become the object of many prejudiced, designing, and interested persons, by misrepresentations and exaggerations,

²⁵ Engels, *The Condition of the Working Classes*, p.288.

²⁶ F. Driver, *Power and Pauperism, the Workhouse System 1834-1884* (Cambridge, 1992), p.113.

²⁷ Fraser, *The New Poor Law*, p.129.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p.129.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p.129.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p.131.

³¹ The *Ten Hour Movement* of the early 1830s had led to the establishment of a network of Short-time Committees throughout the textile districts of Lancashire and the West Riding and these committees now opposed the implementation of the Poor Law. Local anti-Poor Law committees were set up, and their work was co-ordinated by a West Riding anti-Poor Law Committee and South Lancashire anti-Poor Law Association.

to vilify and oppose, refusing to give it that impartial trial, without which its real merits or defects can never be fully ascertained.³²

Despite there being mounting evidence which opposed the principles of the 1834 Act there is no recorded opposition directly found in the Staffordshire Potteries.

The need for further change.

Although the workhouse became the prime objective for poor relief outdoor relief continued to increase during the 1860s. By this time the PLB had become alarmed as expenditure levels became uncontrollable and nationally there was good reason for disquiet, for, as Harris suggests, the consequence of the American Civil War influenced the increase for outdoor relief, particularly in the cotton towns of Lancashire. In London there was also growing evidence that outdoor relief continued to be distributed to large numbers despite attempts to reduce it under the 1834 Act.³³

Many historians agree that the weakness of the central authority to achieve the complete abolition of outdoor relief lies with the original failure of the 1834 Act.³⁴ It became clear that the authority could not impose the construction of workhouses to provide sufficient accommodation for paupers but the expansion of workhouses was essential if the policy of indoor relief only was to succeed.³⁵ In an attempt to further reduce payments of outdoor relief, two additional General Orders were issued by the PLB, but these, as Rose claims, merely reflected ‘the total failure of the central authority to draft and enforce an effective order prohibiting outdoor relief’.³⁶

Williams takes a different view than Rose who firmly identified that the problem lay with

³² *Potteries Mercury*, 12 June 1837. Letter to the Editor by the Bishop of Norwich.

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 54.

³⁴ K. Williams, *From Pauperism to Poverty* (London, 1981), p.61.

³⁵ D. Ashworth, ‘The Urban Poor Law’, D. Fraser (ed.) *The New Poor Law in the Nineteenth Century* (London, 1976), p.132.

³⁶ Rose, *The Relief of Poverty*, p.49.

the Act but rather describes the poor law strategy by the 1850s and 1860s as being concerned with those able-bodied men who were 'in-health' rather than the 'temporarily sick':

Under clause two of the 1844 Order sick persons were specifically exempted from the general prohibition of outdoor relief. Later an 1852 Order's restrictions on outdoor relief were suspended for sick men. The central authority acquiesced in un-conditional outdoor relief for sick men, and the prohibition and restrictions were reserved for those men who tried to draw relief for unemployment related reasons. The strategy of the 1850s and 1860s was concerned with those able-bodied men who were unemployed, underemployed, or low paid.³⁷

In 1868, George Goschen became the first President of the PLB, and in the following year, 1869, issued a memorandum to all London unions regarding metropolitan pauperism and the increase in outdoor relief, urging division of responsibilities between the poor law and charities.³⁸ Goschen was referring to the practice of relief in aid of wages, indiscriminate distribution of charitable funds, and the frequent double distribution of relief to the same persons by the poor law and charities combined.³⁹ His view was that relief was only to be provided to the destitute, not to the poorly paid, since the expansion of relief brought the danger of the poor having a legal claim to public money. This, Goschen continued, 'would degrade self-reliance and thrift.'⁴⁰ In 1869, the Charity Organisation Society (COS) was founded to co-ordinate the work of private philanthropic bodies, thereby concentrating their efforts on the 'deserving' poor. This would prevent them from duplicating the activity of the poor law guardians who were seen also as relieving the 'un-deserving' poor.⁴¹

The COS was in favour of stricter control over outdoor relief and urged that in fact further controls weakened the sense of family responsibility and lessened incentives to thrift. The restrictions of outdoor relief claimed the Society:

³⁷ Williams, *From Pauperism to Poverty*, p.65.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ PP. 22nd *Annual Report of the Poor Law Board (1869-70)*, App. No.4.

⁴⁰ Englander, *Poverty, and the Poor Law*, pp.104-5.

⁴¹ A. Digby, *The Poor Law in the Nineteenth Century England and Wales* (London, 1982)

- Reduces the number of paupers.
- Does not materially increase, and often diminishes/reduces the number of indoor paupers.
- Reduces expenditure and so relieves the rates.
- Encourages thrift and providence.
- Brings relations to a sense of duty.
- Asks kindly and not harshly of the poor, and advances the cause of true charity.

The COS was not without its critics, and one former relieving officer, Joseph Turnell – a leading member of the Sheffield Board of Guardians – published a pamphlet about outdoor relief in 1873.⁴² (Two years following the merger of the PLB with the newly formed Local Government Board.) The pamphlet caused a sensation in poor law circles. Turnell criticised the LGB for adopting COS policy, claiming in a follow-up letter that:

Hundreds of thousands of outdoor aged poor and infirm are in the most miserable condition; that the small allowance we make to them was not sufficient to sustain nature, and that the horses, nay the very dogs of aristocracy were better stabled, kennelled and fed than our deserving poor are housed, clothed and fed.⁴³

Turnell was angry that Mr. Andrew Doyle, LGB inspector for the north of England, had criticised the work of the northern guardians in the appendix to the *First Local Government* report (1872-3). In his report, Doyle claimed that pauperism was unchecked and in many manufacturing districts as high as 10.8 per cent of the total population. Turnell described this calculation as fiction. It is important however to understand Doyle's assessment within the context of the local economy and the history of pauperism within the Staffordshire Potteries

⁴² TNA. MH25/24, LGB misc. J. Turnell, Pamphlet suggestions for the amendment of the administration of the poor law by which double relief could be given to the aged and infirm, materially increase that given to the widow and orphan, and a great reduction of the rates to the ratepayer, Sheffield. 1873.

⁴³ TNA. MH25/24, LGB misc. J. Turnell, Sheffield union, 14 Jan. 1874, Correspondence between civil servants and poor law officials, misc. File, 1874.

and chapter three evaluates much of the evidence alongside that of Dupree and others, and the effects of the depression of trade within the local economy resulting in the closure of pottery many manufactories.⁴⁴

In 1871 the PLB merged with the newly created LGB to form a new ministry of state, controlling most aspects of local government administration. This ministry was more powerful than the old PLB, ranking amongst the most senior government departments whereby its President held a seat in Cabinet.⁴⁵ The previous decade had witnessed a decline in industry and an increase in unsustainable poor law welfare. The Act was seen as a new starting point in rectifying errors of the previous administration in an attempt to reduce the mounting crisis of poor relief. With the LGB in place, a new *Circular* regarding outdoor relief, dated December 1871 was issued to the inspectors and widely published setting the tone for the ensuing decade.⁴⁶ The secretary of the LGB, Mr. H. Fleming raised the issue of the ever-increasing cost of outdoor relief, maintaining that this form of relief had an enervating effect on paupers' sense of responsibility to themselves to their families:

Relief extinguishes in the mind of the labourer all motives for husbanding his resources and induces him to rely exclusively upon the rates instead of upon his own savings for such relief as he may require. It removes every incentive to self-reliance and prudent fore-thought.⁴⁷

In 1873, a review of Fleming's directives was undertaken by Henry Longley, an eminent senior inspector at the LGB, who investigated whether the directives were being uniformly implemented. Longley discovered that there was still a high degree of local autonomy. Consequently, a third anti-outdoor relief initiative (the Longley Report) was issued, reiterating the themes of the Goschen Minute of 1869 and the Flemming *Circular* of

⁴⁴ M. Dupree, *Family Structure in the Staffordshire Potteries* (Oxford, 1995).

⁴⁵ C. Bellamy, *Administering central-local relations 1871-1991. The Local Government Board in its fiscal and cultural context* (Manchester, 1988), for the most comprehensive account of the LGB's record of administration.

⁴⁶ PP. *1st Annual Report, Local Government Committee* (1871-2), pp.63-68. (Circular 2nd December 1871).

⁴⁷ P. Murray, *Poverty and Welfare 1830-1914* (London, 1999), pp.49-50.

1871. Longley proposed far more radical deterrents on the basis that the recommendations of Goschen and Flemming, although appropriate, did not increase compliance. This was based on the fact that they failed to state explicitly that all types of outdoor relief should be abolished. Longley asserted that only by stating that outdoor relief funding was illegal would expenditure on poor relief be reduced.⁴⁸

Fraser argues that the 1870s were something of a watershed in the history of the poor law and that the LGB battled against the abuse of outdoor relief. The rhetoric from the LGB reflects this view but there were also concerns expressed with regards to able-bodied men receiving indoor relief when they were well enough to find work. In March 1870, a meeting of guardians at Stoke expressed their views that severe means should be taken in dealing with the able-bodied claiming indoor relief:

There were thirty-two able-bodied men and thirty-six able-bodied women in the workhouse; eleven of the latter had been deserted by their husbands. Now that the very poorest of the people were called upon to pay rates, some severe pressure should be used as to these able-bodied paupers, and if they could be driven out of the workhouse, all the better. Mr. Davies, the stipendiary (magistrate) agreed that if such people would not work, they should not eat. They could kill idle pauperism by punishment; they could not do it by moral means. One Guardian suggested a taste of the cat of nine tails⁴⁹ (laughter); another jocularly proposed the hanging of one of the able-bodied troublers. Another suggested there should certainly be a severe taskmaster, and another stated that in the adjoining parish such paupers were put to the most disagreeable of duties. The clerk was instructed to write to Mr. Doyle, Poor Law Inspector, asking for his advice as to the best way to deal with the idle able-bodied paupers.⁵⁰

There is no mistaking the terminology used. The guardians were aggrieved that they should be obliged to care for those able to work while the poorest of the parish had to pay rates to maintain them. The guardians believed this to be an injustice.⁵¹ The matter was not resolved,

⁴⁸ E. Hurren, *Protesting about Pauperism* (Woodbridge, 2007), p.24.

⁴⁹ A form of whipping across the back of an individual.

⁵⁰ SS. 19 March 1870.

⁵¹ The current purge on the 'Benefit Society' by national government reflects the same concerns which animated guardians in the 1870s.

but any redress in law was limited. The situation was again referred to at the following guardians meeting in July, where, several able-bodied inmates were called and questioned by the guardians as to their reasons for entering the house. Illness was the cause in all cases, but one said that he intended to discharge himself on the following Monday. It was ordered that the medical officer should be requested to examine them and report accordingly as the guardians were not satisfied with the replies.⁵²

Despite attempts by Longley, Goschen and Flemming they failed to establish national compliance to the administration of the poor law and thereby stop outdoor relief causing confusion by guardians on how to deal with the growing problem of the poor.

Conclusion

By the late eighteenth century the Old Poor Law of 1601 was found inadequate in dealing with the growth of the manufacturing towns and increases in population whereby inflexible attitudes such as parish independence alluding to the Old Poor Law became difficult to suppress and parochialism recognised as a part of the old administration became incorporated in the local administration of the New Poor Law.

It is from this period that the realisation of 'at what cost' the old system of outdoor relief could be maintained became the thought process of change and the establishment of the New Poor Law. However, despite a new law and a new system the old parochial ways remained as guardians were opposed to losing their independence and taking orders from a distant central authority. In some regions opposition to the new law was mounted which took time to suppress. The final acceptance of the law, however, did not bring with it a unified system of relief and the national framework of welfare for the poor remained fractured. The established patterns of relief and the fundamental concept of almost self-administration by interpretation was indigenous – bonds that were not easily adapted to the New Poor Law policy. It is these variations of local and

⁵² SS. 23 July 1870.

regional interpretation of the New Poor Law based largely upon the parochial practice of the Old Poor Law that remained unchallenged.

It was argued in the last section of this chapter that the un-sustainability of outdoor poor relief led to the concept of the only relief available was by admittance into the workhouse of a man and his family. This change in policy presented battle-lines to the constant and un-remitting demands to reduce the cost of poor law welfare. Indeed, it is this challenge to guardians that in many cases fell short of the ideals. The events leading up to 1871 with a change of administration were in many ways seen as a new starting point for the New Poor Law and the denial that there was not one poor law but as unions were interpreting and administering the law according to their own agenda hence multiplied one poor law into many poor laws by the fact of spatial diversity.

This chapter, therefore, provides the necessary background to understanding the concept and pattern of poor relief and importantly presents the dilemma in which the poor law found itself as it set a path once more to restrict outdoor relief in a broken and divided system. Indeed, it is this that remains the key theme of the North-South Divide based upon local variations and how these pressures expressed themselves within the specifics of the day-to-day administration of the two Poor Law Unions and the experiences of the poor themselves. It is case study-led thesis, drawing on primary material to answer the key questions set out in chapter one.

Chapter 3 – The History of the Poor Law in the Potteries until 1871

Overview

This chapter continues from the previous by following the development and changes of the poor law from first a national perspective and secondly from a Staffordshire Potteries perspective. The emphasis in chapter two was on the national transition from the Old Poor Law to the New Poor Law which drew the conclusion that despite the Act there remained a parochial approach to the new administration. It was hoped that the Act would produce clarity and uniformity of the administration of the poor law throughout the country but instead it had little power to enforce its directives.

These national changes in 1834 provide the parameters of this chapter whereby it first establishes the origins of the Potteries, its landscape and the care of the poor under the Old Poor Law that provide a broad analytical overview of the issues relating to its administration and to an area expanding because of industrialisation. The chapter continues with a view of the contrasting areas of social deprivation and questions whether parochialism from the past remained an important factor under the new Act. Finally, it will assess the development of the two poor law unions up to 1871 with its focus on what part spatial diversity played in the experiences of the poor and the approach of both unions to the *crusade*.

The origins of the Staffordshire Potteries

The area known as the Staffordshire Potteries had its origins in the mid-seventeenth century, a period identified as the beginning of the Industrial Revolution. To distinguish this area from other major industrial areas it is necessary first to focus on issues associated with its early development. Its origins are complex as they are based upon a linear pattern mirroring the landscape with small hamlets scattered along a winding lane stretching from the south until it

faded into the Staffordshire Moorlands to the north.¹ This lane lay upon a geological structure consisting of the raw material of clay and coal required for the manufacture of pottery. These hamlets slowly joined together to become villages by the middle of the eighteenth century.

As villages, they expanded into six towns with individual identities and separate administrations and became identified throughout the country as the Staffordshire Potteries. Despite the unifying effect of one identifiable title the district remained divided by the parochial system along established parish boundaries for poor law relief. It is from this period that diversity and separation were cultured as a form of protectionism against one of the six towns losing its characteristics to an adjacent town.

There are three key areas that need to be investigated. Firstly, to establish the social depravity found under the Old Poor Law. Secondly, if there was a north and the south divide of the Staffordshire Potteries, and thirdly, to what extent did political diversity increase under the select vestry system of the poor law administration. It is this area of division and diversity dating back to the middle-ages that has remained as the driving force for the retention of parochial individuality as will become evident within in the administration of the poor law.

Social Deprivation

To place the Staffordshire Potteries into context it is important to identify and evaluate on a regional basis the underlying conditions that paupers suffered under the Old Poor Law to place the period into perspective with what follows. A reference to the parochial administration was included in a report dated 1830 by the overseer of the poor for the parish of Stoke-upon-Trent drawing attention to the abuses of the poor and the additional demands for relief from those moving into the area seeking employment. Mr. G. W. Taylor, the assistant overseer drew attention in his report to the almost reckless demands made by the poor.² It was suggested that

¹ C. Hawke-Smith, *The Making of the Potteries* (Stoke-on-Trent, 1985), p.2.

² Mr. G. W. Taylor was Assistant Overseer of the Poor for the Parish of Stoke-upon-Trent from 1827.

the old poor-house situated in the village of Penkhull made it an attractive alternative to hard work to the extent that when inmates who did find work they would, within a short time, abscond from their places of employment to return to an easy life in the parish poor-house.³

The report states:

No longer is parochial relief asked, it is demanded, as the person's indisputable freehold right, which, whenever peculiar circumstances induce the overseers to refuse or withhold, causes application to be made immediately, and too often successfully, to some magistrate, whose humanity predominates over his judgement, and whose decision, 'That the poor cannot starve, and the overseers must find them either work or money,' gives the pauper the impression that he has gained his point which is quickly communicated to all his acquaintances, and excites others to pursue the same line of conduct ... The smallness of the house, and the difficulty of providing labour, leaves numbers of paupers altogether in idleness, who continue so year after year, without evincing the least desire to obtain employment either at home or in another place. Those who have been admitted into the workhouse, have from the small size of the house, so little labour that no inclination is manifested to quit its accommodation. After being there for a while both boys and girls have such an attachment to it, which they have absconded from good places in which they have been apprenticed and returned to it.⁴

This illustration of how welfare was administered under the Old Poor Law in Stoke-upon-Trent exposes the wider social aspect of how the young and orphaned were treated by employers in the wider Potteries area. Although the report is confined to one parish it stands as an example of the wider social implications and the need for further investigations to place its conclusions into a district or regional context.

The voices of the poor play an important part in interpreting the welfare of paupers and the following extract dated 1836 on the treatment and administration at Stoke under the New Poor Law is alarming. The condition experienced by a young inmate employed at a potbank is a perfect example.⁵ A boy was treated so badly that he reported the matter to his employer Mr. Copeland (Copeland and Garratt, of Stoke) even though such complaints were rare, since

³ Poor-House. This term was used throughout Staffordshire on a map published by Thomas Hargreaves in 1832.

⁴ HA. G.W. Taylor, *Causes of the increase of Pauperism in the Parish of Stoke-upon-Trent* (Hanley, 1830).

⁵ Earthenware or china manufactory.

inmates feared the consequences. The treatment of the workhouse pauper was referred to by the overseer Mr. Taylor thus, 'he was fed on stinking bacon, and was so severely flogged because he complained to his employer. Mr. Copeland considered it his duty to cause a magisterial investigation to which there was no response from the guardians. 'Cronyism, it would seem, was more powerful than a workhouse pauper' the press commented and the case was compromised with costs.⁶ Mr. Taylor concluded:

Nothing would be said to the contractor and the governor, nor would they be complaining while the Board was fed and feasted at the workhouse.⁷

This example shows the extent of depravity that existed at Stoke under the Old Poor Law and provides a realistic assessment of conditions prior to 1834.

New workhouse and administration for the New Poor Law - Stoke

As the population increased so too did the demand for workhouse accommodation resulting in a new workhouse with a capacity of three hundred paupers being built two years prior to the 1834 Act at a location called the 'Spittals' one mile distant from the old poor house. As a result of the move and a re-assessment of outdoor relief the costs which had increased from £8,000 for outdoor relief and £1,200 for indoor relief recorded in 1828/9, was reduced by nearly one-third by 1833.⁸ A salaried assistant overseer was given authority to appoint officers annually, and to pay the governor of the workhouse together with six collectors, 'subject to the supervision of the overseers and the select vestry.'⁹

A Commissioner's report of 1835-6 paints a critical picture of management practice at Stoke. Not only was the Board dominated by Potters' Union operatives, but the workhouse

⁶ *Potteries Mercury*, 18 December 1836.

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ H.A. The annual accounts for the parish of Stoke-on-Trent 1828-9. Others authors on the subject include: K. Williams, *From Pauperism to Poverty* (London, 1981); M. MacKinnon, 'English Poor Law Policy and the Crusade Against Poverty' *The Journal of Economic History* (1987).

⁹ J.G. Jenkins (ed.) *Victorian County of Staffordshire, vol.viii* (London, 1963), p.198-9.

governor had long been a contractor for supplies and personally collected the earnings of the paupers. The following report portrays corruption, partiality, and incompetence:

The consequences of the arrangements were first an unnecessary accumulation of inmates from 210 which when discontinued fell to 136; a great discrepancy in the diet for where he did not care a stint to starve the aged, and unable to work, it was his interest to allure the stout and able-bodied to the establishment and maintain them there in good working condition.

The classification of the house was so imperfect that in the previous year three unmarried females became pregnant. The accounts were in a state that almost defied investigation, and the collection of rates was conducted fraudulently and no rate regularly balanced for many years.¹⁰

In 1835, the Potters' Union (NUOP) declared its intention to take over the administration and to use poor rates in the form of outdoor relief to support current industrial action against employers. In the end, it became impossible for the vestry to make decisions as the composition of the guardians included several members of the working classes.¹¹ This being the case the parish requested a meeting with the Poor Law Commission for advice on how to accommodate the threat from the Potters' Union.

The decision was put to a public meeting of middle-class manufacturers and working-class ratepayers in November 1835 which passed a resolution asking the PLC to send an assistant commissioner to investigate the situation. This rather unusual move by the Stoke Union must have been seen as a perfect illustration of support for the new Act against local political interference. Rather than protest against the principles of the 1834 Act, the Potters Union's strategy was to gain control of the new Board of Guardians at the forthcoming elections. The Assistant Commissioner, Mr. Richard Hall, arrived to discuss the matter with the Select Vestry and those of 'the operative classes.' The affairs were freely stated, resulting in a unanimous decision that the present system could not continue and that the New Poor Law Act

¹⁰ PP. *2nd Annual Report of the Poor Law Commission* (1836), by Assistant Commissioner Richard Hall, p.401.

¹¹ The Union held a number of seats on the Board and members used their status to oppose all proposals.

should be adopted immediately. A recommendation to that effect was agreed to be presented to the forthcoming meeting of parishioners.¹²

The Potters' Union pressed the assistant commissioner to recommend a £6 rateable qualification to enable several its members to stand for election to the Board of Guardians. The assistant commissioner gave the impression that he agreed to the rate of £6 but instead recommended a £20 qualification disbaring the working classes from seeking election on account of the cost.¹³ The following election, held on the 23rd April 1836,¹⁴ saw thirty candidates standing for twenty-four vacancies,¹⁵ resulting in a return of only one guardian sympathetic to the Potters Union. By the end of the month, Stoke-upon-Trent Poor Law Union had adopted the new Act.¹⁶ The failure to take control of the Board of Guardians by the Potters Union meant that their funds were exhausted and subsequently, in 1836/7 its members could no longer receive outdoor relief from the poor law – and the strike of pottery workers was defeated.¹⁷ Stoke parish became the first manufacturing area to be placed under a Board of Guardians under the Poor Law Amendment Act of 1834.¹⁸

New workhouse and administration for the New Poor Law - Wolstanton

The Wolstanton and Burslem Poor Law Union commenced life as two separate parishes. Wolstanton was a rural parish with a small cottage-type parish poor-house¹⁹ whereas Burslem, an urban area, a poor-house was established by the 1780s and later enlarged in 1835.²⁰ The creation of the new union and the subsequent building of a workhouse situated at Chell could

¹² *Potteries Mercury*, 29 November 1835.

¹³ The annual value or rental of a property before an individual was entitled to vote.

¹⁴ *Potteries Mercury*, 23 April 1836.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 7 May 1836.

¹⁶ PP. *2nd Annual Report of the Poor Law Commission (1836)*, by Assistant Commissioner Richard Hall, xxix, pt.1, p.401-3. Also, MH12/11458, 17 October, 25 November and 10 December 1835. *Potteries Mercury* for press reports, November-December 1835.

¹⁷ R. Fyson, *Unionism, Class and Community in the 1830's* (London, 1988), p.210-12.

¹⁸ Although Stoke voted to accept the 1834 Act, there was much opposition to this in the country: D. Fraser, *The New Poor Law in the Nineteenth Century* (London, 1981). p.129; J. Knott, *Popular Opposition to the 1834 Poor Law* (Kent, 1986).

¹⁹ D. Baker, *Workhouses in the Potteries* (Stoke-on-Trent, 1984), p.11.

²⁰ *Ibid.*

not have been more different to that of Stoke-upon-Trent. In 1834, the guardians of Burslem and Wolstanton expressed their opposition to amalgamation to become the combined Wolstanton and Burslem Poor Law Union delaying the procedure for some years. A report dated 1836, by Assistant Commissioner Richard Hall, found a catalogue of malpractice at Burslem in the existing poor law administration which was mainly under the control of local pottery manufacturers considered to be the elite of the town. The need for proper control over the paid officers was also noted as the most pressing problem. Mr. Hall, the Poor Law Inspector, reported that:

During my enquiries among them, complaints were repeatedly made of the corrupt and disorderly conduct of those officials. ‘Why do you not get rid of them’ I asked; ‘I wish we could but the governor has too many friends at the general meeting’ was the reply.²¹

In December 1837 correspondence from the PLC confirmed that discussions regarding the amalgamation of Burslem with Wolstanton to form a new union were taking place. Wolstanton opposed the proposal on the basis that it wished to remain a single parish workhouse in a rural setting. If this was not possible, the vestry requested to form a union with Newcastle, an adjacent parish, and not with Burslem.²² In an attempt to remain as a single parish Burslem decided to add a further ward to the old buildings, bringing its capacity to three hundred which the PLC strongly suspected was carried out to ward off a combined union with Wolstanton.²³

Both Burslem and Wolstanton feared the loss of control and, at Burslem in particular, the loss of revenue from inmates’ earnings. The Burslem select vestry consisted of pottery manufacturers and business men possessing considerable influence and objected because inmates from the workhouse were employed casually in local manufactories at busy periods and for many years the average collective earnings totalled more than £100 per annum. The

²¹ PP. 2nd *Annual Report of the Poor Law Commission* (1836), by Assistant Commissioner Richard Hall, p.419.

²² TNA. MH12/11196/30, 16 February 1838.

²³ The guardians thought that by increasing the workhouse capacity to 300, it would maintain its independent position in the centre of the town and ward off other Unions which might wish to join with them to form a larger union.

reality was that the manufacturers were getting cheap labour and thereby increased profits creating unemployment amongst outdoor able-bodied and therefore placing even more into the workhouse or in receipt of outdoor relief.²⁴ The loss of such income from the casual employment of inmates would be detrimental to the parish if a new poor-house were to be erected at any distance away from the town. By way of comparison with Stoke-upon-Trent, the important issue at Burslem was the resistance to change, a resistance driven by power, greed and a fear of diminished authority among the pottery manufacturers. By February 1838, the Poor Law Commission wrote to the guardians at Burslem after numerous failed attempts to persuade them to form a proposed amalgamation:

The Commission does not accept the argument that there is no harmony of interests between Burslem and Wolstanton for the guardians will have a common duty to both, and the ratepayers can be relied on to cordially co-operate in the implementation of the new arrangements.²⁵

The Wolstanton and Burslem Poor Law Union came into existence on the 2nd April 1838 and at its second meeting of guardians it recommended that the old Wolstanton workhouse in Burslem be sold.²⁶ The newly elected Board proceeded quickly with their plans to erect a new workhouse, advertising one month later for a site of four to five acres.²⁷ The Poor Law Commissioners authorised an expenditure of £6,200 to erect the workhouse which would accommodate four hundred inmates and be completed by 1839. In February 1840, the union opened the new joint workhouse. The Staffordshire Advertiser described its opening:

The new establishment is situated on lofty ground situated at Turnhurst Road, Chell ... It consists of three distinct ranges of buildings the first nearest to the road contains the boardroom and other officers, the porter's lodge, probationary wards, and stabling. The second range is the main building in the centre of which stands three stories high, are the apartments for the Governor. On each side are the school rooms and the day and sleeping rooms for the aged, the kitchens, etc. Two wings, one on each extremity comprise the day

²⁴ TNA. MH12/11196/24, 30 Dec 1837.

²⁵ TNA. MH12/11193/31, 23 February 1838.

²⁶ *Potteries Mercury*, 5 April 1838.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 15 May 1838.

and sleeping rooms for the able-bodied. The third range to the rear comprises a spacious hospital for the sick, with every needful convenience, wash-houses, and workhouses for the children, mill-room, and bake-house. There is a spacious chapel neatly fitted up and capable of holding 300 persons²⁸

The building comprised three main sections. A single-storey entrance range containing the porter's lodge, boardroom, offices and receiving wards, possibly with vagrants' wards to the side. The three-storey main block had quarters for the master, matron, schoolmaster and schoolmistress at the centre, with male accommodation in the north wing and female in the south. An infirmary was at the rear together with a laundry on the female side, and the bake-house, corn mill, workrooms and piggeries on the male side. A kitchen, with a chapel above, lay between the main block and the infirmary.²⁹

The description presents a fully working, purpose-built institution.³⁰ The incorporation of vagrants' and receiving wards, providing for classification of paupers in line with the 1834 New Poor Law Act, emphasises this point. The new design also incorporated appropriate accommodation for the workhouse master, an infirmary, wash house and school room. In fact, the design reflects a workhouse laid out with a clear purpose, as opposed to Stoke, which from 1832 was added to on an ad-hoc basis without any overall plan. With only limited parochial funds and loans any development was limited and not consistent with the policy of classification by buildings which was the main feature of the New Poor Law.

Evidence shows that from this period each of the parishes, Stoke, Burslem and Wolstanton were embedded by an historical philosophy of maintaining its own identities whereby people of local influence governed with the objective of protecting their position, a

²⁸ S.A. 28th March 1840.

²⁹ Barker, *Workhouses*, p.32.

³⁰ M. Crowther, *The Workhouse System 1834-1929 the History of an English Social Institution* (London, 1981), p.39-40, Crowther makes the point that a single new building would present a more potent symbol of the new poor law than a series of familiar parish poorhouses; E.C. Midwinter, *Social Administration in Lancaster 1830-1860: Poor Law, Public Health and Police* (Manchester, 1969), p.55. In the study of Wigan Midwinter suggests than rather embark on a huge capital programme of re-building that many of the old workhouses are retained.

standpoint that will be projected throughout this study.

Parochialism

Parochialism in the Staffordshire Potteries was a natural progression from the seventeenth-century whereby hamlets protected themselves as the industrial revolution encroached upon their lives. The two previous subsections have established the early distinctions between the two unions, Stoke and Wolstanton illustrated by the diverse path each took before they came under the authority of the New Poor Law. Previous attitudes towards parochial relief under the Old Poor Law were challenged as a result of the 1834 Act and the guardians feared their protected independence being eroded by centralisation and directives.

This challenge was to retain their identity through each stage of growth into large manufacturing towns. The cause of independence remained embedded in the attitudes of town leaders, workers, employers and local communities. This fundamental concept of parochialism provides the back-drop of local spatial variations throughout the early mid-poor law period, hence the focus on this theme in the introduction to this thesis. From early times this inherited blueprint of self-determination continued a pattern that over-lapped from the Old Poor Law into the New Poor Law to create a north-south divide in the Staffordshire Potteries. The final section to this chapter seeks to expose the parochialism now interpreted as spatial variations found in the administration of the *crusade* against outdoor relief. Nowhere do these local variations show themselves more keenly than in the attitudes towards this new campaign to reduce poor law expenditure.

Many of the important published works for the period focus on subject of the *Crusade* such as: Anthony Brundage's work and more recently the study of Northamptonshire by Elizabeth Hurren whilst Pat Ryan's analysis of East London draws attention to the beginning

and the end period of the *Crusade*.³¹ Following the introduction of the 1834 New Poor Act one of the major policy areas was, as we learn in chapter two, to reduce outdoor poor relief for the able-bodied male and for this to be replaced only by relief via the workhouse. Brundage views the immediate period following 1834 as prosperous but by 1837 trade depressions caused a major downturn in key industries such as found in the Staffordshire Potteries and other northern industrial towns. The problem understood by Brundage was that workhouses were in no state to accommodate the numbers seeking shelter under the provision of 'less eligibility'. He believed that the rise in numbers led to a struggle between central government and poor law unions as those poor who were granted outdoor relief were made to feel ashamed of their situation.³² Brundage further places the responsibility for the increase of outdoor relief expenditure on to the PLB as they failed to use their audit powers to control costs which ultimately led to the *Crusade* being introduced.³³ It is these failures and changes as a result of pressure from trade depressions and demographics that caused the need to establish a new policy for the reduction of outdoor relief.

For Karel Williams, the essential problem of the continuing strength of demand for and supply of, outdoor relief is unsurprising. His foundation study argues in essence that the New Poor Law was never established to end outdoor relief, but rather to restrict it in normal times. This being so, he notes, extraordinary events such as trade cycles that led to the mass use of the workhouse and/or withdrawal of small outdoor relief allowances which were never envisaged in 1836.

³¹ A. Brundage, 'Reform of the Poor Law Electoral System', *Albion: A Quarterly Journal Concerned with British Studies* (1975), pp.201-215; E. Hurren, *Protesting About Pauperism: Poverty and Poor Relief in Late-Victorian England* (Woodbridge, 2007); P. Ryan, 'Politics and Poor Relief: East London unions in the later nineteenth and early twentieth-centuries', M.E. Rose, (ed.) *The Poor and City: the English Poor Law in its urban context, 1834-1914* (Leicester, 1985), pp.133-172 .

³² A. Brundage, 'The English Poor Law and the Cohesion of Agricultural Society', *Agricultural History Review* (1974), pp.85-86.

³³ *Ibid.*, p.112.

The interpretation of poor law statistics by Williams identifies the start of a full-scale assault in the 1860s against outdoor relief for able-bodied male pauperism as the most negative instrument directed towards the poor in the entire New Poor Law period.³⁴ Williams argued that the *Crusade* as it became known, caused a drastic change in the outdoor classification of paupers and the demands on outdoor relief, and, as a consequence, suggested that the new workhouse system was all about the re-organisation of administration and not about the attempt to reduce outdoor relief. Williams provides a compelling perspective but it is nonetheless true that public and administrative opinion came to dwell negatively on the continuing escalation of both the overall poor law costs and outdoor relief.

It follows then that over the last thirty years the subject of the *Crusade* has been dominated by the study of Williams.³⁵ He argued that the *Crusade* in the 1870s was not merely a restoration of the aims of the 1834 *Report* based upon the able-male pauper, but rather than an attack on pauperism on a much wider front with the able-bodied, old and young, women and children all being targeted. Williams estimated that the overall reduction in outdoor pauperism was forty per cent between 1871 and 1893 that had been achieved whereby aged and infirm adults, and widows with dependent children, the two largest classes of pauper, experienced reductions of thirty and thirty-three per cent respectively.³⁶

Estimates of the resulting reduction in pauper's numbers claiming outdoor relief as a result of the *Crusade* has been challenging. Williams considered that 'between the years 1871-1876 the total number of paupers fell nationally by two hundred and seventy-six thousand or a thirty-three per cent reduction in the number of outdoor relief paupers. This reduced the percentage of total population receiving out-relief from 3.8 to 2.4 per cent – considered a brilliant short run success.'³⁷ David Thompson, on the other hand, argues that Williams failed

³⁴ K. Williams, *From Pauperism to Poverty* (London, 1981).

³⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 104-107.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p.102.

to address the fact that the age profile of the population in England and Wales was increasing, and therefore Williams' findings are subject to misrepresentation.³⁸

In comparison, the figures for Stoke-upon-Trent amounted to nine per cent, suggesting the unreliability of national statistics if taken as a standard figure for every union.³⁹ During the period of industrial distress in the pottery industry between 1875 and 1876 a higher proportion of paupers in receipt of outdoor relief were anticipated but the reality is that only around six per cent of the population of Stoke Union received the relief.⁴⁰

In response to the comments by Williams, Michael Rose remarked that 'the steep fall in indoor relief in the 1870s, which the reformers hailed as a demonstration of the success, has yet to be investigated at grass-roots level.'⁴¹ Until 2007, little appears to have been done to evaluate the work of Williams until Elizabeth Hurren argued that the emphasis of Williams's study was 'based upon national pauperism statistics which has been a disincentive to local studies of the crusading experience.'⁴²

Whilst other historians have struggled to arrive at a definitive answer to the issue of the *Crusade* Hurren has revisited this with a case study of the Brixworth workhouse where she describes the rationale as a 'complex jigsaw puzzle'.⁴³ She argues that *Crusading* measures cut to the heart of poor relief spending from the perspective of paupers – hence their vociferous opposition to even minor relief cutbacks experienced in the Brixworth area.⁴⁴ In her study of

³⁸ D. Thomson, *Provision for the Elderly in England, 1834-1980*. Ph.D Thesis (Cambridge, 1981). The proportion of elderly persons in the total population in England and Wales was increasing; the number receiving 'some form of public assistance' in 1890 'was less than half of what it had been in the 1870s'.

³⁹ SS. 7 April 1877.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, This is the total number of those in receipt of relief for the full year. It indicated that the Stoke guardians had succeeded in implementing the *Crusade* against out-relief to some degree.

⁴¹ M.E. Rose, 'The Crisis in Poor Law Relief in England 1860-1890', W.J. Mommsen (ed.) *The Emergence of the Welfare State in Britain and Germany 1850-1950* (London, 1981).

⁴² Hurren, *Protesting about Pauperism*, p.55.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, p.250.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

the complicated nature of the *Crusade*, she illustrates her argument from four different perspectives.

Firstly, that the *Crusade* had a devastating effect of reducing families to starvation levels including women having to beg for funeral costs in an attempt to prevent the bodies of their loved ones being taken for dissection by anatomists. This was in addition to the practice of prosecuting adult children of elderly paupers to force them to pay towards the maintenance of relatives both inside and outside of the workhouse. Also, the withdrawal of poor relief had the effect of removing financial support when it was needed to care for the sick and mentally ill at home. This consideration is supported by the work by Kim Price as it forced many paupers into the workhouse on the basis of survival.⁴⁵

Secondly, the *Crusade* had so many aspects that it was a reasonable assumption that not all unions followed central authority's *Circulars* to implement them. Hurren suggests there were, in fact, different types of *Crusades* both in different places and at different times. There were also numerous participants: the opportunistic, moderates and extremists and that the *Crusade* was not just about the able-bodied being forced into workhouses but was wider, encompassing the idle and habitual beggar who entered institutions as an effort to cut the cost of outdoor relief.⁴⁶

In many parts of the county, the sudden rise in unemployment within a few years following 1834 produced shortages in accommodation which was unlikely to reduce outdoor relief later as it was to be replaced by the 'workhouse test'. It is here that the central Board believed that outdoor relief was 'morally and economically destructive' and they saw the

⁴⁵ K. Price, 'Where is the Fault, the Starvation of Edward Cooper at the Isle of Wight Workhouse in 1877', *Social History of Medicine* (2012), p.21-57.

⁴⁶ Hurren, *Protesting about Pauperism*, p.249.

Crusade against outdoor relief to ‘improve the moral character of society and reduce relief expenditure’ by using the workhouse test as a test of destitution.⁴⁷

Thirdly, following the change of administration of the poor law in 1871 from the PLB to become a part of the LGB, officers became alarmed as they calculated that only about sixteen per cent of paupers were being relieved within workhouses. The rest were in receipt of outdoor relief despite the revenue changes brought in after 1865 to improve accommodation facilities in workhouses.⁴⁸ Hurren argues that it was this that prompted the LGB to inform unions to re-examine outdoor procedures where the policy was not being carried out fully as it was noted that in some workhouses sixty per cent of paupers were there as a result of no outdoor relief policy and not that of the *Crusade*.

Hurren concludes in her fourth point that in reality the origins of the *Crusade* were rooted in a major recession during the 1860s. This assumption is supported by Kidd, who suggests that outdoor relief provision came under renewed attack following a series of slumps in trade in 1863-4.⁴⁹ Furthermore, it was not until the LGB replaced the PLB in 1871 that it was recognised as a trade problem whereby the LGB blamed Boards of Guardians for maintaining outdoor relief.⁵⁰ This re-visited study of the *Crusade* by Hurren following on from that of Williams expresses the need for further examination of outdoor relief of the poor emphasising the fact that far less has been done in the revision of the scholarship on poverty covering the period following 1871. It is from this date Hurren argues, that the *Crusade* began suggesting the need for future historians to bring together poverty and poor relief as one subject. By the 1890s, Snell argued that most outdoor relief regulations were relaxed by circulars of 1895, 1896 and 1899 suggesting that such relief was provided more easily especially to the deserving and the elderly.

⁴⁷ M. Mackinnon, ‘English poor law policy and the crusade against out-relief’, *Journal of Economic History*, (1987), p.607.

⁴⁸ R. Humphries, *Sin, organised charity and the poor law in Victorian England* (Basingstoke, 1995), p.24.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p.20.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

Despite the *Crusade* being reliant upon the willingness of guardians falling largely within the realm of persuasion and refusal to implement directives costs of outdoor relief continued to escalate bringing with it pressure to change the system of poor relief.⁵¹ This introduction to a complex subject is necessary for a clearer understanding of how Stoke and Wolstanton Unions interpreted the demands for the reduction in outdoor relief. It is important, in view of the national campaign against outdoor relief, to establish if Stoke and Wolstanton Unions observed central directives. The focus therefore turns to an examination of outdoor relief statistics; policy and practice found in unfamiliar areas such as the Staffordshire Potteries but above all will highlight local variations. Indeed, it is important that whatever broad conclusions are drawn from national statistics, without detailed analysis of local primary material, the impact or otherwise of national conclusions such as those of the *Crusade* can at best only be partially understood and appreciated.

Census returns for Stoke and Wolstanton workhouses from 1841 to 1871 suggest that from 1841 spatial variations had been established between the two unions. The tables below have combined able-bodied inmates between the ages of fourteen and seventy, and further divided between female and male with percentages of +/- for both Wolstanton and Stoke:

Table 3.1 Number of Able-Bodied Inmates between the ages of fourteen and seventy per gender at Wolstanton

Wolstanton	Female	Male	Total	% +/- over previous no.
1841	29	36	65	
1851	41	59	100	54 +
1861	33	61	94	6 -
1871	37	34	71	24 -

Table 3.2 Number of Able-Bodied Inmates between the ages of fourteen and seventy per gender at Stoke

Stoke	Female	Male	Total	% +/- over previous no.
1841	55	66	121	
1851	29	42	71	41 -
1861	90	127	217	205 +

⁵¹ Brundage, *The English Poor Law*, p.112.

1871 132 166 296 36 + ⁵²

These figures represent a snapshot of the peak years found at Wolstanton for the years 1851 and 1861 of able-bodied inmates. At Stoke there was found a slight variance of the years 1861 and 1871. The question as to why should the numbers of two neighbouring unions sharing the same industrial conurbation produce conflicting results as Stoke showed an increase of two hundred and five per cent in 1861 compared with Wolstanton of six per cent for the same year? If the cause was distress in trade, similar findings might have been expected. The most likely explanation is that a trade depression affected the pottery industry but the depth of the depression was felt harder at Stoke as several local pottery manufacturers went out of business around this time, such as William Adams, whose manufactory closed in 1860 with the loss of five hundred jobs. In addition, the blacklisting by manufacturers of employees who were members of a worker's union or political activists may have added further to the numbers.⁵³

The following figures listing the cost of outdoor relief from 1857–1867 show considerable disparity apart from 1861 and 1865 for Stoke and Wolstanton:

Table 3.3 Cost of outdoor relief of the poor for the Unions of Wolstanton and Stoke 1857-1868

Year	Wolstanton	Stoke
1857-8	£5957	£3783
1858-9	£5647	£3591
1860-1	£4784	£4240
1862-3	£6381	£5621
1865-6	£5057	£5406
1866-7	£4782	£6142
1867-8	£5070	£7348 ⁵⁴

⁵² Taken from census returns 1841-1871. The out-relief is for those with a genuine need. It is not for the able-bodied who were admitted into the workhouse to obtain any form of relief.

⁵³ M.W. Dupree, *Family Structure in The Staffordshire Potteries* (Oxford, 1995), p.343. The huge increase of in-house able-bodied recorded in the 1861 census could well be accounted for by the loss of employment at William Adams.

⁵⁴ SS. 9 June 1871, Figures extracted from Guardians' Minutes published in the press.

The Table 3.3 covers a ten-year period from 1857 to 1867. Wolstanton experienced fluctuations over this period reaching its peak in 1862/3 but ended the decade with a reduction in expenditure of seventeen per cent from the year 1857/8. At Stoke, they showed a steady increase over the ten-year period with only 1858/9 showing a lower figure. The overall increase in expenditure for the decade was ninety-four per cent. In view of the previous reference to Wolstanton refusing to support the prohibiting order for outdoor relief the numbers from these statistics suggest otherwise or they may merely indicate a general increase in trade thereby reducing the demands for outdoor relief. If either of these was the case neither could be applied to Stoke Union which experienced a huge increase. It would appear therefore, that the guardians at Stoke were applying outdoor relief more readily as an alternative to the workhouse.

In 1871, a new campaign was introduced to reduce the cost of maintaining the poor by the reintroduction of the *Crusade* against outdoor relief. No relevant statistics regarding total numbers of inmates or recipients of outdoor relief are available from the LGB correspondence files, and guardians' minute books have not survived for this date. Local press reports of guardians' meetings have survived and list inmate and outdoor relief numbers for Stoke and Wolstanton but it is how these two unions reflected upon the new demands for change that is important to assess.

The new regulations of 1871 were in direct conflict with the resolution of the 29th January 1869 by the Wolstanton Board of guardians which recorded that their priority was to continue with outdoor relief rather than force paupers into the workhouse:

The guardians adopted the plan of giving outdoor relief in preference to compelling people to enter the workhouse which had been successful. The Board gave a larger amount of outdoor relief than the three unions of Stafford, Leek and Newcastle put together.⁵⁵

⁵⁵ SS. 30 January 1869.

This short reference found in the local press suggests that guardians were appealing the electorate for political reasons – that of re-election.

Table 3.4 Summary of statistics for in-house and outdoor relief for able-bodied over the age of 14 years 1861-1871. (%)

Workhouse able-bodied		Outdoor able-bodied	
Wolstanton increase	143	decrease	71
Stoke-upon-Trent increase	72	increase	184 ⁵⁶

The figures in Table 3.4 highlight, in summary, the complexity as they show a large percentage variance between Stoke and Wolstanton for the period 1861-1871 in a comparison between workhouse and outdoor able bodied relief. At Wolstanton the increase of in-house able-bodied amounted to one hundred and forty-three per cent against a decrease of seventy-one per cent for outdoor relief suggesting compliance with LGB directives to reduce outdoor relief. At Stoke, the situation was entirely different with an increase of seventy-two per cent of able-bodied in-house against a huge increase of one hundred and eighty-four per cent for outdoor relief suggesting that there was no compliance with LGB directives to reduce outdoor relief. These results further emphasis the unpredictability of raw data that confirm the wide spatial diversity found in able-bodied relief between two neighbouring unions.

To obtain a more accurate picture concerning the effects of the *Crusade*, additional figures have been extracted from the monthly guardians' reports for the years 1867-1875 which have been averaged to cover periods of twelve months for the purpose of comparisons. The assessments following will be made for two periods: 1869-1870 and 1871-1873 for outdoor relief, and 1867-1870 and 1871-1873 for in-house whereby identifying disparity for the period prior to 1871.⁵⁷

⁵⁶ The figure includes both able-bodied and those otherwise sick.

⁵⁷ SS. Figures extracted from published Guardian's minutes produced fortnightly in the local press.

Figure 3.1 Average monthly in-house relief figures for Stoke and Wolstanton 1867-1875 listed yearly

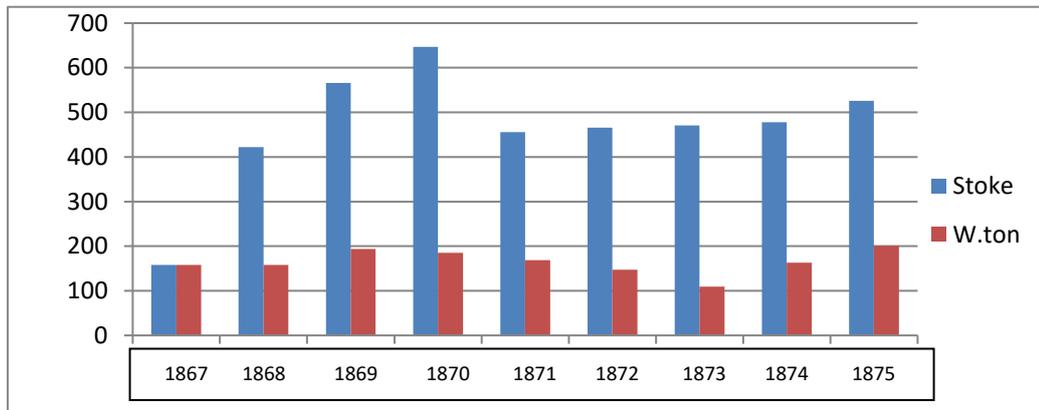
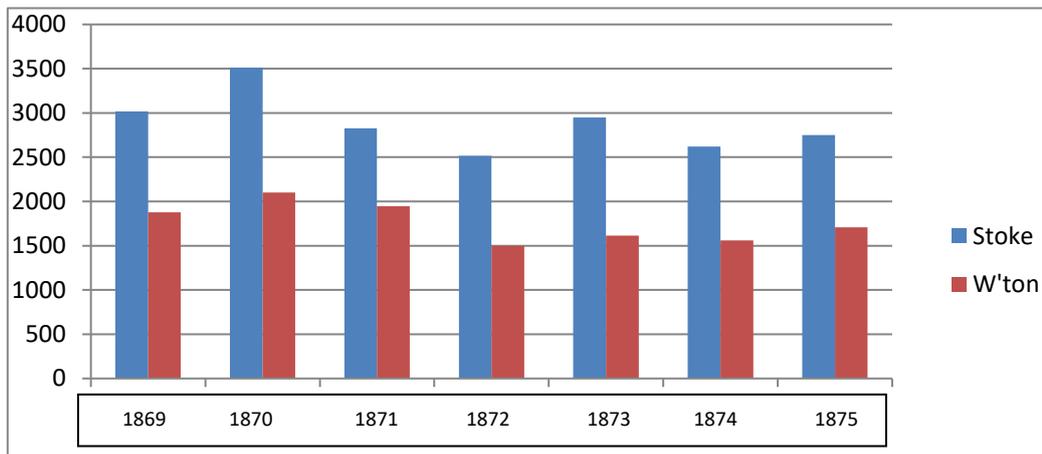


Figure 3.2 Average monthly outdoor relief paupers for Stoke and Wolstanton 1869-1875 listed yearly



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The number of inmates in Stoke workhouse from 1867-1870 increased by three hundred and nine per cent over four years, whereas at Wolstanton over the same period the increase was seventeen per cent. For the period 1871-1875, Stoke increased by fifteen per cent and Wolstanton by nineteen per cent.

The results for outdoor relief for each union show that at Stoke for the years 1869-1870 there was an increase of sixteen per cent, and Wolstanton that of eleven per cent. The period 1871-1875 shows a slight decrease of 0.03 per cent for Stoke and fourteen per cent decrease years for Wolstanton.

⁵⁸ SS. Guardians' Minutes published 1867-1873 taken each month then averaged per year.

It has been established that prior to 1871 there is little evidence of continuity between unions. Both in-house and outdoor relief numbers increased by not too a dissimilar figure, apart from the increase at Stoke of inmates for the period 1867-1870. The figures for the period following the introduction of the *Crusade* by the LGB from 1871-1875 suggest that there was a leaning towards the expectations of the *Crusade* but not full compliance. Stoke and Wolstanton show an increase of inmates of thirteen per cent on average against a decrease in outdoor relief of 0.03 per cent for Stoke, and in comparison, a larger decrease of fourteen per cent at Wolstanton.

What conclusions can be drawn from these statistics? It is clear that neither Board of Guardians applied any strict policy regarding outdoor relief before 1871. The figures for the ensuing period, 1871-1875, show that at Stoke there was limited adherence to LGB policy but the findings may be as a result of proving outdoor relief to families in the case of sickness, which probably explains why a reduction of only 0.3 per cent was achieved.⁵⁹ At Wolstanton, having asserted their intention to continue with the payment of outdoor relief in 1869, expenditure was in fact increased by fourteen per cent suggesting their compliance with its earlier minute and not the directives received from the PLB.⁶⁰

Based on the evidence it shows that from 1871 both unions had partly complied with the requirement of the *Crusade*, but to no great extent and Stoke retained its stance on sickness relief. These findings may well reflect on those of Snell who argues that ‘the rising pauperism in 1860 was balanced by the decline in the 1870s, and in fact, ‘growth in national productivity and wealth throughout this period continued to be the main factor of domiciliary outdoor relief persisting over the entire period’.⁶¹

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 26 October 1872, p.6.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 30 January 1869. It was recorded by the Board at Wolstanton that they gave a larger amount of out-relief than other Unions.

⁶¹ K.D.M. Snell, *Parish and Belonging – Community, Identity and Welfare in England and Wales 1700-1950* (Cambridge, 2006) p.263-4.

What has been established by this lengthy debate is the complexity of the *Crusade* firstly by the diversity found in the historiography and secondly in the analogy of primary material. These areas reflect the enormity of the subject where there appears to be no set agreement to either the extent of the implementation of the *Crusade* or in fact the outcomes. What has been established is the amount of spatial diversity found in both historiography and within the administration of two adjacent unions which validate the difficulty in arriving at one definitive conclusion.

Conclusion.

The two Stoke-on-Trent unions under scrutiny have presented us with an image of conflict, division and uncertainty for the period prior to the 1834 Act onwards. The historical background from the Old Poor Law through to the period of this study has exposed spatial variations throughout. Both unions had similar origins and traditions but, as the towns increased in size through immigration and industrialisation, they developed independently supporting their own communities and, in many respects of different directions maintaining a policy of parochialism of which there were winners and losers within the context of the welfare of the poor.

The lack of secondary literature in relation to this region in general and those communities in particular has one advantage, in that it enables a concise assessment based upon the local situation without predetermined theories influencing the interpretation of secondary data. This point is significant as our findings contribute to new insights, exposing for the first time the extent of infighting and politicking that could be found within a relatively small industrial conurbation pointing to the internal forces that moved and influenced the two union administrations especially prior to 1834 and immediately following. It is these local differences and intermittent pressures that have distinguished one union from the other, identifying spatial diversity even though both were serving the same economic and social community.

The north of the city was dominated by pottery manufactures occupying positions of

authority, status and influence. They used their positions to allow workhouse inmates to be exploited for cheap labour, evincing no compassion for the poor under their care. The guardians at Stoke, for their part, exploited their positions with minimal involvement in return, except to use their status to secure 'lavish feasting' while inmates were served 'stinking bacon' which in turn encapsulates the sentiment and meaning of the early administration. Workhouse masters abused their positions for gain, strengthening up young male inmates to be put out to work. The Potters' Union was powerful and its leaders set out to abuse their position for their own gain by attempting to obtain through elections full control of the poor law administration and its finances for its own purpose. In response, the guardians took full advantage of the 1834 New Poor Law Act which they implemented at the earliest opportunity, sacrificing their own status and independence to stop the Potters' Union in its tracks from a take-over. At Burslem, guardians strongly objected to an amalgamation with Wolstanton and fought to remain independent, again to secure their own status.

Evidence exposes failures within the PLC, the PLB and later the LGB. Their *Circulars* should have established a uniform national policy of outdoor relief by law but failed as many unions refused to implement them. Census returns for the years 1841-1871 (the year of the incorporation of the LGB) are significant as they offer a set of figures that illustrate spatial variations under the Old Poor Law. At Wolstanton, in the period overlapping the transition of the poor law to the LGB these figures show a net increase in inmates of just one per cent over three decades by contrast to Stoke which characterising the area by an increase of one hundred and forty-four per cent over the same period showing significant local variation. This may explain why guardians urged the LGB to allow outdoor relief to those who, through no fault of their own, were unemployed.

Financial returns for the decade 1857-1867 point to the fact that, while Wolstanton was restricting outdoor payments, with an overall reduction in expenditure of fifteen per cent,

whereas at Stoke by 1867 it had almost doubled by ninety-four per cent. Figures from 1867-1876 include the first few years prior to the LGB administration and those immediately following which show beyond doubt that neither union implemented central policy to any extent. Guardians at Stoke and Wolstanton, determined to be the masters of their own destiny retained their parochial ideology of the Old Poor Law, ignored the PLB and implemented only selected *Circulars* from the LGB protecting their own agendas and independence.

Historians in their summaries of the *Crusade* against outdoor relief show how complex the subject is with little coherent agreement either to the cause, its implementation or its success. What is significant is that a comparative study of the two unions fails to display any unified approach to the subject. What has become clear is that local returns reflect a retained structure of parochialism for each Board of Guardians conducted their business according to the individual needs of their unions.

This summary of the early years of the New Poor Law illustrates what King has identified as an expression of 'regional variations'.⁶² The use of primary data has identified the spatial disparity found between unions and stands to show the value of micro-studies that reflect the diverse agendas of guardians. In the case of Stoke, the motivation was power emanating from the Potters' Union, but at Wolstanton, the guardians had their own agenda specifically keeping inmate numbers low by paying their wages at just above starvation level, and thus securing both cheap labour for their own factories and thereby popularity for election time.

These findings confirm the principle of spatial diversity within the administration of the Poor Law Unions. However, the following chapter will extend this field of investigation into the experiences of vagrancy. The reason this is included under the heading of a life-cycle is although vagrancy is not a term applied to resident paupers, it is nevertheless a life-style choice

⁶² S.A. King, *Poverty and Welfare in England, 1700-1850* (Manchester, 2000), p.249-50.

of paupers which sets vagrants apart from others into a defined group of travelling paupers where their treatment and accommodation is frequently separated from the main workhouse buildings and therefore justifies consideration here.

Chapter 4 - Classification and Vagrancy

Overview

The focus of this study thus far has been on the wider historiography of the poor law, its beginnings and development, the priorities pursued and limitations faced by its administrators and the internal and external influences regarding its operation. It then turned its focus to the parochial divisions dating back to the seventeenth-century found in the Staffordshire Potteries. In this chapter the focus turns to those aspects of the poor law which are to be considered under the theme of life-cycle experiences referred to in chapter one. These life-cycle aspects of the poor law are rooted in the politics of officials and the daily experiences of poverty and welfare particularly in the form of institutional care which changes the characteristics from an outdoor relief experience. The complexities of historiography and the treatment of paupers under poor law welfare has been established but the primary material included in this chapter will further demonstrate that spatial diversity extended to the area of non-resident paupers - vagrants.

This chapter is divided into two sections. Firstly, it is important to explore the implications of classification under the 1834 Act and its wide-ranging approach to segregate paupers and families as a form of deterrent. Secondly it will view how historians have portrayed vagrants and the resulting perceptions of the scourge of vagrancy from a national point of view based upon a life-cycle micro-study of the two unions under investigation and a comparative appraisal in areas of policy and classification.

The methodology will be to summarise each union independently over a wide range of related topics including the 'cell' system and the response of guardians to LGB directives. The work ethic for vagrants will be considered and also the restrictions in the admission and discharge of vagrants. So too will the respective attitudes to the notion of providing accommodation in return for tasks.

Classification

In assessing the problem of poverty on a national level, the distinction between the ‘deserving’ and the ‘non-deserving’ poor had always been an area of confusion. The assumptions involved in this distinction were implicit in the policy of pauper classification introduced as part of the New Poor Law which determined both the treatment and accommodation of paupers admitted into the workhouse. Englander suggests that classification had three functions: provision of treatment according to the needs of each class; deterrence and discipline; the prevention of ‘moral’ contagion arising from mixing men and women, adults and children, sane and insane, and sick and healthy.¹

There were eight distinct categories:

- 1 – Men infirm through age or any other cause.
- 2 – Able-bodied males over 15.
- 3 – Boys between the ages of seven and 15.
- 4 – Women infirm through old age or any other cause.
- 5 – Able-bodied females over 15.
- 6 – Girls between seven and 15.
- 7 – Children under seven.
- 8 – Vagrants.²

Not only were inmates to be segregated, but they were to have separate wards, day rooms and exercise yards. These divisions were neither subtle nor complex; they prescribed sex segregation and a minimum age necessary for the maintenance of ‘decency’.³ It was considered more appropriate for children to be segregated, in order to dissuade them from a life of indolence and mendicancy, and kept from what was considered ‘sluggish sensual indolence’.⁴ Given that the living standards of the labouring poor were already woefully inadequate, the

¹ D. Englander, *Poverty and the Poor Law Reform in 19th century Britain 1834-1914* (London, 1998).

² *Ibid.*, p.14

³ K. Williams, *From Pauperism to Poverty* (London, 1981), p.108.

⁴ F. Crompton, *Workhouse Children* (Stroud, 1977), p.38. Later this led to the formation of Cottage Homes so that children could be reared in an appropriate family situation with a ‘house mother’.

only way the authorities could make the workhouse 'less eligible' was through additional classification and segregation.

The guardians, therefore, undertook to enforce separation of married couples and families, thus creating the very antithesis of the Victorian domestic ideal.⁵ In 1868, not satisfied with the results regarding reduction of inmate numbers, the PLB instructed that in the construction of workhouses it would no longer be advisable to segregate within one building, but buildings should also be segregated from each other. This would further amplify the 'dread of the workhouse', and, therefore, reduce the cost of maintaining the poor by acting as an additional deterrent to those seeking admission.

Indeed, there was a seemingly endless debate regarding the suitability of institutions, designs and regimes for the class of indoor paupers. These involved a constant flow of ideas and influence across all sectors affected by or involved in the administration of the poor law. A whole variety of authorities and organisations claimed a stake in the treatment or care of workhouse inmates. Debates revolved around two points, the training of pauper children, and the treatment of insane paupers, which overall contributed little to the general function of classification but will be considered in later chapters.⁶

In 1843, the ages were revised for the classes two, three, five, and six, all being placed at fifteen years of age. The term 'aged or infirm' had no legal definition, but was generally applied to those aged sixty or over. Likewise, bureaucratic interpretations of the term 'able-bodied' were left to the discretion of each Board of Guardians, although generally, it was applied to those aged fifteen to sixty who were in good health. A union could also sub-divide any of the seven main classes 'with reference to moral character or behaviour, or the previous habits of the inmates.' The most common use for this provision was to house women such as prostitutes

⁵ R. Richardson, *Death, Dissection and the Destitute: The Politics of the Corpse in Pre-Victorian Britain* (London, 2001), p.147.

⁶ F. Driver, *Power and Pauperism, the Workhouse System 1834-1885* (Cambridge, 1992) p. 95. The two issues of children and the insane are discussed in the appropriate chapters.

and single mothers separately from other able-bodied women.

The implementation of classification provoked objections. Arguments against the forced separation of married couples, and of parents from their families helped to foment widespread public hostility. But the Poor Law Commissioners reversed the argument, ignoring such concerns that paupers had renounced the obligation to support their families by entering the workhouse and should be separated from them.⁷ Green argues that:

The extent to which changes were implemented by unions had always been open to negotiation, and local practice often differed from national policy; and the ambiguity in the way that paupers were classified, particularly those defined as able-bodied, allowed guardians discretionary powers to dispense relief in ways contrary to the wishes of the central Commissioners.⁸

The Poor Law Commissioners were adamant about the need for separation, arguing in their *First Annual Report* ‘that to allow a man to enjoy a wife’s company or vice versa, may have the effect of reconciling them to permanent habitation in a workhouse’.⁹ While Richardson emphasises the claim of ‘natural feelings’ Hurren, by contrast, points to the idea of ‘natural selection’ quoting COS literature which explains that guardians were following the maxim of ‘natural selection’ when they categorised paupers into ‘deserving and undeserving’ classes. They were concerned and determined to identify incurable hereditary characteristics such as laziness, idleness or drunkenness.¹⁰

Increased specialisation within the workhouse system, at least in the larger urban areas, was a return to Chadwick’s vision of the 1830s, with a range of designated buildings for the sick, aged, children, and insane, and others for the able-bodied. Hence, from the 1860s, central authority officials urged guardians to classify inmates more clearly and to distinguish between each, both in treatment and diet, based on the cause of poverty and an assessment of their

⁷ M.A. Crowther, *The Workhouse System 1834-1929 the History of an English Social Institution* (London, 1981), p.42.

⁸ D. Green, *Pauper Capital, London and the Poor Law 1790 -1870* (London, 2010), p.15.

⁹ PP. *1st Annual Report of the Local Government Committee (1871-2)*, xxiii.

¹⁰ E. Hurren, *Protesting about Pauperism* (Woodbridge, 2007), p.63.

character. The sharp increase in workhouse construction was designed, like other initiatives, to act as a deterrent to reduce the number of inmates. London led the way.

The Houseless Poor Act of 1864 provided for a network of improved casual wards, centrally funded, into which the homeless poor were to be sent by police. In the first half of the century, casuals accounted for one in six of all paupers.¹¹ Later the same year, the PLB issued a *Circular* containing advice regarding casual ward provision in an attempt to escalate the policy of separation and classification. Separate wards were to be provided for men, women and children, each having a yard with a bathroom and water closet, and a work shed. A temporary, casual ward was erected at St. Marylebone workhouse in 1867 designed by Henry Saxton Snell based on these recommendations, its walls were heavily decorated with 'improving' religious texts for the benefit of paupers; this fostered a form of religiosity which became the norm in many workhouse dining halls. Vagrancy was just one of a number of classifications by-which inmates were identified and separated into different workhouse accommodation to isolate them from other inmates an area of importance to the life-cycle experience of paupers.

The Scourge of Vagrancy

Casuals or vagrants dominated numerically the flow of poor inmates through the workhouse. The Act of 1834 was changed by subsequent Acts in an attempt to stem the drain on resources, to reduce the national burden of vagrancy and was strongly influenced by the overriding desire to classify and segregate paupers, seeking to target all who would 'avail themselves of the ambiguity of the word poor'.¹² Government statistics support the increase in the rise in vagrancy for the period leading up to 1871 with an increase of sixty-one per cent between the years 1866-1871 a snapshot of the pressure that vagrancy was having on local rate-payers as the financial

¹¹ Green, *Pauper Capital*, p.18.

¹² PP. *Report on the administration and practical operational of the Poor Laws* (1834).

burden grew out of control. The following demonstrate the increase in numbers for England and Wales for a period of the first six months of the years 1866 to 1870 of the PLB:

1866	....	4,075
1867	....	5,248
1868	....	7,946
1869	....	6,992
1870	....	6,630
1871	....	4,293 ¹³

The national decline in the number of vagrants from 1868 from 7,946 to 4,293 three years later is dramatic and probably on account of the increased awareness of guardians and a response to a number of initiatives been undertaken in an attempt to reduce numbers. These included the change of times for departure from the workhouse, improved admission control using police officers as relieving officers, the stricter adherence to the implementation of manual work and the increase in the use of individual vagrant cells. However, these totals expose a dilemma in statistics whereby local figures from Stoke Union between 1860 and 1908 the number of vagrant admissions rose from one thousand, five hundred and seventy-two to seventeen thousand and eighty-three per annum. In 1837 poor law authorities became obliged to provide temporary overnight shelter for any destitute person, forcing workhouses to arrange special accommodation for this purpose. Initially, the casual poor were housed in infectious wards and frequently stables and outhouses were also pressed into service. Eventually, most workhouses erected purpose built casual wards which became popularly known by tramps and vagrants as the ‘spike’. Wards were frequently superintended by the workhouse porter, perhaps with his wife attending the female casuals. Some ‘spikes’ were in the charge of a Tramp Major who was often a former tramp himself. The usual arrangements for casual wards were to be placed at the edge of the main workhouse site, frequently having its own access from the

¹³ PP. 23rd *Annual Report of the Poor Law (1871-72)*, p.xxiv.

highway to avoid contamination with other inmates.

Despite such efforts by the PLB and guardians in late-Victorian and early Edwardian England there was a failure to reduce the numbers of vagrants roaming the country to any extent and numbers remained the most intractable problem confronting poor law administrators.¹⁴ It was this class of pauper that proved both controversial and an increasingly menacing crisis for the foreseeable future where the roots to attitudes stemmed from the earliest days of the New Poor Law. Vorspan places the dilemma into perspective:

Vagrants would arrive late in the afternoon waiting for admission and their personal belongings removed. The number of beds available for casuals was frequently limited and late-comers found themselves turned away. Segregation of the sexes was strictly observed. In better-regulated wards, casuals were stripped, bathed and their clothes disinfected (Fig.3.1). A bread and water supper was then served.¹⁵

It was the belief that immoral habits and behaviour patterns are communicable. In fact, for pauperism and related problems, the metaphor of disease is employed far more frequently than in the more familiar analogy with crime. The common criticism of workhouses and the casual wards was that they were morally 'unclassified' and thereby facilitated the contamination of the various workingmen by the professional idler.¹⁶

A further view of the perception of vagrants is given by Brundage on exactly how the vagrant was viewed by society:

That vagrants required no special provision other than improved policing and deterred from public relief. As a body of highly mobile population roaming the country in search of work legal or illegal it became a feature of the Victorian era. The component of this male population consisted chiefly of agricultural labourers, navvies, and sailors. There was also a group consisting of demobilised soldiers with no peacetime occupation and casual labourers whilst others could be classed the mentally ill. In the public imagination, they were considered the image of the tramp: slovenly, drunken, wily, and unwilling to work but ready to engage freely in whatever criminal opportunity that may present itself.

¹⁴ R. Vorspan, 'Vagrancy and the New Poor Law in the late Victorian and Edwardian England', *English Historical Review* (1977), p.287.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p.51.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p.68.

Even those who kept within the letter of the law were often described as an unhygienic and corrupting element. The campaign against outdoor relief made the vagrant particularly repugnant, and a threat to Christian civilisation.¹⁷

In the eyes of the respectable classes, the homeless and workless who congregated in the casual wards occupied a borderland between indigence and criminality. These, the lowest of the low, were thought of as turbulent desperadoes who were beyond reform and redemption.¹⁸

It became popular during the mid-1860s for impersonators to enter workhouses on the pretence of being vagrants in order to expose the conditions found in wards. Probably the most celebrated exponent of mid-Victorian treatment of vagrants was James Greenwood, the 'Amateur-Casual', whose reports on '*A Night in the Workhouse*', based on his experience as a 'tramp' at Lambeth workhouse, sparked an immediate outcry regarding treatment of casual paupers.

Marked with every sign of squalor, he entered the ward, pretending to be an out-of-work engraver, fed, bathed and put to bed where about thirty vagrants were asleep on beds of hay. Among the horrors was a large patch of blood on the bed in which he was to sleep. Then followed the offensive language of his fellow inmates, and the foul 'toke' (bread) and 'skilly' (oatmeal porridge) that was served. In the morning, they all had to complete the task that was demanded of those who used the casual ward – grinding of corn, breaking stones or picking oakum. All were not allowed to leave until eleven-o'clock in the morning.¹⁹

Vorspan extends his dialogue further to include a description of the accommodation that was provided for vagrants:

Brick floors and beds with loose straw and rugs for males and iron bedsteads with straw for females. The wards are badly ventilated with no means of producing warmth. All holes for ventilation in reach of the occupants were stuffed with rags and straw, so that

¹⁷ A. Brundage, *The English Poor Laws 1700-1930* (Hampshire, 2002), p.117. This point of view typifies the Victorian attitude to vagrancy.

¹⁸ D. Englander, *Poverty and Poor Law Reform in 19th Century Britain 1834-1914* (London, 1998), p.32.

¹⁹ M. Freeman, 'Journeys into Poverty', *History Workshop Journal* (2001), p.104 quotes from: 'A Night in the Workhouse', published in the *Pall Mall Gazette* and subsequently reprinted in *The Times* in pamphlet form (1866).

the effluvia of these places was at best, most disgustingly offensive and the bedding far worse than that provided for general inmates.²⁰

Casual wards had raised sleeping platforms, divided down the middle by a gangway, and each side divided up to give a sleeping space of at least 2ft. 3in. wide, with an area at the head of each compartment where clothes could be placed.²¹ Bedding was to consist of 'straw or cocoa fibre in a loose tick', and a rug 'sufficient for warmth' was provided. The principal consideration of the guardians was to reduce the number of vagrants.²² (Figures 3.2 and 3.3.)

By the 1840s, in an attempt to reduce the number of vagrants, separate casual wards became the official government policy. Their deterrent nature was intended to drive a wedge between the travelling artisan and the professional tramp. Onerous task-work, humiliating induction procedures, a meagre diet, and deliberately provided cramped and spartan sleeping accommodation made the casual ward the resort of the desperate and were, to many, quite unimaginable.

Alan Kidd comments on the separation of casuals and the possibility of contamination of the genuine wayfarer and the additional dangers of moral contamination promoting solitary confinement:

The construction of separate casual wards had been official policy since the 1840s, especially in the Midlands and the northern cities, to mitigate the possibility of contagion by providing for casuals to sleep and work in solitary confinement. In theory, this arrangement both safeguarded the deserving wayfarer from the moral infestation and eliminated the sociability so attractive to the habitual tramp. By 1904 the cell system had been adopted by 434 boards of guardians.²³

An attempt was made in 1871 by the newly formed LGB to further reduce the number of vagrants using powers of detention, later to be extended in 1882. Labour was to become

²⁰ N. Longmate, *The Workhouse* (London, 1974), p.232; A. Kidd, *State, Society and the Poor* (London, 1999), p.55, refers to the conditions prevailing in the new vagrant blocks.

²¹ PP. 17th *Annual Report of the Poor Law Board* (1864-65), pp.77-79.

²² Vorspan, 'Vagrancy and the New Poor Law', p.68.

²³ A. Kidd, *State, Society and the Poor in 19th Century England* (London, 1999) p.69.

compulsory and tasks made suitably deterrent. The national statistics regarding detention as an alternative for those inmates refusing tasks show considerable variations. The following figures indicate that a considerable number of workhouses neither had casual wards, nor insisted on work being carried out in return for accommodation, reinforcing the assumption that the LGB's power to achieve its goal of national adherence to its directives was minimal and that national spatial diversity was clear:

No. of Unions: 533

Workhouses without casual wards: 86

No. of unions requiring tasks of work from vagrants: 424

No. of unions not requiring tasks: 195

No. of unions employing police as assistant relieving officers: 292

Unions not doing so: 327²⁴

These figures indicate wide variations found under the poor law and thereby emphasise the need for more local micro-studies to further identify variations on a regional basis. Taking the total number of unions as five hundred and thirty-three the variations throughout the list of union returns indicate significant differences ranging from workhouses without casual wards at eighty-four per cent to the other end of the spectrum that of the requirement of tasks at seventy-nine per cent of workhouses. These figures vindicate King in his suggestion of the need for more detailed regional and local studies to establish if there was not one poor law but many and illustrate further how unions varied in their interpretation of the law.²⁵

Segregation into individual cells, a later development, inevitably deterred vagrants, but did not remove the problem of vagrancy. Men, generally in search of work, were discharged

²⁴ G. Nicholls, *History of the English Poor Law in connection with the State* (London, 1898), p.384.

²⁵ S.A. King, *Poverty and Welfare in England 1700-1850* (Manchester, 2000), p.249-50.

from the casual wards too late in the day to find employment.²⁶ Consequently, many homeless wayfarers²⁷ took refuge in dosshouses or charitable shelters, and even preferred sleeping rough to a night in the casual ward. The LGB maintained that despite this those who used vagrant wards numbered less than one per-cent of all paupers for all but six of the years between 1849 and 1900.²⁸

From about 1870 a new form of vagrants' accommodation began to be adopted in some workhouses to minimise the harmful consequences of mixing together different classifications of inmate. The LGB acknowledged the *bona fide* working man and steps were taken to stop him associating with the class who had recourse to a casual ward and to have relief given to him with more consistent respect.²⁹ Relief in such cases meant individual sleeping cells, very much like those found in a prison, usually arranged along both sides of a corridor. Sleeping cells contained a simple bed, perhaps hinged so that it could be folded up against the wall when not in use.

Some workhouses installed work cells for stone breaking which had a hinged metal grille opened from the outside to allow unbroken lumps of stone to be deposited into the cell. The inmate then had to break up the stone into lumps small enough to pass back through the holes of the grille to drop into a separate horizontal tray beneath. (Fig.3.4) Casuals who refused this work became liable to imprisonment. The departmental committee which examined the problem in 1904 concluded 'that vagrants were in general a bunch of good-for-nothing layabouts who would not exist but for indiscriminate charity and that the best solution was to transfer them from the poor law to police control.'³⁰

The tasks of work required of vagrants remained controversial for despite *Circulars* from

²⁶ A. Kidd, *State, Society*, p.55.

²⁷ A wayfarer presented himself at the workhouse, indicating where he planned to look for work. He was issued a ticket specifying the prospective place of employment and the casual wards along the way.

²⁸ *Pauperism and Distress: Circular letter to Board of Guardians*, Chamberlain Circular (March 1886).

²⁹ D. Hunter, 'Vagrancy in the East and West Ridings of Yorkshire', *Local Historian* (2006), p.186.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p.33.

the LGB, they were frequently ignored by guardians. In other cases, when recommendations were implemented they were invariably challenged. One such example was at Spalding where the guardians were challenged by the workhouse Chaplain, Rev. Jones. He had inspected the casual wards and the amount of work which was expected of each vagrant, concluding that the breaking of two hundredweight of stone in four hours was far too much, and an act of cruelty. The chaplain added that no guardian would like to undertake the task themselves, upon which Mr. Brett, a fellow guardian, declared his willingness to perform the task. This was carried out the following day where Mr. Brett broke the required quantity of stone in one hour and forty-five minutes.³¹

This assessment of vagrancy within a national setting has shown the complexity of the treatment, the variety accommodation provided and the attempts to reduce the problem as a scourge on society itself. What will now be investigated is how vagrancy was treated at a local level and the implications away from the central authority and under the influence of local guardians.

The Local Situation

Historians have given a great deal of attention to classification and the national complexity regarding the treatment of vagrancy for this period. However, despite the abundance of secondary literature few studies relate to local issues on a day-to-day basis therefore any interpretation of vagrant experiences and of the pressures guardians were placed under to find solutions lack comparative analysis. Neither does the body of secondary literature illustrate to any degree the level of involvement of the LGB for the period 1871-1901.

As the current debate reflects that of regional and micro-studies this sub-section investigates and identifies the underlying theme of variations between adjoining unions extending this where appropriate to a regional dimension in an attempt to understand how

³¹ SS. 25 August 1874. p.4

vagrancy was dealt within a spatial framework. Guardians had their own agenda, often stemming from the desire to retain the autonomy of parochialism which they had previously enjoyed under the Old Poor Law and parochial system.

The locality of workhouses frequently determined the number of visiting vagrants and consequently influenced policy decisions on how to address the issue. Stoke was situated on the main highway from London to Carlisle (the current A34), less than a mile from the market town of Newcastle-under-Lyme,³² and on the western edge of the Potteries. The proximity to a major highway made the workhouse a natural magnet for vagrants travelling north or south. The situation at Wolstanton was different. It was situated one mile down a narrow branch road from the main road leading from Burslem to the Staffordshire Moorlands. It was not a natural location for wanderers.

In an attempt to evaluate spatial diversity between the two unions the use of primary material and detailed references which are recorded in the minute books for Wolstanton and Stoke will be invaluable.³³ Local newspapers document minutes of Guardians' meetings reflecting Victorian attitudes to the problem of vagrancy which provide a wider perspective into the lived experiences of those who wandered the country and rejected the philosophy of work.³⁴

A detailed examination of this material allows us to connect in micro detail the treatment of vagrants, the perceptions of guardians and their response to *Circulars* from the LGB, a perspective missing from the current literature. Our thematic discussion, then, is rooted in a local analysis of the sentiment and meaning of the poor law and the micro-experience of workhouse life from the mid-1860s onwards – a time when nationally numbers of vagrants were increasing.³⁵

³² Newcastle-under-Lyme remains a different Borough than Stoke-upon-Trent.

³³ The minute books held at the City Archives date from mid-1876 for Stoke and from 1870 for Wolstanton. The earlier records were lost during WWII.

³⁴ The Guardians represent the Victorian values which framed the *ad hoc* policy on vagrancy.

³⁵ Longmate, *The Workhouse*, p.245. In Hampshire, the Earl of Carnarvon commented on the fact that 3,000 vagrants were recorded in 1860 and that within a decade 26,000 were receiving relief.

Vagrancy at Wolstanton

In a report of March 1867, it was noted at Wolstanton workhouse that the PLB Inspector had made enquiries as to the state of several wards but had learnt of no cause for complaint from the inmates regarding the standard of care provided. He concluded by complimenting the new vagrant ward, commenting that there was needed proper provision for employment of that class of pauper.³⁶ The task of work for male vagrants instituted by the guardians was as follows: 'pump for four hours, pick oakum for two, or breaking 1½ hundredweight of stone.' For female vagrants, the task was to 'pick half a pound of oakum.'³⁷ In 1869, the task of working at the pump was amended to working at the corn mill for 3½ hours.³⁸

The issue of vagrants was discussed at a later meeting of the Board held in the September thereby further emphasising, in a manner which seems almost to condemn the comments made by Inspectors in 1867, regarding the appalling situation he found at Wolstanton:

Mr. Wragg asked the workhouse governor, Mr. M. Nash if he thought it somewhat disgraceful for 16–18-year-old able-bodied men who could not get work should remain in the house picking oakum. Mr. Nash replied that the men were too idle to work. Mr. Harrison, the assistant master, said that it would be found that most of the men had been in the workhouse for some years. One man, who was thirty-nine, had been in thirty-two years; they were regular workhouse birds. These men had fifty-four pounds of oakum to pick a day, and it sometimes took them until eight in the evening to get that done.

To encourage vagrants to carry out their task of work, procedures were put into place whereby work would be forcefully extracted from vagrants by threatening to withhold food.

The Vice-chairman asked how vagrants responded to oakum picking in the morning. Mr. Harrison said that 'they only got part of their breakfast if they did not pick the required quantity of oakum; if they finished picking the remainder of their breakfast was given to them.' In reply to a question as to how the cold baths for vagrants were viewed Mr. Harrison said that 'they were not at all relished.' The vagrants who visited the house last week were thirty-two. In doing the bath business, Mr. Harrison said care was taken that the water was not too warm. The Chairman asked whether this was not rather a mistake,

³⁶ SS. 18 March 1867.

³⁷ TNA. MH12/11202, 12 January 1869.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, But note added to the back of the correspondence.

for perhaps if the water was warmer it might dissolve the dirt. (Laughter) The reply, the cold water was a deterrent.³⁹

In 1869, the PLB issued a *Circular* pressing for the introduction of work to each vagrant where it was not already being carried out. Wolstanton confirmed both its receipt and their compliance:

My Lords and Gentlemen, I am directed by the Board of guardians of this union to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the 9th inst. addressed to the Chairman of the Board concerning the proposed arrangements for the relief of Vagrants and requesting the guardians to pass a resolution as the task of work to be performed by Vagrants in return for the relief afforded to them. The guardians at their previous meeting passed the resolution intimating on the attached form as to the task of work agreed. I am – respectfully yours etc.⁴⁰

The following week the matter was again discussed with additional recommendations in response to a new *Circular*, which sought local opinions and recommendations on how the law should be changed.⁴¹ The guardians responded accordingly:

Vagrancy as an institution is increasing in this district, and the guardians are convinced that more stringent measures are required as to this class. For six weeks ending 30th November 1868, no less than six hundred were admitted and given relief. With the view of securing a more vigilant and close investigation, the guardians have determined to call in the aid of the resident police officers from Burslem and Tunstall, both being within two miles of the workhouse. At their last meeting, they appointed Sergeant German, Burslem, and Inspector Longden, Tunstall, as assistant relieving officers for the district with a salary of £5 per annum and to give orders to all vagrants, keeping all the books required and submitting their books to the guardians at each meeting of the Board.⁴²

That the name and occupation of the application with the place from which he comes and that to which he is going be recorded.

³⁹ SS. 20 September 1869.

⁴⁰ TNA. MH12/11468, 27 February 1869.

⁴¹ This in reference to the formation of the Local Government Board in 1871.

⁴² It is presumed that the duty of the Police Sergeant as an assistant relieving officer would be to issue admission tickets to vagrants upon request at the local police station. Because of the poor salary offered it may be presumed that he would have had no further involvement with the poor, although no other evidence is available.

If applicant, when searched, is found with adequate means of support upon him, relief will be refused and before he is received in the workhouse, he shall be put in a bath (except when ill).⁴³

Guardians were concerned that there was an average of around a hundred vagrants attending the workhouse each week that inevitably increased costs. Urgent steps to reduce this escalating expenditure were taken by the introduction of a Police Sergeant as a dedicated relieving officer to examine each application. The apparent ease that vagrants could previously gain overnight accommodation suddenly came to an end with this new intervention having the effect of reduced numbers.

In January 1869, the PLB asked for confirmation of the diet sheet provided to vagrants in their care:

Dietary for vagrants – supper for males above fifteen years of age 6 oz. bread and one pint of gruel. For females above fifteen years of age and for children of both sexes from 7-15 years of age, 6 oz. of bread and one pint of gruel. For children under seven years of age 4 oz. of bread and half a pint of gruel. For breakfast – the same as supper and there was no breakfast until the task of work or half of the task is completed according to the circumstances.⁴⁴

Restricting the proportions of food until work was completed was the only incentive for many: otherwise there would be no form of payment exchanged whereby prosecution would follow.

Experience of increased numbers of vagrants dominated discussion and focused the determination of the guardians to reduce numbers. A formal communication by guardians to the LGB followed, requesting permission to spend £225 for the building of new pauper sleeping cells and enclosing plans for their approval.⁴⁵ These plans were approved, with the final figure of eleven cells to be erected.⁴⁶ The site chosen was the existing vagrants' yard with the addition

⁴³ Ibid., 16 January 1869.

⁴⁴ Wolstanton Minute Book, vol.SD1232/8, 12 January 1869.

⁴⁵ Wolstanton Minute Book, vol.SD1232/8, 26 February 1872.

⁴⁶ TNA. MH12/11203, 16 April 1872.

of an attendant's room, bathroom and water closet, with a new pig yard adjoining.⁴⁷

In an attempt to further reduce the number of vagrants, the Casual Poor Act was passed in 1882, whereby vagrants were detained until 9 a.m. on the second day following admission, and, if it was a second application to the same union within one month, delayed until the fourth day. The guardians resisted the 1882 Act until January 1886 when they finally the guardian's minutes confirm there was 'considerable discussion regarding whether, and at what date, the Act should be implemented, or if to continue as previously unless the master decided otherwise':

the Master of the workhouse is compounded to discharge all classes of vagrants' after one-night detention except offenders against the regulations and those that may be identified as habitual vagrants. That he be instructed to allow any casual pauper to leave as soon as he has performed his task of work on the morning, he is entitled to his discharge and further that he (the master) be empowered to detain the casual for the two nights if in his opinion it is desirable to do so.⁴⁸

This could be as a result of the LGB complaining in 1886 that only half of the unions, seeking to reduce the cost of maintenance, observed the requirements of detention for an extra day as there had been little adherence to the policy nationally.⁴⁹ As a result, the LGB began recommending early discharge of casuals, because, if they were detained until 11 a.m. or even 9 a.m. any work for the day in the vicinity of the workhouse would have already been taken.⁵⁰ In 1892, the LGB granted casual inmates the unconditional right to claim their discharge at 5.30 a.m. in the summer and 6 a.m. in the winter by simply presenting to the master that they were

⁴⁷ Ibid., 13 May 1872. This may have been thought to cause a 'natural' offence to vagrants' because of the obnoxious odour associated with pigs, with the idea in mind that it would act as a further deterrent to vagrants. The question must be asked if there was some un-written policy, as later Stoke workhouse also built a new vagrants' block with an adjoining piggery.

⁴⁸ Wolstanton Minute Book, vol.SD/1232/11, 31 January 1886.

⁴⁹ P.W. Fowle, *The Poor Law* (London, 1881), p.67.

⁵⁰ Brunbridge, *The English Poor Law*, p.119.

‘desirous of seeking work.’⁵¹

Despite the implementation of the treatment of adult vagrants, the guardians showed compassion to child vagrants instructing that any child under the age of fourteen years be taken to a Magistrate with a view of sending that child to a Certified Industrial School, and that the master be instructed to keep ‘a close eye on the child.’⁵² This was no doubt to protect the child from the influence and behaviour of adult vagrants.

Notwithstanding these efforts by guardians, the numbers of vagrants continued to increase – so much so that by 1896 it was decided to erect a new infirmary and tramp ward at a cost of £600.⁵³ Unfortunately, the references in the minute books are to ‘buildings ‘or ‘building work’ and therefore fail to specify individual buildings. As the original estimate for work included a new infirmary block, the only reference that can be considered relevant in dating the building of a new vagrants’ ward refers to work being carried out on the ‘old’ infirmary – suggesting that the new one was completed. This is dated September 1897, so it may be supposed that the vagrants’ ward was completed sometime before that date.⁵⁴ While the building work was being undertaken the requirement that vagrants complete ‘tasks’ was withdrawn, and, as a consequence, numbers of vagrants increased (once the word had been passed on to other vagrants) to one hundred and twenty per week.⁵⁵ When the work was completed tasks were again implemented and numbers returned to the average of thirty-nine.⁵⁶

Vagrancy at Stoke

The concern over increased numbers of vagrants at Stoke was published in monthly local press

⁵¹ Vorspan, ‘Vagrancy and the New Poor Law’, p.70.

⁵² *Ibid.*, vol.22, 26 October 1887.

⁵³ Wolstanton Minute Book, vol.SD1232/14, 12 September 1896.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 28 September 1897.

⁵⁵ Tasks: males had to break between 5 cwt and 13 cwt of stone. Alternatives were picking four pounds of oakum or nine hours digging, pumping, cutting wood or grinding corn. For women, there was a choice of picking two pounds of oakum, or nine hours of washing, scrubbing, cleaning or needlework.

⁵⁶ SS. 10 April 1900.

reports. The Chairman of the Board of Guardians summed up the situation in the local press in graphic terms in February 1869:

There are six-hundred vagrants admitted into the house. Five hundred were men and sixty-five women and forty-five children and seventy per cent of the entire number being able-bodied vagrants, habitual beggars, suspected character, and prostitutes. The vagrants, unless ill, are to carry out four hours work in the morning before breakfast was supplied.⁵⁷

This introduction illustrates the immediate spatial variation from the neighbouring union of Wolstanton. Stoke emphasises the fact that they were overwhelmed by the numbers of able-bodied vagrants. From between late 1869 and early 1870, the PLB recorded that they had not received any returns on the issue of vagrants being allotted tasks in return for food and lodging from Stoke.⁵⁸ A possible explanation for a lax attitude towards vagrants is found in a report for Stoke dated 11th January 1870:

The state of the workhouse has for some time been very unsatisfactory. The late Master had become quite inefficient through old age and illness and the discipline of the House in consequence greatly relaxed. I have communicated with the Clerk upon the subject and shall take an early opportunity of meeting the new Master and Matron in introducing a better system. I do not think that any useful purpose would be served by the Board pointing out in detail the several defects which require being noticed. I shall do this more carefully by personal communication.⁵⁹

A report in the local newspaper dated November 1870 includes a statement by the master Mr. Crough, confirming the views of the public on the subject of vagrancy:

In the course of the conversation, the oft-urged question of what can be done with vagrants came up. The master stated that the vagrants resorted to all sorts of expedients to secrete the money they might bring with them. He had agreed to the searching of clothes and occasionally had found a few pence, but one woman, who had often been in the house, after being recently searched in vain was thought by the matron to speak rather thicker than usual, and five sixpences were found in her mouth. In another case, a woman

⁵⁷ SS. 27 February 1869.

⁵⁸ It should be remembered that the Board of Guardians' Minute Books until 1876 are not available, and that as a consequence it is not possible to state with certainty whether any reference was made to the subject in meetings of that period.

⁵⁹ TNA. MH12/11469, 11 Jan 1870.

and her family had been discharged to go to America, but the woman returned a few days later, stating that she had been to Liverpool and seen her children off to their father, who was in America, but she dares not go herself, because she expected her husband would thrash her, and she believed that in order to do so, he would come back to England.⁶⁰

It was just one month following the suggestion that ‘cells’ should be adopted at Wolstanton that the guardians at Stoke wrote to the LGB requesting particulars for twelve proposed cells.⁶¹ The LGB responded with full details, estimating the cost at around £350.⁶² Unlike Wolstanton, which took an early decision under LGB directions to deal with the ever-increasing problem of vagrancy, Stoke took a year to respond to the LGB noting ‘that the guardians had not yet reached a decision.’⁶³ This was followed a year later by a further communication to the LGB in April 1873 requesting ‘any information you may have of the particular drawings, etc.’, giving the impression that the guardians were now ready to proceed:

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The guardians are contemplating erecting a new vagrant ward upon the cell system and request for information of any reports of the working and effect of that system in other unions. The Board have already considered the Oswestry system and the benefits received there.⁶⁵

As a result, the clerk was instructed to investigate the experiences and views of other unions. His report referred to the experiences at Ellesmere and Oswestry Unions as good examples. At Oswestry, there was a bathroom, a passage, a fumigating room, and separate sleeping and work cells (completed in 1867). It was noted that the cost per vagrant’s accommodation was 3½ pence per night, of which two pence was for food and 1½ pence for fire.⁶⁶ The results of the task allocated to each male covered the cost of food, showing a profit

⁶⁰ SS. 17 November 1870.

⁶¹ TNA. MH12.11470, 21 March 1872.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 26 March 1872.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, MH12/11471, 18 February 1873.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 24 April 1873.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, May 1873.

⁶⁶ This is the only reference suggesting that there was heating in the cells.

of 1s 4d per cubic yard of broken stone. It was noted that in twelve other unions, as in Stoke, the number of vagrants had increased, whereas Oswestry, particularly since Saturday had been made a working night, recorded reduced numbers. Evidence was also submitted from the nearby Wolstanton and Stafford Unions.⁶⁷

The COS, in what may be considered an attempt to highlight their work and the increasing problem of vagrants, published their determination to eradicate the streets of vagrants, hoping thereby to win influence at the forthcoming Stoke guardians' meeting.⁶⁸ The local newspaper reported the following sweeping condemnation of vagrants:

There is a bad time coming for beggars, who are in danger of becoming removed from the face of the land. All romance has long ago departed from the career of the beggar, who has been reduced to the lowest level of idle, thriftless, utterly disreputable scamp-hound. They crowd the casual wards of the workhouses, and otherwise comport themselves after the manner of the scum of society, and are viewed as vulgar and uninteresting fellows as the life of cities can furnish. He represents all that is meanest and most contemptible amongst civilised men and says 'I will not work, to beg I am not ashamed;' and thrives and fattens where and while his betters suffer and starve

The COS, are preparing to take further steps to suppress vagrancy with the suggestion to stop all night free dormitories which effectively promote vagrancy with free lodging. The law it was suggested for the imprisonment of vagrants should be strictly applied. Following this industrial house should be established in which vagrants after being twice convicted should be made to work 'under wholesome restraint.'⁶⁹

Despite the well-meaning nature of the scheme, it was considered impractical as there were not sufficient prisons in the country to contain all the vagrants. For many, prison would have represented a much easier existence than constantly being on the move and having to beg to survive. As a consequence, the press raised the issue of vagrancy on the following day, emphasising the importance of the cell system and its success at Oswestry:

It is possible that some time will elapse before the COS will be able to realise what they propose, and therefore turn to the scheme originated by the Oswestry House of Industry.

⁶⁷ SS. 14 May 1873.

⁶⁸ Hurren, *Protesting about Pauperism*, pp.60-65, extensively covers the work of the COS.

⁶⁹ SS. 20 May 1873.

We refer to the separate cell system, which acts as a deterrent on the professional vagrant from obtaining the relief which he is entitled. The Oswestry scheme has been followed by Ellesmere, Burslem, Chesterfield, and elsewhere and about to be tried at Stafford. Of course, until all unions have adopted it no judgement can be pronounced upon its workings; for tramps, will avoid some places and will flock to others, and many influences are at work which cannot be grappled with all at once in dealing with this all-important vagrant question.⁷⁰

This impressive talk by the COS of reducing the burden of vagrants for rate-payers failed to connect with the people of Stoke and therefore, the COS found only limited support in North Staffordshire. This 'lack of connection' was reflected at their annual meeting held at Stoke Town Hall in May 1880; as it was reported that the meeting attracted 'only a small attendance.'⁷¹ Even so, the guardians noting public opinion failed to take urgent action to reduce the number of vagrants; remaining unconcerned by increased numbers. The subject of dealing with casuals according to the LGB *Circulars* was again in the context of vagrants and their treatment and discussed at a meeting of the guardians on the 20th May. Once more the guardians refused to accept the recommendation of the LGB to erect separate cells. The Vice-Chairman of the guardians, while in London called at the office of the LGB concerning this matter. The results were received in a follow-up letter:

The LGB insist upon separate cells being provided for vagrants – that a separate bed of iron or wood be provided; that food should be given them; that they should be detained at the workhouse until eleven o'clock in the morning; and that they should be required to perform some task of work, either pumping water or digging in the garden for three hours. The LGB would not raise further difficulty, and this would relieve the old men at the house to some extent. This action need not involve the guardians in any great expense, and it would obviate the necessity of joining Stoke in the matter of casual treatment. It was decided to defer the matter for a time, and meanwhile to make inquiries concerning it.⁷²

Two conclusions may be drawn from this; firstly, that the guardians were able to ignore the instructions of the LGB; that the LGB had few powers to enforce its 'insistence'; and that

⁷⁰ Ibid., 21 May 1873.

⁷¹ Ibid., 29 May 1880.

⁷² SS. 27 May 1873.

there was no collaboration between the two. Secondly, that the treatment of vagrants at Stoke workhouse was relatively benign, a circumstance which, as previously stated, would act as an incentive encouraging further vagrants to seek accommodation. Despite this rebuff from the LGB, the guardians still refrained from introducing the separate cell system or allow the clerk to make further enquiries concerning their benefits. The fact remained that many workhouses which had introduced the 'cell system' also increased the daily tasks for vagrants which it was noted, had the benefit 'measured in terms of reduced numbers.'⁷³ Stoke, regardless of other unions appraisal of the 'cell system' appears to have had more interest in retaining the old vagrant ward system. The local press reported that, following questions by a guardian, the chairman responded by stating 'if they did not have vagrants to man the pumps, they would have to hire labour to pump the water required.'⁷⁴ After years of deferring the subject of cells, it eventually became clear that the reluctance to proceed was due to financial considerations.

A further ten months followed until the guardians meeting of May 1874 debated the question of cells again. At his insistence Mr. Gilman, a guardian who had previously raised the issue proceeded to present a picture of the general public's perception of the vagrant problem:

No more of our money to help to feed an idle army of men and women who won't work, and therefore shan't eat. But what were the present facts of the case? Driven from the streets and lanes, the vagrants still refuse to work. The matter is so serious that the Boards all over the country are nearly in the arms of death in sight of this monster, whose name is legion. Having no home, so idle they won't work, their moral natures are so low that they are found like a pestilence slaying the life of our labouring poor. If there was no remedy for this disease, then it would be a useless task to bring it before this deliberative body.⁷⁵

⁷³ Ibid., 25 May 1873.

⁷⁴ Ibid., 9 July 1873.

⁷⁵ Mr. Gilman was an Alderman of Hanley Borough Council, and a J. P. He was also the proprietor of the largest gentleman's outfitters in the town. The metaphors used here are typical of the disgust many people felt for those whom they considered idle and parasitic. This is probably a reflection of the Victorian ethic of rewards for hard work.

Mr. Gilman's Victorian attitude reflected the prevalent values of the day: hard work and self-discipline. It emphasised the overwhelming distaste for members of society who would not work but rather scrounged off those who did. To qualify his initial comments, he then referred to the current state of the economy (which presented far better employment prospects than in previous years), continuing:

Perhaps strangers would ask if it was true, with work so abundant, wages so good, and labour so scarce, that men are found and women also, who will sooner submit to privation in kind of food and kind of bed than work for their own living. Perhaps he might be told that if these persons were not on the roads, they would be in our workhouses or our prisons, and we must keep them somewhere.

This assessment by Mr. Gilman received a 'hear, hear' from his fellow guardians, which again reflected the majority opinion of vagrants in a society where work was plentiful. Mr. Gilman continued to quote statistics from 1868 which proved alarming. He then referred to the previous year 1873, which was of unusual prosperity, and yet number of vagrants continued to rise:

At our own workhouse during the year 1868, 3,338 vagrants were relieved. The weekly average of destitute poor in the house was 620; in 1869 the vagrants increased to 4,249, but in 1873, a year of unusual prosperity, they increased to 5,782, but in the year ending 25th March of this year (1874), nearly all without exception they were able to earn their own living.

To prove to the Board of Guardians that there was an alternative with a proven record of reducing the number of vagrants, Mr. Gilman continued to press for the 'separate cell system'.

There was, without doubt, a remedy – It was known as the 'Oswestry' or 'separate cell system.' At Bolton, it was in full use for thirty-three persons – If the last half year the number was reduced from 8,664 to 3,464. But two cases upon which he mostly depended on to commend this separate system were Oswestry and Burslem and Wolstanton. The former had not only reduced the idlers from 2,619 to 521 but made it pay the cost of working. The latter place, their near neighbour, Burslem said that up to Lady Day, 1872, the number was 1,452. This was reduced by the new plan to 244.

Finally, in his concluding remarks, the cost of such a change was highlighted:

Their cells had been built to accommodate 16 vagrants at a cost of £1,006. The plan paid its way by reducing the number in one year from 5,799 to 4,116 and was considered in all respects satisfactory. He claimed for the same period that Stoke was really in a worse state than any other parish in the kingdom. Stating surely the guardians of Stoke parish, with a list of 7,337 vagrants ought to adopt it.⁷⁶

The plea by Mr. Gilman was ignored by the Chairman, Mr. Ashworth, who thought only of the cost:

Currently, the cost of vagrants amounted to £45 p.a. and the cost of a new 'cell system' around £2,000.⁷⁷ To borrow the money would cost £75 p.a. against a saving of £45 despite there being a reduction of vagrants under this new system in no place would it go away?

Although many of the guardians agreed with the assessment of the situation and the urgency of reducing the number of vagrants was acknowledged, a vote was taken on the motion, two for and eight against.⁷⁸ However, the force of the argument for a separate cell system to reduce vagrant numbers remained undiminished. The results of the vote showed what influence Mr. Ashworth held as Chairman of the Guardians and a person whose opinions carried great weight. He remained adamant and ignored the overwhelming evidence from other unions regarding the benefits of the cell system. In his attempt to dismiss the original claims on factual grounds, he used seemingly dubious figures to press for a vote against the plans which other guardians felt unable to challenge. The decision, consequently, was made in his favour.

Referring to the final objection in relation to the cost of accommodation raised by Mr. Ashworth in the hope of gaining support from hard-working rate-payers, Mr. Gilman argued for more stringent measures against vagrancy and contradicted Mr. Ashworth's estimates. The implementation of the 'cell system' was finally deferred for a further twelve months.⁷⁹ Consequently Stoke continued to suffer the results of indecision. Mr. Gilman referred to the fact that Christmas was coming and that the number of vagrants would, as there being no

⁷⁶ SS. 21 May 1874.

⁷⁷ It would appear that this was exaggerated as at the Bolton workhouse the cost was only £700 for 33 persons.

⁷⁸ SS. 21 May 1874.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 12 June 1875.

deterrent, increase substantially. Not surprisingly, at the same time the majority of guardians were reluctant to implement improvements even for bathing facilities, for fear that, once completed, the pressure would then be to implement separate cells.⁸⁰

Newcastle Union situated only half a mile away from the Stoke was under pressure from the LGB to reform the vagrant system along with other unions which had not yet implemented the separate cell system.⁸¹ An LGB Inspector visited Newcastle in November 1876, urging the guardians at least to improve bathing facilities, on the grounds that ‘it has generally been found to have a deterrent effect upon vagrants as the numbers at the workhouse over the past year showed no reduction standing at one hundred and twenty the previous week compared with the corresponding week the previous year at one hundred and thirteen.’⁸²

The following month saw numbers of weekly vagrants increasing at Stoke from one hundred and twenty-eight in 1873 to one hundred and sixty-one for June 1874.⁸³ The decision by the Board of Guardians attracted a flow of ‘Letters to the Editor’. One such letter from Mr. Joseph Randell of King Street, Stoke-upon-Trent, was to the point:

It is high time that some steps be taken in order to abate this crying evil, for when we consider that 7,357 vagrants are continually pouring in like a polluted stream, drawing as it were, the life blood from the hard earnings of the already over-worked ratepayers, which some stringent measure should be adopted. What is more shameful is that to find that thousands of these idle vagrants are annually relieved at the expense of the ratepayers, why scores of deserving are entirely neglected? The great problem is how to suppress vagrancy ... When you consider that something like 6,000 children are born on the roads each year and in our workhouses and nursed in the very cradle of vagrancy, it is appalling. Boards of Guardians all over the country are adopting some plan, and in some cases are at their wits' ends; in no case, however, can guardians independently operate of each other ... Mr. Gilman states (guardian at Stoke) that the cost of 16 cells would be £1,006. I do not know whether these cells are fitted out after the manner of a fashionable hotel as Mr. Ashworth facetiously remarked, but from the cost, I should say they were. A builder can build three large cottages, houses large enough to accommodate eighteen people – at a

⁸⁰ Ibid., 21 November 1876.

⁸¹ Newcastle-under-Lyme was a different Borough from Stoke.

⁸² SS. 5 June 1877.

⁸³ Ibid., 26 June 1874.

cost of £450. So according to his idea, a vagrant is worth twice the accommodation as a hard-working ratepayer.⁸⁴

The exact date of the building of separate cells at Stoke is not confirmed as the minute books prior to 1877 have not survived. (Fig. 4.5) Neither a search of the National Archives correspondence files or the local press resolved the question of the exact date. Evidence provided by a reduction of vagrant numbers must, therefore, be taken as a sufficient indication that the cells had been introduced. On this supposition, they were probably built late in 1875 or early in 1876⁸⁵ and are detailed on a map dated 1877.(Fig. 4.6) In the first full year of the new cell system numbers had decreased from seven thousand, one hundred and thirteen to three thousand, nine hundred and twelve (fifty-two per cent) and were falling rapidly.⁸⁶ In February 1876, the master reported the largest drop experienced, from a high of one hundred and nineteen the previous year to only fifty-one and again in March from one hundred and sixty-six in the previous year to only forty-five.⁸⁷ By May the reduction was further confirmed, with a total of fifty-five as against eighty-one the previous year; and, lastly, in June, the total was twenty-seven against sixty-five in the previous year. This represents an overall reduction of seventy-one per cent for the period.⁸⁸ To place this into context, the number of vagrants at Wolstanton was only fourteen per week for the month of May.

Areas of Comparison

This section assesses in comparison the spatial diversity found not only between the two unions, Stoke and Wolstanton but those within the region to gain a wider perspective of diversification within specific functions of the poor law that include the implementation of sleeping cells, the variants of beds allocated to the specific use of vagrants and the numbers of vagrants with

⁸⁴ SS. 4 June 1874. The writer draws attention to the facts presented by Mr. Ashworth, which conflicts with those presented by Mr. Gilman, as well as with what we know about the cost of building at Bolton workhouse.

⁸⁵ It is not easy to rely on published numbers. The reductions shown early in 1876 could have been a consequence of the cell system, but might just as easily be attributed to bad weather.

⁸⁶ SS. 23 May 1877.

⁸⁷ Ibid.,. 19 January and 15 March 1876.

⁸⁸ Ibid.,. 31 May and 26 June 1876.

special attention to any reductions as a result of changes in accommodation or the implementation of central authority circulars. The effect of local business distress on employment levels will also be viewed as a cause of vagrancy.

With the apparent success of the cell system at Stoke, the guardians at Newcastle decided to visit neighbouring unions Wolstanton and then Congleton to investigate the results where vagrants were avoiding these two workhouses. At Stafford, in addition to the separate cell system vagrants were tasked with oakum picking. (Fig.4.7) The change, it was reported, saw the number of vagrants reduced from seven thousand per year to around three thousand five hundred.⁸⁹ Following these visits the guardians at Newcastle, were convinced and finally agreed to change the existing accommodation for vagrants by the addition of separate cells.⁹⁰ The impressive reduction in vagrant numbers at Stoke suggests that the ‘cell system’ was unlikely to be the sole explanation, but one of a combination of factors such as a better economic climate providing employment which probably influenced the number. A further assessment of the situation can be gained from LGB reports regarding the numbers and the number of beds available to accommodate vagrants.

The following table extracted from annual LGB inspection reports of both Stoke and Wolstanton workhouses quotes the number of beds allocated for vagrants and their occupancy. Total numbers of vagrants recorded are different for each workhouse as each union derived its own formula on the number of beds to provide based on previous demands over a set period. The variance of these statistics focuses on the dates when numbers increased in addition to the number of allocated beds and years.

⁸⁹ Ibid., 21 November 1877.

⁹⁰ Ibid., 21 November 1877.

Table 4.1 Number of Vagrants and Beds

Stoke-upon-Trent.	Beds - Total Occupied				Wolstanton	Beds - Total Occupied			
	Female	Male	Female	Male		Male	Female	Female	Male
2 July 1879	16	6	6	2					
22 March 1881	16	6	11	1					
29 June 1882	16	6	10	1	6 Mar. 1882	12	8	4	2
23 Oct. 1883	16	6	12	3	18 Feb. 1883	11	6	2	0
20 Nov. 1884	16	6	9	6					
17 Mar. 1884	12	6	3	1	5 Jan. 1885	12	6	10	
18 Dec. 1886	16	6	9	3	25 Jan. 1886	14	6	6	3
89 Aug. 1887	16	6	1	4	5 May 1887	14	6	6	3
23 Aug. 1888	30	6	13	1					
7 Nov. 1889	30	6	5	5					
12 May 1890	30	6	4	0	10 June 1890	14	6	2	2
10 Nov. 1891	30	6	18	28	10 April 1891	14	8	6	1
9 Dec. 1892	26	6	32	8	17 April 1892	14	6	7	5
7 Nov. 1893	26	6	21	6	17 May 1893	14	6	15	6
7 Sept. 1894	26	6	11	5	13 March 1893	14	6	14	3
5 Dec. 1895	26	6	35	7	10 May 1895	14	6	12	3
					8 May 1896	24	10	10	0
2 Nov. 1897	26	6	16	2	12 May 1897	24	10	7	0
18 May 1898	26	6	28	4	6 May 1898	24	10	3	0
29 Mar. 1899	26	6	35	4	11 April 1900	24	10	7	0 ⁹¹
23 May 1899	48	16	5	1					

At Stoke, the number of beds was increased from sixteen to thirty in 1888, but as figures indicate they were under-occupied, and so, in 1892 numbers were reduced to twenty-six. Because of significant increases in March 1889 of males to twenty-eight, a shortage of beds was noted, resulting in the number being increased to forty-eight. Until 1891, the numbers had remained almost static at an average of six over the previous six years.

At Wolstanton, the figures present a different picture. Until 1893, two years later than Stoke (1882-1891), they averaged five with a shortage of beds recorded in 1893. Despite this, the number of beds for male vagrants remained the same at fourteen until 1896, when the number was increased to twenty-four. Vagrant numbers increased at Stoke from 1891, whereas

⁹¹ Numbers extracted from LGB Inspectors' reports on the dates quoted in series MH12.

at Wolstanton they remained static until 1893. The situation was fluid, possibly on account of the availability of casual labour locally or maybe as a result of the strict rule of vagrants not being allowed out of the workhouse until late in the morning when casual work would have been taken.

By a series of directives local guardians were allowed to relax the need to retain vagrants until late in the morning to ‘*bona fide* lookers-for-work’.⁹² It was, therefore, surprising given their long tradition of ignoring LGB *Circulars* that guardians at Stoke were quick to implement this new ruling. Until then they had benefited from the reduction of vagrants through the implementation of the cell system, but could now see that this benefit become eroded. In May 1882, it was noted that the annual number vagrants had already reached over two thousand and that the matter needed urgent attention.⁹³ A meeting of the guardians held on the 11th June 1882 referred to the ‘urgency of some means being devised to stop the increasing numbers of vagrants.’⁹⁴ Referring to the new Bill before Parliament in its second reading, Mr. Gilman observed, ‘the objects of this Bill appeared to meet what was required.’ The Bill once on the statute books was discussed at the meeting of the guardians on the 7th January 1883 where it was resolved it should be implemented immediately.⁹⁵

The efforts by the guardians to control the increase of vagrancy came too late for the following four years which witnessed a trade depression in the Staffordshire Potteries whereby demands for accommodation at both workhouses increased. Public schemes such as road building were implemented by the government in an attempt to find employment nationally for over ten thousand workers.⁹⁶ The coal fields of North Staffordshire were practically moth-balled from 1884 and in the towns of Burslem to the north and Longton to the south of the

⁹² Nicholls, *History of the English Poor Law*, p.384.

⁹³ SS. 15 May 1882.

⁹⁴ Stoke Minute Book, vol.19, 11 June 1882.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, vol.20, 7 February 1883.

⁹⁶ SS. 28 February 1886.

Potteries many had been reduced to starvation levels and subscription lists opened for the poor.⁹⁷ In 1885 the LGB Inspector reported that in the Newcastle and Stoke unions there had been an increase of three hundred and sixty-six applications for outdoor relief.⁹⁸ Not only did the winter of 1886 cause exceptional distress among the working classes,⁹⁹ but while other areas in Shropshire and Staffordshire showed a decrease in outdoor relief, Stoke, Wolstanton, Derby and Macclesfield showed an increase of one thousand one hundred and sixty-two applications seeking relief.¹⁰⁰ It was reported that in the Wolstanton and Burslem Union over one thousand men were thrown out of employment in the autumn of 1886, owing to the stoppages at the local ironworks, blast-furnaces, and collieries thereby the guardians were forced to grant relief under the labour-test order.¹⁰¹

In 1887, the local press referred to increasing weekly numbers of vagrants. At Stoke, the figures for the week were one hundred and ten (seventy-one the previous year), and at Wolstanton thirty-one (twelve the previous year).¹⁰² It was not vagrants alone who contributed to the demands upon the workhouses – so did soldiers, demobilised without a peacetime occupation or having lost the habit of sleeping under an ordinary roof. It was reported at Stoke in August 1895 there were two hundred and twenty-five vagrants, of whom forty-seven (20.8 per cent) were one-time soldiers. In the previous week, there were one hundred and ninety-nine vagrants.¹⁰³ This prompted the Board to write directly to the LGB suggesting a national list of numbers of soldiers in the country seeking relief in order to ascertain whether the increase of soldiers was due to the short service system in the Army, and, to outline what steps the LGB

⁹⁷ Ibid., 16 January 1886 and 23 March 1886.

⁹⁸ PP. 15th Annual Report of the Local Government Board (1885), p.30.

⁹⁹ PP. 16th Annual Report of the Local Government Board (1886), p.68.

¹⁰⁰ PP. 15th Annual Report of the Local Government Board (1885), p.30.

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

¹⁰² SS. 14 April 1887.

¹⁰³ Stoke Minute Book, vol.26, 2 October 1895. It was too early for these soldiers to have returned from the Boer War of 1899-1902. It may have been the earlier Zulu Civil War, or these may have been soldiers who had served their time in the army and now found themselves with no abode or occupation. There is no evidence to suggest that the LGB took any action to reduce the numbers of soldiers.

could take to reduce these numbers.¹⁰⁴ There is no evidence that the LGB compiled a register of discharged soldiers.

Following this period of national distress in the country by the 1890s there was an upturn in trade and employment and according to the LGB annual report the Potteries shared in a national reduction of able-bodied claiming relief. However, in the late 1890s surprisingly the numbers of vagrant paupers increased despite a continued improvement in trade:

Currently, a favourable condition of trade in the coal and iron districts and in the Staffordshire Potteries, which has no doubt, decreased the numbers of paupers generally. It has also had its effect on vagrancy relieved in the workhouses in the district last year being 12,862 less than the previous years. In only six unions was there an increase in vagrancy, the principal being Stoke at 645.¹⁰⁵

Accommodation for vagrants was now at a premium at Stoke as wards were proving inadequate and unable to satisfy the additional demand brought on by the increase in numbers of former soldiers. As a result, the Board met in May 1895 to discuss the situation following an inspection by the LGB and confirmed that additional accommodation was required:¹⁰⁶

The current arrangements at the workhouse for the treatment and reception of vagrants in the past have been found inadequate and inconvenient. The guardians believe the existing accommodation should either be extended or improved or that it should be demolished altogether by the erection of a more suitable building on a separate cell system providing sleeping rooms and work cells which are at present a long distance apart being arranged together with receiving wards.¹⁰⁷

In 1895, it thus became necessary to increase the number of cells at Stoke to accommodate demand. An additional plot of land was purchased adjacent to the main highway at a cost of £2,000.¹⁰⁸ The location was deemed appropriate as it provided direct access from the road thereby eliminating possible 'contamination' with other paupers, a common concern of

¹⁰⁴ TNA. MH12/11495, 4 October 1895.

¹⁰⁵ PP. 29th *Annual Report of the Local Government Board (1899-1900)*, p.126.

¹⁰⁶ Stoke Minute book, vol.25, 8 May 1895.

¹⁰⁷ TNA. MH12/11495, 15 August 1895.

¹⁰⁸ Stoke Minute Book, vol.25, 17 September 1895. Erected on what is now London Road, Newcastle-under-Lyme (A34), although within the boundary of Stoke-on-Trent.

guardians. This new accommodation, built at a cost of £7,483 was opened four years later¹⁰⁹ and included a porter's lodge with residence for those in charge of the casuals, receiving wards for prospective inmates and vagrant wards. The new cell block was to be situated adjacent to the workhouse piggeries.¹¹⁰ When the LGB Inspector visited the following year, he reported that 'the new casual ward for vagrants may be considered satisfactory.'¹¹¹

Conclusion

This chapter has demonstrated that the Boards of Guardians at Stoke and Wolstanton reflected the national picture in their experience of vagrants through a spatial framework of analysis. There are two reasons for its inclusion into this study. Firstly, as previously mentioned vagrancy was a life-style choice which by the severity of numbers creates an identifiable separate group of paupers which represents their life-cycle of experience of poverty and welfare under the new poor law and thereby justifies its inclusion. Secondly this chapter has filled the gap regarding issues in the treatment of vagrants that has remained under researched in detail of the Staffordshire Potteries and for the period 1871-1901.

Historians have illustrated how vagrants were perceived and tolerated by the wider society. However, there available only little secondary literature to demonstrate the daily experiences of vagrants in workhouses, nor the day-to-day reality of how local Boards of Guardians firstly dealt with the problem of vagrancy and secondly, responded to LGB directives. This chapter is therefore structured around these challenges of local workhouse administration contributing a vivid picture of the poor vagrant whereby the understanding of sentiment and meaning adds significantly to existing literature.

At Stoke the guardians initially failed to implement the cell system in 1871/2 despite recommendations by LGB Inspectors regardless of overwhelming evidence of the system's

¹⁰⁹ In 1871, an Inspector's salary started at £200 p.a. with up to £250 allowance for personal expenses.

¹¹⁰ Wolstanton Minute Book, vol.SD1232/14, Ibid, 15 April 1899.

¹¹¹ TNA. 23 May 1900.

proven effectiveness from other workhouses, such as those at Oswestry, Stafford, and Wolstanton, where numbers dropped considerably from one thousand four hundred and fifty-two in 1872 to two hundred and forty-four in 1873. Therefore, vagrancy was not effectively reduced at Stoke but continued to rise as guardians were unwilling to relinquish the free labour of vagrants for work at the water pumps. Stoke also failed to address the need for onerous tasks and the part they would play in reducing vagrant numbers whereas the 1882 Act, changing the terms of admission of vagrants, was implemented immediately.

On the other hand, Wolstanton implemented the cell system in 1872 following LGB directives. Consequently, vagrant numbers decreased and remained low. Despite the number of vagrants slowly increasing during 1880s, guardians failed to recognise the importance of the 'task-as-payment' method in reducing vagrant applications. In addition, guardians also failed to implement the more stringent rules under the 1882 Act for four years resulting in the number of vagrants in both workhouses increased - albeit at different times. It is evident that the poor law central bureaucracy could not unilaterally enforce its vagrancy regulations.

The conclusions of this chapter confirm the views of Vorspan on the unpredictability of uniformity:

Although the New Poor Law has often been acclaimed for its 'centralising' features, this ascription applies more accurately to poor law theory than to poor law practice. In fact, the coercive powers of the central authority were minimal and the guardians enforced official orders at their own discretion. Since the final determination of policy thus rested with locally elected and unpaid administrative bodies, the predictable consequence was a complete absence of uniformity in local relief practices. One of the few general patterns that emerged involved a fairly widespread local adherence to the rigorous vagrancy orders of the LGB soon after their promulgation, followed by a general accelerating trend towards laxity in a majority of unions which eventually produced another outburst of repressive legislation from the central authority. If the period under discussion is considered as a whole, neither the work nor detention requirements were severely enforced.¹¹²

¹¹² Vorspan, 'Vagrancy and the New Poor Law', p.61.

As Vorspan implies, despite all the rhetoric and the *Circulars* issued by the LGB, local evidence contradicts the idea that Poor Law Unions followed central policy. Archival material for Stoke and Wolstanton present a factual argument that both unions had their own agendas regardless of external pressures where both were determined to remain in charge of their own destiny emphasising the local variations in policy and practice. The conclusions drawn within this chapter confirm comments made by Mr. H.G. Kennedy the Chief Inspector of the LGB, at a national conference held in Hull in 1895:

still found little uniformity of treatment between different unions with respect to sleeping arrangements, food, work, length of stay and the provision of hot water for bathing.¹¹³

Finally, despite its best intentions, the LGB administration was seen to be inadequate and ill-equipped for the task of reducing vagrancy because it was not given the tools of authority by Parliament to enforce change. Conversely, guardians rejected *Circulars* from London viewing them as distant interference into local matters. The combined effect was that the number of vagrants first increased followed by a period of decrease but failure to implement the 1882 Act saw vagrant rise substantially at Wolstanton.

This chapter has produced significant evidence to show that both Guardians at Stoke and Wolstanton carried out their responsibilities according to local circumstances and agendas thereby under-valuing the LGB as an unnecessary body with little or no relevance to the day-to-day life of the workhouse. Evidence has shown conclusively that the LGB administration and the decisions made by guardians changed perspectives regarding classification and the daily experiences of vagrants.

The following chapter explores the theory of local variations in policy and practice even further as it investigates the relevance of local variations of religion. Victorian attitudes to the Establishment and in particular the Established Church varied considerably in a region where

¹¹³ TNA. MH32/102, H.G. Kennedy's Report to LGB 1895.

Non-conformity had become firmly established in places of employment as well as among guardians and others in positions of authority.

Fig.4.1 The communal bather in the casual ward. The rule that all newly-admitted casuals must have a bather was strictly enforced for deterrent as well as hygiene reasons. Dated 1872

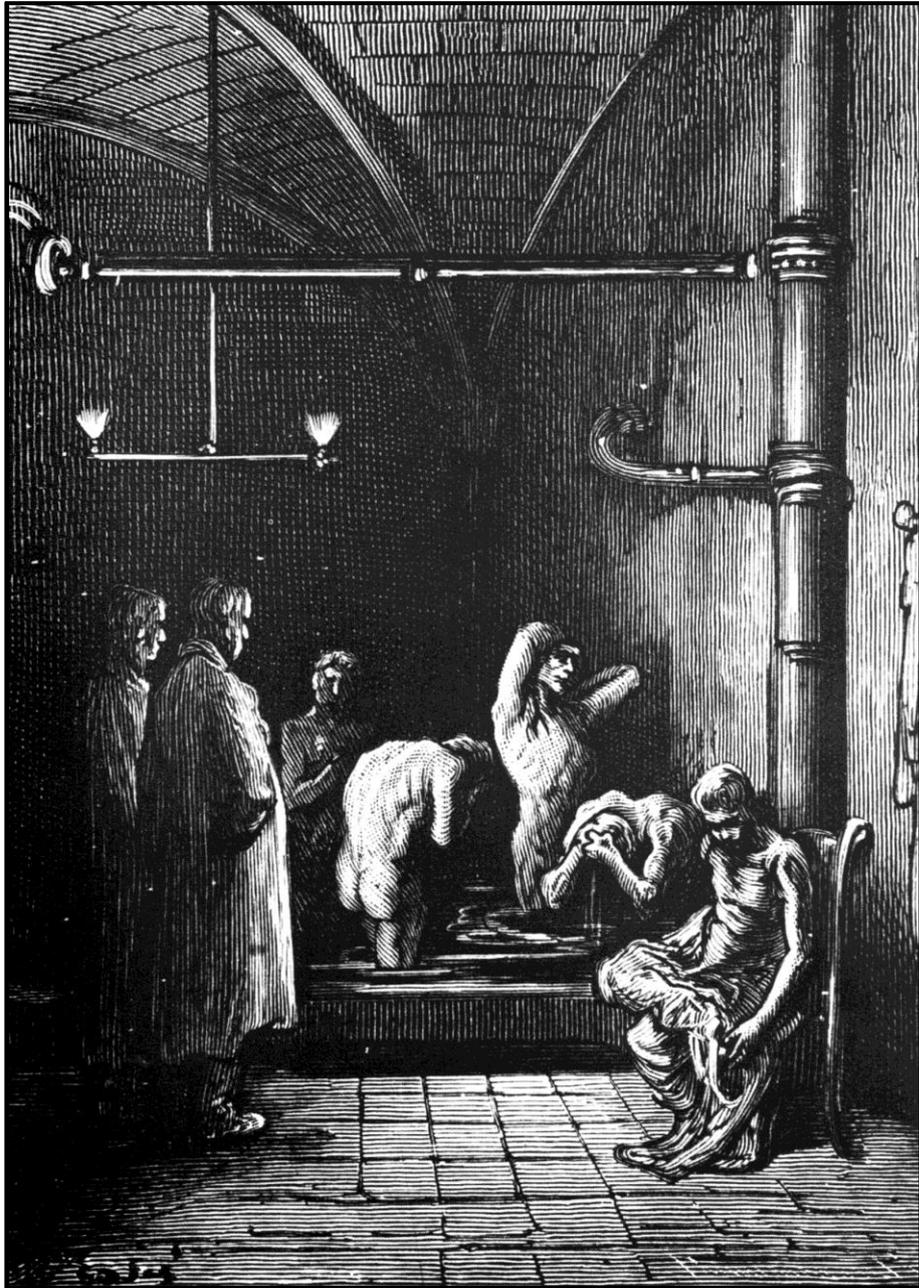
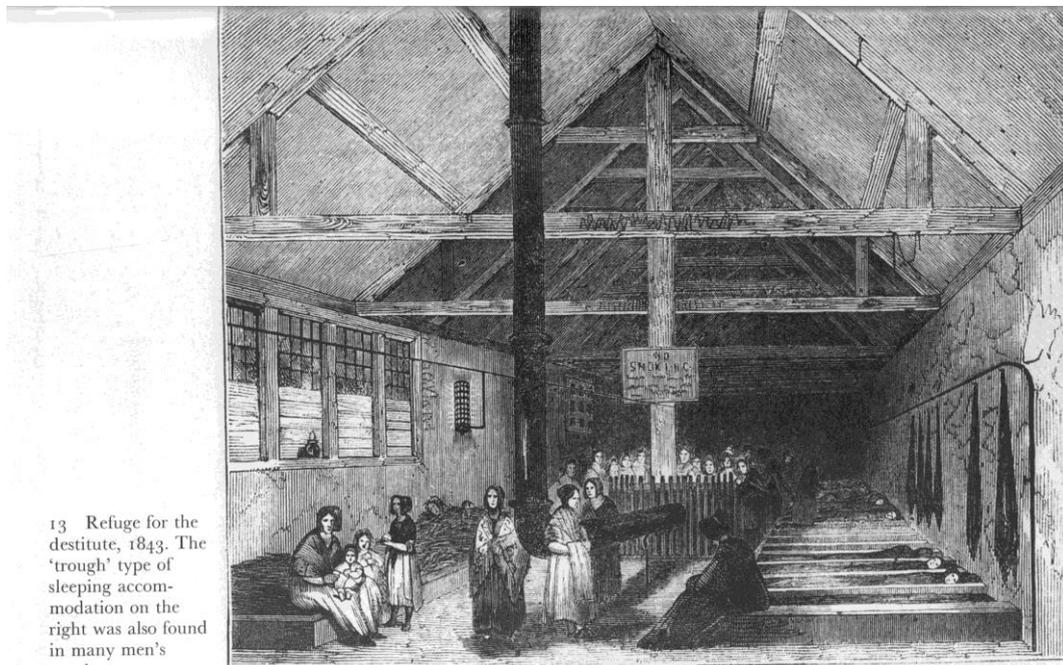


Fig.4.2 Lord Mayor visits the women's casual ward of the West London Union c.1860. This shows the sleeping platform



12 The Lord Mayor visits the women's casual ward of the West London Union, c. 1860. This shows the 'sleeping platform'.

Fig.4.3 Refuge for the destitute, 1843. The 'trough' type of sleeping accommodation on the right was found also in many men's wards



13 Refuge for the destitute, 1843. The 'trough' type of sleeping accommodation on the right was also found in many men's wards.

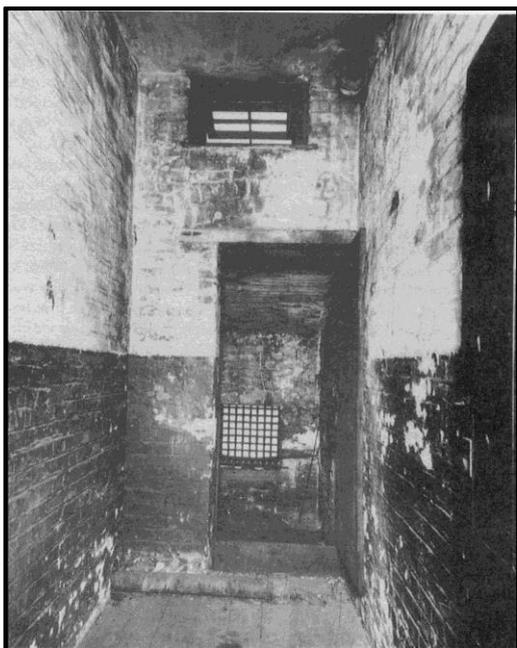


Fig.4.4
Hackney casual ward cell from a 1935 photo. In the foreground is the dormitory cell; this gives on to the stoke-breaking cell beyond. The grid through which the size-graded chips were fed is clearly seen. (Greater London Record Office)

Fig.4.5 Cells at Stoke workhouse

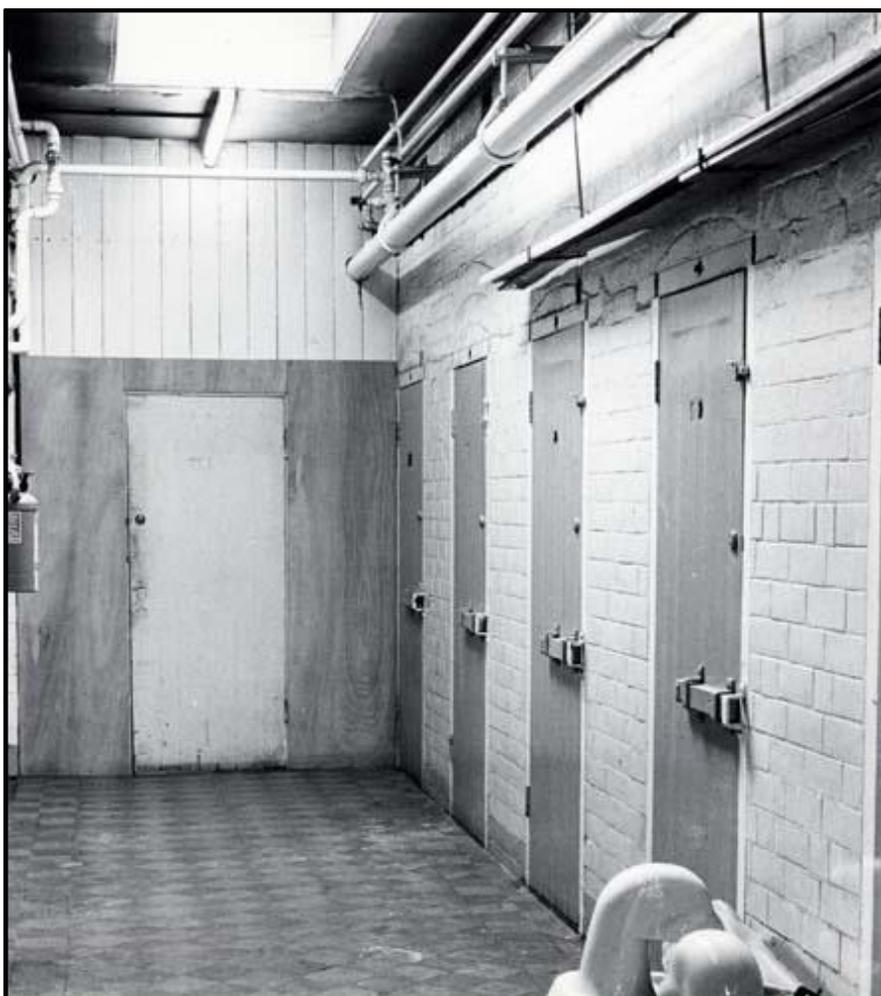


Fig.4.6 O.S. Map 1877 showing location of vagrant cells and stone yard adjacent to the main highway

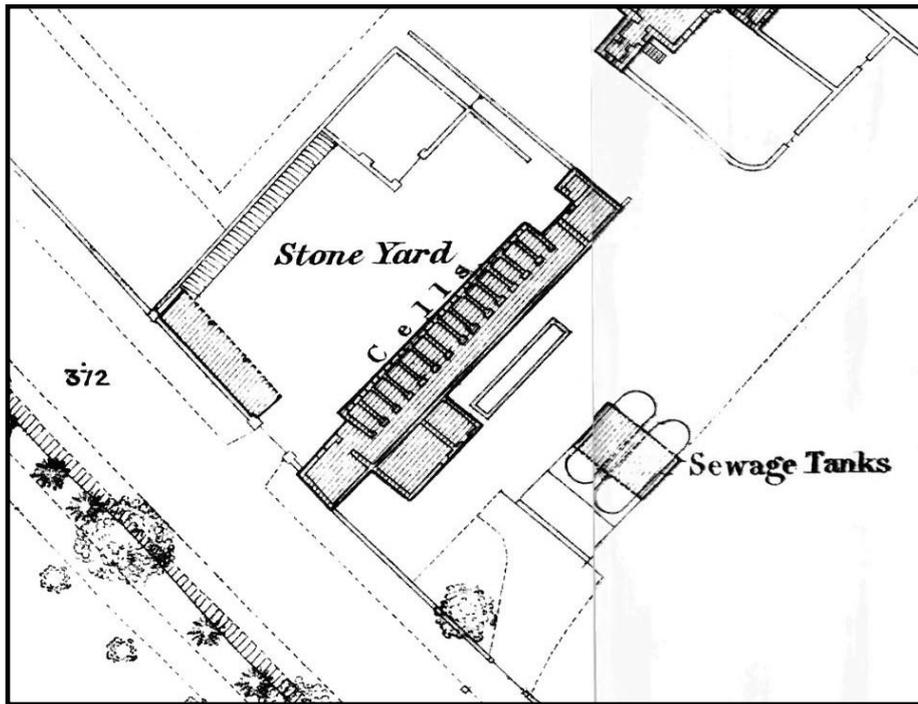


Fig.4.7 Ladies Oakum picking



Chapter 5 - Religion in the workhouse

Overview

The history of religion is one of conflict world-wide, nationally and locally. Following the wars with France and the defeat of Napoleon in 1815, all classes of people in Britain expected a period of prosperity but it failed to materialise with little improvements in areas of employment for the next seven years which despondency seems to have affected church going. Ken Inglis places the standing of religious observance into perspective:

During the nineteenth century, the habit of attending religious worship was not normal among the working-class. From the beginning of the century, the spiritual destitution of the lower orders was a commonplace of discussion.¹

The nineteenth century was a contentious period between denominations with claims and counter claims whereby the working classes viewed the Established Church as the elite and renowned for the vices of pluralism and absenteeism and general indifference towards pastoral care by its clergy.² Many clergy were frequently absent from their parish but receiving huge stipends from glebe, tithes and pew rents whilst frequently leaving curates ill-paid to perform their duties. It was a situation that encouraged the growth of Non-conformity especially in the northern industrial towns where Methodism had become popular.³ However, it remained that members of these churches, known as dissenters, were often regarded as second-hand citizens suffering considerable discrimination as they were not allowed to marry in their own place or worship until 1835 and until 1836 were also obliged to pay church rates towards the upkeep of the Established Church buildings, churchyards and burial grounds and church tithes to the benefit of the clergy until the 1850s.⁴

¹ K. S. Inglis, *Church and the Working Class* (London, 1963), p.1.

² J. Walvin, *English Life 1776-1851* (London, 1984), p.103.

³ C. K. Clarke, *The Making of Victorian England* (London, 1962), p.153.

⁴ J. Ward, *The Borough of Stoke-upon-Trent* (London, 1843), p.495; K.D.M. Snell, *Church and Chapel in the North Midlands: Religious Observance in the Nineteenth Century* (Leicester, 1991); K.D.M. Snell, P. S. Ell, *Rival Jerusalems: the Geography of Victorian Religion* (Cambridge, 2000); K.D.M. Snell, *Parish and Belonging, Community, Identity and Welfare in England and Wales 1700-1950* (Cambridge, 2006)

It is into this national picture of wealth and dominance of the Established Church that furthered the cause of dissenters especially in industrial areas such as the Staffordshire Potteries where Primitive Methodism became influential followed by the Wesleyan and New Connexion Methodists Churches which by 1830 had witnessed its growth to thirty-four chapels in Stoke-on-Trent against the Established Church who built only four.⁵

This is this aspect of religious disunity that found its way into the daily life of workhouse paupers forming a part of the life-cycle of experiences. Following the Act of 1834, requirements for religious observance were included in the national regulations for the running of union workhouses with provision made for dissenters. Regulations had been included to protect adult paupers from proselytism giving inmates the freedom to follow their own religious convictions without pressure to attend either the Established Church services or convert to other faiths. The law regarding religious worship and instruction was administered by the appointed Established Church Chaplain as stipulated in the 1834 New Poor Law Act, but despite good intentions the law was ignored by the Poor Law Commissioners. However, in some unions, notably in Non-conformist areas objections were made regarding the appointment of Anglican chaplains. Other issues regarding the acceptance or otherwise of Non-conformist ministers and the general ethos of religion were debated extensively.⁶

This chapter has three areas which focus on the religious experiences of workhouse life. Firstly, religious infrastructure was at the centre of denominational diversity, religious allegiance and the problems associated with such allegiances and the importance of the Creed Register to ensure that inmates were allowed the freedom to worship their chosen denomination. It further addresses the issues and the role of the workhouse Chaplain an area where there was initial opposition to the appointment of an Anglican chaplains and religious worship.

⁵ J. G. Jenkins, *The Victorian County History of Stafford* (vol. viii) (London, 1963), p.277

⁶ A.D. Gilbert, *Religion and Society in Industrial England* (London, 1976); Ward, *Religion and Society in England*; Inglis, *Churches and the Working Classes*; Walvin, *English Life*, p.103.

Secondly, it considers social attitudes towards religion found within the poor law system and in particular in the area of a child's education and pressure upon guardians and the conflicts between guardian and religious leaders to ensure that children were brought up in the faith at the time of their baptism. Thirdly, it seeks to trace the importance of religious values on how contemporaries understood the role of the poor law and how paupers experienced union policies - were they based upon their profession of faith or at the political will of the guardians, the diocese or the LGB. The examination of primary material will be among the first to provide evidence on religious experiences of the period 1871-1901. It is this detailed investigation of controversies over access to religious succour between three major denominations in the region, Anglican, Non-conformists and the Catholic Church which presents us a novel perspective of the nature and causation of local variations in poor law practice, as well as exposing the day-to-day experiences of institutionalised poor people under the authority of the New Poor Law.

The Religious Infrastructure and the Poor Law

The 1834 legislation directed that a daily form of prayers was to be conducted before and following breakfast and after supper, with grace being said before and following each meal by the workhouse master. 'Divine Service' was to be held every Sunday, Good Friday and Christmas Day for all inmates except for those who were sick, mentally ill, the infirm, young children or anyone - 'professing religious principles differing from those of the Established Church, the Church of England.' The Solicitor General reminded the Poor Law Commission of their responsibility to ensure religious freedom for both officers and paupers alike, so, from the outset, it was the official intention to create ordered Christian associations in workhouses, which ensured inmates the freedom considered most likely to fulfil the expectations of the New Poor Law.⁷ Also, public opinion would not allow paupers to be denied the consolation received through faith, but commissioners argued that if paupers went out of the workhouse on a Sunday

⁷ F. Crompton, *Workhouse Children* (Stroud, 1997), p.70.

to attend church, all manner of evils would result. Therefore, the Chaplain was considered a kind of 'gaoler', a term which could not be avoided.⁸

The Poor Law Commissioners required that unions appoint chaplains from the Church of England, but, as Crowther points out, they underestimated the opposition of some unions.⁹ This opposition was on the assumption that many areas resented the Church's monopoly on the grounds they did not wish to employ such an expensive officer when inmates could easily attend a local church at no cost. Crowther, perhaps the only author to refine research into this issue gives examples:

Kent, an Anglican stronghold, appointed a chaplain, but in the few unions without them, it was demanded that inmates be allowed to attend church but only under supervision and then in workhouse uniform. However, the inmates hate this public exhibition and the marching prevents them creating any disorder.¹⁰

There was considerable resistance to the appointments of Anglican clergy particularly in areas such as Cornwall and the north of England where dissenters from the Established Church were most common. Crompton records a case in 1837 where guardians in the Pershore Union wanted to appoint a Non-conformist chaplain, a situation highlighting the common tension between Anglicans and other denominations.¹¹ Any pressure to appoint a Church of England Chaplain was seen by many as an attempt to proselytise non-Anglican inmates and also to provide jobs for the clergy.¹² As dissenters were allowed to opt out of attendance at workhouse Anglican services, the appointment of a Church of England chaplain appeared futile in a number of northern unions where there was a majority of dissenters such as Burslem.¹³ In 1844, the commissioners reported that one hundred and forty-four unions were still refusing to appoint a chaplain. The areas with most deficiencies were Lancashire (ten unions), the West Riding

⁸ M.A. Crowther, *The Workhouse System 1834-1929 the History of an English Social Institution* (London, 1981), p.128.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p.129.

¹⁰ TNA. MH12/32/69, 25 October 1836

¹¹ Crompton, *Workhouse Children*, p.70.

¹² Crowther, *The Workhouse System*, p.129.

¹³ Burslem had a large following of the Wesleyan tradition. Charles Wesley preached there some times.

(thirteen), Durham (twelve) and Cornwall (seven) all places where dissent was strong.¹⁴ Although there remains little secondary evidence of the disparity of chaplains' there is sufficient to establish at an early date regional variations that form part of the later wider picture which questions the existence of a central authority.

Chaplains were usually poor curates anxious to supplement their living. Their work was not easy as in the first place it was subject to the vagaries of the 'rule' of the workhouse master and matron as to when they could visit those of their flock who needed spiritual help and guidance. Many young curates would have struggled against the power of a workhouse master and the unruly and probably blaspheming nature of his flock and from the restrictions they may have received from Non-conformist guardians.¹⁵ The Chaplain did not administer the Sacrament of Holy Communion except to the sick and the dying although the Bishop could grant permission for the Sacrament to be administered in special circumstances under regulations made law in 1842.¹⁶ Sundays were strictly observed as the Lord's Day by inmates, with all labour - apart from household duties and cooking - disallowed, giving paupers a rare opportunity for respite from the monotonous toil of workhouse life.

In 1836 it was agreed that non-Anglican inmates should continue to be allowed out to visit their own churches on Sundays. This inevitably brought about problems as many of the workhouse officers were Anglicans and were protected by a conscience clause whereby they could not be compelled to attend Non-conformist or Catholic services.¹⁷ The conditions upon which this right could be exercised were established in the case of the Roman Catholic inmates of Chelsea workhouse in 1861, under the authority of the Court of Queen's Bench.¹⁸

¹⁴ Crowther, *The Workhouse System*, p.129.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ TNA. MH12/14118, 20 March 1847.

¹⁷ In most cases it was only Anglicans that were appointed officers.

¹⁸ T.W. Fowle, *The Poor Law* (London, 1881), p.133.

As a way forward it was agreed that the minister of the church could certify the attendance of inmates if they attended unsupervised though inevitably some paupers took advantage and absconded. From this period an offer was made to Non-conformist ministers to attend the workhouse to take services for their own 'flock' but became possessive in protecting their congregations against the influence of other denominations and actively sought to discriminate against them. Interdenominational competition was strong and ministers ensured that inmates only attended services of their professed faith. Even so in 1842 in a gesture inmates could contact ministers of other faiths but as a consequence, accusations of proselytism were again raised.¹⁹

The frequent disagreements between denominations in workhouses prompted the Poor Law Amendment Act of 1868 which brought about the introduction of the *Creed Register*. The Act stipulated that 'guardians should record in the creed register each inmate's religious affiliation' as a way of ensuring that the person's appropriate religious instruction could be provided. The registers were arranged alphabetically noting the religious affiliation of inmates along with the dates of admission and discharge and lastly who admitted the inmate, i.e. self, parent, husband, neighbour, etc. (Fig.5.1). Upon entering the workhouse adult paupers were asked their creed, which was then entered into the register and was immutable on subsequent admissions to any workhouse. The creed of the head dictated the creed of the rest of the family but in the case of orphaned and deserted children, where no faith was offered they were placed under the umbrella of Anglicanism. Crompton's study of children in the workhouse offers no evidence to the various treatments of children from different faiths and fails to quantify them, only submitting the theory that 'any difference was down to the design of the workhouse.'²⁰

¹⁹ PP. *Poor Law Commission Instructional Letter*, (5 February 1842). TNA. ZHC/1386.

²⁰ Crompton, *Workhouse Children*, p.72. No other author has studied the subject of children in the workhouse. This local study provides local detail that reflects upon on the treatment of children as part of a life-cycle experience.

Personal details such as occupation, previous address and year of birth or age and finally death were sometimes recorded.

In many workhouses, creed registers gradually replaced admission and discharge registers. Unfortunately, only a few have survived and many have not survived and it is only now, with renewed interest into the role of the workhouse on a regional basis with its focus on variations and the social implications that their historical importance has been fully realised. However, as the following section demonstrates the information contained in creed registers could be instrumental in creating controversy and resentment between inmates where their treatment may be affected by their religious allegiance.

Religious Allegiance

Creed Registers are an important document from which the statistics relay snap-shots of religious persuasions at any given time. The only one which has survived locally is for the Wolstanton containing a ten-year record of all admissions, dates of birth, parishes, occupations and creeds of all inmates admitted from March 1887 - August 1897.

The following statistics in graph form are drawn from one thousand, eight hundred and eighty-nine recorded entries producing remarkable results when considering the dominance in the Staffordshire Potteries by Non-conformity. These are assessed alongside the results of the 1851 Religious Census.

Fig.5.1 Staffordshire Religious make-up from the 1851 census

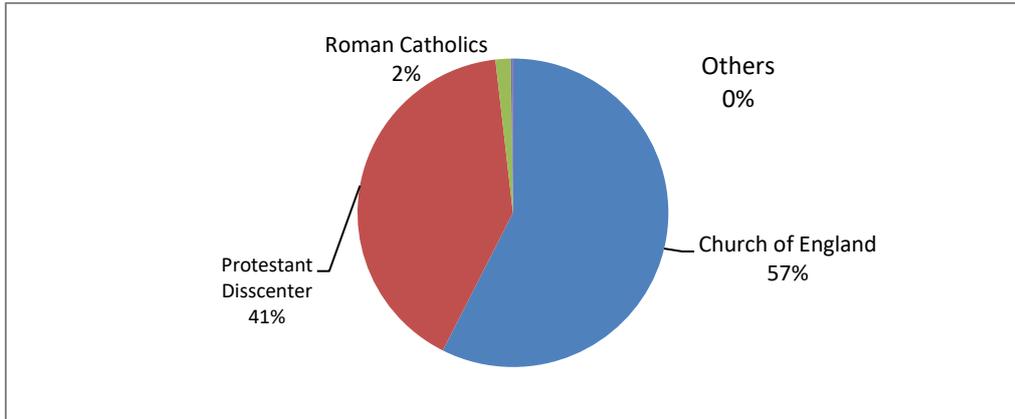


Fig.5.2 Creed Register Wolstanton Parish

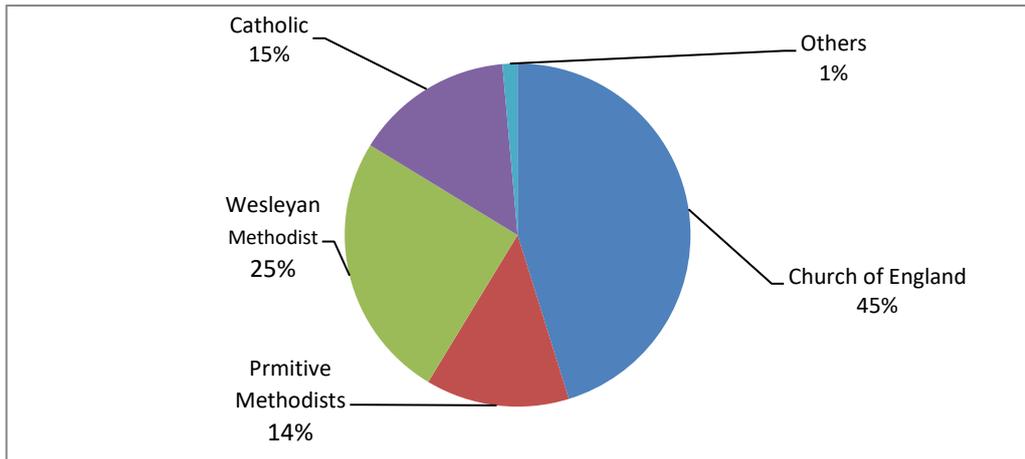
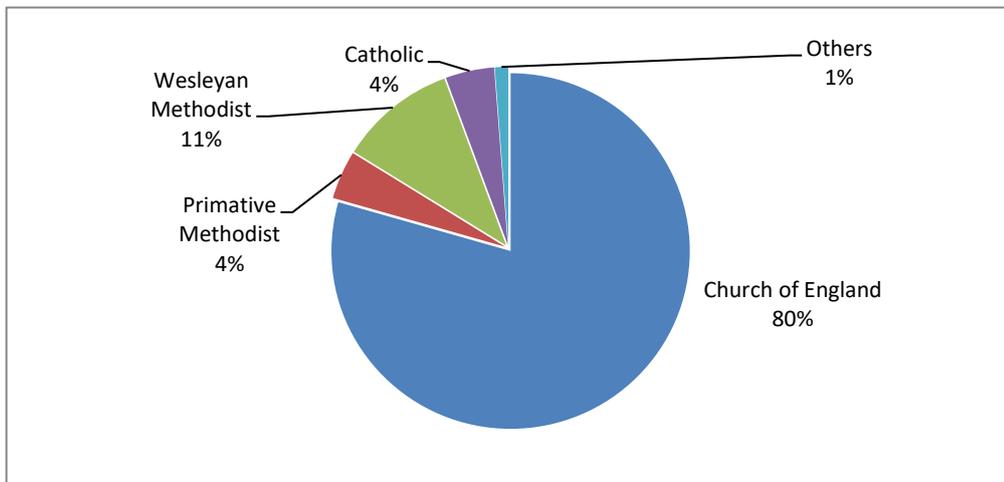


Fig.5.3 Creed Register Burslem Parish



As a comparison and to place the results into context to the wider area the 1851 Religious Census has been used for greater clarity of statistics.²¹ However, this type of census is known to be flawed in its concept and the resulting data is generally regarded as an unreliable source for statisticians.²² The census was taken in the mid-years of the Industrial Revolution, a time of growth in the Staffordshire Potteries and points to the trend that continued over the next eighty years of religious fervour.

The graph for 1851 (Fig.5.1) is representative of the whole of Staffordshire and identifies Anglican worship at fifty-seven per cent and other denominations at forty-three per cent. National figures are marginally different: Anglican forty-nine per cent and others fifty-one per cent.²³ Despite the unreliability of the census from a population of just over two hundred and twenty thousand there are pointers towards the findings of the Wolstanton register compiled some thirty-five years later.

The register show that thirty-nine per cent of inmates listed were Non-conformists from the Wolstanton area a similar number to that of the 1851 census at forty-one per cent. (Fig.5.2) Figures for Burslem provide a different picture of Non-conformists stood at around sixteen per cent. (Fig.5.3) and the largest number represented was the Church of England at forty-five per cent for the district of Wolstanton and eighty per cent for Burslem. Within the Non-conformist section eleven per cent was Wesleyan Methodists and four per cent Primitive Methodists. The

²¹ Walvin, *English Life*, p.104-5; J.D. Gay, *The Geography of Religion in England* (London, 1971), p.4; A. Everitt, *The Pattern of Rural Dissent: the Nineteenth Century* (Leicester, 1972) p.15.

²² Figures are taken from the PP. Census of Great Britain – Religious Worship. In 1851, an official census of religious worship was held in Great Britain for the first and last time. Alongside the ordinary decennial census, parliament sought information about attendance at public worship on a given Sunday, about the number of sittings available in churches and chapels, and about certain other matters. Because the result could be interpreted as showing that half the nation was Non-conformists, parliamentary defenders of the Establishment resisted any proposal to repeat a census of this sort. Consequently, since 1851, no official information about the religious preferences of the population has ever been collected.

Report of Tables 1852-1853. They remain un-reliable because the questions referred to attendance totals at three different services. There was no account of the number of times individuals attended church on a Sunday. In most cases it would be twice – therefore, the total attendances does not reflect the totals of individuals.

²³ Snell, *Parish and Belonging*, p.170.

town of Burslem was considered a stronghold of the Wesleyan Methodist Church²⁴ despite the Primitive Methodism was founded at nearby Tunstall just after the turn of the century by Hugh Bourne and William Clowes.²⁵

Between 1870 and 1900 it was considered an era of chapel building in the Potteries when towns were expanding and many new chapels erected as the population and housing increased. By 1900 the number of chapels in Burslem alone was as follows: Wesleyan, thirty-six; New Connexion, twenty-five; Primitive, thirty-one; United Methodist, eight, a total of one hundred each having its own Sunday school. Arnold Bennett, the Victorian author, reflects on the social life of the Potteries and Methodism and its dominance in the town.

Swan Bank Chapel in the centre of Burslem is mentioned in Bennett's '*Anna of the Five Towns*' where he describes how chapels were the mainstay of society drawing their congregations from all walks of life, working class operatives and pottery manufacturers.²⁶ It is this background that identifies and places into context the strength of religious fervour for Non-conformity in the north of the Potteries and the influence the agendas of the guardians had when dictating union policy.

The findings from the creed register create a conundrum as they are not reflected as percentages of inmates at any one time but rather a percentage of paupers when admitted. Numbers suggest that the highest was Anglican followed by the Roman Catholics, and not as expected Non-conformist. This may be explained in three or perhaps four ways. Firstly, if someone was not in regular attendance at a church, when asked upon admittance into the workhouse, they would give the Established Church as their faith. Secondly, most employers, both large and small, were Non-conformist. They were the stalwarts of the community both as

²⁴ John Wesley visited Burslem to preach on many occasions.

²⁵ Jenkins (ed.) *Victoria County History*, p.276. Primitive Methodism saw a huge growth in the Potteries as by 1797 five chapels had been established leading to 10 in 1851 and 20 in 1871.

²⁶ A. Bennett, *Anna of the Five Towns* (London, 1902) is a novel by Arnold Bennett first published in 1902 and one of his best-known works.

employers and in many cases the leaders and Sunday school teachers of local chapels. Therefore, opportunities for employment for Non-conformists were probably much higher than for members of the Church of England and even more so for Roman Catholics - hence poverty would be lower for Non-conformists. Finally, it may be simply that Non-conformist congregations had a strong Christian social conscience, and therefore provided the necessities of life to avoid one of their members entering the workhouse to be classed as a pauper.²⁷

This consideration produces only more questions than answers pointing to the premise of unchartered territory where further research needs to be done. The religious differences found within the northern part of the Staffordshire Potteries could be established by almost imaginary street boundaries, one side Anglicans the other Non-conformists which further emphasises the fact that two neighbouring poor law unions cannot be assumed to have identical religious allegiance, something that might feed into the spatial diversity of policy that can be found in the areas of education, health and old age forming one of the main areas of enquiry for the subsequent chapters.

The following two sub-sections are concerned with the minority denomination - Roman Catholicism that reflect the strong approach that the Catholic Church had in maintaining its influence over Catholic inmates and the importance of regular worship and of Catholic teaching to inmate children. It is also important to reflect more widely on the expression of religion through worship, and this is done in the context of a micro-study approach of variations found within the two unions to the involvement of paupers and the support of guardians in both the conduct of worship and response to religious activities.

To overcome the lack of secondary literature, local differences and disagreements within the framework of the poor law will be identified using primary literature where the policies,

²⁷ D. Dyble, *A History of Apedale and Chesterton*, (Newcastle-under-Lyme, 2002), p.17. David Dyble draws the assumption that the Co-operative movement only employed non-conformist staff.

references to guardians and chaplains are found in the minute books and expose the inadequacies of the LGB in their attempt to resolve issues on the one hand and the attitudes of guardians in ignoring their advice on the other. Both Stoke and Wolstanton workhouses will be seen to have done their best to uphold the law regarding the freedom of inmates to worship in their own faith, but sometimes events happen which prevented this with unpredictable consequences for the ways in which paupers experienced workhouse life.

Roman Catholicism at Stoke

Catholic Priests were renowned for encouraging their congregations to attend Mass on a weekly basis and workhouse inmates were not excluded from this. It was not unusual therefore for the guardians to be questioned on how far the use of the creed register should be extended into the lives of children at Stoke workhouse.

Roman Catholicism was viewed as a minority religion compared with Non-conformity and the Established Church in the Staffordshire Potteries. It was only from the end of the 18th century, when the population of the district was multiplying rapidly, that Roman Catholic numbers increased, helped a few decades later by Irish immigrants coming to work on the development of canals and railways.

The district of Cobridge situated in between Hanley and Burslem had a relatively strong Catholic community by 1657 and from there land was bought in Lower Foundry Street, Hanley in 1857 where three years later the church of St. Mary and St. Patrick was opened by Fr. William Molloy, Hanley's first resident priest.²⁸ He arrived in Stoke-on-Trent in February 1860 from Madeley, Shropshire and with a fund of £600 he opened the first Catholic Church in the town. In September 1879 Fr. Molloy was elected as a guardian to the workhouse representing the district of Shelton. His parish was considered one of the poorest in the country which gave him a wide understanding of poverty and un-employment. It took nearly twenty-nine years to raise

²⁸ Jenkins (ed.) *Victorian County History*

sufficient funds to commence work on a new Catholic Parish Church, Sacred Heart, in Regent Road, Hanley. Sadly, following the laying of the foundation stone Fr. Molloy died in 1890 and never saw its completion. His ministry in the district, noted for its association with the poor and, therefore his background led him to be a natural choice to become a guardian of the Poor at the Stoke-upon-Trent workhouse.²⁹ As a minority religious group Fr. Malloy was determined to maintain the Catholic independence within the workhouse despite being out-numbered but remained steadfast in identifying the needs of his congregation.

Before the 1868 Act religious conflict was expressed more by Non-conformist members who showed their dislike of the Church of England at every opportunity but not with the Roman Catholic Church. The following is a typical example of the aggression of one denomination towards another which was reported to the guardians regarding the use of a pen in the chapel vestry which was used by both the Non-conformist ministers and the Church of England Chaplain:

A religious difference was created by one by the Non-conformist minister who had conducted services at the workhouse chapel complained that he could not write with the pen provided in the vestry. The Master explained that the church clergymen always cut the nib away before he could write but the Non-conformists cannot write with the pen of a Conformist was the response. The Vice Chairman replied: I suppose one is the broad gauge, the other the narrow. (Laughter) The Master was requested to furnish the requisite writing materials.³⁰

With his experience of the poor and his determination to provide the benefits of the Catholic Church Fr. Molloy was a constant critic and voiced his opinions at the fortnightly meetings of guardians. Most opinions were in the form of continual interruption with regards to religious worship at the workhouse and the important role of the local Catholic Church in ensuring that Catholic children had the opportunity to be taught by Catholics and to attend a Catholic Church every Sunday.

²⁹ M. Greenslade, *A Brief History of the Catholic Church in Stoke-on-Trent* (Stafford, 1960).

³⁰ SS. 28 December 1867.

In 1870, Fr. James Terry, the Catholic Priest from nearby Holy Trinity Church at Newcastle-under-Lyme, requested that Catholic children entered in the creed register should be ordered to attend services in a Catholic Church on Sundays and Holy Days and not to attend the workhouse chapel or elsewhere and that the master was to facilitate further instruction of the children and other Roman Catholic inmates of the workhouse. The Board refused to agree to his first demand but suggested 'they would set apart some room where the Priest could meet them twice in the week for about an hour as not to interfere with the good order of the house or the recreation of the children.'³¹

This was not the only request from the Roman Catholic priest for he further stated that 'no catechism or religious instruction be given to Roman Catholic children' in the workhouse school, and requested that the children be granted permission to attend the Roman Catholic school nearby 'with or without the usual payment.' But the demands went further, quoting the number of Roman Catholic children being around seventy he demanded that the guardians should appoint a Roman Catholic Chaplain. Finally, the priest protested that contrary to all religious freedoms the Anglican Chaplain was conducting baptism of Roman Catholic children born in the house:

In conclusion, I beg to be allowed to offer my protest against a practice, contrary to all religious freedom, of the Chaplain of your workhouse is baptising the children of Roman Catholic's that are born in the house and that you will order it to be discontinued.³²

The guardians at their next meeting concluded:

That the permission to attend the morning service at the Roman Catholic church at Newcastle has hitherto being granted to inmates above fourteen years of age on condition that Roman Catholic children between the ages of 7 and 14 shall be taken to the morning service at the Roman Catholic church. That the Roman Catholics be allowed to use the chapel twice in the week for an hour each time for religious instruction to such of the Roman Catholic inmates above the age of 12 years if they desire to receive them.³³

³¹ TNA. MH12/11469, 17 January 1870.

³² Ibid.

³³ Ibid.

The response of the guardians was to decline the suggestion to allow any of the children to attend other schools than those of the workhouse as they were under the care and control of the guardians and responsible officers. Because of this refusal, it was some years before the Catholic Church attempted once more to push through changes at Stoke. No information for 1872 has survived but in January 1873, Fr. Molloy requested the following: 'That the Roman Catholic priest of Newcastle be appointed by this Board as religious instructor of the Roman Catholic paupers, with such a salary as the guardians may think fit to allow him.' At that time, the Rev. Sir Lovelace Stamer as Rector of Stoke was also a guardian and therefore, not without influence on the Board. It was therefore no surprise that the motion fell as only the proposer, and one other voted in favour.³⁴

From the following report the balance of power within the Board remained with the Anglicans, but in 1878 Fr. Molloy hoped things would change referring 'to the fact that slight changes had taken place on the Board, and now he hoped that the subject would be impartially considered.'³⁵ Again, acknowledging first that the motion had failed the previous year, he attempted once more to win the vote, this time pressing for the appointment of a Religious Instructor and not a Catholic Chaplain. Fr. Molloy continued to state that there were . . .

105 Catholic inmates and that he was pleading the cause of a class of paupers whose wants he might say without presumption he knew better than anyone else on the Board. He wanted justice to be extended to them with impartiality.³⁶

Continuing, Fr. Molloy presented his protestations regarding the Anglican Church and the Anglican Chaplain:

They had their regular chaplain, and he had no doubt that the wishes of the paupers were complied with, and their spiritual wants supplied by the Rev. Mr. Brown. On the other hand, the Dissenters would in very few cases object to the services of the Church of England chaplain. They had their worthy and pious friend, the Mayor of Hanley, who supported their cause.

³⁴ SS. 23 January 1873.

³⁵ Ibid., 24 January 1878.

³⁶ Ibid.

On the one hand, there were the Church of England paupers, who were well attended to. He thought it might be said that the Dissenters and the Church of England inmates were supplied to their hearts' content in spiritual matters. But were the poor Roman Catholics treated in like manner? He knew their wants better than anyone in the room. It was the custom of poor people of the Roman Catholic persuasion to ask whether they would be able to see a priest at the workhouse.

Mr. Gilman, a guardian, rose and argued the point that Fr. Molloy had tried to show that there was no difference between Mr. Brown, the Chaplain and the dissenters.

There was no substantial difference. Both were Protestants, and did not, therefore, differ upon points which Fr. Molloy would lay much stress and importance. In his opinion it would be a great misfortune to the Church of Christ if there were no poor people to be attended to. The Poor have the gospel preached unto them. He thought that a Catholic Priest should work without a fee or reward it would be to his increased gratification. (Hear Hear)

Mr. Piddock, another guardian, spoke against the motion which raised a number of relevant issues between Anglican and Dissenters:

Mr. Piddock saw great differences even between Churchmen and Dissenters. According to law workhouses could not have more than one chaplain and if the Roman Catholics were to appoint a paid priest, it would remove a great deal of spontaneous expressions of sympathy on the part of the priest at Newcastle. (Laughter) If the Board allowed a salary to the priest at Newcastle, where would it end? The dissenters. (Hear Hear)

If agreed to a payment whether for an increase the church would take with avidity all that might be agreed to, and would then blame the Board for not giving more? (Laughter)³⁷

Mr. Carryer then added to the debate in a tone that further condemned the motion.

That the Board did not profess to find luxuries for the paupers, but solid food that was in the necessary matter of life and ordinary sound religious instruction, which they were bound by law to do. They also permitted others without payment, and he did not see that they could be called upon to do any more either by law, principle, or charity.

Finally, the last speaker asked the question that if the motion was carried, 'what would be next, three chaplains, one low, one broad and one high church and if it was carried, he for one would then push for a Presbyterian Chaplain.'³⁸

Fr. Molloy continued to argue, stating that he wished 'justice to be extended to his flock with impartiality.' He implied that the Anglican Chaplain was appointed by the demands of

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Ibid.

paupers ignoring the fact that the appointment was confirmed in law. The debate became aggressive as Fr. Molloy provoked the guardians further suggesting that the influence of the Mayor of Hanley supported the stance of guardians and further implying that the Anglicans and Non-conformists were in league together to the exclusion of the Roman Catholics. This drew the response refuting the suggestion that there was no difference between the Established Church and Dissenters. The whole unfortunate episode carried forward here illustrates the animosity that existed between the various Christian denominations during the late-Victorian period.

The Chairman, putting the vote, the mover and seconder were the only ones to show their hands in favour of the motion which was opposed by the remaining members of the Board and therefore 'fell to the ground.' But Fr. Molloy was not content to let the matter lie, so raised a vote of no confidence in the Church of England Chaplain. The chaplain, Rev. J.W. Brown wrote to the local newspaper as a counter attack drawing attention that in the twenty-three years as chaplain that he had never been called to account. 'If Mr. Molloy wanted clarification as to the time he spent at the workhouse he had only to examine the Chaplain's Report Book' Rev. Brown responded.³⁹

Fr. Molloy tirelessly fought for recognition of the Catholic Church within the workhouse raising next the issue of the availability of Catholic publications at a meeting of the guardians on the 4th December 1878 suggesting such periodicals as the *Catholic Times*. The objection was that once the Board provided publications for the Catholic inmates, then all other denominations would demand the same. The item was therefore left until the following meeting of the Board.⁴⁰ This took place on the eighteenth at which Rev. Molloy suggested further reading. It was pointed out that both the Anglican and the Non-conformists had prayer books but no reading

³⁹ Ibid., 11 December 1878.

⁴⁰ Stoke Minute Book, vol.18, 4 December 1878.

material – therefore Catholics should not have reading material. After a debate the motion was adopted.⁴¹

In August, the following year 1879, Fr. Molloy raised the issue of payment for a Catholic Religious instructor again at an annual salary of £30, ‘or whatever sum was deemed by the guardians as appropriate.’ He then went on to quote that there were one hundred and one Catholic inmates currently in the workhouse without Catholic instruction and moved that the sum of £35 be paid to the priest at Newcastle for his services. The master responded, stating that currently they could attend the Roman Catholic Church on a Sunday and could obtain Catholic ministrations when they required them. Once more the motion failed to obtain support.⁴²

At the following meeting, Fr. Molloy raised the issue that a register should be kept of the religious denomination of any family where children were to be sent after leaving the workhouse to maintain that child’s connection with the appropriate denomination and not to be influenced otherwise. Despite agreement there is no evidence that this was implemented. The local newspaper reported on the guardians meeting:

He did not contend for it solely in the interest of his own religious denomination but he thought the guardians ought to be in the possession of the information respecting the religious feature of the character of pauper children whose general welfare they were entrusted to look after. Carried with one dissident.⁴³

A different argument followed from Fr. Molloy in July 1880 when he cited the baptism and sacraments for all inmates of the workhouse. The master replied that the previous year there were around fifty children born, and around thirty were baptised by the Chaplain. This naturally led to Fr. Molloy to argue the case for the employment of a Roman Catholic priest to cover those of that faith at a salary of £25 per annum. The debate was long but when put to the vote

⁴¹ Ibid., vol.18, 18 December 1878.

⁴² Ibid., vol.18, 28 August 1879.

⁴³ Ibid., 29th September 1879 quotes from the previous meeting of guardians.

it again 'fell to the floor'.⁴⁴ Two years later, on the 18th August 1882, the issue was raised once more demanding that Catholic children should have their own instructor or failing that, they should be allowed to attend the Catholic school at Newcastle. The motion was lost on the grounds that a member of staff would have to accompany the children and that was not possible.⁴⁵

In his final push, Fr. Molloy made a further plea for a Catholic religious instructor. The Board appeared to allow the debate but then suggested that the matter be referred to the LGB with regards to the legality of paying a Roman Catholic Chaplain as well as an approved Anglican Chaplain. At that Fr. Molloy withdrew his motion. The Board then agreed to pay for a Catholic Chaplain at an annual salary of £50 per annum until the end of the current financial year.⁴⁶ It would appear that only one payment was made to the Roman Catholic priest: that of £10 6s 2d to Fr. R. C. Robinson a Catholic religious instructor.

A reply came from the Auditor of the LGB who disallowed the payment as it was paid to an officer that had not been agreed by the LGB quoting the Act of Parliament under which the guardians were not empowered to make such an appointment.⁴⁷ The correspondence emphasised the fact the guardians and the clerk to the Board were negligent. Although the Board had been harassed since 1873 by Fr. Molloy, no one had considered consulting the LGB for clarification about payment and it was, therefore, content to continue the argument for ten years without official guidance.

These references to the continual disputes between the Roman Catholic Church and the guardians reflect the fact that in the broader picture of religious worship of Catholicism in the Staffordshire Potteries was a contentious issue. The Catholic priest would feel marginalised but remained determined to defend the religious instruction and observance of his flock against

⁴⁴ SS. 15 July 1880.

⁴⁵ Stoke Minute Book, vol.19, 8 March 1882.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, vol.19, 19 August 1882.

⁴⁷ TNA. MH12/11482, 9 March 1883.

opposition from the guardians. The determination of Fr. Malloy occupied much of the time at meetings but this fact stands to illustrate the importance of localities and their diversity in subjects that have figured lightly in literature thus far. Working through both sides of the arguments has an impact upon how workhouse life was experienced from the Board down to the inmate. As we shall later see at Wolstanton it speaks of the wider issue of local variations in policy, spending and pauper experience.

Experiences of Worship

The Rev. J.W. Brown, vicar of St. John's Trent was appointed as chaplain in 1856 under the authority of the PLB. His duties, as authorised were not only to conduct religious services as prescribed by law but also to supervise the religious teaching in the workhouse schools and where necessary, minister to the sick and the dying and conduct funerals. Before the building of a new chapel in 1875 at a cost of £9,800, (Fig.5.5 and Fig.5.6) all services were conducted in the dining hall.⁴⁸

A new format of children's worship was introduced in 1869 at a time when child inmates numbered two hundred and twenty. Regardless of denomination all children attended Non-conformist Sunday school in the morning and then attended the Anglican service in the afternoon.⁴⁹ Only one guardian, Mr. Gilman, commented on the new Act of 1868 and the reality of the numbers quoted by denomination:

. . . the new Act, as to creed registration was made so that all parties in workhouses might be able to act in accordance to religious convictions. Out of the 220 children in the House only a small number were given as being Dissenters; while, as he thought they are well aware the Dissenters formed the largest portion of the religious communities of the Staffordshire Potteries district.⁵⁰

To quantify this, Mr. Gilman added that orphan children who entered the house were kept away from all religious services except that of the Church of England. 'If such children were

⁴⁸ Ibid., MH12/11472, 5 May 1875.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 20 February 1869.

⁵⁰ Ibid., This comment by Mr. Gilman gives credit to the conclusions of the Creed Register previously referred to.

called upon to give an answer as to what religion they belonged, they would likely say the Church of England, simply because they had not been in the habit of going to any other service.’⁵¹ With regards to finances, Mr. Gilman made the point that the local dissenting ministers taking the services to an acceptable standard saved the parish some £25 a year the sum they would have payed to an Anglican Chaplain.⁵²

This comment drew a reaction from the Rector of Stoke, the Rev. Sir Lovelace Stamer, who pointed out ‘that there had not been any narrow, sectarian feeling as influencing in any degree in the case.’ He followed this by referring to the poor law which stated that ‘children of the Church of England were forbidden attending Non-conformist services.’⁵³ At this point Mr. Gilman referred to an important fact when attempting to use statistics to implement policy or to draw conclusions:

. . . people who did not belong to any denomination were listed as Church of England. Not only did this confuse the professed members of the Church of England but also as the waifs of society. The assistant Master of the workhouse believed he tried to ascertain the religious Creed of the parents of the children. It often happened children were left in the workhouse whose parents never attached themselves to any denomination and that the Church of England would therefore be recorded.⁵⁴

It was finally agreed, following a consensus, to continue with the existing arrangements.⁵⁵

This scenario paints a picture of conjecture using the fact that few inmates worshipped on a regular basis and, therefore, boosted the numbers of the Established Church by default. This in turn gave the guardians more ammunition in setting agendas.

In January 1878, the first Confirmation Service of eighteen children was conducted by the Bishop of Lichfield something previously quite un-heard of in the new workhouse chapel and the Bishop presented each candidate a bible following confirmation.⁵⁶ Two children, it was

⁵¹ Ibid., 20 February 1869.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Stoke Minute Book, vol.17, 8 January 1878.

found, could not be confirmed as they were entered in the creed register as Wesleyans. Confirmation became almost a regular event with services being conducted in February, 1890, June, 1895 by the Bishop of Lichfield and the last recorded in October 1898 which was by the Bishop of Shrewsbury when nineteen boys and six girls were confirmed.⁵⁷

It is not known why the Chaplain, Rev. Brown, was challenged by Mr. Emery a guardian⁵⁸ with regards to his visits to the workhouse and the teaching of the catechism stating that he had ‘only visited the school for the teaching of the catechism ten times’, which was considered inadequate. The Chaplain replied that he had visited the school over thirty times in the last year for the purpose of examining scripture and the catechism; six to hear children singing hymns; five to hear senior children sing and six for general visits. The Chaplain concluded that this was the first time in twenty-eight years that a vote of confidence had been presented regarding his service. The Chairman in reply stated that he was ‘happy with the particulars furnished by the Chaplain and were quite satisfactory.’⁵⁹

The minute books also give pointers to the significance and the involvement of religious festivals. From the early 1880s, Hot Cross Buns were given to all inmates on Good Friday and officers were allowed fish dinners from 1887.⁶⁰ In 1884 the usual Whitsuntide holiday had been given to all the children suggesting that this was an annual event.⁶¹

Following the retirement of Rev. Brown in 1898 and under the leadership of the newly appointed Chaplain, Rev. Edward Spink, other activities started to appear: a concert of sacred music in the chapel later the same year and a week of Mission Services which was to be organised by the Ladies Visiting Committee for which Miss Wedgwood was the leading light

⁵⁷ Walvin, *English Life*; Gay, *The Geography of Religion*; Everitt, *The Pattern of Rural Dissent*; Snell, *Parish and Belonging*; Crowther, *The Workhouse System*.

⁵⁸ Perhaps Mr Emery belong to the Non-conformist or Roman Catholic Church therefore the question would have a motive to discredit the Anglican Chaplain.

⁵⁹ Stoke Minute Book, vol. 20, 26 December 1883.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, vol.23, 10 April 1889.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, vol.25, 16 May 1894.

in its organisation.⁶²

What has been established is that Stoke had a long standing Chaplain who was seen as a father figure in the establishment involved with the care of both children and adults in a spiritual way. Also, the Board of Guardians were in the majority members of the Established church determined that although they accommodated Non-conformist inmates and provided services to meet their needs, they constantly opposed the proposals of the Roman Catholic guardian who demanded equal rights and facilities as the Church of England.

Denominational Conflict Wolstanton

At the Wolstanton workhouse there existed a strong antagonism between the Anglican Chaplain and the predominantly Non-Conformist guardians. The situation at Wolstanton was similar to that of Stoke with regards to Catholic pauper's attending Catholic Church on a Sunday. On one occasion the Catholic Priest determined, as it was at Stoke to protect his flock from corruption by other faiths attended the meeting of the Visiting Committee regarding the attendance of Catholic inmates at their church in Tunstall:

It was pointed out that it was impossible to arrange services at the workhouse on a Sunday as other duties prevented it and could not find the necessary escort for Catholic inmates to attend the Roman Catholic Church as requested.⁶³

The creed book was maintained as at Stoke whereby a case was recorded in 1888 with regards to an illegitimate child named Winifred Kenny who was entered as an Anglican which serves as a primary example of how prolonged arguments can be with regards to correct creeds being recorded. The Catholic Priest claimed that the child was a catholic and demanded that the register be altered from a previous entry (the Church of England) by Mr. Dansey the LGB inspector to that of catholic. In reply the master stated that the child was born on the 10th September 1881 and christened Mary Ann and later discharged with her mother. The girl was re-admitted into the workhouse and the Board entered her name in the creed register as Church

⁶² Ibid., vol.27,18 February 1898.

⁶³ HA. Wolstanton Visiting Committee Minutes. vol.SD1232/21, 5th May 1885.

of England in accordance to her baptism. The LGB requested evidence as to the religion of the mother to proceed.⁶⁴

The Secretary to the guardians responded directly to the LGB pointing out that the facts presented by Fr. T. Kenny were not true:

The guardians at their last meeting investigated the matter and consider that the Master was quite justified in entering the child as Church of England it having been baptised by the chaplain. This information was obtained from the woman Gibson who had the care of the child and who returned it to the workhouse after an interval of five years not 20 days as stated in the Fr. T. Kenny's letter.

I also forward a statement by the mother of the child from whom your Board will perceive that she is still wishful that the child should be brought up in the Church of England as recorded in the Creed Book.⁶⁵

In a further attempt to clarify the position at the insistence of Fr. Kenny, the Board considered it advisable that Mr. Dansey visit the mother directly to ascertain from her the facts of the case:

I am at the same time directed to state that in view of the representations made by the Fr. Kenny the Board deemed it advisable that their Inspector Mr. Dansey should see Bridget Kenny, the mother of Winifred Kenny and ascertain what her wishes with regards the child and what religion she herself professes. Mr. Dansey had an interview with the woman on the 3rd and reports that she informed him that the reason why she allowed the child to be baptised by the Chaplain was that she was persuaded to do so by another woman in the same ward and that she was at the time afraid to take it to the Catholic Priest, but that she had always herself been a Roman Catholic and wishes the child to be brought up in that religion.

The Board direct me to point out that as Winifred Kenny is under 12 years and illegitimate, her creed must be deemed to be that of her mother, Roman Catholic. The board, therefore hereby desire it that the entry in the Creed register at the workhouse relating to Winifred Kenny be amended by the substitution of the words Roman Catholic for the words Church of England.⁶⁶

It was not just the recording of a child's creed that attracted attention but also where a child attended worship. In an attempt to clarify the service which a child should attend - Anglican or Roman Catholic - the parish priest corresponded with the LGB regarding another

⁶⁴ TNA. MH12/11217, 21 March 1888.

⁶⁵ Ibid., MH12/11217, 16 May 1888.

⁶⁶ Ibid., 31st July 1888.

Catholic, a boy named John Birkin who attended Protestant services whilst he was entered in the creed register as Roman Catholic. The matter was resolved that the master in future would see that all children attend the service of their religious persuasion.⁶⁷

From 1868 Wolstanton held two religious services on a Sunday the first was for Non-conformist at 10.30 a.m. conducted by local Methodist ministers and the other at 2.30 p.m. for Protestants conducted by the workhouse chaplain but sometimes inmates were escorted to the Anglican Church at Newchapel 1½ miles away subject to weather conditions. The guardians considered that to assist in the singing at the Non-conformist service all children regardless of denomination should attend the service at 10.30 a.m. thereby expressing their influence in dictating which service children should attend regardless of their denomination:

That with the view of assisting in the Non-conformist services in the workhouse the school children be taken to their service in the mornings of the Sabbath and that in the meantime the questions be thoroughly investigated so as not to sanction any departure from the regulations of the PLB.⁶⁸

The Master of the workhouse referred the matter to the PLB for clarification pointing out that he could not direct the children registered as belonging to the Church of England to be taken to a Non-conformist service without a violation of the Orders of the PLB:

The Board of Guardians at the previous meeting agreed to adopt the recommendations of the special committee but instructed the clerk to enquire if they could under the circumstances, direct the children to be taken to the Non-conformist religious services. The master confirmed that the numbers of Non-conformist children were few and the girls sat with the women the boys all taken care of.⁶⁹

Following the incorporation of the LGB, the question of religious worship was discussed by the Board on the 2nd October 1871. It was noted that the teachers at the workhouse school who performed services on a Sunday morning were Wesleyan, New Connexion and Primitive Methodists. The guardians stated that:

⁶⁷ Wolstanton Minutes Book, SD/1232/12, 30 June 1891.

⁶⁸ TNA. MH12/11202, 12 November 1868 letter from Guardians to LGB.

⁶⁹ SS. 30 January 1869.

The same truths and doctrine are preached by the Chaplain and the Non-conformists and the only difference is in the mode of worship and respectfully submit that there is no reason why as the services are conducted in the same chapel and the doctrines are the same that the whole of the inmates of the workhouse should attend both services and that they should not be taken on Sunday mornings in all weathers to church.⁷⁰

The master stated that it was the law and the Board had no powers to intervene but would clarify that position with the LGB. The reply from the LGB quoted the rules under the 1868 Act:

The children belonging to the workhouse cannot legally be required to attend the services conducted by the Non-conformist ministers in the workhouse chapel. Under the circumstances the LGB are of the opinion that the practice of taking the children together with any other inmate who are members of the Church of England and many be desirous of attending to the morning service at church is legal and proper but they are of the opinion that the guardians alleged attendance of all the inmates at the service conducted by the Chaplain on the Sunday afternoon, may we remind you, is a mode contrary to the religious principles of such inmates regardless of faith and illegal.⁷¹

The apparent animosity between Non-conformist and Anglican continued in other areas for in 1879 it was proposed to create a workhouse cemetery for inmates on ground opposite to the workhouse. The Burslem Town Council presented a petition to the Bishop asking him not to consecrate the proposed cemetery chapel as once built it could not legally be used except for Churchmen; (meaning the Church of England) whereas there is nothing in the beliefs of Churchmen, Catholics or Non-conformists to prevent them from officiating in an unconsecrated building which would be the ideal.⁷²

This was a further sign of the strength of Non-conformity in the north of the city and the Bishop responded to this with his own suggestion on how to resolve the issue:

That no chapel should be provided at the Cemetery, but rather the burial services be read in the Church or the Chapel with which the deceased has been connected. So far as I am concerned to dispense with the erection of a chapel altogether, and to authorise the clergy in the neighbourhood to perform in their own churches that part of the services which is usually read in a Cemetery Chapel leaving the various Non-conformists bodies to make

⁷⁰ TNA. MH12/11203, 2 October 1871.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 16 October 1871.

⁷² For further reading on the nineteenth century religious divisions: Snell, *Parish and Belonging*, pp. 366-455; Inglis, *Church and the Working Class*; M.W. Dupree, *Family Structure in the Staffordshire Potteries 1840-1880* (Oxford, 1995) pp. 35-35.

a similar arrangement, or any other bodies to make a similar arrangement which they may prefer.⁷³

Burslem Town Council corresponded directly to the LGB with regards to the Bishop's reply which condemned his lack of consideration referring also to religious divisions in the area and the social consequences of his decision:

The reason assigned by the Town Council in preparing the petition was firstly, that it was desirable to save the ratepayers the expense of providing one or two additional chapels; and, secondly, that it was not desirable unnecessarily to obtrude religious divisions in the sleeping places of the dead. Furthermore, they will be compelled to attend church or chapel in the town and then accompany the funeral cortege all the way to the Cemetery. We are afraid that it will be a great inconvenience and in cold winters a real hardship to mourners. We are sorry, therefore, that his lordship should have made himself responsible for an arrangement which is sure to prove very unpopular.⁷⁴

But the Town Council also noted the problems that the Bishop's recommendations could bring: religious discord and inconvenience to mourners having to travel distances following the service prior to burial:

By adopting this course, a considerable saving will be affected but the burden which falls upon the ratepayers in connection with the new Cemetery and there will be at least an equal or indeed greater security against any manifestations or religious discord. His Lordships adds 'I shall be glad to hear that the proposal which I make will be acceptable to the Burial Board'.

The council expresses regret that the Bishop cannot see his way to comply with the prayer of the petition, but recommends the Council to act upon his lordship's suggestion and defer for the time being the building of a Chapel, in the hope that the time is not far distant when such modifications will be made in the law as will render the erection of two chapels unnecessary. We join in both the regret at his decision.

In conclusion, the Town Council took the opportunity to suggest that the Bishop had a hidden agenda for not accepting the petition:

We are sorry that – for reasons some of which are not very clear to us and none appear conclusive – the Bishop has not been able to mark the commencement of his episcopate by what would have been felt to be a graceful concession to the wishes of a public authority, and to the feelings of a large portion of the population.⁷⁵

⁷³ SS. 3 May 1879.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ Ibid., 3 May 1879.

What is established here is a further example of the animosity between the Established Church and that of Non-conformity. It is doubtful if the question of a cemetery chapel was the real issue, as no doubt many of the guardians were local manufacturers and town councillors held and Non-conformists also positions in local Methodists Chapels thereby refused to accept the dedication of the chapel. A local petition by the council may have been a political ploy to gain support from local residents as the majority of the population of the district were Non-conformist and therefore when seeking re-election would gain additional support. This dispute with the Church of England did not end with the cemetery issue. Even before it was completed the Chaplain, Rev. T. F. Salmon wrote to the Board requesting an increase in his salary from £70 to £80 per annum claiming additional fees for performing burial services of inmates in the proposed cemetery. The chairman moved that the Board make the offer of £75 per annum but upon a vote it 'fell to the floor':⁷⁶

The Board instructed the clerk to reply to the LGB, stating they considered Mr. Salmon's salary quite sufficient and that the extra duties did not warrant a further advance.⁷⁷

In response to their refusal, the Chaplain replied to the Board:

As guardians have always paid me and other incumbents for burials from the workhouse it is fair and reasonable that if I officiate at the new cemetery, I should be paid for these services. Am I to take on this extra work with no salary?⁷⁸

Subsequently, the subject was discussed by the Board which commented on the fact that at the Stoke Workhouse 'the chaplain received only £63 per annum for a workhouse twice the size as Wolstanton which included burials.'⁷⁹ The Board appeared adamant regarding extra pay, and Mr. Salmon referred this matter back to the LGB who then wrote directly to the Board after learning that the Chaplain was conducting burials without payment.

⁷⁶ Ibid., 3 March 1879.

⁷⁷ Ibid., 9 April 1879.

⁷⁸ Ibid., 15 March 1879.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

The response from the LGB insisted that the formal duties of a Chaplain despite duties being performed by him since the meeting but under protest did not include those of the burial of inmates:

I do not think that it forms part of the duties of the Chaplain of the workhouse to perform these rites in cases of burials. His duties are defined and there is nothing in his terms about burials.⁸⁰

The argument over pay continued and by July the LGB Inspector, Mr. Dansey attended the workhouse to resolve the problem. Mr. Dansey pointed out that prior to the cemetery being completed the Chaplain received fees in respect of funerals between £10-£12 p.a. It was not part of his duty to perform burials and the Board were in no position to compel him to do so now. The Chairman of the Board considered that his fees in comparison with other unions were good and therefore, they were justified in not increasing his salary for the additional work. In fact, they were considering requesting that the Board sanction a decrease in the Chaplain's salary on the grounds that his demands were unreasonable. Mr. Clive, Chairman of the Board concluded by moving 'that the previous minute is rescinded to which the Chaplain's salary would be fixed at £70, with an additional £10 for extra services'. This was confirmed in a letter to the LGB dated the 1st August 1879.⁸¹

In September, the Chaplain submitted an invoice for the sum of £4 11s 8d to the Board for just under ten months' additional work until the final agreement on his salary. The Board refused to pay stating that it was illegal to do so.⁸² Rev. Salmon promptly informed the LGB of additional aggravation from the Board to which the LGB wrote to the Board informing them that 'it must be paid'.⁸³ It became clear to the Chaplain that his position was now untenable and subsequently resigned. The last act of Rev. Salmon was to provide an afternoon tea for the two hundred inmates at which he announced his resignation from the post of chaplain. The master,

⁸⁰ TNA. MH12/11210, 10 June 1879.

⁸¹ SS. 19 July 1879.

⁸² TNA. MH12/11210, 11 September 1879.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 13 September 1879.

Mr. E. Hudson made a thankyou speech to which Rev. Salmon carefully phrasing his comments attempting to gloss over the recent events which prompted his resignation:

I have much pleasure in returning thanks on your behalf (speaking then on behalf of the inmates) to our worthy Chaplain for the kind manner in which he has provided this treat. At the same time, it is with feelings of the deepest regret that he is about to leave us. I am sure I have listened each Sunday to the very able way he has explained the Gospel to us. He has continually given us that advice which you and I very much need.⁸⁴

By the 24th September the Rev. John Seed, Vicar of Mow Cop was appointed as his successor.⁸⁵ The Board were still exercising their animosity towards the Church of England and the obligation to appoint an Anglican Chaplain by offering him a salary of £70. The LGB, whose duty was to confirm the appointment following the agreement of the Bishop asked the question as to why there was a reduction in the salary from the previous chaplain who earned £80 per annum.⁸⁶ The Board referred back to a previous minute dated the 27th February which confirmed at one point the salary for Rev. Salmon as £70 which was to include burials and ignoring the latest agreement, stating that there were ‘not prepared to rescind that minute’.⁸⁷ Seemingly, the Board wanting to have the last word, wrote again to the LGB that ‘it is considered the salary quite sufficient for the duties that will be performed’ dismissing the £80 salary as being of ‘peculiar circumstances’.⁸⁸

Rev. John Seed was appointed to succeed Rev. Salmon but two years following his appointment as Chaplain the Bishop suddenly withdrew his licence to perform duties at the workhouse.⁸⁹ To resolve the situation correspondence flowed between the LGB and the Bishop. The Bishop refused to move because Rev. Seed was, in the first place, licensed only for a period of six months. Upon investigation, the LGB responded that the guardians had failed to notify

⁸⁴ SS. 14 October 1879.

⁸⁵ SS. 24th September 1879.

⁸⁶ TNA. MH12/11210, 18 September 1879.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 22 September 1879.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 10 October 1879.

⁸⁹ Wolstanton Minute Book, vol.SD1232/9, 10 January 1882.

this fact to their office and if they had done so they would not have approved the appointment and confirmed that the Bishop was therefore within his rights. The Board in response expressed their satisfaction with Rev. Seed and wished him to remain as chaplain to which Rev. Seed agreed despite being banned from doing so by the Bishop. The Board agreed to pay his salary.⁹⁰

However, the Board failed to anticipate that the LGB would refuse to authorise the payment and therefore Rev. Seed had only the income as Vicar of Mow Cop. To obtain satisfaction, he took the case to his M.P. and to the local press who took the matter up stating it was a real injustice how he had been treated by the Bishop and the Archdeacon of Stoke, Sir Lovelace Stamer, and urged the guardians to request that questions be asked in the House of Commons.⁹¹

However, the Board had a change of heart once told that they could not pay the Chaplains salary. In January 1886, because of severe weather, the Chaplain was not in attendance to take services for two consecutive Sundays. At the February meeting it was decided to advertise for a new chaplain at an annual salary of £50 to include burials, and dismiss Rev. Seed despite him being in service for a few years.⁹² The question remains, were his services dismissed on the grounds the Board stated or was it in an attempt to employ a Chaplain at a greatly reduced salary that was approved by the Bishop and the LGB? Early the following March a new Chaplain, Rev. Thomas Harrison, curate of Wolstanton accepted the appointment with the consent of the Bishop commencing in July.⁹³

The last two sections explore religion and how it can be exploited to become a tool to be manipulated as the face of local policy and thereby expose such variations of the nature of the experiences by paupers.

⁹⁰ TNA. MH12/11211, 7 February 1882.

⁹¹ Ibid., MH12/11216, 21 July 1886.

⁹² Wolstanton Minute Book, vol.SD/1232/11, 2 February 1886.

⁹³ TNA. MH12/11216, 23 July 1886.

Religious Worship at Wolstanton

For the period 1871-1901 there are no references to special activities or services that could be classes as spiritual such as, religious instruction, Christian literature, missions, confirmations, or sacred music held at the workhouse the only discussion was concerning the attendance of children to Sunday services. It may be assumed therefore that as the chaplain was Anglican and that most the Board were Non-conformists therefore to some extent in conflict with they would not wish to encourage an Anglican priest to undertake such evangelical work for fear of him attracting Non-conformists into Anglicanism. Considering inmates were in the main Non-conformist they would also be reluctant to attend anything the Anglican chaplain organised in the area of spiritual observance.

Conclusion

This chapter has illustrated spatial diversity of a totally different nature than would normally be associated with the poor law in general. What has been achieved by this process is that the subject itself can further our knowledge of pauper life-cycle experiences from unexpected areas of investigation – religion. It has shown that sentiment and meaning may be found in such topics within the confines of institutional life where conflict and diversity flourished where previously considered as not contentious. In fact, much of what has been related has little to do with faith but of the wider arena of point scoring between the three main denominations. However, the exploration of this subject is important because we learn much more about the complexity of religious politics, worship, and power upon which there has been little found in New Poor Law literature.⁹⁴

The main contention between the two unions was historical based upon the wider established factions of religious bias between the Anglican Church and that of Non-conformity.

⁹⁴ Although we know the broad framework of religion and non-conformity for the period, we know even less about the experiences of institutionalised paupers.

Yet set within the centre ground was the minority religion of Catholicism which when confronted with the ideologies of the other two led to a wide range of different experiences. At Stoke there was diversity within the ranks of all three denominations. The Established Church and the Non-conformity had a tradition of non-alliance but the Catholic Church stood out and battled against the odds to secure for its own congregational instruction and the opportunity to worship.

Although at Wolstanton the mix of religions was identical but the Roman Catholic Church had few of its ranks as inmates. The only diversity here was the local Catholic priests expressed concerns for the correct denomination being listed in the creed book of those baptised as Roman Catholics and the opportunity for children to follow their own faith. The two main areas of spatial diversity are as a direct result of religious bigotry between the two main denominations and the administration of the guardians as they sought to rule by their pre-disposed stance on religions matters.

Worship at Stoke was conducted in a co-ordinated approach whereby inmates and children attended their own services in the chapel albeit at different times. There were special services and missions to promote Christian attitudes and spirituality organised by the chaplain and the Ladies Visiting Committee and confirmations conducted by the Bishop. At Wolstanton there were no special services or any programme to promote religious fervour an area so relevant to history of Methodism. The priority for worship was given to the Non-conformists whereby the guardians encouraged all children to attend those services in direct opposition to the rules of freedom of worship Act of 1868.

The most prominent example of spatial diversity is within the policy towards the workhouse Chaplains. At Stoke, the Chaplain was a respected long standing member of the establishment. His duties were wide-ranging to include caring for the dying, perform burials, teaching the catechism and visiting the workhouse school on a regular basis to oversee the

instruction of religion and listen to the children singing. At Wolstanton, the guardians responded un-sympathetically towards the Anglican Chaplain at every opportunity notably in his salary and duties. Guardians refused to pay the appropriate fees for him to conduct pauper funerals and attempted to reduce his annual salary. Upon his resignation from office they appointed the new chaplain at a lower salary. On one occasion, they even employed a Chaplain without the consent of the Bishop or the LGB. Furthermore, with the creation nearby of a workhouse cemetery the guardians refused to erect a chapel for the burial services on the basis that it would have to be consecrated by an Anglican Bishop and therefore not possible to be used for any Non-conformist services.

What this chapter has illustrated is the critical and importance of micro-studies into the life-cycle of inmate paupers and in doing so we can learn more about the issue of religion and how that was experienced by inmates under the broader analogy of poor law welfare. The following chapter, a wide and complex study of health and ill health in the workhouse, continues to broaden the theme.

Fig.5.4 Workhouse Chapel – built 1875



Fig.5.5 Workhouse Chapel – built 1875. Interior



Fig.5.6 Creed Register Wolstanton Workhouse 1886

Wolstanton & Burslem Union

Date.	NAME. CHRISTIAN AND SURNAME.	Year when Born.	From whence Admitted.	Religious Creed.	Name of Informant.	Date of Admission.	Day Entered
	Ashton Ann		Wolstanton	C of E	Wife of Self	24-12-92	
1893	Atterley Richard	1825	Burslem	Wesleyan	Wife	10-1-93	
	Ashton Ann	1833	Wolstanton	C of E	Charwoman	24-4-92	
	Angel Thomas	1833	Burslem	R. C.	Labourer	24-6-92	
	Adams Mary	1878	Burslem	S. M.	Scholar	4-9-93	
	Ashton William	1828	Wolstanton	Roman C.	Labourer	28-10-93	
	Allen George	1884	Wolstanton	C of E	Child	24-10-93	
	Anderson Emily	1872	Wolstanton	" "	Prick Pot boned Pot	1-11-93	
	Arkell William	1823	Wolstanton	" "	Miner	6-12-93	
	Ashley Frederick	1865	Wolstanton	" "	Lab.	12-12-93	
	Anderson	1894	Wolstanton	" "	Child	4-1-94	
	Ashton Ann	1833	Wolstanton				5-2-94
	Ashton Ann	1886	Burslem	" "	Scholar	6-2-94	
	Allen Charles	1855	W.	" "	Miner	25-2-94	
	Ash Isaac	1849	Wolstanton	Wesleyan	Miner	16-3-94	
	Anderson Rosina	1877	Wolstanton	C of E	Potter	24-2-94	
	Adams Baron	1832	B.	" "	" "	24-2-94	
	Anderson David	1894	"	" "	Child	15-9-94	
	Collman Thomas	1842	F.	" "	Printer	16-10-94	
	Atterley James	1838	Tunstall	" "	Labourer	15-11-94	
	Atterley Annie	1870	Tunstall	Primitive	Miner	15-11-94	
	Allbutt Enoch	18	Kidsgrove		Throatcher	2-1-96	
	Ashton Emma	1873	Wolstanton		Self	29-1-96	
	John	1895	Wolstanton	" "	" "	" "	
	Adams Baron	1826	Tunstall	C of E	Potter	21-2-96	
	Ashton Elizabeth	1861	Burslem	C of E	Wife	28-2-96	
	" Elizabeth	1884	"	"	Child	"	
	" Jane	1891	"	"	"	"	
	" Harold	1895	"	"	"	"	
	Ashton Ada	1889	Hilton	"	"	12-6-96	
	Adams Sarah A	1873	Wolstanton	Wesleyan	Wife	22-2-96	

Chapter 6 – Health, Infirmaries, Nursing, Lunacy, and Mortality

Overview

Mental and physical ill-health, was the prime cause of poverty in the late Victorian period preventing bread-winners from earning their families keep.¹ Current literature focuses upon the larger poor law unions situated in cities such as London,² thereby excluding smaller regional unions, and nothing at all about Staffordshire and even less about the period 1871-1901. This applies to the broad spectrum of health problems. To rectify the lack of evidence this chapter contextualises the importance of infirmary building, nursing, and the treatment of workhouse lunatics versus that of asylums and will help to fill the gaps in literature within a regional context. For those incarcerated in the workhouse medical treatment formed an integral part of life's experiences both physically and mentally and therefore justifies this study as one of the core themes to this thesis.

In 1834 it was unclear what provision would be made for medical care under the new Act as the subject had received little attention in the Royal Commission's report other than giving JPs the authority to order medical relief in cases of sudden illness for inmates.³ The Commission had devised no coherent policy for it was never considered that acute illness would be a reason for admission into the workhouse. The reality was that to receive medical attention under the poor law a person first had to be declared a pauper and as it was never envisaged that paupers should receive better medical care than those of the working class.⁴

Anne Digby asserts that the system of medical relief evolved in a piecemeal and pragmatic fashion before it was firmly established in a logical structure by the General

¹ M.W. Flinn, *Medical Services under the New Poor Law*, D. Fraser (ed.) *The New Poor Law in the Nineteenth Century* (London, 1976), p.45.

² D. Green, *Pauper Capital: London and the Poor Law 1790-1870* (London, 2010); G. Mooney, 'Diagnosis Spaces: Workhouse, Hospital and Home in Mid-Victorian London', *Social Science History* (2009).

³ A. Brundage, *The English Poor Laws 1700-1930* (Basingstoke, 2002), p.96.

⁴ M.A. Crowther, *The Workhouse System 1834-1929, The history of an English social institution* (London, 1981), p.80

Consolidated Order of 1847.⁵ The proportion of sick inmates rose from ten per cent in 1843 to between thirty-four per cent and forty-eight per cent in the mid-to-late 1860s, with the higher number recorded in London and the lower in provincial workhouses.⁶ By the mid-nineteenth century nearly three-quarters of the cases of pauperism in England and Wales involved sickness.

It was observed by Hilary Marland that the New Poor Law ‘had been designated by historians as a distinct watershed in the provision of medical services for the poor, marking the beginning of an improved and widening range of facilities’.⁷ This growth may, however, have been based upon, as Flinn suggests, the rapid appointments of medical officers by the newly elected Boards of Guardians. Loudon argued that the old system had faults, but the New Poor Law treated both general practitioners and pauper patients with a ‘singular scorn and brutality’⁸ and whilst it was intended to ‘make life unpleasant for the able-bodied pauper’, it was never intended that the conditions for the sick, the aged, and the infirm should be any harsher than it had been previously.⁹

Improvements in medical services did not begin to appear until the late 1860s following pressure from reformers and some highly-publicised workhouse scandals published by *The Lancet*.¹⁰ Various changes were brought about by dedicated individuals such as Joseph Rogers, who in 1856 was appointed medical officer of the Strand Union workhouse in London. Here, Rogers, encountered and tried to correct a number of glaring abuses, including the practice found in the lying-in wards whereby unmarried mothers were kept on a starvation diet for nine days after confinement, and the employment of paupers to beat carpets (at a profit of £400 a year), the

⁵ A. Digby, *Pauper Palaces* (London, 1978), p.166.

⁶ Digby, *Pauper Palaces*, p.166.

⁷ H. Marland, *Medicine and Society in Wakefield and Huddersfield, 1780-1870* (Cambridge, 1987), p.70.

⁸ I. Loudon, *Medical Care and the General Practitioner, 1750-1850* (Oxford, 1986), p.235-240.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p.236.

¹⁰ R.G. Hodgkinson, *The Origins of the National Health Service: The Medical Services of the New Poor Law 1834-1871* (London, 1967), p.64.

noise and dust from which caused severe health problems.¹¹ Later in 1867 Rogers helped to form the Poor Law Medical Officer's Association, the most important pressure group working for further reform of poor law medical services.¹²

Margaret Crowther argues that these services still retained a second-class reputation from 1867-1914 in spite of the improvements to the physical state of many infirmaries. She asserts this was partly down to the diverse conditions of infirmaries and the attention received from full-time doctors and well-qualified nurses that were found in London in comparison to the perfunctory part-time doctors and untrained nurses operating in small workhouses such as Stoke and Wolstanton.¹³ Brundage takes the view that Boards of Guardians operated in the belief that 'timely medical care could restore a person to health and keep him out of the workhouse, thereby saving money'.¹⁴

The subject of ill health could involve lots of thematic areas, but four illustrate this as a central issue of life-cycle, spatial variation, and actual pauper experiences. This chapter is structured to illustrate how two adjacent unions addressed the issue of health based on identical criteria. Firstly, the section assesses the importance of workhouse infirmaries and the significance of the creation of physical capacity in the two unions in an attempt to overcome the increasing problem of overcrowding. It will examine the steps guardians took to expand medical facilities within each union and assess building programmes to meet growing demand.

Medical services combine a broad spectrum of needs and this section will investigate those that are important in delivering a facility of care to the sick. These include the role of the nurse and the care they administered, the appointment of staff, the involvement of guardians and the LGB in policy and the development of probationary nurses training to certification. The

¹¹ R. Richardson, B. Hurwitz, *Doctor Death: Medicine at the End of Life: An exhibition at the Wellcome Institute for the History of Medicine* (London, 1997), p219-20.

¹² *Ibid.*, p.221-2.

¹³ Crowther, *The Workhouse System*, p.181

¹⁴ Brundage, *The English Poor Laws*.

focus then changes to that of the concerns of the mentally ill, their care in the community, the growth of county asylums and the need for workhouses to accommodate the growing problem of lunacy. It will conclude with the wider area of mortality and the statistics relating to deaths found within union workhouses to assess the spatial variations and thereby illustrate how each addressed the issue of illness, and that of infectious diseases.

The New Poor Law was designed to deter paupers and not to offer them free hospital treatment or specialised care in institutions. Crowther refers to the fact that during the nineteenth century Commissioners had no long-term plan for larger institutions and therefore reluctant to accept the fact that many workhouses were being increasingly viewed as hospitals. Furthermore, the PLB noted that official responsibility for the sick only extended to the destitute, not the poor, and did not wish to admit into the infirmaries anyone who could pay for medical treatment.¹⁵

Infirmaries

The Lancet announced in April 1865 the setting up of a ‘Sanitary Commission for the Investigation of the state of the Infirmaries of Workhouses’. In one report by an investigating doctor it was noted that despite the ‘air of bescrubbedness’ and the powerful odour of soap and water’, he soon discovered that all ‘the bedridden patients habitually washed their hands and faces in chamber utensils.’ The female itch-ward in another hospital was dismissed as the ‘nastiest place altogether that our eyes have ever looked upon’. In a third they found ‘but one round-towel a week for the use of the eight inmates suffering from syphilis’¹⁶ and even in the 1920s early workhouse infirmaries could still be described as ‘little better than the rubbish heaps in practice’.¹⁷

In 1867 the Metropolitan Poor Act resulted in infirmary improvements acknowledging

¹⁵ Crowther, *The Workhouse System*, p.80.

¹⁶ N. Longmate, *The Workhouse* (London, 1974), pp.204-5.

¹⁷ Poor Law Conference, 1883. W. Midlands 7.

that it had become the responsibility of the state to provide medical care for the poor. The consequence of this is that the 'less eligibility' clause was no longer a barrier to their treatment.¹⁸ An official *Circular* of 1868 on workhouse construction recommended that separate day and night-time accommodation should be provided for the sick, the aged, the able-bodied and children, with males and females strictly segregated. Driver estimates that during the period 1867-83 that a total of £2.9m was authorised on the building of one hundred and fifty-five workhouse infirmaries.¹⁹ Stoke, as we shall establish took advantage of this expansion on numerous occasions, but at Wolstanton they only expanded once.

An infirmary had been established at Stoke since 1842, described as a parish hospital consisting of wards for the sick, the old and infirm and those with fevers and itch.²⁰ (Fig.6.1 and Fig.6.2) By December 1865, Inspector Doyle described the accommodation as 'inadequate'.²¹ On the basis of this report guardians decided the following year to erect a new school and thereby convert the old school into wards to provide additional accommodation for forty patients.²² At a further inspection in 1873 the LGB considered that the medical facilities still remained insufficient arguing that 'steps should be taken to provide a small infectious hospital, probably with three or four beds for either sex.'²³ The following year, 1874, a new infectious hospital was operating but was described by Inspector Dansey as inadequate.²⁴ Later the same year as a consequence of an outbreak of smallpox a further purpose built wooden structure was erected at a cost of £303 14s 6d to accommodate an additional eighty-nine sick patients.²⁵ Further infectious outbreaks followed and pressure mounted to secure an additional temporary building to

¹⁸ D. Ashworth, *The Poor in Bradford 1834-1871*, Ph.D Thesis (Bradford University, 1979), p.589.

¹⁹ F. Driver, *Power and Pauperism, the Workhouse System 1834-1884* (Cambridge, 1993), p.88 (table 4,5 and 89).

²⁰ HA. Minutes of Committee ref. 3506/1/19, to consider defects in Workhouse 1841-43, May 29 1842.

²¹ TNA. MH12/11470, 21 December 1863.

²² *Ibid.*, Report of Buildings and Estates Committee, July 1864.

²³ SS. 25 July 1881.

²⁴ LRO, G/12/57b/35, 20 Aug; 8 Oct 1885. Bradford Hospital recorded that they had separate buildings for sick and infectious cases.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, MH12/11370, 6 November 1871.

overcome the immediate problem of a shortage of accommodation. In some workhouse infirmaries, such as Radford they refused to take infectious cases on the basis that the chance of recovery was less than for those who remained in their homes.²⁶

Accommodation once more became an issue in 1881 as patients at the old infirmary were reported as sleeping five in a bed in the general sick wards and conditions were described as follows:²⁷

The additions to the old infirmary are most un-satisfactory as there is poor ventilation throughout. The bath is in the cellar; the stairs are dangerously steep and the lavatory arrangements defective. It is ill adapted to have an additional storey.²⁸

In 1882 plans were submitted for a new infectious disease hospital which was constructed of wood and corrugated iron.²⁹ However, as the workhouse population grew so did the demand for more general hospital beds. In July the following year Mr. Charles Lynam a local architect, submitted plans for a new hospital consisting of one hundred and seventy-six beds at a cost of £12,703. This was completed four years later in 1886.³⁰ In 1894, the guardians sought to build an even larger workhouse infirmary as the current one opened six years previously was recorded as being overcrowded.³¹ Two detached blocks were suggested for males and females, but this was opposed on the grounds of difficulty in administration and supervision. Plans were eventually submitted to the LGB with an estimated cost of £9,500³² and the final draft approved in June at a greater cost of £10,500.³³ The building was completed and occupied two years later

²⁶ E. Denny, *The emergence of the occupation of district nursing in nineteenth century England*, Ph.D thesis (Nottingham University, 1999), p.211, Oxford in the year 1854.

²⁷ SS. 24 October 1877.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 13 May 1881.

²⁹ TNA.MH12/11221, 6 December 1892.

³⁰ HA. Stoke Minute Book, vol.21, 29 April 1885.

³¹ LRO, G/12/57b, 11 Feb 1897 Records that overcrowding in the infirmary was a constant problem, especially as numbers of long-term chronic and infirm patients increased.

³² *Ibid.*, MH12/11222, 24 January 1894.

³³ *Ibid.*, MH12/11222, 7 June 1894.

in June 1896.³⁴ This new hospital infirmary contained eighty-six male beds and eighty female a total of one hundred and sixty-six, an increase of fifty-six per cent³⁵ compared with a total of one hundred and six beds in the old infirmary.³⁶ Crowther suggests that once public institutions began to offer more specialised and expensive treatments that many people who previously had afforded private treatment turned to institutions and thereby increasing demand upon beds.³⁷

Whilst we see an expansion of medical services of Stoke, the Board at Wolstanton were in denial for in answer to a questionnaire of 1882 regarding the medical treatment of paupers it was pointed out that ‘where possible all treatments were carried out in the homes of paupers and only inmates received treatment at the workhouse infirmary.’³⁸ On one such occasion, the medical officer visited a pauper patient, aged thirty-six, suffering from bronchitis. The doctor charged extra for this visit as he had done previously over a period of eight months.³⁹ A further charge was made for the treatment of John Taylor of Burslem in respect of the removal of cancer from his upper lip. The medical officer charged the guardians £2 2s for his services.⁴⁰ It may be assumed that home visits were a way of increasing his salary above his basic stipend, off-set by the lack of providing improved facilities at the workhouse.

In May 1873, there were ten cases of smallpox admitted to the isolation ward. This was followed by outbreaks in June 1876 of scarlet fever, measles, and typhoid when every precaution was taken to prevent the spread of disease.⁴¹ At the same time an outbreak at Kidsgrove, a district within the Wolstanton Union where four cases of smallpox were reported in the community. The local doctor asked if it was possible for the workhouse infirmary to

³⁴ Ibid., MH12/11223, 12 May 1896. *Workhouses in the Potteries*, 1984, wrongly gives the date of completion as 1894, whereas this was the approval date of the plans.

³⁵ Ibid., MH12/11224, 12 May 1897. Annual Inspection by the LGB 12 May 1897.

³⁶ Ibid., MH12/11222, Annual Inspection by the LGB 13 March 1894. Driver p.88 refers to the promotion of larger infirmaries by the LGB.

³⁷ Crowther, p.62

³⁸ Ibid., MH12/11202, 14 January 1870.

³⁹ Ibid., MH12/11212, 2 February 1882.

⁴⁰ Ibid., MH12/11213, 11 October 1883.

⁴¹ SS. 24 November 1875.

accommodate them.⁴² The question was referred to the LGB, who promptly replied that ‘they had no authority to sanction this as it was a matter for the guardians to decide’.⁴³

In contextualising this section it has been shown that from the 1840s there had been a concerted effort by the guardians of Stoke to comply with the inspector’s recommendation to improve and extend medical facilities and in the case of epidemics to build emergency isolation wards. In comparison, Wolstanton continued to treat poor patients in their own homes and not in the infirmary restricting this facility to inmates only.

Nursing Care

Existing scholarly literature on poor law nursing is slight, despite its significance within nursing history.⁴⁴ Rosemary White has provided the one dedicated account of poor law nursing in which she argues that, ‘despite the lack of interest by historians and the nursing profession, workhouses nursed seventy-five per cent of all hospital patients’.⁴⁵ The aim of this section is firstly to contextualise how nursing evolved nationally from 1834 to 1901. Secondly, it will identify how the term ‘nurse’ and their responsibilities were applied under the New Poor Law reviewing the role of the inmate nurse followed by the conditions and treatments that occurred of inmate patients. Thirdly, it will reflect within the local context staff appointments and the relationship between guardians and the LGB with regards to authority, power and accountability.⁴⁶

⁴² Ibid., 7 June 1876.

⁴³ Ibid., 9 July 1876. This incident placed pressure on the Board of Guardians to recommend to the Sanitary Authorities to erect a hospital for cases of infectious diseases for patients of the non-pauper class.

⁴⁴ S. Cherry, *Medical Services and the Hospitals in Britain, 1860-1939* (Cambridge, 1996), p.81; B. Abel-Smith, *A History of Nursing Profession* (London, 1960), p.10 noted that while there were many detailed accounts of the operation of voluntary hospitals, there were few for poor law hospitals.

⁴⁵ R. White, *Social Change and Development of the Nursing Profession* (London, 1987), p.3.

⁴⁶ A Gestrich, E. Hurren, and S.A. King, (eds), *Poverty and Sickness in Modern Europe: Narratives of the Sick Poor, 1780–1938* (London, 2012); A. Digby, *Making a Medical Living: Doctors and Patients in the English Market for Medicine, 1720–1911* (Cambridge, 1994); D. Green, ‘Medical relief and the New Poor Law in London’, in Grell, Cunningham and Jutte, *Health Care and Poor Relief, in eighteenth and nineteenth century Northern Europe* (Aldershot, 2002), pp. 220-245; S.A. King, ‘Poverty, medicine and the workhouse in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries’, in J. Reinartz and L. Schwarz (eds.), *Workhouse Medicine* (Rochester, 2013), pp. 228-246; J. Robin, *Elmdon: Continuity and Change in a North West Essex Village* (Cambridge, 1980); A. Tomkins, ‘The excellent example of the working class: Medical welfare, contributory funding and the North Staffordshire

In the early nineteenth century before hospital reform, nurses generally did not undertake what later became as standard nursing duties. No special knowledge or aptitude was required and their responsibilities were more in line of domestic service - providing basic care of patients and cleaning and washing. Indeed, the majority of nurses were drawn from the domestic service class.⁴⁷ As the New Poor Law was not designed to treat the sick, no stipulation was made for the provision of nurses for those who became sick in the workhouse or entered because of illness.⁴⁸

Pauper nursing in the early years of the new poor law should be viewed in the context of the primary social conditions of the poor, the lack of medical knowledge and the state of general hospital nursing. This early period pre-dated general reforms in nursing and, as White has pointed out, the duties of workhouse nurses set out in 1847 were more responsible than those of the nurses at St. Thomas's Hospital in 1867.⁴⁹

The General Consolidated Order of 1847 sets out the duties of workhouse nurses as being simply to attend the sick; to administer to them all medicines and medical applications according to the direction of the medical officer to inform the medical officer of any defects observed in the arrangements in sick lying-in wards; and to take care that a light was kept at night in the sick wards. The workhouse nurses were therefore merely required to be sober and capable of reading and understanding the medical officer's instructions.⁵⁰

It has been established that Stoke showed a greater concern for the sick in its provision of facilities in comparison with Wolstanton but can the same conclusion be made with regards to nursing care? As a comparison with the period 1871-1901 and to place the treatment of paupers into context I have included a full transcript of a pauper letter written as a complaint

Infirmary from 1815', *Social History of Medicine*, 21 (2008), pp.13-30; S.A King, 'Nursing Under the Old Poor Law in Midlands and Eastern England 1780-1834', *Journal of the History of Medicine and Social Science* (2015), pp.588-622.

⁴⁷ Crowther, *The Workhouse System*, p.166

⁴⁸ A. Negrine, *Medicine and Poverty: A Study of the Poor Law Medical Services of Leicester Union, 1867-1914*, Ph.D thesis (Leicester University, 2008).

⁴⁹ R. White, *Social Change and the Development of the Nursing Profession* (London, 1978), pp.8, 25-6.

⁵⁰ Crowther, *The Workhouse System*, p.166

regarding the treatment received in relation to Mr. William Lambert, who attended the workhouse infirmary at Stoke. The letter contains several relevant points for the period which justifies its reproduction:

To the Honourable PLB. May 31st, 1858
Gentlemen

I entered Stoke workhouse and seen by the Master and placed me into Idiot Ward. Here one of the idiots was carried in bleeding from his nose. I then experienced frantic yells of frequent occurrence. Upon enquiry, I found it was quite common for the nurse to place sick patients in the Idiot Ward. There is no partition to prevent the idiots from rambling into any of the wards.

The following day Mr. Ashford, the assistant or medical officer, although I was very ill, entered and left again without seeing me. He again came and again went without seeing me. I asked the nurse why I was not introduced to the Doctor and was flatly insulted. I requested an interview with the Master but was refused.

On Thursday, the 13th, I was taken from the Idiot Ward and placed in the old men's sick ward then seen by Mr Garner the medical officer. I told him my chest was painful adding that I had a pain in my right. I was asked to strip for an examination. 'I know you have, now can you otherwise be quiet,' was his reply. After sounding me, he pointed to the nurse 'this man wants little or no medicine' with the exception of a large cup full of a dark mixture called opening medicine more adapted for horses than sickly humans. This opening medicine is nicknamed by the patients 'Black-Jack'.

During my stay in the hospital, I saw every day patients comb their heads in pursuit of finding lice in large numbers. There are no facilities for personal cleanliness, no basins of any kind to wash in save the chamber pots and there is a sad deficiency there. Patients feel a repugnance to wash in a chamber pot not used by themselves in the ward where I slept. There were no towels, no soap and but three chamber pots for seven men. I have seen the old men's ward which was my day ward where for three days successively it was without soap of any kind, hard or soft. There were here but two small towels for 11 or 12 men. I have myself washed these several times when they were shamefully filthy and could procure no soap for the purpose.

I went the old men's ward and saw two beds in it with very filthy covering, in one bed a man and in the other four boys, two at each end. I asked the man if all the boys had diarrhoea but the nurse took no notice of the boys upon the bed. I was told they were nearly free from it which must be attributed to bad food or filth or perhaps both.

My daily diet of bread, butter and coffee for breakfast and then in the evening in addition to the coffee and tea being nearly cold, the bread was insufficiently baked, and the butter was rancid. I have seen patients scrape the butter off the bread. Dinner was rice and broth although the rice was musty and inferior being baked or boiled in some watery matter certainly not all milk. The broth was devoid of any vegetables and owing to the meat being very often over cooked was tough.

There are no knives, forks or spoons you must wait and borrow from others. Upon enquiring I was told knives, forks and spoons were allowed in the House, and this deprivation to the sick is entirely the work of the nurse paid £20 yearly with rations for attending to the wants of the sick.

On Thursday, the 19th Mr. Ashford visited the Hospital and prescribed 'Black Jack.' I thank God for giving me strength to crawl away.

Such a state of things calls loudly for redress, and I have no doubt you only require the facts to be laid before you to insure your kindest and vigilant attention.

I am Gentlemen, your very humble William Lambert.⁵¹

⁵¹ TNA. MH12/11464, 31 May 1858; Longmate, *The Workhouse*, pp.204-5.

This snap-shot of workhouse conditions and treatment covers a number of important issues. Firstly, Mr. Lambert was placed within the idiot ward, not into a medical ward. He was not examined by a doctor for several days and ignored by nursing staff. When finally examined he was treated with contempt despite being in considerable pain and then only received a laxative (Black-Jack) as a form of treatment and food of inferior quality. In addition, the state of cleanliness, hygiene and washing facilities were extremely poor. This complaint, therefore is a valuable contribution to an otherwise unknown period of care in the workhouse and indicates to us that treatment during this period was in the extreme, un-caring, un-hygienic, un-professional and with little medical knowledge on how to diagnose or offer any suitable remedies. In 1869 a Royal Commission investigated serious public health issues which led in 1871 to the formation of the Local Government Board, with responsibilities for public health as well as the poor law.

In most workhouses nursing was supervised by the matron who was usually the master's wife and his official deputy were listed in 1866 as follows:

The matron's duties are varied and multiplied. She superintends the whole internal workings of the establishment, the cleaning, the linen, the food, the cooking, the distribution of food, the stores, etc. And in the discharge of these duties has as much as an active person can properly do. But in many workhouses, she is expected to superintend the nursing and bedding and other questions relating to the sick.⁵²

A description of nursing care is highlighted by Lynn McDonald who reflects upon the early years of workhouse medical care with clarity:

Medical attendance was only occasional. There was no provision for drugs so that the doctor had to pay out of his own stipend for any he prescribed. There was nothing to speak of; untrained pauper nurses, or women inmates, not themselves sick provided what was called 'nursing.' Often these were old and could not even lift patients. Few could read, and many drank on the job.⁵³

⁵² B. Able-Smith, *A History of the Nursing Profession* (London, 1960).

⁵³ L. McDonald, *Florence Nightingale at First Hand* (London, 2010), p.142.

Fraser also identifies that the problem associated with poor care was the lack of trained nurses:

Given an able and energetic nursing force, some of the terrible conditions found in workhouse infirmaries could perhaps have been overcome, but the greatest handicap under which the poor law laboured in the early decades was a complete absence of trained nurses.⁵⁴

In her study of King's Lynn Union Digby describes the nursing as the weakest point in medical care:

Not infrequently a single paid nurse oversaw thirty or forty patients, and this meant that everything done for the sick was by inmates. They had nothing to gain if they did the duty assigned and nothing to lose if they did it badly; the fact that being able-bodied women, they were workhouse inmates proved, *prima facie*, that they were not of high character; so most of them were not disposed to take much trouble in attending to helpless old folk requiring assistance in various respects by night or day.⁵⁵

The over-riding principle of the period was economy, but there were also reasons other than the use of pauper nurses. Firstly, there was no body of trained nurses to draw upon and therefore any inmate who was considered able-bodied was given work to do and nursing was one task that could be readily allotted regardless of whether the inmate was suitable although they tended to be elderly women with little prospect of employment outside of the workhouse.⁵⁶ Pauper nurses simply received extra privileges in the form of food, liquor or token cash payments for their special duties. For instance, at the Strand workhouse in the 1860s, pauper nurses were given a glass of gin 'for laying out the dead and other repulsive duties'.⁵⁷ At Stoke guardians set to work children under the age of thirteen to perform nursing and domestic duties.⁵⁸

⁵⁴ D. Fraser, *The New Poor Law in the Nineteenth Century* (London, 1976), p.57.

⁵⁵ Digby, *Pauper Palaces*, p.171.

⁵⁶ Negrine, *Medicine and Poverty*, p.99.

⁵⁷ Crowther, *The Workhouse System*, p.227.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, MH12/11472, 18 September 1874

Nursing was one of the most intractable of the problems on which the reformers focussed their attention. For improvements to take place, not only had the guardians to overcome their reluctance to pay for services that had previously been freely available but realised that institutions for the training of nurses had to be established: indeed, a whole new concept of nurse training had to be accepted. The work of Florence Nightingale in the 1860s was crucial to this later development.⁵⁹

Florence Nightingale was involved in the first nurse training scheme in 1865 at a workhouse infirmary in Liverpool financed by local benefactor, William Rathbone.⁶⁰ Hallett draws attention to the conditions of workhouse infirmaries at that time:

The medical wards were in a desperate state and were run by a matron – often the wife of the workhouse master – who knew little of nursing and played the role of housekeeper. The principle of less ‘less-eligibility’ sought to ensure that the situation of paupers was worse than that of the poorest independent labourer. Infirmaries were impoverished places, ill-equipped, and poorly governed and under-resourced. Care was largely in the hands of pauper inmates.⁶¹

For both unions Stoke and Wolstanton few records of actual duties and detailed care of sick inmates have survived - if they ever existed. The minute books however record the one-off payments made for extraordinary duties when infectious diseases occurred and nursing was needed from those prepared to undertake the duty of care for such patients. One such epidemic was highlighted by the guardians at Stoke during a smallpox outbreak in 1882 where one nurse with no formal training undertook their care and was paid an additional £2 2s.⁶² A further case was recorded whereby two nurses who had previously recovered from smallpox were allocated to the isolation hospital to care for current victims of the disease:

Two staff nurses and an inmate for smallpox victims are in the workhouse isolation hospital. All had previously contracted smallpox so it was considered safe to work there.

⁵⁹ Fraser, *The New Poor Law*, p.62.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p.148, 149.

⁶¹ A. Borsay, E. Hunter, *Nursing and Midwifery in Britain since 1700* (London, 2012), p.29.

⁶² Stoke Minute Book, vol.19, July 1882.

No others have access. Food and water are left in a locked court about twenty yards away from another ward. Carbolic acid is used diligently.⁶³

Nursing Appointments.

In February 1875, guardians at Stoke appointed a properly 'qualified nurse for the female side of the workhouse where previously the duties had been carried out by pauper inmates.⁶⁴ The position was advertised at £15 per annum but received no applications. The LGB agreed that the guardians could increase this to £18 or even £25 to secure the right appointment.⁶⁵ Evidence indicates that even though qualified nurses were being sought, pauper inmates were still being used in the hospital but the medical officer thought it was necessary to appoint a trained night nurse as inmate nurses could not be relied upon. Until this time, the duty had been previously carried out by a pauper inmate who 'would sit up all night'.⁶⁶

The rationale behind nursing appointments for this period is confusing. Appointments were first made by the guardians and then these were submitted to the LGB for final approval. Sometimes references were followed up, sometimes not. Frequently, if the candidate appeared not to be up to the job the guardians and LGB would exchange correspondence attaching blame to each other for the appointment. Negrine takes up this issue of appointments in Leicester in 1871 where the medical officer objected to the guardians as he was not represented on the appointments panel, or involved in the selection process and concerned by the low calibre of nurses appointed. He suggested that this process was consistent with all other nursing institutions.⁶⁷

⁶³ TNA. MH12/11481, 12 July 1882.

⁶⁴ Ibid., 8 February 1875; Ashworth, *The Poor Law*, p.488 refers to the first appointment of a paid nurse in 1858 at Bradford Union and in 1858 at Bierley workhouse in 1858.

⁶⁵ TNA. MH12/11473, 25 June 1875; E.R. Frizelle, *The Life and Times of the Royal Infirmary at Leicester: The Making of a Teaching Hospital, 1776-1980* (Leicester, 1988).

⁶⁶ Ibid., MH12/11490, 23 June 1890.

⁶⁷ Negrine, *Medicine and Poverty*, p.104 quotes Leicester Record Office (LRO) G/12/94, Medical Officer's Annual Report, 1871.

David Ashforth in his study of Bradford discovered that nursing appointments at the workhouse were also of unqualified nurses then after a short period frequently asked to resign as unsuitable. He further discovered that the PLB neglected to scrutinise nurse's qualifications and even an appointment where the candidate was illiterate she was still offered the position.⁶⁸ At Leicester Union in 1871 two nurses were appointed, one had previously been a machinist and the other in domestic service.⁶⁹ Despite pressure by the LGB that only trained nurses should be appointed in the late 1870s, Leicester Union ignored this and appointed a male nurse aged thirty-nine, an invalided soldier with no nursing experience but was considered fit enough to nurse sick paupers as late as 1884.⁷⁰ From these examples, it is evident that the practice nationally was two-fold, firstly, that guardians appointed who they wanted regardless of experience or suitability and secondly the LGB were expected to approve such appointments without question.

Despite the efforts of the guardians to employ qualified nurses, one nurse at Stoke was dismissed for inappropriate behaviour. A further case involved a newly appointed nurse Sarah Edge, who in 1882 was accused of visiting another part of the workhouse overnight leaving patients. She was requested to resign.⁷¹ A further request for resignation followed later the same year indicating that guardian's intention was of maintaining a high standard of nursing. The nurse was called upon to resign because of her ill-treatment of inmates as 'she placed Mary Hallam, aged seventy-four, into a bath of cold water as a form of punishment.'⁷² Despite these examples of poor quality nurses Inspector's reports frequently noted examples of good practice as in the case of Ann Wetman who in July 1882, 'fulfilled her duties with credit as an imbecile

⁶⁸ D. Ashforth, *The Poor Law in Bradford, c.1834-c.1871, A Study of the Relief of Poverty in Mid-19th-Century Bradford*, Ph.D. thesis (Bradford University, 1979), p.488-490.

⁶⁹ LRO. G/12/94, 1 October 1872.

⁷⁰ LRO. G/12/57b/g, 5 May 1885.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, MH12/11481, 20 May 1882; Digby, *Making a medical Living*, p.246 states that night-nurses at workhouses were 'conspicuous by their absence.'

⁷² HA. Stoke Minute Book, vol.19, 16 December 1882.

nurse' with a salary of £15 per annum at Stoke.⁷³ Staffing levels are recorded in 1883, as five nurses in the sick ward and two with the imbeciles and that the medical officer attends daily'.⁷⁴

The policy of employing trained nurses continued with the appointment in November 1887 of day nurse Mary Rutherford. Special reference was made at the time of her being registered with the Edinburgh Nursing Association and certified in midwifery.⁷⁵ In May 1893, records reveal an important step forward as guardians decided to appoint a district nurse to visit homes of patients on outdoor relief. She was employed at a salary of £52 per annum with an additional accommodation allowance of £15. District nurse Taylor had previously received three years' instruction in the medical and surgical wards of the North Staffordshire Infirmary and training school.⁷⁶

From this period, most of the appointments were of probationary nurses, subject to a period of three years training. In September 1894, the LGB Inspector praised the number of nursing staff which consisted of two-day nurses and one night nurse working at the infirmary; two nurses and one probationer in the male wards and one nurse, one probationer and one-night nurse in the female wards. Lunatic wards had two attendants in both male and female wards. Despite good staffing levels, the inspector added that: 'there are altogether one hundred and thirty-seven beds including those allocated for lock, itch and lying in cases far more than the present staff can manage and more staff is urgently required.'⁷⁷

By 1889 numbers of patients at Stoke had increased: male two hundred and eighteen, female one hundred and ninety-eight, a total four hundred and sixteen. The average taken over a ten-year period was male - one hundred and sixty-one, female - one hundred and thirty-nine.

⁷³ HA. Stoke Minute Book, vol.19, 20 November 1882.

⁷⁴ TNA. MH12/11483, 31, October 1883.

⁷⁵ HA. Stoke Minute Book, vol.22, 2 November 1887.

⁷⁶ TNA. MH12/11494, 28 June 1893.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 4 September 1894.

The staffing levels in December 1895 had increased to: seven nurses, four probationary nurses and six lunatic attendants.

With the numbers of patients continually on the rise the need for a more structured level of administration became evident. A letter from a visiting medical officer was brought to the attention of the guardians indicating ‘the desirability to furnish nurses who had completed the probationary training with certificates of proficiency.’ The guardians immediately approved this proposal.⁷⁸ With a proven record of training and high standards of medical care the guardians took the initiative in May 1896 to become members of the Nursing Association agreeing an annual subscription of £2 2s.⁷⁹ In 1898, the numbers and structure of nurses had changed to one superintendent nurse, four charge nurses, four probationary nurses, and one children's nurse⁸⁰ leading to the demand in August 1900 for a new nursing home at a cost of £3,700.⁸¹

The turning point for the Stoke hospital came in February 1901 when the LGB wrote to the guardians enquiring ‘whether the workhouse may be regarded as a ‘Training School for Nurses’ within the meaning of the Nursing in Workhouses Order 1891.’ This would involve a set period of approved instruction and lectures given by medical officers and a process of examination.⁸²

Despite national attempts to improve the appointments and the training of nurses, many workhouses failed to recognise the issue as a problem, arguably on the basis that it was paupers who were being treated and therefore good medical care was not considered a priority. The following table of nursing staff listed in the census returns from 1841 to 1901 identifies the numbers of those employed in the capacity of nurses at Wolstanton which indicates that there

⁷⁸ HA. Stoke Minute Book, vol.25, 7 August 1895.

⁷⁹ TNA. MH12/11485, 28 May 1896.

⁸⁰ Figures extracted from annual LGB inspector's reports.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, MH12/11498, 14 August 1900.

⁸² HA. Stoke Minute Book, vol.29, 29 February 1901 and 10 April 1901.

was no real increase until 1901 when the nursing staff consisted of one charge nurse, one infirmary nurses, three probationer nurses, three superintendent nurses and one sick nurse.

Table. 6.1 Nursing staff at Stoke listed in the census returns 1841 to 1901

1841 - 0	1851 - 1	1871 - 2
1881 - 2	1891 - 3	1901 - 9

The guardians at Wolstanton failed to assess the need to improve the numbers of nursing staff. In September 1870, the appointment was of a married couple where previously the husband was a ship's steward and the wife worked at a retreat house.⁸³ Further examples are worth noting. Thomas Dix was employed as a male nurse but following his appointment in March 1870, his reference came back from his previous employer stating that he was employed as a porter and that he was a poor time-keeper and frequently drunk on duty. An elderly nurse was appointed in April 1871, and although the guardians approved the appointment the LGB wrote expressing their concern over such an appointment 'the nurse, though very anxious to discharge her duties is not only inexperienced as a nurse, but I fear too old to learn.'⁸⁴ Despite these comments from the LGB the person was employed.

In February 1871 Sarah Yates, a local woman, aged fifty, was employed – her previous occupation was a baker.⁸⁵ In June the following year, a cook, aged thirty-nine, was employed as a nurse. The LGB asked what previous experience she had in nursing. The reply was 'none, but she appears fit for the job.'⁸⁶ Nurse Mary Dudley, aged fifty-seven, a widow, came from Lutterworth workhouse stating that she had left as there was little work. When references finally arrived it was noted that she was sacked for drunkenness on duty and speaking disrespectfully to the lunatics.⁸⁷ Despite managing to retain her position, she was finally asked to resign twelve

⁸³ HA. Wolstanton Minute Book, vol.SD1232/8, 29 September 1870.

⁸⁴ TNA. MH12/11202, 1 April 1871.

⁸⁵ HA. Wolstanton Minute Book, vol.SD1231/8, 22 February 1871.

⁸⁶ TNA. MH12/11204, 13 June 1872.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

months' later account of drunkenness. On the appointment of a male nurse, James Harris, the question was asked by the LGB as to his suitability as he was previously a gun maker. The reply from the Wolstanton guardians was: 'his duties will consist of what he is told and that they will devolve upon him.'⁸⁸ Another appointment made in February 1878 confirms that the guardians remained indifferent to the appointment of trained nurses when they appointed Mary Baker, age fifty-two, a widow as an infant's nurse at a salary of £25 per annum. Enquiries from the LGB as to her former experience the guardians replied: 'No experience but did what she was told.'⁸⁹ In July 1896, Alice Jones, aged forty-four, was employed as a nurse after previously being employed at Stockport Union. Her references were poor, yet despite concerns expressed by the LGB the guardians ignored their advice and offered her a six months' trial period. She was dismissed for a quick temper and being drunk on duty. In a further appointment, the same year of a children's nurse with no experience was later found drunk on duty and dismissed to be replaced by a fully trained nurse.⁹⁰

A report by inspectors during this period noted that the number of staff employed was inadequate. In 1883, it was stated that an additional two nurses were required each day as 'no infection register was being kept at the infirmary.'⁹¹ Until this time trained nurses had remained elusive. These examples of appointments point firmly to the fact the guardians at Wolstanton were irresponsible and displayed a total lack of compassion for the sick placed in their care. A further example of 1895 shows that the system had not changed as it referred to the appointment of Nurse Rogers in March 1895. Upon being interviewed she stated that her age was forty-four, although she mentioned that she was not exactly sure. Her references, as for many appointments, were critical of her past employment and following representations by the LGB

⁸⁸ Ibid., MH12/11205, 18 June 1874.

⁸⁹ Ibid., MH12/11208, 2 February 1878; Ashworth, *The Poor Law in Bradford*, p.490 refers to the position of guardians at Bradford Union whereby they ignored advice from the LGB with regards to inappropriate appointments.

⁹⁰ TNA. MH12/11208, 2 February 1878.

⁹¹ HA. Wolstanton Minute Book, vol.SD1231/9, 18 September 1883.

they were informed by the guardians that 'the LGB cannot interfere with appointments.' One year later, the Poor Law Officers Superannuation Act 1896 was implemented. Nurse Rogers decided to claim the allowance under the terms of the Act as she stated she was, in fact, sixty-five years of age, whereas two years previous she indicated she was around forty-four.

At the time of her interview, one guardian raised the issue of her age as she looked older than forty-four but her word on the matter was accepted without further clarification. She stated in her application for a pension that she was interviewed by the guardians who asked her to resign her position as she had deceived the guardians at her interview.⁹² She refused and took legal action against the Board claiming that it was incumbent upon them to have checked her credentials thoroughly at the time of her appointment and claimed the sum of £14 7s 6d, equivalent to half a year's salary. Ultimately the case went to court and Mrs. Rogers lost the case. Commenting afterwards the LGB inspector noted 'I have no sympathy with the guardians as they raised no questions to the particular circumstances at the time of Mrs. Rogers' appointment. They are neglectful of their duty as guardians and my sympathy lies with Mrs. Rogers.'⁹³ In all probability, this was the deciding factor that prompted the Board to appoint only suitable candidates in the future.

The numbers of patients at Wolstanton for the period of our study from 1871 to 1901 averaged - men forty-three and women thirty-eight⁹⁴ suggesting that with such a low number of nurses it would have been impossible to care effectively and probably the use of inmate paupers designated to both domestic duties and act as night attendants supplemented the full-time nursing staff.

An evaluation of the care of inmates was made by the LGB in the form of a private internal comment when they noted on the reverse side of an application form received from the

⁹² Ibid., MH12/11224, 23 March 1897.

⁹³ Ibid., 21 January 1898.

⁹⁴ Ibid., The numbers represented are extracted from the annual LGB Inspectors reports from 1876 to 1899.

guardians in 1892 for permission to erect a temporary infectious hospital reflecting in standard of nursing 'it is hardly likely that responsible nurses or attendants will be employed by the guardians.'⁹⁵

From this time nursing appointments were conducted in a far more professional manner. Advertisements were placed for the appointment of trained nurses which received no applications so the guardians wrote to the LGB in June 1897 informing them that they were experiencing difficulty and asked if they could increase the salaries to attract candidates.⁹⁶ Finally, a structure of responsibility was in place by May 1898 following a report from the LGB inspector with the appointment of two additional trained nurses and a superintendent nurse.⁹⁷ This was followed by the adoption of the new 'Nursing in the Workhouses' order of 1899 which called for the appointment of both trained and probationary nurses.⁹⁸

At Stoke Union the minute book illustrates the additional responsibilities that guardians took in the wider context of care when nurses recommended to the guardian's additional treatments for injured patients. This was done on the basis that those patients who were previously able-bodied, and with the right treatment there was a possibility, at a small cost, that they could return to work and not to become a permanent burden upon life-long poor relief. Unusual requests came in the form of the purchase of wooden legs.

The first reference for Stoke was found in March 1877 when a male inmate was sent to Manchester to be fitted for a wooden leg. A further case was recorded in the following year when Thomas Ibbs was also sent to be measured and fitted.⁹⁹ A collier, aged forty-four, lost his foot in a pit accident and the guardians agreed to pay for an artificial one so he could return to work and keep his wife and two children and the guardians agreed to pay no more than £5 10s

⁹⁵ Ibid., MH12/11221, 26 September 1892.

⁹⁶ Ibid., 9 June 1897.

⁹⁷ Ibid., MH12/11224, 25 May 1898.

⁹⁸ Ibid., MH12/11225, 8 February 1899.

⁹⁹ Ibid., vol,18, 11 September 1878.

for the foot.¹⁰⁰ In December 1894, Catherine Kaine, a widow, aged forty-eight, applied for a wooden leg for her son, aged thirteen. His leg had been amputated below the knee.¹⁰¹ A further example of guardian's sympathies was in the case of William Clarke, aged twenty-two, who suffered from consumption and was sent to Southport convalescent home whilst other patients attended Rhyl convalescent home at a cost of 5s per week.¹⁰² One patient suffering with rheumatism was sent to Nantwich Brine Baths for treatment on a regular basis. There are no records of such sympathy shown towards inmates at Wolstanton.¹⁰³

In Summary

Both unions initially maintained a similar criteria's over appointments of nursing staff until the early 1870s. By the mid-1870s Stoke attached more importance to qualified nurses whereas Wolstanton still ignored LGB recommendations until the 1890s. Secondly, Stoke set up a training scheme for probationary nurses suggesting more compassion to the sick even to the point of sending them to convalescent homes and brine baths.

There is no doubt that in 1871 both unions were at a par with regards to the staffing arrangements of their infirmaries. But evidence from this period illustrates that the guardians at Stoke became more aware at an earlier date of the need to employ qualified nurses but at Wolstanton there remained little change in appointments until the 1890s. Stoke also took the initiative to commence a probationary nurse training programme leading to the infirmary becoming nationally recognised as a training hospital.

This section is justified as it adds to the sense of this thesis thus far that despite being under a single act of parliament two proximate unions in an otherwise unstudied physical and neglected area simply did very different things. If this was observation for the Staffordshire

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., vol.21, 6 August 1884.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., vol.21, 17 December 1884.

¹⁰² Ibid., vol.20, 18 April 1883.

¹⁰³ Ibid., vol.23, 6 June 1888.

Potteries was reflected within the national framework it would lead to us to question the nature and purpose of the New Poor Law.

Mental Health.

In the first instant pauper lunatics were being cared for within family unit and the PLB instructed guardians to request medical officers to pay quarterly visits to their homes for which the fee of two shillings and sixpence was paid. A medical officer's report was required to state whether the lunatic was well cared for and if he or she was fit to remain outside institutional care. In chapter one there was little discussion regarding the care of the insane within the home and community. Wright for example suggested the need for further investigations and like Bartlett and Suzuki argues for a wider appreciation of the previously underestimated care found outside of the asylum and important area of consideration.¹⁰⁴

By the eighteenth century 'madhouses' had emerged to provide residential care taking in 'boarders' at the expense of the family.¹⁰⁵ The owners of such houses sometimes employed 'keepers' to guard the patients, and during this period a set of public scandals revealed the unscrupulous nature of this trade in lunacy.¹⁰⁶ In most cases, especially in the northern manufacturing towns a private 'madhouse' was beyond the reach of most families and so an appeal would be made to the local parish who administered poor relief.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁴ D. Wright, 'Familial Care of Idiot Children in Victorian England', in P. Horden, R. Smith, (eds.) *Locus of Care* (London, 1988), p.176-177; A. Suzuki, *Madness at Home: The Psychiatrist, the Patient, and the Family in England, 1820-1860*, USA, 2006; P. Bartlett, 'The Asylum, the Workhouse, and the Voice of the Insane Poor in Nineteenth-Century England', *International Journal of Law and Psychiatry* (1998), p.3; A. Suzuki, *Madness at Home: The Psychiatrist, the Patient, and the Family in England, 1820-1860* (USA, 2006); Crowther, *The Workhouse System*; S.J. Taylor, "'She was Frightened while Pregnant by a Monkey at the Zoo'": Constructing the Mentally Imperfect Child in Nineteenth Century England', *Social History of Medicine*, (in Press); S.J. Taylor, 'Depraved and Deviant: Depicting the Insane Child in England's County Asylums, 1845-1907', *The Journal of the Historical Association*, 2016), S.J. Taylor, 'Insanity, Philanthropy and Emigration: Dealing with the Insane in the Late-Nineteenth Century North-West England', *History of Psychiatry* (2014), pp.224-236.

¹⁰⁵ By the end of the 18th century there was about forty-five madhouses licensed catering largely for the better-off residents, especially the smaller houses, which charged higher fees and accommodated only five or six people. They include, Ticehurst House in Ticehurst, Sussex, Brislington House, Bristol.

¹⁰⁶ W.L. Parry-Jones, *The Trade in Lunacy* (London, 1972).

¹⁰⁷ P. Rushton, 'Lunatics and Idiots, mental disability, the community, and the Poor Law in North East England, 1600-1800', *Medical History* (1988), pp.34-50.

By the early nineteenth century the country was in the grip of the post Napoleonic war followed by a recession and with it came near hysteria about the burden of 'undeserving poor'. Hence the Victorian era saw the emergence and consolidation of large-scale social provision for those who were unable to maintain themselves through the provision of poor law infirmaries and asylums as the 1834 Act specifically endorsed the separation of the insane on the grounds that they should receive treatment in a specialist environment - asylums.¹⁰⁸ Mellett however argues that the 1834 Act permitted the maintenance of the insane in workhouses on the basis that they were harmless but those certified as dangerous could be retained only on a temporary basis for a maximum of two weeks before removal to an asylum.¹⁰⁹ Hodgkinson sums up the conditions in the workhouses as follows:

Inmates were cramped as buildings were not designed to accommodate lunatics who were maintained in mixed wards. Only small exercise yards were provided and patients attended to by other inmates. There was no one to provide specialist care or to maintain discipline. Punishment for violence or excitement was severe, when these were really the symptoms of the illness requiring medical care.¹¹⁰

A further reflection of the period is provided by Edward Myers:

The attendants are unqualified, often themselves pauper inmates. The rooms were gloomy and prison like, there was little provision for occupation or amusement and little space for exercise.¹¹¹

The attitude of the Commissioners in Lunacy towards the poor law authorities was critical claiming from the start that the treatment of the insane was no concern of the PLB or of the guardians who were reluctant to commit to the asylum all but the most difficult of cases. This was because the expense of keeping paupers in the workhouse was far less than the charge made by the asylum. The Commissioners report was damning stating that harmless insane paupers

¹⁰⁸ M. Foucault, *Madness and Civilisation* (London, 1965); A.T. Scull, *The Most Solitary of Afflictions* (London, 1993).

¹⁰⁹ Mellett, *The Prerogative of Asylums*, p.140.

¹¹⁰ Hodgkinson, *The Origins*, p.577.

¹¹¹ E. D. Myers, *A History of Psychiatry in N.Staffs.* (Leek, 1997), p.23-24

were being detained in workhouses rather than being sent to asylums suggesting therefore that those detained were being abandoned to the hopeless world of poor law discipline:¹¹²

Placed in a gloomy and comfortless room, deprived of free exercise in the open air, and wanting substantial nutriment sufficient to promote restoration, they pass their lives in a moody, listless, unhealthy, inactive state, which is fatal to their chance of ultimate recovery.¹¹³

The treatment and housing of the insane pauper received increased attention as the century progressed. The increasing number of the mentally ill and the new Lunacy Act of 1808 facilitated the construction of additional asylums to provide much needed accommodation. The distinction between idiocy and lunacy became increasingly important to diagnose correctly as guardians struggled to manage as only limited accommodation was available. The difference between the two interpretations of lunacy had been important for hundreds of years. There are three points to be noted here, as Bartlett explains:

Idiocy commenced at birth or very shortly after, while lunacy could commence at any time in a person's life. Idiocy was a permanent state, whereas lunacy in law always allowed for the possibility of cure. Lunacy always allowed for the possibility of a 'lucid interval', a period of time when the patient functioned normally.¹¹⁴

Figures produced by Kidd illustrate the dilemma that guardians faced when considering how to deal with this issue in 1842 as; only one per cent of inmates were classified as lunatics. In an attempt to regulate and apply national standards, the Lunacy Act of 1845 and 1862 created a permanent Board of Lunacy Commissioners which allowed for the removal of lunatics from workhouses to the county asylum which became the chief repository.¹¹⁵

Mellet argues that in many workhouses the decision for removal was often based on available accommodation and dependent upon the governance of the workhouse in preventing

¹¹² The 1844 Report of the Metropolitan Commissioners in Lunacy.

¹¹³ PP. Supplement to the *12th Annual Report of the Commissioners in Lunacy* (1859), IX, 12.

¹¹⁴ Bartlett, *The Poor Law*, p.56.

¹¹⁵ A. Kidd, *State, Society and the Poor in 19th Century England* (New York, 1999), p.56.

the pauper being a danger, either to himself, or others rather than being a medical consideration.¹¹⁶ On this issue it could be assumed that the willingness of workhouse medical officers to certify ‘insanity’ may well have been geographically influenced. For example, in 1859 the PLB reported that no less than forty-eight different descriptions of insanity had been used in official returns ranging from ‘head affection after fever’, through to ‘cerebral excitement’, to simply ‘silly’. The most common causes were dementia, idiocy and imbecility.¹¹⁷ In addition workhouse medical officers did not always fulfil their statutory obligations in respect of care for lunatics resulting in considerable pressure from both the Lunacy Commissioners and others to have them admitted into asylums.¹¹⁸ The PLB had themselves initially taken the same view but changed their mind when it became evident that asylum care was costlier than care in the workhouse.

In England and Wales, the proportion of expenditure for the maintenance of paupers in asylums increased from six per cent in 1857 to fourteen per cent in 1885.¹¹⁹ Until 1874 guardians had a direct financial interest in keeping as many lunatic paupers out of the asylum until central government gave a special capitation grant for the maintenance of pauper ‘lunatics’ sent to asylums. This detention of large numbers of lunatic paupers in asylums prompted extensive debates amongst those supporters of specialised treatment within an asylum rejecting workhouses and other institutions as appropriate places for the care of the insane. However, support for more asylums was strengthened by the criticism of the appalling conditions found within workhouses.

Cherry reflects on the institutionalised lunatic and the anticipated cures or benefits of those considered to be incurable as numbers increased from twelve thousand in 1860 to twenty-

¹¹⁶ Mellet, *The Prerogative of Asylums*, p.140. The issue of accommodation supports Mellet’s assumption will be discussed later in this section.

¹¹⁷ PP. 12th Annual Report of the Poor Law Board (1865), p.266.

¹¹⁸ PP. 3rd Annual Report Local Government Board (1874), pp.311-94.

¹¹⁹ PP. 15th Annual Report of the Local Government Board (1886) p. 127.

seven thousand ten years later, by which time asylums had become a primary place of quarantine.¹²⁰ Conversely, Walton disagreed with this analysis but rather asylums should ‘aim at their rehabilitation’¹²¹ but at the same time criticised workhouses suggesting ‘there was often an inappropriate confinement followed by a ‘steady decline thereafter, losing weight, being dosed with morphia, bromide, and chloroform’ and that ‘patients were allowed to languish without coming to the attention of the asylum authorities’.¹²²

As demand exceeded the available beds in county asylums a new policy in the assessment of the mentally ill determined the return of chronic lunatics back to local poor law care. This was resolved in 1862 with a reversal of policy and the insertion of a special clause into the 1861 Lunacy Act, allowing for the removal of chronic lunatics from asylums into workhouse lunatic wards. It is this care and how it was to be delivered and what provision was made to achieve uniformity under the poor law this section seeks to address.

In the same year a Parliamentary return reported that out of six hundred and fifty unions, one hundred and fifteen claimed to provide special wards for lunatics, although it was noted that not all wards were separate from the main workhouse buildings.¹²³ Driver argues that many unions had increased the number of separate wards for lunatics but the Commissioners interpreted this as being motivated by short-term savings against long-term improvements in the care of the insane paupers.¹²⁴ The argument appeared to be based upon the fact that improvements and enhanced supervision by trained officers would effectively reduce the number of lunatic paupers being sent to the county asylums.

¹²⁰ *ibid.*, p.50.

¹²¹ W.F. Bynum, R. Porter, M. Shepherd, *The Anatomy of Madness* (London, 1985). J.K. Walton. ‘Casting out and bringing back in Victorian England: pauper lunatics, 1840-70’ *The Anatomy of Madness* (Cambridge, 1985), p.132.

¹²² *Ibid.*, p.139.

¹²³ PP. *Return of workhouse lunatic wards* (1863) LII.

¹²⁴ Driver, *Power and Pauperism*, p.109.

By 1867 more unions were accommodating lunatics although many still maintained that workhouses lacked a therapeutic environment but the President of the Medico-Psychological Association was nevertheless prepared to argue that:

aged imbeciles and demented lunatics prefer the workhouse to county asylums, partly from the greater freedom from discipline (from enforced order and cleanliness, baths, etc.) which they enjoy, partly from the association with some persons there instead of the insane, and partly because it is situated nearer their own parish and family.¹²⁵

Ruth Hodgkinson takes a different view describing the care of the insane in workhouses as unfit¹²⁶ but this was not the case at Wolstanton as conditions were described in a report dated December 1867 by the Lunacy Inspector who noted that:

There are sixteen inmates in the workhouse today classed as unsound mind. They were all quiet and orderly and no one made any complaint. Their dress and appearance was satisfactory. Some women are usefully employed in domestic work.¹²⁷

The Lunatic Commissioners found in 1870 in Blackburn workhouse, that lunatics were confined without proper certification and that accommodation was frequently paid for by relatives at ten shillings a week so they were no longer in the care of the family, but in the care of others. Despite the Capitation Act of 1874 and the financial re-arrangement of the grant for the maintenance of pauper inmates in asylums Wright and Borsay still argued that many of the county asylums remained overcrowded and consequently numbers of the chronically mentally ill poor had to be returned to workhouses.

Care of lunatics continued to improve as a report by the Lunacy Inspectors of July 1875 commented:

I have a favourable report to make on the condition and find the inmates well as regards to cleanliness and the state of their clothing. A large proportion of them are usefully employed in domestic duties. Beds and pillows are of straw. The dietary has not improved. In reality this report is based on 6 men and 14 classed as of unsound mind.¹²⁸

¹²⁵ C. Robertson, 'The care and treatment of the insane poor', *Journal of Mental Science* (1867), p.299.

¹²⁶ Hodgkinson, *The Origins*.

¹²⁷ SS. 21 December 1867.

¹²⁸ TNA. MH12/11205, 21 July 1875.

In 1875, the government began to pay a subsidy to poor law authorities of up to twenty-five per cent of the cost of maintaining pauper lunatics in asylums. This was the first direct involvement by central government for the responsibility of financing social or welfare services. Even this failed to induce unions to send most of their lunatic inmates to asylums, and by the turn of the century most poor law institutions had provided separate wards for lunatics.¹²⁹

This section has identified the pattern of care for the mentally ill firstly within the community to the establishment of mad-houses and to workhouses. It has shown that treatment was mixed and uncertain and with the expansion of county asylums came pressure from central authorities to place lunatics, idiots and imbeciles into these institutions. The demand for accommodation by the mid-1880s became intolerable and in an attempt to resolve the growing issue the government resorted to the return of certain categories of lunatics to workhouses.

Local Workhouse Provision for Lunatics

The numbers accommodated within Wolstanton Union were continually low and therefore an examination of paupers cared for in their own home seeks to establish if numbers were proportionally higher at Wolstanton Union than at Stoke. In 1870, the number cared for in their homes at Wolstanton was five rising to a maximum of eighteen in 1889, the average taken over a period of thirty years was nine. At Stoke numbers ranged from nil in 1870 to sixty in 1885¹³⁰ an average over the same period of forty-one. However, as a comparison the total of lunatics recorded at both unions over the period was almost identical at twenty-five five per cent.¹³¹

The admission and discharge book for the period 1836 to 1838 has survived for Stoke which over a three-year period shows that under the New Poor Law that those with mental

¹²⁹ F. Driver, 'The Historical Geography of the Workhouse System in England and Wales, 1834-1883', *Journal of Historical Geography* (1989), pp.269-86, 276-284.

¹³⁰ This high figure could reflect the LGB changing the policy of reducing the numbers held in asylums because of overcrowding.

¹³¹ Numbers extracted from Parliamentary Lunacy returns.

conditions were classified upon admission. The register shows that there were: Idiots - fourteen, Imbeciles - twelve, Insane - twenty-two.¹³² Census enumerator's returns from 1851 all so classify the mentally ill in terms of idiots or imbeciles and the following tables illustrate that even from the early date of 1851 that there was a considerable diversity of numbers between Stoke and Wolstanton:

Table.6.2 Census returns showing the number of inmates in the workhouse and the number identified as idiots and imbeciles 1851-1901

Year	Inmate	Stoke		Inmates	Wolstanton	
		Idiots	Imbeciles		Idiots	Imbeciles
1851	121	4		156	4	
1871	644	19	7	148	9	5
1881	776	28	30	272	3	10
1891	866	28	12	218	2	8
1901	995	99	41	369	9	0 ¹³³

In 1851 Stoke and Wolstanton contained four idiots each. By 1871 the numbers of paupers at Stoke with mental issues represented four per cent, whereas at Wolstanton it was represented by nine per cent. Thirty years later the balance changed at Stoke to fourteen per cent and at Wolstanton numbers reduced to just two per cent. In an attempt to explain this reversal at Wolstanton the policy was to send this classification to the county asylum to save the expense of individual wards and staffing for such small numbers but Stoke maintained the majority of lunatics. Digby argues that 'idiots were left in the workhouse, while cases of imbeciles became the province of the asylum'.¹³⁴ It could, however, be as Bartlett suggests 'that the county asylum may have been miles away, rendering visits a practical impossibility for many' thus giving cause of retention at Stoke.¹³⁵

Viewing the numbers as a percentage of total inmates the results show that at both unions they were just over 0.03 per cent. However, what was found interesting at Stoke was average age of this classification was forty-nine whereas Wolstanton was twenty-six. This disparity may

¹³² Ibid.

¹³³ Figures extracted from census returns for the years quoted.

¹³⁴ Digby, *Pauper Palaces*, p.37.

¹⁴³ Bartlett, *The Poor Law*, p.45.

be accounted at Stoke by the fact two additional wings recently built for lunatics and therefore able to accommodate those needing long-term accommodation. The eldest person in this classification was eighty-eight years of age suggesting end of life care. At Wolstanton, there was no permanent accommodation for the insane as the eldest was forty years of age. These facts extracted from census returns suggest only temporary pauper accommodation at Wolstanton and the elderly found accommodation in the county asylum. As a comparison from other areas the combined number of those with mental issues found in Leicester Union in 1881 was ten per cent¹³⁶ a similar figure to that of Basford union in Nottinghamshire.¹³⁷ Both are higher than Stoke at seven per cent and Wolstanton at five per cent.

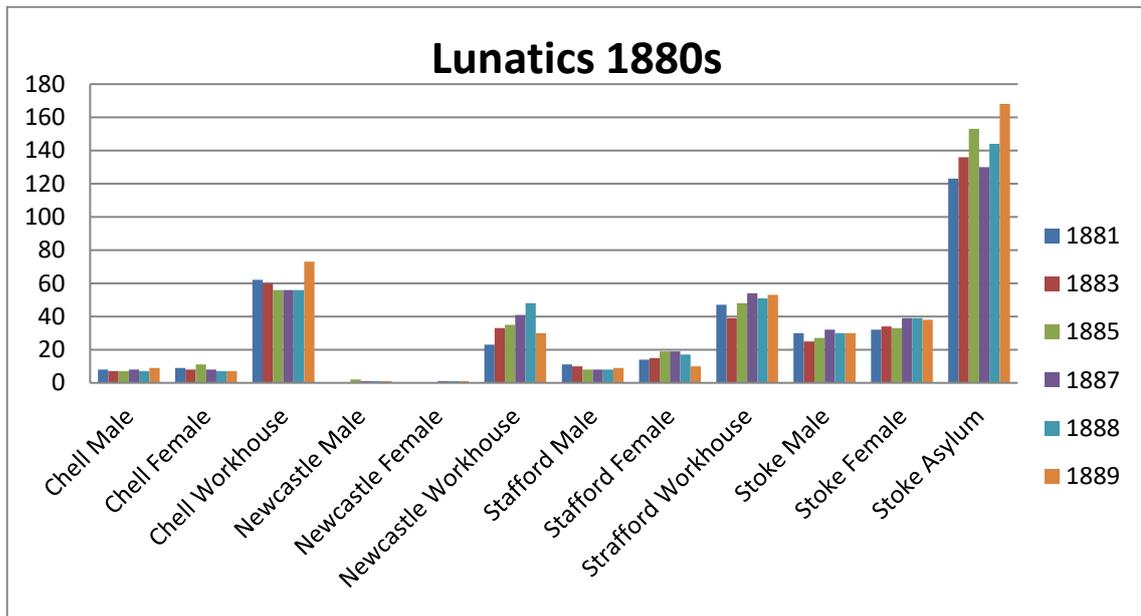
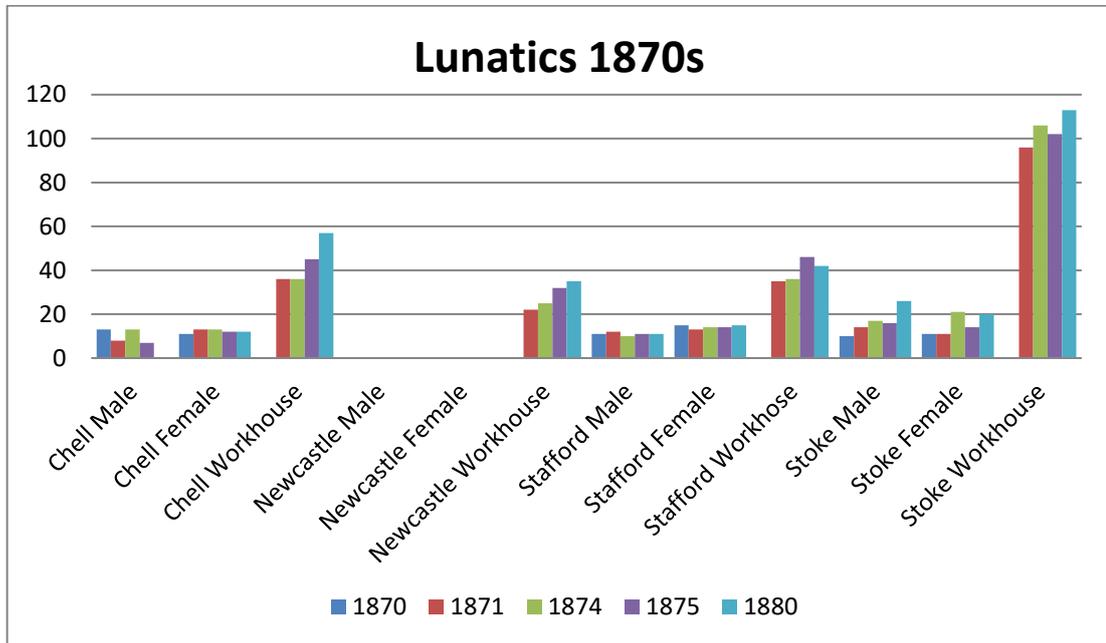
The following three graphs are compiled from parliamentary annual returns and divided into three decades 1870s – 1890s. To place the figures for Stoke and Wolstanton into the broader sub-region context of north Staffordshire those of nearby Newcastle-under-Lyme and a rural workhouse at the county town of Stafford.

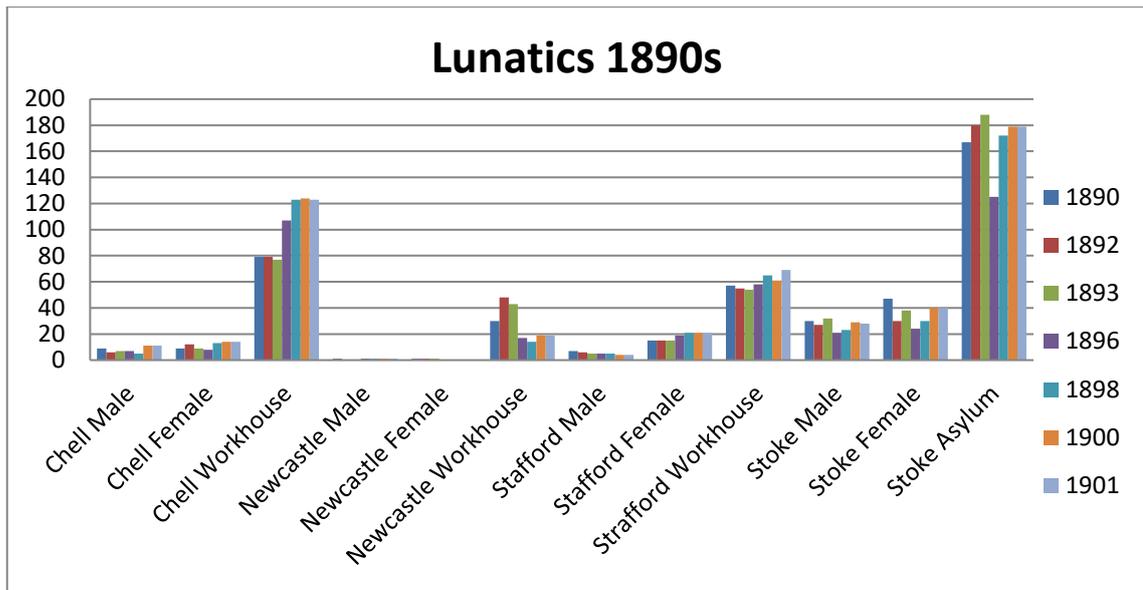
¹³⁶ LRO, G/12/57d/16-55; Nagrine, *Medicine and Poverty*, p.74.

¹³⁷ Ashforth, 'Urban Poor', p.135.

Fig.6.1 Parliamentary returns - statistics

List both Wolstanton and Stoke, placing both in comparison with the neighbouring Unions of Newcastle-under-Lyme and Stafford





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These figures represent the spatial disparity over three decades between rural and urban areas separated by a total distance of fifteen miles. The figures at Wolstanton, for males and females, remain almost equal throughout. The totals for the 1870s, fluctuated between twelve and fourteen, rising in the 1880s to between fourteen and eighteen, and from fifteen and twenty-five in the 1890s. Numbers increased for those admitted to the county asylum from a relatively low average of thirty-five in the 1870s to an average of one hundred and eighteen during the 1890s. However, at nearby Newcastle Union there were no imbeciles recorded during the 1870s, and in the 1880s only one. It would appear that the policy at Newcastle was to place this category directly into the county asylum. Over a thirty-year period, numbers remained low totalling to between twenty-two and forty-nine imbeciles for the entire period.

The figures from the rural workhouse at Stafford suggest a reduction over three decades from a relatively low average of twenty-seven during the 1870s to an average of twenty-three during the 1890s. By contrast, the number placed into the county asylum rose from an average of thirty-one in the 1870s to over double that number in the 1890s, at sixty-six. Again, it would

¹³⁸ Figures extracted from the Parliamentary *Annual Lunacy Reports* for the years quoted.

suggest that Stafford, like Newcastle they were not prepared to maintain lunatic paupers thereby transferring the problem to the county asylum or granting medical out-relief payments.

The last set of figures for Stoke displays a completely different scenario. The average imbecile or lunatic inmates admitted during for the 1870s remain almost gender balanced at sixteen males and fifteen females. By the 1890s the situation had completely changed to twenty-eight males and thirty-six females - double the previous decade. Despite the fact that thirty additional beds had been provided (culminating in two new imbecile blocks in the 1895) numbers still out-weighed available accommodation as the average increased to more than double that which was previously recorded at one hundred and seventy resulting in many being sent to the county asylum. Nevertheless, Stoke retained a significant number of lunatic and imbecile paupers in separate wards for this classification compared with those recorded at Stafford, Wolstanton and Newcastle where they were accommodated within the general inmate wards. The final area of investigation with regards to lunatics reflects the treatment of this classification within the community.

In Summary

Wolstanton maintained a position of referring lunatics to asylums creating considerable hardship to families and friends unable to visit because of distance. Early records show that prior to 1863 accommodation was provided at Stoke in an infirmary built in 1842. By December 1865, Inspector Doyle described the accommodation as 'inadequate' reporting that: 'provision for lunatic inmates not only admits improvement but demands it'.¹³⁹

Despite efforts to improve accommodation it remained a serious issue as a report dated October 1886 expressed concerns as to the care of lunatics suggesting that accommodation was not provided in separate wards but mixed with general pauper inmates. One imbecile was described as 'very dirty and dribbling' while the others were described as 'very feeble and 'few

¹³⁹ TNA. MH12/11470, 21 December 1863.

capable of helping themselves or of any use', then, almost in a casual statement, the report concludes: 'I have no doubt that they are all kindly treated' without providing any quantifiable comment.¹⁴⁰

The pressure for additional accommodation for Stoke lunatics continued as in July 1888 the subject was raised again by an LGB inspector.¹⁴¹ The following year it was reported the situation was so bad at that a number of female lunatics were required to sleep in the general inmate wards.¹⁴² Two years later in 1890 with no reduction in lunatic numbers the guardians contemplated alterations to the existing wards in order to provide further accommodation to which the Inspector concluded that: 'at last the inmate weekly bath is in clean water for each patient.'¹⁴³ This practice was again short-lived, and the final report dated May 1894 referred to a number of complaints that had been previously reported:

That heating be provided for the padded rooms, that an additional attendant is required for both wards and also paid night attendants required and that bathing for each patient should be done in fresh water and that at least one weekly walk to be taken by those capable.'¹⁴⁴

It was shortly after this inspection that the guardians agreed that it would be building two new lunatic blocks on adjacent land yet to be purchased the total investment being estimated at £11,940¹⁴⁵ which opened in June 1894.¹⁴⁶ (Fig.6.5)

At Wolstanton lunatic paupers were accommodated in the same wards as general paupers. The 1851 census return suggest that only four were listed as lunatics so the need to provide separate wards was considered unnecessary.¹⁴⁷ However, in 1863 the guardians wrote to the

¹⁴⁰ Ibid., MH12/11216, 2 October 1886.

¹⁴¹ Ibid., MH12/11487, 13 July 1888.

¹⁴² Ibid., MH12/11489, 11 October 1889.

¹⁴³ HA. Stoke Minute Book, vol.23, 26 January 1890.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid., 30 May 1894. This inspection report was published only two weeks before the opening of the new imbecile wards, and yet the Guardians were instructing that improvements be made, reflecting their commitment to the care of imbeciles.

¹⁴⁵ TNA. MH12/11490, 3 October 1889.

¹⁴⁶ HA. Stoke Minute Book, vol.25, 2 June 1894.

¹⁴⁷ Myers, *Psychiatry in North Staffordshire*, p.67.

county asylum to state that they had provided: 'additional and separate wards for epileptics and other similar cases were provided and the guardians appointed a paid nurse to that department'¹⁴⁸ but the report makes no reference to lunatics. Probably, this action was considered necessary as the county asylum was full and subsequently patients from Wolstanton would have to be accommodated further away at Chester at a far greater cost to the guardians. An inspectors' report of November 1884 stated that there remained inadequate provision at Wolstanton as 'despite under blankets being supplied in the men's wards however patients remained habitually bathed in the same water which shows inconsistency of care'.¹⁴⁹

As a consequence of asylums overcrowding pressure was placed on workhouses and the LGB to issue new guide-lines to unions in 1885 'where possible many pauper lunatics currently in county asylums can be adequately accommodated in workhouses'. Each asylum inmate was assessed as to the severity of lunacy and the names of those who could satisfactorily be returned to union workhouse were listed. Each union was contacted via a *Circular* requesting that the LGB be furnished with their observations.¹⁵⁰ However, despite these pressures from the county asylum for unions to absorb more lunatic inmates the numbers at Wolstanton remained relatively consistent, averaging between twelve and fifteen.

In comparison with Stoke, Wolstanton guardians invested little, providing only the basic necessities required as a report dated April 1900 records: 'That the inspector of lunacy noted that one of the lunacy wards was in need of demolishing.'¹⁵¹ Despite this damning report there were no follow-up actions by the guardians recorded in the minute book. At Stoke reports were noted as satisfactory but the Visiting Committee reflected upon the conditions found in lunatic wards and reported the following drawing attention to cleanliness:

¹⁴⁸ HA. 3505/2/1/op.cit, 3 November 1863.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid., MH12/11483, 18 November 1884.

¹⁵⁰ TNA. MH12/11483, 17 January 1885.

¹⁵¹ SS. 24 April 1900.

It has become necessary to have some active middle-aged woman appointed to maintain order and to enforce personal cleanliness in the various wards, especially among the women.¹⁵²

At the same time the LGB Inspector's report for Stoke for April 1887 implied the opposite:

The dayrooms and dormitories are in very good order, and the patients are neatly dressed and in answer to questions said they were happy and contented. I have every reason to think that the imbecile paupers are treated with great kindness and consideration.¹⁵³

An inspectors report dated March 1896 presents a snapshot of the care found in the new wards:

There are two paid attendants for each ward assisted by some paupers during the day and one attendant at night assisted by one pauper inmate. The bedding is of excellent quality and the wards scrupulously clean and the patients neatly dressed and evidently well cared for. There are good sized rooms including a sitting room and good stores and a kitchen where the meals are provided.¹⁵⁴

A final report dated May 1900 by the LGB inspectors at Stoke presents a portrait of care and homely life for imbecile inmates:

I was quite satisfied with the appearance, dress and contentment of all I saw and gave a favourable impression of care, kindness, and consideration which is bestowed on those who are accommodated in the imbecile wards. The ventilation of the padded rooms is now effective. A few cheap books in a bookcase in each ward would be a valued asset in inmates' leisure time. Easy chairs are provided for the aged and helpless, and a music box and board games are also provided. Pictures are also now placed upon the walls.¹⁵⁵

By the turn of the century, the picture suggests that of domesticity. Not only does it represent a meaningful appraisal of the care attributed to the imbecile inmates but also the comfortable surroundings commenting upon books and pictures that at a small cost make the wards even more appropriate for long-term care.

This section on lunacy has contextualised the available secondary literature to illustrate the dilemma found in society in its attempt to care for lunatics firstly in the home to that of

¹⁵² HA. Stoke Minute Book, vol.22, 2 February 1887.

¹⁵³ TNA. MH12/11485, 28 April 1887.

¹⁵⁴ TNA. MH12/11495, 21 March 1896.

¹⁵⁵ TNA. MH12/11498, 16 May 1900.

enforced segregation within the context of the asylum. Because of the inability to find sufficient accommodation for the increasing numbers diagnosed as lunatics it became necessary to re-assess those in need of secure accommodation and return those who were no longer a danger to themselves or others to local workhouse care. The use of primary material in a coherent way has identified the experiences of the mentally ill within two poor law unions and how guardians approached the subject of lunacy under the 1834 Act and thus providing the evidence that spatial diversity existed within a relatively small area of the west midlands.

The overriding consequences of this section is that while it has assessed contemporary secondary literature of lunacy and highlighted the important factors nationally which illustrate the extraordinary diversity between perspectives and the complexity of the subject it has not addressed the spatial diversity of time and space in an area or a period that is badly under-researched. Examination of primary material has uncovered how diverse the treatment of lunatics can be on a local level, even between two adjacent unions and despite being under the central authority has defined their own policy. These findings therefore significantly endorse the use of micro-studies to the extent of spatial diversity that can exist both within a specific area but also within a defined space.

Mortality

Life-cycle experiences of paupers under poor law welfare has been the theme of this thesis and this final section on mortality completes the life-cycle approach as for many paupers their lives ended within institutionalised care and therefore this summary on mortality justifies its inclusion. To those incarcerated, the major cause of mortality in the workhouse was predominantly a result of epidemics during the nineteenth century such as typhus, typhoid, whooping cough, mumps, scarlet fever and smallpox whereby hundreds if not thousands died annually. Other causes such as over-crowding, poor or non-existent sanitation, lack of clean water and an inadequate diet also contributed to the high mortality.

In the nineteenth century, institutions were usually considered a place of last resort where death tended to be thought of as something that was seen as a natural progression for the elderly.¹⁵⁶ Graham Mooney, viewing post 1837 death certification process argued that ‘differences in diagnostic depth depended partly on socio-demographic characteristics and area of residences within the city, but the immediate spatial context of the death was overwhelmingly vital.’¹⁵⁷ The point that Mooney makes is an area under researched nationally but the diversity of life’s expectancy in the Staffordshire Potteries prompts the need for investigation regarding the spatial context of death as shown the following tables (6.4 – 6.7), where the major cause of death in the potteries was from phthisis.

Death in a workhouse was for countless paupers inevitable as most accepted this fact when they became institutionalised through either: age, sickness or disability. Some contemporaries believe that mortality rates in workhouses were extremely high due to lack of hygiene, sanitation, overcrowding and the difficulties of segregating those infected from the healthy, an issue found in the two unions Stoke and Wolstanton. Ruth Richardson and Brian Hurwitz identified the same noting that ‘a recurring problem of the workhouse treatment was the impossibility of segregating patients with terminal acute, chronic and infectious diseases.

Having no casualty provision, no trained nursing staff, few drugs, and no surgical facilities, workhouses could not adequately cope with acute cases.’¹⁵⁸ Not surprisingly, reports of epidemics in workhouses were common as were high death rates especially with regards to infants.¹⁵⁹ The aged, while exempt from most work requirements, had a particular reason to fear death as it raised the possibility that if they died in the workhouse, their bodies would be turned over to medical schools for dissection as workhouse masters were empowered to do this under

¹⁵⁶ Crowther, *The Workhouse System*, p.57.

¹⁵⁷ Mooney, ‘Diagnosis Spaces.

¹⁵⁸ R. Richardson, B. Hurwitz, ‘Joseph Rogers and the Reform of Workhouse Medicine’, *Institute of Historical Research*, (London University, 1989), p.1508.

¹⁵⁹ J. Boulton, R. Davenport, L. Schwarz ‘These Anti-Chambers of the Grave’, J. Reinartz, L. Schwarz, (eds.), *Medicine in the Workhouse* (Rochester, 2013), p.59.

the terms of the Anatomy Act of 1832.¹⁶⁰

It was in the twentieth century when institutional deaths in Britain reached close to one in five of those dying.¹⁶¹ Margaret Crowther estimated that 11.3 per cent of all Londoners died in workhouses and other poor law institutions and a further 6.9 per cent met their end in the capital's many hospitals and lunatic asylums. By 1906 the percentage of deaths recorded in London's institutions had doubled to 38.3 per cent mostly due to the expansion in institutional medical provision (both in public and poor law infirmaries).¹⁶²

The following statistics for the Stoke and Wolstanton Unions place the average number of deaths from phthisis, and other lung diseases caused by industrial pollution and inadequate housing and appalling living conditions found in the Potteries.¹⁶³

Table.6.3 Average Annual Death-rate per 100,000 from lung disease Wolstanton 1861 – 1871

Wolstanton and Burslem Union – consisting of Burslem, Tunstall, and Wolstanton

Aged 15 – 25		Aged 25 -45		Aged 45 -55		Aged 55 – 65	
Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
1033	1597	2226	2076	5318	1950	8479	4962

An average number of annual deaths 1861-71 per 100,000 over ten years - 27,641 or 2.76 per cent.

Table.6.4 Average Annual Death-rate per 100,000 from lung disease Stoke 1861 – 1871

Stoke-upon-Trent Union - consisting of Hanley, Stoke, Fenton, and Longton

Aged 15 – 25		Aged 25 -45		Aged 45 -55		Aged 55 – 65	
Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
1952	2623	4051	3567	7493	3479	12591	8312

An average number of annual deaths 1861-71 per 100,000 over ten years - 4,066 or 4.4 per cent ¹⁶⁴

These tables represent a period of ten years from 1861-1871 of deaths from lung disease for the unions of Stoke and Wolstanton. The groups are divided by age and gender. The numbers

¹⁶⁰ Brundage, *The English Poor Law*, p.81.

¹⁶¹ Boulton, Davenport, Schwarz 'These Anti-Chambers of the Grave', p.59.

¹⁶² Crowther, *The Workhouse System*, pp. 57-58.

¹⁶³ Phthisis – tuberculosis or better described as consumption. This frequently relates to the quality of housing, cramped living conditions after three generation living in a small two-bedroom house with poor ventilation, damp and little if any heat. Poor diet would also be a contributory factor.

¹⁶⁴ pp. 24th – 39th Registrar *General Annual Reports England (1861-1871)*. Abstracts. Figures compiled from the Annual Reports. These submitted are for the working age of the population 15 to 65 and averaged over the number of years.

reported are phenomenal and further emphasise the poor state of health of the district and the huge spatial disparity found within each age group and gender. The following table represent the number of registered death recorded in Stoke-upon-Trent for the years 1879 to 1899 set within the context of age groups.

Table.6.5 Registered Deaths at Stoke– Annual Numbers by age group

Year	Under 1	1 – 4	5 – 14	15 – 24	25 – 60	Over 60	Total
1879	6	3	1	3	33	42	88
1891	5	10	5	2	68	95	185
1893	3	15	2	10	62	55	147
1897	9	4	4	1	66	53	137
1898	8	12	3	6	80	51	160
1899	10	4	1	3	87	66	171 ¹⁶⁵

The medical conditions prevailing nationally such as typhoid and typhus were reported in Stoke workhouse in 1877. The following year, the town of Stoke-upon-Trent suffered one of its worst years for mortality. The medical office of health in his report of March 1878 referred to diseases such as typhoid, measles, whooping cough and scarlet fever, numbering deaths at five hundred and fifty-nine comprising of three hundred and sixty-five males and two hundred and four females. Out of these ninety-one occurred in Stoke workhouse. The previous year, 1877, the total of deaths was recorded as four hundred and fifty-two. The report lists the causes of local deaths: overcrowding, houses unfit for habitation, polluted water supplies, poor or inadequate sanitation, public nuisances and the want of proper cleanliness.¹⁶⁶

To illustrate the character of this subject and its diversity the figures of the combined deaths in 1878 for Wolstanton Union in the districts of Burslem, Tunstall and Wolstanton numbered nine hundred and sixty-four mostly as a result of epidemics¹⁶⁷ but in 1882 the number of deaths nearly doubled that to one thousand, seven hundred and sixty-nine mainly through the uncontrolled spread of smallpox.¹⁶⁸ Itch was reported in Stoke girl’s school in 1882, and later

¹⁶⁵ TNA. From the years as shown series MH12/. Statistics for other years have not survived.

¹⁶⁶ TNA. MH12/11426, March 1878.

¹⁶⁷ TNA. MH12/11209, The annual reports for Burslem and the rural district of Wolstanton added together.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid., MH12/11213, 11 October 1883.

the same year smallpox, and the year following scarlet fever. A major measles epidemic broke out in the workhouse school where a total of thirty-three cases were reported in July 1886.¹⁶⁹ A nation-wide epidemic of measles reached the Staffordshire Potteries in September 1888 and within the space one month, ninety-two people died in Burslem alone, including fifty children aged five years or under. All public schools were closed and visiting at the workhouse suspended in an attempt to restrict the epidemic further. The Potteries was further hit by a serious epidemic of zymotic diseases in 1891¹⁷⁰ resulting in nine hundred and thirty-five cases (29.3 per cent per 1000) of the population compared with seven hundred and four recorded in the previous year. Numbers recorded at Stoke were significant at one hundred and eighty-five in 1891, occurring mostly in people from the age of twenty-five years upwards.

In 1895, a further epidemic of scarlet fever followed and all workhouse visiting was again suspended in an attempt to control the spread of the disease.¹⁷¹ It was discovered that poor sanitary conditions at Stoke workhouse contributed to fever and diphtheria. In February 1896, fifteen cases of measles were diagnosed at Stoke and again visiting was suspended.¹⁷² The following year chicken-pox was found in the female children's ward¹⁷³ and in January 1889, chicken-pox broke-out the third outbreak in five months, the cause finally traced to the drains which the guardians took note recommending the system be overhauled.¹⁷⁴ This did not prevent further cases being reported ten years later when twelve children were transferred to the isolation hospital at Bucknall¹⁷⁵ followed by two boys three months later with scarlet fever.¹⁷⁶ Other diseases were prevalent including syphilis common amongst the working classes. By

¹⁶⁹ SS. 10 July 1886.

¹⁷⁰ Zymotic Disease – 19th-century term for acute infections such as typhoid, typhus, small-pox, scarlet fever, measles, whooping-cough and diphtheria.

¹⁷¹ HA. Stoke Minute Book, vol.25, 20 February 1895.

¹⁷² Ibid., 15 February 1896.

¹⁷³ Ibid., 29 September 1897.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid., Stoke Minute Book, vol.23, 6 January 1889.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid., 2 February 1899.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid., 26 April 1899.

1897, syphilis became so dominant in its contagious form that the guardians took the initiative to ‘obtain an order under an Act giving power to detain such persons in a workhouse hospital’.¹⁷⁷

Table.6.6 Registered Deaths at Wolstanton – Annual Numbers by age group

Year	Under 1	1 – 4	5 – 14	15 – 24	25 – 60	Over 60	Total
1876	2			2	26	30	56
1878	6	2	1	1	22	36	68
1881	3	2	1	3	14	27	50
1882	5	2	3	2	9	25	45
1883	5	6	3	2	19	33	68
1884	4		1	3	9	35	52
1885	3	5	2	4	19	31	64
1886	3	1		1	21	27	53
1888	2	1		3	17	28	51
1889	4	1	1	2	13	35	56
1891	4	1	2		26	32	65 ¹⁷⁸

Results in themselves do not indicate average annual increases but rather the years of annual killer diseases. Statistics collected by the LGB from 1871-1906 show a steady increase from 5.6 of all deaths recorded in workhouses to 9.7 by 1906. Crowther argues that the increase may be as a result of social change whereby death was being removed from the home to institutions although no evidence has been found locally to confirm this.¹⁷⁹

The Annual reports of the Registrar General provide the number of deaths in each workhouse from 1871-1901 in addition to these the LGB collected statistics of the number who died in situations other than their own homes for the period 1871-1906. In England and Wales 5.6 per cent of the population in 1871 rising to 7.00 per cent in 1881, 7.1 per cent in 1891 and 8.1per cent in 1901. Thus by 1901, 8.1 per cent of all deaths in England and Wales occurred in public institutions a proportion that increased from the year 1871 to 1901 by sixty-nine per cent.¹⁸⁰

¹⁷⁷ TNA. MH12/11224, 11 November 1897.

¹⁷⁸ Figures taken from Annual Returns which also include causes of death for the years quoted. There are no local returns made after 1891.

¹⁷⁹ Crowther, *The Workhouse System*, pp.57-58.

¹⁸⁰ PP. 37th *Annual Report of the Local Government Board* (1909) 4671 ciii, 743.

What has been established is the complexity of statistics. Mooney suggests that the numbers of deaths could almost be chartered to the demographic characteristic of an area. However, the calculations from Stoke and Wolstanton Unions when viewed alongside the numbers from the surrounding areas were attributed to poor sanitation, appalling living conditions, and a lack of clean water all contributing to major annual epidemics of killer diseases. The numbers of deaths relating to lung disease alone categorises the area by the prevalent pottery industry and the pollution it caused which in itself was a death sentence to thousands regardless of which area of the Staffordshire Potteries they lived.

The importance of this section cannot be under estimated as it summarises the obstacles to life that had to be overcome to survive during the nineteenth century. Those living in an enclosed environment such as workhouses were not excluded from the advances of infectious diseases rather the opposite and the necessary data provided statistics that illustrate the severity by the numbers involved.

Conclusion.

This chapter consists of a broad complex subject of medical experiences found under the poor law. It has concluded that little was known about the theme of this study in terms of secondary literature, and yet the experiences of paupers are fundamental to this study of health within the workhouse. Furthermore, the lack of detailed examination of the poor law in the west Midlands and even less regarding the Staffordshire Potteries or for the period in these terms has shown that nothing at all is known about diversity of practice in contiguous unions.

What has been determined is that the pauper experience of medical care between Stoke and Wolstanton Unions could not be more diverse. Accommodation for the sick was a constant concern to the guardians at Stoke for as soon as additional wards were built it was only a short time before these became inadequate for the growing number of sick inmates and the poor seeking medical care. The most striking difference between the two unions was the complacent

attitude of the guardians towards general medical care and staffing found at Wolstanton in comparison with that found at Stoke. In the first instance, both unions used inmates in the role of nurses to assist in the care of other paupers, a practice that continued until the 1870s at Stoke but lasted until the 1880s at Wolstanton. The appointment of nurses was also an area of unease as numerous inappropriate appointments were made at Wolstanton emphasising the fact guardians were operating under their own agendas with total disregard to concerns expressed by the LGB, or to the inmates.

As demands for medical care increased Stoke took the initiative and employed suitably trained nurses and in 1892 undertook the training of probationary nurses followed by a structure of administration with the appointment of a superintendent and charge nurse. Certification of trained nurses followed thereby providing conclusive evidence as to why Stoke workhouse was chosen in 1901 to become a training hospital. At Wolstanton trained nurses were not employed until after 1883. These examples identify spatial diversity in the welfare of sick inmates which thereby affected the standard of medical care to patients throughout the period under discussion.

In 1870 Stoke and Wolstanton workhouses already had an established track-record of spatial disparity in their provision for the care of lunatics. Evidence indicates the increasing numbers of patients at Stoke and whilst they were accommodated in separate wards, Wolstanton failed to recognise the importance of this and placed lunatics in general inmate wards. Despite regular visits from the LGB inspector's guardians failed to implement recommendations or national *Circulars* for the care of lunatics leaving guardians the freedom to set their own agendas.

Wolstanton took the early decision to limit their responsibility of care of lunatics by sending them to asylums whereas at Stoke guardians were conscious of the need for local care and increased accommodation to meet demand. Arguably this may have been to retain lunatics and the feeble minded near to relatives on compassionate grounds but realistically may have

been done to reduce the cost of asylum care. Evidence shows that Wolstanton only catered for the short-term care of lunatic inmates as opposed to Stoke where the guardians provided for long term.

Finally, it was small gestures of care over such items of artificial legs were supplied to enable people to return to work that sets Stoke apart from Wolstanton. On other occasions, those who were ill were sent to various convalescent homes or brine baths. Despite the difficulties experienced by inmates with health issues at Stoke, it has been shown they did receive some consideration both in facilities, medical care and a better quality of nursing than that offered at Wolstanton.

What has been established is the investigation into the experiences of inmates over the last three chapters in areas of classification, vagrancy, religion and medical care, show how diverse the subjects can be. The following two chapters move to specific periods of the life-cycle of inmates, that of children and the final chapter on the experiences of the institutionalised elderly.

Fig.6.2 Stoke-upon-Trent Parish Hospital built 1842



Fig.6.3 1842 Parish Hospital – now listed English Heritage Grade II



Fig.6.4 New Hospital at Stoke workhouse 1886



Fig.6.5 Male Lunacy Ward built 1894



Fig.6.6 Stoke Burial Ground off the A34 opposite the workhouse



**Fig.6.7 Excavations of paupers remains in 1967 during road widening on the former
Stoke Workhouse Burial Ground**



Chapter 7 - Education, Care and Wellbeing of Children

Overview

As chapter one has suggested, the collective literature for the history of nineteenth century childhood is extensive, but that regarding pauper children has been rather less developed.¹ Apart from Crompton's major contribution, there is little secondary literature detailing the daily routine in the life of a child found within a poor law institution in general or of the North Midlands in particular.

Life for the family under the New Poor Law was a constant changing experience from the day of admission for when a family entered the workhouse parents ceased to be responsible for the physical condition, education and moral welfare of their children. As Rees notes, once admitted children the responsibility of their parents:

Entering the workhouse meant in reality that a pauper child's parents relinquished responsibility for their children. Unlike their able-bodied parents, children could not be held responsible for their own poverty. On the other hand, they were paupers and their situation, under the less eligibility rule, could not be made better than those of poor children outside the workhouse.²

Driver states that the first element on official policy towards indoor pauper children under the 1834 Act was made in 1838 by the publication of two reports by James Kay in which the emphasis was based upon a different approach to the treatment of pauper children than on adults:³

This class above all others, deserved more than deterrence since children were pauperised, not as a consequence of their errors, but of their misfortune. The logic of less eligibility could not therefore, apply directly to them. What is required was a programme of education, which is one of the most important means of eradicating the germs of pauperism from rising generations.⁴

¹ P. Horn, *Children's Work and Welfare 1788-1880s* (London, 1994); H. Hendrick, *Children, Childhood and English Society 1880-1900* (Cambridge, 1997); J. Humphries, *Childhood and Child Labour in the British Industrial Revolution* (Cambridge, 2010); P. Kirby, *Child Labour in Britain* (London, 2001); U.Q.R. Henriques, *Before the Welfare State* (London, 1979); F. Crompton, *Workhouse Children* (Stroud, 1997).

² R. Rees, *Poverty and Public Health 1815-1948* (London, 2001), p.55.

³ F. Driver, *Power and Pauperism, the Workhouse System 1834-1883* (Cambridge, 1992), p.96.

⁴ PP. *4th Annual Report of the Poor Law Commissioners* (1838), p.140.

To place this report by Kay into context the Poor Law Commission Annual report 1835 paints a desperate picture of life within the workhouse, both in general terms, and of children in particular. One section of the report singles out the conditions found at Ewhurst workhouse:

Every visit confirms the necessity of interference by the powerful arm of the new law. Reform is required in systems and habits which are a disgrace to civilisation and humanity and is a sad example of the evil and misery which flows from neglect. In the day-room, I found a group of children sitting in idleness, or instructed in either moral or useful duties. One of the bedrooms for old men and women was affected with a certain loathsome disease. Another room had three girls there, a further appropriated for the reception of young women several boys and girls. In another room a violent female lunatic tied to a chair hurling obscene abuse to all. In a low dark room which was hot to suffocation, I found eight beds closely packed together in which one was sitting a lame pauper inhaling as much air as the small aperture would allow. In another bed was stretched out a poor wretched man in the last stages of consumption, emaciated and exhausted by disease but having his suffering aggravated ten-fold by the hot and pestiferous atmosphere.⁵

The following year, the Poor Law Commissioners report issued guidelines and the responsibilities of guardians towards children placed in their care:

Towards the children who have lost their natural guardians. The workhouse guardians will have them instructed in reading, writing and the principles of the Christian religion and must impart other instruction to them as may be calculated to train them to habits of useful industry and virtue. To this end, education in some trade or art is desirable, and the Boards of Guardians should, to this extent provide for the employment of the children.⁶

To what extent guardians implemented the PLC recommendations is open to debate. Driver points to the fact that little was implemented as suggested by a school inspector following his visit to Huddersfield Workhouse in 1847:

That the teacher is a pauper who cannot spell and is obviously incompetent. Two children only could read the New Testament. None could read the first commandment. No one knew the name of the Queen.⁷

The classification of the young was paramount. The need for separate accommodation from adults was a priority to prevent moral contamination. Boys were to be separated from men to protect them from bad language, card-playing, drinking and bad behaviour even idleness.

⁵ PP. *1st Annual Report of the Poor Law Commission* (1835), p. 21.

⁶ PP. *2nd Annual Report of the poor Law Commission* (1836), p.101.

⁷ Driver, *Power and Pauperism*, p.147.

The same applied to girls, but with the added need for them to be separated from prostitutes as Crompton describes:

The presence of unchaste women, such as prostitutes, in the workhouse, would have meant that girls of thirteen years of age or less, in general, wards, would be liable to contamination by these undesirables. Clearly keeping pubescent girls apart from such women was thought essential.⁸

Pamela Horn presents the case for girls citing Liverpool workhouses:

There are allegations of moral contamination in the bigger institutions with girls from Liverpool drifting into prostitution. The pupils lacked any practical awareness, and the absence of a normal domestic family meant that females, in particular, were poorly prepared either for employment in service or for the duties they would have to undertake as wives or mothers.⁹

Murray-Brown took on a different view claiming that the proximity of children with adults was not an issue as described by Pamela Horn:

The geological proximity of the children to adult paupers is an objection which has been much exaggerated. Children do not catch pauperism as they catch measles, by passing someone on the stairs.¹⁰

Life for Children Outside Institutional Care

To place into context children's experiences of welfare under the New Poor Law it is important to compare the experience of a child in the workhouse to that of a child's experience living outside of the poor law. This life was frequently viewed in terms of a child's value where their earnings would help to maintain the family unit thereby avoiding being driven by starvation into the workhouse.

Many families living in poverty managed to survive outside of the care of the poor law by sending out their children to work from an early age to provide a little extra money each week. Jane Humphries poses the question as to whether this children's work was a means to survival, and if so, how it related to the household economy, or was it considered a training step

⁸ Crompton, *Workhouse Children*, p.38.

⁹ Horn, *Children's Work*, p.72.

¹⁰ T. Murray-Brown, 'The Education and Future of Workhouse Children', *Poor Law Conference* (London, 1883), pp.97-8.

on a career ladder or even an escape into a new adventure?¹¹ The issue is also taken up by Kirby who argues that poverty was the reason for child labour and that: ‘during the fluctuations of trade the income of a child could make a difference to the survival of a family’.¹² Kirby also recognises that children, by necessity, would commence work from an early age to the benefit of the house-hold if the mother was a widowed or deserted or if the family was on outdoor relief because of sickness.¹³ Humphries adds to the debate about the demand for children workers noting: ‘that some tasks are more suited to children than adults or, as within many industries, a child would cost far less than an adult in wages’.¹⁴ Evidence to support the argument of Humphries can be found within two Government reports. The first was compiled by Mr. Samuel Scriven, a government inspector published in 1843.¹⁵ A second was compiled by Mr. F.D. Longe as part of the Children’s Employment Commission of 1862.

In 1843, the Scriven report argued that ‘whilst children attended work during the week, the only education received was via Sunday Schools.’ The number of children attending these in the Stoke Union was recorded as nine thousand, five hundred and ninety-nine and in the Wolstanton and Burslem Union eight thousand, three hundred and thirty-five.¹⁶ Dupree argues that by 1871, following the implementation of the 1860 Factory Act there was a reduction of children in the Staffordshire Potteries employed by five per cent suggesting that because of the Act, more children attended education.¹⁷

¹¹ Humphries, *Childhood*, p.1.

¹² Kirby, *Child Labour*, p.31.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p.28.

¹⁴ Humphries, *Childhood*, p.13.

¹⁵ PP. *Children’s Employment Commission. Second Report of the Commissioners (1843)*. Trades and Manufactories. Commissioner Mr. S. Scriven.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ M. Dupree, *Family Structure in the Staffordshire Potteries* (Oxford, 1995), p.266-267.

Scriven records the extensive use of children in the pottery industry in some cases from the age of six working long hours in appalling conditions.¹⁸ The same applies to children working in the mines from the age of seven or eight pulling wagons below ground. His report also states that children were unable to read or write leaving home at 5.30 a.m. to return at 6.30 p.m. six days a week for a weekly wage at fourteen years of ten shillings.¹⁹ The Longe report of 1862 compiled twenty years later notes: ‘There seems to be no improvement as to the age at which children are employed since Mr. Scriven’s inquiry in 1841.’²⁰ Longe estimated that the number of children employed in the pottery industry numbered six thousand, five hundred.²¹ Horn states that in the 1860s children below fifteen years of age in the Staffordshire Potteries constituted of one-fifth of the workforce. Boys commenced work as young as eight whereas girls commenced from the age of ten or eleven.²²

This brief account of children’s experiences outside of the poor law acts as a forerunner to what follows in this chapter set within the context of a micro-study. It will therefore seek relevant evidence to show that for some children the experience of workhouse life provided a better education and employment prospects of upon leaving. In addition, this study focuses on a little known and under researched period 1871-1901.

As there is only limited secondary literature available, primary evidence will be used to under-pin this micro-study.²³ In many ways, the treatment of children stands at the totemic core

¹⁸ PP. *Children’s Employment Commission. Second Report of the Commissioners* (1843). Trades and Manufactories. Commissioner Mr. S. Scriven. Scriven lists interviews from children of their working hours and conditions of work to substantiate his conclusions.

¹⁹ PP. *Children’s Employment Commission, First Report of the Commissioners. Mines* (1842), p.10 cites to boys John Maddox and John Bennett, both aged 14 years and having worked in the mines for five years.

²⁰ PP. *Children’s Employment Commission, First Report of Commissioners* (1862), p.2. Commissioner Mr. F.D. Longe.

²¹ *Ibid.*, Mr. Longe continues to report on the hour of work and the occupations that children were employed to do. Like that of Scriven, his report is justified by the evidence directly collected from children employed.

²² Horn, *Children’s Work*, p.47.

²³ Parliamentary Reports, LGM correspondence files and Stoke and Wolstanton Union minute books.

of our understanding of the latter decades of the New Poor Law, life-cycle experiences and welfare to reflect upon the importance of local variation in policy.

The structure of this chapter is divided into sub-sections. Firstly, the number of children in both unions will be contextualised as this influence the policy of administration. Secondly, the plight of the young who were employed in industry to subsidise the family income is evaluated in the context of children who were institutionalised. Thirdly, the importance of education is assessed for the quality of teaching, attainment and suitable industrial training that provided greater opportunities when leaving the workhouse. Fourthly, the exposure of children to cultural activities - music, concerts, sports where it is important to explore if each union included these areas of children's experiences. Fifthly, that of children's experiences outside of the workhouse such as outings, swimming, theatre, visits to circuses will be evaluated within the context of spatial variations. Lastly, the chapter will investigate the emigration of young children to the former British Colonies, an area which forms little in poor law literature and even less about the period or the lives of children themselves. It is these sub-sections that will give voices to previously unheard pauper children.

Workhouse Population of Children

The use of the 1881 census for the North Staffordshire area indicates the percentage of children in workhouses as a proportion of the total inmate population:

Stafford	24 per cent
Uttoxeter	26 per cent
Newcastle	33 per cent
Stoke	31 per cent
Wolstanton	36 per cent

The comparisons range from twenty-four per cent in the rural south to thirty-six per cent for the industrial north. There was a total of sixty-seven children at Stafford, thirty-five girls

and thirty-two boys. As a percentage of the total workhouse population the gender balance is represented by twelve per cent girls and eleven per cent boys. At Uttoxeter, a smaller workhouse than Stafford the percentage for girls was eleven per cent and boys fifteen per cent. At Newcastle, nearly one mile distant from Stoke girls represented nineteen per cent and boys fourteen per cent. At Stoke girls represented twelve per cent and boys eighteen per cent whereas at Wolstanton girls represented fourteen per cent and boys twenty-two per cent.

The conclusion is that the differences reflect upon the socio-economic environment and the types of employment available for children found in the urban and rural communities. Stoke and Wolstanton were industrialised and therefore vulnerable to trade depressions which would increase the number of pauper inmates.

To place the two unions, Stoke and Wolstanton into perspective further census returns highlight the number of children resident in the workhouses and in addition statistics from other unions will be used to expand the analysis. The age group is from four years to sixteen years at which age the young person would be leaving the workhouse to find their own way in the world.

Table.7.1 Number of child paupers of school age between the ages of 4-16 at Stoke and Wolstanton Unions

Stoke	Wolstanton
1851 - 43	43
1871 - 258	49
1881 - 270	105
1891 - 215	55
1901 - 167	43 ²⁴

These figures show significant variations between the two workhouses across the census periods. At Stoke, the average over a fifty-year period was one hundred and ninety. At Wolstanton it was fifty-nine emphasising the huge disparity. Government annual inspection

²⁴ Figures taken from the census returns of the years listed.

reports give further breakdowns of average numbers of children within each workhouse over six months' periods. As census returns are only an accurate statistic for one day every ten years the following graphs have been compiled with the use of annual reports based upon the average attendance at workhouse schools of children over a period of six months ending Lady Day each year to give a more accurate perspective.

Fig.7.1 The numbers of children by gender attending Stoke workhouse 1851-1875

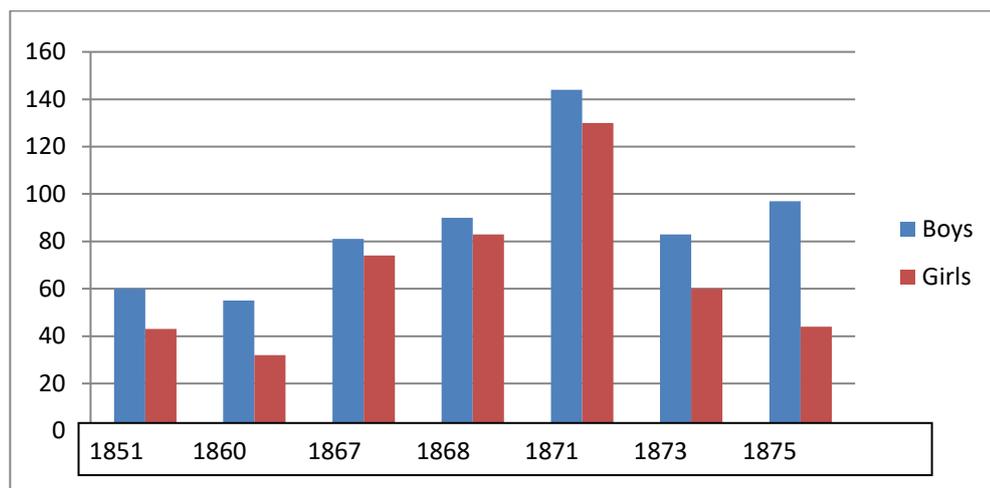
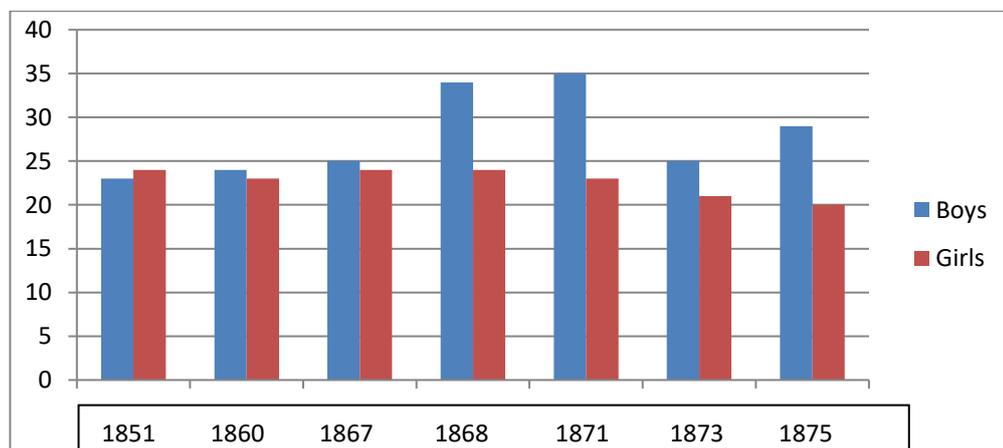


Fig.7.2 The numbers of children by gender attending Wolstanton workhouse 1851-1875



These graphs suggest that workhouses were home to a greater number of boys than girls apart from Wolstanton in 1851. Apart from 1868 and 1871 and to some extent 1875 the range for both genders remain almost constant. Only two years show any similarity 1868 and 1873 at Stoke the highest number at over one hundred and forty boys, whereby numbers for the other

years vary considerably. For girls, there was little variation in numbers.²⁵ In summary the striking difference between the two workhouses was that over a period of twenty-four years (1851-1875) the population of children in the workhouse at Stoke increased by sixty-one per cent for boys and no increase for girls whereas at Wolstanton boys increased by one per cent and girls eight per cent. However, this may be accounted for by the fact that the new large school was built on the assumption that it would serve as a district school for children from other unions. Although Wolstanton first considered this proposal and then withdrew, West Bromwich Union took advantage which thereby increased the number of children in proportion against those of Wolstanton.

Education

The 1834 Poor Law report made little reference to the education of inmate children and secondary literature only provides little that may identify the educational experience of children in 1834. The guidelines and policy of the PLC were thus established, children in the workhouse were to be given an education for boys to sixteen years of age and for girls to eighteen who were to be taught the benefit of industry and virtue noting that this would inevitably help in finding employment and prevent their return to the workhouse as adult paupers.

Many of the assistant poor law commissioners had been selected because of their adherence to the utilitarian principles of the New Poor Law. One of the workhouse inspectors, Edward Gulson, argued in favour of giving advantages to pauper children identified by the Act because, 'that evil is very much less than the evil of allowing children to be bought up in such a way that they must remain paupers'.²⁶ The workhouse was, per contemporary opinion, sufficient and satisfactory in its educational provision because pauper children were taught to

²⁵ Numbers extract for *Annual Reports* of the PLB and the LGB for the years quoted. Six months prior to Lady Day would be for the winter months – September to March suggesting that attendance would be higher in the winter than the summer.

²⁶ PP. *Poor Law Commission Select Committee on the Education of the Poorer Classes* (1837-38), p.202, xviii/Part 1. Question 992.

read and generally to write. In many cases, they were taught a little ciphering and the girls taught to knit and sew, thereby offering a variety of employment opportunities.

In 1838, the PLC adopted a timetable for workhouse children in an attempt to regularise the daily routine and to ensure that their care combined a strictly balanced programme of education incorporating religious worship, education and exercise.²⁷ Although these were national guidelines, guardians were free to decide for themselves whether or not they were to be implemented suggesting that Poor Law administration, even of children, remained grounded in parochialism whereby guardians maintained their position of governance as under the Old Poor Law. It was not until a report of 1841 that confirmed that children were being accommodated separately for teaching and sleeping:

The room for girls, five girl's sleep five to a bed and sixty children sleep in a room of only five hundred and fifty square feet whereas the boy's bedroom measuring 22 feet x 25 feet provides accommodation for sixty-five boys. The boy's schoolroom is by far too much crowded and the girl's measuring 33 feet x 10 feet contains sixty-three scholars.²⁸

Because of the inspector's report and under pressure from the PLC the guardians at Stoke decided to build a new school with accommodation in 1842 increasing the total capacity of the workhouse from three hundred and twenty to five hundred. (Fig.6.3 and Fig.6.4) In 1865, accommodation for children was again described as 'inadequate' and therefore, a further new school was opened in 1866.²⁹ The building combined boys and girls with infants to provide accommodation for four-hundred children. Teaching rooms were situated on the ground floor, dormitories on the first, separated by apartments for the teaching staff.³⁰ The PLB refer to the new school at Stoke in their report of 1869-70:

Stoke have recently erected a handsome school, furnished with every appliance for the education and training of children. The instruction imparted in the school is excellent,

²⁷ Ibid., p.161 xviii, Part 1.6 and 7 Report. Question 2529.

²⁸ Ibid., MH12/11460, 18 April 1842.

²⁹ TNA. MH12/11467, 29 June 1866.

³⁰ HA. *Woolly's Almanac*, 1902.

and at the same time commendation may be given to the industrial training.³¹ (Fig.6.5 and Fig.6.6)

This programme for workhouse children was not implemented by the guardians of Stoke until 1845 nearly ten years after it was suggested by the PLB.

Table.7.2 Timetable to be adopted for the schools at Stoke.

Boy's timetable

1. Rise in the summer at 6 a.m.
2. Washing and prayers by the governor
3. Breakfast by 7 a.m.
4. Play until 8 a.m.
5. Wash and clean for walk.
6. Walk for 1½ hours or if the weather is bad, have singing or the master to examine or read to the boys.
7. 9:30 to 10:30 a.m. – writing
8. 10:30 to 11 a.m. written arithmetic
9. 11 a.m. to 12-noon reading and spelling
10. Wash and dine at half past to 1 p.m.
11. 1 hour play
12. 2 until 3 p.m. reading and spelling
13. 3 until 4 p.m. mental arithmetic
14. 4 until 5 p.m. geography and singing
15. 5 until 5:30 p.m. tea
16. 6 p.m. more play
17. Before 7 p.m. the boys and girls with master mistresses assemble. The master reads and explains the prayers. All sing.
18. 7:30 p.m. off to bed

Girl's timetable.

1. Rise at 6 a.m.
2. Wash before prayers
3. Prayers between 6 and 7 a.m.
4. Breakfast 7 a.m.
5. Time for play while Mistress has breakfast with her family.
6. Prepare for walk 8-9 a.m. or half-past depending upon the weather.
7. Reading and spelling until 10 a.m.
8. 10 a.m. to 12 noon, sewing, knitting and mending.
9. Dinnertime 12:30 p.m. to 1 p.m.
10. Until 2 p.m. play

³¹ PP. 22nd Annual Report of the Poor Law Board (1869-70), pp.121-2.

11. 2 p.m. until 3 p.m. spelling and reading
12. 3 p.m. until 4 p.m. writing and domestic accounts.
13. 4 until 5 p.m. geography and singing
14. 5 until 5:30 p.m. tea
15. 6 p.m. more play
16. Before 7 p.m. the boys and girls with master mistresses assemble. The master reads and explains the prayers. All sing.
17. 7:30 p.m. off to bed ³²

The strict adherence to time; the importance of regular exercise by morning walks for both boys and girls; the necessity of a morning and an evening act of worship involving the master as their father figure maintained the authoritarian daily programme. Whilst boys studied mental arithmetic, singing, and geography and spent their time learning a trade, girls focused upon mending, knitting and domestic accounts in preparation for an anticipated future occupation as domestic servants. Initially children in small workhouses were taught by paupers since the schools were too small in numbers to justify qualified teachers and guardians reluctant to pay salaries.³³

Few workhouse schools had more than fifty pupils therefore the school at Stoke was an exception with an average of one hundred and ninety children but at Wolstanton they averaged only fifty-nine. Initially Poor Law Commissioners set no yardstick for assessing the ability of teachers, taking a long-term view that higher salaries for better qualified teachers would ultimately be justified providing better opportunities for children to gain employment and thereby a reduction in future pauperism.³⁴

With the establishment of an inspectorate from 1846,³⁵ education and teaching levels improved and in 1880 a central fund to pay the salaries of teachers was established. A state certification was introduced whereby teachers' pay became determined by a certificate being

³² TNA. MH12/11461, 18th August 1845.

³³ B.C. Broomfield, (ed.) 'The Autobiography of Sir. James Kay-Shuttleworth', *Education Libraries Bulletin* (1964), pp26-28. Workhouse schools continued to be taught by paupers until Russell adopting a proposal of Peel, provided £30,000 in the Poor Law estimates of 1846 for workhouse teacher's pay.

³⁴ D. Fraser, *The New Poor Law in the Nineteenth Century* (London, 1981), p.69.

³⁵ A. Digby, *Pauper Palaces* (London, 1978), p.188.

awarded based upon a formula which included quality of teaching, examination of children and the average number of children in the class.³⁶ This policy assured national uniformity and thereby no longer dependent upon guardians and consequently good teachers were guaranteed a reasonable salary.³⁷

Frank Crompton cites Kidderminster Union as one of the most active regarding education catering for a high number of inmate children but he uses the description of attendance as a means of filling time and not that of learning.³⁸ This was not however a general perception and an opposing argument by James Kay who was initially active in administering the New Poor Law who argues as early as 1838 that he wanted:

To combine sound religious education with a careful industrial training, and such an amount of secular instruction, as shall invigorate the children, and thereby increase their chances of maintaining themselves in life after the workhouse.³⁹

Kay's interpretation reflects the line of the Poor Law Commission in 1836 insisting that education was fundamental to children:

Impart such instruction in education, trade or art that was desirable to increase habits of usefulness, industry and virtue. To this end education is desirable and necessary to provide employment of the children.⁴⁰

Although the final paragraph stressed its importance in general terms and detailed evidence was appended to the report was much more informative.⁴¹ It noted that in many parishes there was a total lack of provision for education or that of an inadequate standard. The *Second Annual Report* of the Poor Law Commission presents a mixed picture but this time referred to the importance of education stating:

³⁶ Ibid., p.74. As a direct result of educational improvements of paupers, the pressure on the establishment of District Schools that the advantages of such soon appeared less decisive.

³⁷ Kirby, *Child Labour*, p.111.

³⁸ Compton, *Workhouse Children*, p.148. There is no evidence found at either Stoke or Wolstanton workhouses which subscribe to Compton's assertion.

³⁹ PP. Poor Law Commission Select Committee on the *Education of the Poorer Classes* (1837-38). pp. 202, xviii/Part 1. Question 124.

⁴⁰ PP. *2nd Annual Report of the poor Law Commission* (1836), p.101.

⁴¹ PP. *1st Annual Report of the Poor Law Commission* (1835), p.98.

Towards those children who have lost their natural guardians, the union has to fill the place of guardian; and besides instructing them in reading, writing and the principles of the Christian religion, must impart such other instruction to them as may be ‘calculated to train them to habits of usefulness, industry and virtue’.

To this end, education in some trade or art is desirable, and the Boards of Guardians should, to the extent to which this may be necessary, provide for the employment of the children.⁴²

Following these changes, Crompton makes observations that reflect on what it was like to teach within the workhouse:

Teachers were virtually incarcerated in a closed institution and causing them to become institutionalised and tainted by association with the workhouse so that these posts remained an unattractive prospect. It appeared that once appointed to workhouse, a school teacher remained in the pool education system with little chance of promotion. The vast majority of schoolmasters left for other occupations, while many school mistresses married and left the teaching profession.

Further demands by guardians inhibited applicants for positions. These included that a high moral standard was expected of applicants, because a school teacher was expected to counterbalance the insidious adverse influence of the workhouse on pauper children. The result of all this, together with the low salary offered and the unattractive nature of the work and living conditions, was that few suitable applicants came forward.⁴³

Staff and teaching assessments are not available prior to 1871 only inspectors’ reports having survived. Other assessments are not continuous as the system of recording changed after 1876 and, therefore statistical information is not uniform. An inspection in April 1870 presents a snapshot of the standard of teaching. It was brief, as they all were, but sufficient to indicate the standard:

In January 1870, I inspected the schools. The children in both schools passed a very fair examination. The girls in the first class; read, write and spell well but their arithmetic should be more accurate.⁴⁴

⁴² PP. 2nd Annual Report of the Poor Law Commission (1836), Appendix, p.308.

⁴³ Crompton, *Workhouse Children*, p.142.

⁴⁴ TNA. MH12/11469, 1 April 1870.

In the same year reports were compiled alongside that of examination results for the following subjects: religious knowledge; reading; spelling; penmanship; arithmetic and geography, together with the number of pupils. The results are tabulated separating boys and girls. This procedure existed between the years 1870 and 1878 during which time nine inspections were carried out. Marking was by a sliding scale, fair, very fair, medium, good and very good. (Fig.7.7 and Fig.6.8)

Table.7.3 Collective results of examinations from 1870 – 1878

R. Knowledge	boys: 100% good	girls: 89% good 11% fair
Reading	boys: 89% good 11% very fair	girls: 66% good 34% very fair
Spelling	boys: 89% good 11% very fair	girls: 78% good 22% very fair
Penmanship	boys: 100% good	girls: 78% good 22% very fair
Arithmetic	boys: 78% good 12% very fair	girls: 11% v.good 55% good 33% fair
Geography	boys: 11% good 89% fair	girls: 11% good 89% fair.

These results represent a good standard for core subjects of reading, spelling, writing and arithmetic with an average of eighty-nine per cent pass for boys but lower for girls at an average of seventy-two per cent.⁴⁵

In 1872, six standards of education⁴⁶ were incorporated in the *Revised Code of Regulations*.⁴⁷ They were assessed in three basic subjects known then, and are still referred to, as the three ‘Rs’, reading, writing and arithmetic. Standard 1, was the lowest standard with relatively simple tasks, Standard 6 was the highest and achieved by the accomplishment in reading – ‘read with fluency and expression’; writing – ‘writing a short ordinary paragraph from a newspaper slowly dictated once by a few words at a time’ and lastly arithmetic – ‘being able to deal with proportion and fractions’ (vulgar and decimal).

Although this *Revised Code* was introduced in 1873 there is no evidence of its implementation locally until 1887. Until that date the system of recording assessments was via

⁴⁵ Ibid. Extracted from Annual LGB School Inspectors reports 1870-1878, MH12/11469-11476

⁴⁶ Standards were assessed on pupil’s achievements and adjudicated by an inspector of schools who judged pupils between Standard 1 and Standard 6.

⁴⁷ An Act to amend the law relating to education, 17 December 1872 by an inspector.

a simple, repetitive sentence noted within an inspector's report. The following entries for Stoke provide examples:

10 March 1881 – I have inspected the school which is very satisfactory. The children are well taught and as efficient as can be expected.⁴⁸

7 February 1883 - I have inspected the school. The boys are well taught and have passed a very good examination.⁴⁹

23 February 1887 - I have inspected the school. The boys and girls are well taught and have passed a good examination.⁵⁰

23 February 1889 – I have inspected the school. The girls are well taught and have passed a good examination.⁵¹

From the evidence available it could be assumed that LGB Inspectors were apathetic in their responses and negligent in ensuring that the best education was provided. These minimal reports failed to present an accurate assessment of achievements and misinformed the Board as to the state of education in workhouse schools and, moreover, there was no attempt to offer advice to improve standards in accordance with LGB policy.

Inspectors' reports show that the level of education at workhouse schools was maintained throughout the 1880s. Only three of the standard pupils reports have survived from 1896 until 1898, the last year of the schools held at the workhouse.⁵² In comparison to previous reports the standard of education, when analysed, does not appear as high as presented by LGB Inspectors on previous occasions suggesting a decline in achievements.⁵³ In defence of teachers it should be remembered that workhouse schools were subjected to a wide range of issues that affected academic results such as the unattractive nature of workhouse school and teachers' duties aptly referred to as 'really full time attendants'.⁵⁴ Pupils invariably came from poor

⁴⁸ TNA. MH12/11479, 10 March 1881.

⁴⁹ Ibid., MH12/11482, 7 February 1883.

⁵⁰ Ibid., MH12/11487, 23 February 1887.

⁵¹ Ibid., MH12/11488, 23 May 1886.

⁵² The following year children were transferred to a number of District Board Schools.

⁵³ A tabulated list of results by year and standard are found in Appendices, p.321.

⁵⁴ M.A. Crowther, *The Workhouse System, 1834-1929: the History of an English Social Institution* (London, 1981), p.38.

families with no previous education and frequently placed into a workhouse for short periods for various reasons: father unemployed seeking work, mother ill or unable to cope with large families or during the later stages of pregnancy. For such children, there was no continuity in education and in many cases children were unable to read or write upon admission.

The overall picture found over a period of three years shows that no single pupil reached a one per cent pass of Standard VI, (the highest) whereas sixty-one per cent failed to reach Standard III. In addition to poor academic achievements class sizes had reduced during the 1880s as a result of increased employment opportunities in the area and with economic growth the number of able-bodied men (and their families) seeking indoor poor relief decreased. With fewer attending school, financial costs in staff and the maintenance of buildings became proportionally higher for each pupil. The Education Act 1891 provided education free and was made compulsory⁵⁵ and guardians made the decision in November 1897 to close the school and transfer all children to local Board or National schools as could no longer justify the cost.⁵⁶

With considerably fewer numbers of children at Wolstanton workhouse than at Stoke the boys' and girls were originally taught in day/dining room as there was no purpose-built school.⁵⁷ The first Inspectors report dated February 1869 creates an early benchmark of what was to follow:

I have inspected the school and regret that I cannot report favourably of its condition. The first class are fairly instructed in the Scriptures, but are imperfectly taught in arithmetic and writing from memory and in dictation. The girls are backwards and all the lower classes are imperfectly taught and do not appear to have made progress since my last inspection.

I hope the guardians will permit the expediency of arranging with the Stoke Board for the children of this workhouse to attend their new school where there is excellent education

⁵⁵ The 1870 Act allowed voluntary schools to carry on unchanged, but established a system of 'school boards' to build and manage schools in areas where they were needed. The issue of making education compulsory for children had not been settled by the Act. The 1876 Royal Commission on the Factory Acts recommended that education be made compulsory to reduce child labour. In 1891 a further Education Act finally made school attendance compulsory between the ages of five and ten.

⁵⁶ TNA. MH12/11497, 6 November 1897.

⁵⁷ The census return for 1871 list 48 school age children compared with 258 at Stoke workhouse.

and industrial training. The PLB request to be informed whether my suggestion of sending the children to the new school at Stoke will receive attention. The Board would be able to dispense with the cost of a schoolmaster, and the shoemaker and tailor.⁵⁸

The guardians discussed the PLB's report the following month and Mr. Woodward, the schoolmaster was summoned to explain stating that the problem was that he had concentrated more of his efforts on teaching subjects that were not examined and promised to be more diligent in the future. At the same time the guardians declined the suggestion by the PLB to provide a better education suggesting that children should be transferred to Stoke Union as the cost would be significantly less to the ratepayers than maintaining the children at the union workhouse but the guardians declined.⁵⁹

By 1872 there were modest improvements reported by the school inspector although some concerns remained with regards to backward children:

Apparently, the children are very young but look remarkably healthy and have nice manners. Inspected the school but there were a great number of young who are rather backward, but the first class have improved under their present Master and have passed a fair examination.⁶⁰

The report of 1873 continues to show improvements:

I believe it to be very well managed. I have inspected the schools, and am pleased with the progress since my last visit.⁶¹

Few of the reports record any relevant information to the progress or otherwise of the teaching standards at the workhouse school. Most of the inspector's comments refer to the school by stating that: 'It appears to be fairly well managed.'⁶²

⁵⁸ TNA. MH12/11202, 9 February 1869.

⁵⁹ Ibid., MH12/11201, 30 March 1869.

⁶⁰ Ibid., MH12/11203, 11 June 1872.

⁶¹ Ibid., MH12/11204, 18 June 1873.

⁶² Ibid., MH12/11204, 18 June 1873, MH12/111206, 21 May 1874, and MH12/11208, 17 August 1877.

Table.7.4 Collective results of examinations from 1872 – 1879. Boys’ and Girls’ combined

R. Knowledge	boys and girls: 75% good - 25% fair
Reading	boys and girls: 25% good - 25% very fair - 25% fair
Spelling	boys and girls: 25% good - 25% very fair - 50% fair
Penmanship	boys and girls: 25% good - 50% very fair - 25% fair
Arithmetic	boys and girls: 50% good - 25% very fair - 25% fair ⁶³

The results of inspectors’ examinations demonstrate a poor standard of general education although highlight a better standard of religious knowledge which was judged at seventy-five per cent good. The core subjects of reading, writing and arithmetic were disappointing at an average of 37.5 per cent good and the remainder of subjects as 62.5 per cent were divided between very fair and fair. In the final set of examinations held in January 1879, all four subjects were assessed as good indicating that some progress had been made. The average number of pupils at each examination numbered twenty-eight whereas at Stoke they numbered considerably more at one hundred and ninety-eight⁶⁴ and the standard of teaching was reported as fair.⁶⁵

Under pressure in April 1875 from the LGB to provide a purpose-built school the guardians at Wolstanton submitted for approval the first draft of plans:

A new school is proposed to be built in the boys’ yard, with a separate classroom and access from the girls’ side. The boys’ schoolroom measured 40 feet x 20 feet. ⁶⁶

It was not clear in the description if it was intended just for boys or was proposed to be a mixed school. From this description it appears that the school project was for a school room which was confirmed by an inspector stating that: ‘a new school room is now in the process of

⁶³ Ibid., Four annual school inspectors’ reports have been used to assimilate the numbers. MH12/11203, 8 January 1872; MH12/11206, 24 November 1875; MH12/11206, 8 December 1876 and MH12/11210, 20 November 1879. No other reports have survived.

⁶⁴ The number of pupils sitting each examination divided by the number of exams available for assessment at nine is 192.22 pupils.

⁶⁵ Without a standard set of goals and objectives results would have been subjective, and would vary from inspector to inspector.

⁶⁶ TNA. MH12/11206, 31 March 1875.

being built and will probably be completed in the early spring.’⁶⁷ Work on the proposed school room commenced sometime after May 1876 followed by correspondence from the LGB to the guardians requesting information on how they proposed to borrow the cost of building at £695 and how were these costs to be met.⁶⁸

However, a low number of school children at Wolstanton proved it was no longer financially sustainable. In 1884 the question of education was discussed by the guardians who agreed to transfer all the children to Wolstanton Board School to reduce costs.⁶⁹ At the next meeting the decision was rescinded without explanation until Inspector Dansey wrote to the Board recommending that they should arrange to transfer all the children to the Wolstanton Board School. The transfer finally took place from September 1886.⁷⁰

This long discussion over education is important as firstly it has identified the diverse approach to the educational needs of children in two adjoining unions and their education and accommodation. Secondly it has established the standard of education between the two unions which has been extensively evaluated. However, it is important to appraise how each union prepared a child for an occupation upon leaving the workhouse - an important factor for guardians to undertake and implement successfully.

Industrial Training and Employment

Industrial training was first discussed in a Parliamentary report of 1836 stating that one of the objectives of the new Act was to, ‘educate children in a trade with the prime objective that they would have a far better opportunity of finding employment upon leaving the workhouse and no longer be a burden on the parish rates’.⁷¹ It is within industrial schools, with trained instructors,

⁶⁷ Ibid., 5 November 1875. There is no other reference available as the Minute Books have not survived between the years 1872-1881.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 2 May 1876.

⁶⁹ HA. Wolstanton Minute Book, vol. SD1232/9, 18 March 1884.

⁷⁰ TNA. MH12/11216, 21 June 1886. The last report referring to the children being at the workhouse school is January 1886 and the 1877 Inspectors report of the workhouse refers to the fact that the children are being educated at the Wolstanton Board School.

⁷¹ PP. 2nd Annual Report of the Poor Law Commission (1836), p.86.

that boys were taught trades such as tailoring, shoemaking, baking, farming and gardening and later carpentry. For girls subjects were limited to sewing and needlework, laundry and ironing; nursing and domestic accounts as these were considered appropriate for their only opportunity of employment was 'in service'.

Industrial training, theoretically, was intended to occupy about one third of a child's time but could be stretched in its definition to include housework for the girls and gardening and farm work for the boys. Inspector Doyle defended workhouse schools against the pressures to close them in favour of local district schools, insisting that industrial training was the most vital part of children's education. Children, argued Mr. Doyle, were far better equipped as a consequence of industrial training for opportunities of finding employment than the majority of their counterparts living outside of the workhouse.⁷²

Henriques agrees that for those boys leaving the workhouse with a trade in hand had greater opportunities of employment than for boys outside of the poor law. For these children, of the lower working classes, the only opportunities were often in the form of apprenticeships or indentures for up to seven years which were considered as exploitation. The average annual salary expected for an apprentice would range from £2 10s to £5 a year depending upon age. On the subject of apprenticeships, Honeyman argues that, 'they provided a route out of poverty and also reduced levels of pauperism.'⁷³ Digby found in Norfolk the considerable benefits of workhouse training with regards to better opportunities.

The girls in Norfolk workhouses found no difficulty in finding situations as domestic servants and were particularly sought after when they had been trained in the girl's home. The industrial training, and the academic education rather than industrial for boys proved a success.⁷⁴

⁷² Crowther, *The Workhouse System*, p.204.

⁷³ K. Honeyman, *Child Workers in England* (London, 2007), p.15.

⁷⁴ Digby, *Pauper Palaces*, p.193.

Some positions were provided on a trial period whereby prospective employers could return the child to the workhouse if they were considered idle, untrustworthy or not strong enough for heavy manual labour. If a child was disabled in any way it was practically impossible for them to find employment. For those leaving for employment the LGB approved the expenditure for a new set of clothes before commencement and a prospective employer would provide the necessary food and lodgings frequently found just above that of starvation level.

When the opportunity arose, some boys chose a life at sea on training ships, a scheme encouraged by the PLB. A plea was made in 1868 by guardians that service at sea should be generally introduced into workhouse schools noting that many went into the Royal Navy or the Merchant Service. The report was summarised by acknowledging that:

The main secret for destroying and treating pauperism was to educate children apart from the influence of adults and send them into the world as far removed as possible from their own miserable relations and parishes where they have known nothing but vice and misery.⁷⁵

Whilst the broad outlines of industrial training are clear and some of the general studies reflect on this area of a child's workhouse experience, one would get a sense from the establishment and literature that all training was uniform. A study of Stoke and Wolstanton illustrates that this to have been anything but the case and it is to this micro-study we now turn to establish firstly, that there was no national policy, and secondly, the extent of spatial diversity found in the treatment of child paupers between two adjacent unions.

The following list of subjects taught under the heading of industrial training identifies immediately the spatial variations found in children's training:

Stoke

Gardening and farming

Shoe making

Wolstanton

Drill and gardening

Shoe making

⁷⁵ PP. 21st Annual Poor Law Board Report (1868-9), p.87.

Baking for boys	Baking for boys
Tailoring for boys	Household work
Drill and Brass Band	Tailoring for boys
Cooking	Needlework and sewing
Digging, planting, sewing seeds	Knitting, scrubbing and bed making ⁷⁶
Laundry work and Ironing	
Household work	
Needlework and sewing	

At Stoke for working girls the situation was significantly improved as the guardians were sympathetic to their plight as specialist training to prepare them for employment within the right household became available.

In September 1878, a letter was read to the guardians from Miss Rose Wedgwood in which she asked for consideration to be given to setting up a girl's cottage home at Barlaston for the training of girls to go into domestic service. ⁷⁷

Sir, I wish to ask for your permission for my scheme which is to establish a small home where the workhouse girls could be trained for servants with more individual attention allow me to take entire charge of their supervision of a few orphan girls say six and board out the children with me. I would send them to school for half their time and train them in all sorts of household work with the other half. My reason for wishing this is first: that having skill in their work will give them a better start in the world enabling them to keep their places and take better ones. Secondly, they would be removed from contact with casuals.

I have observed in my 2½ years' experience of these children, that the most frequent complaint on the part of their employers are that of impertinent behaviour, untruthfulness, and, in some cases of dishonesty. I have a notion that coming suddenly from the desire and strict discipline of the workhouse into the comparative freedom of domestic service turns their heads. I am very anxious to try whether and formal stage of life a little mixing with the outside world may not seem to steady them before they go out to service, and

⁷⁶ Subjects taken from appointment of Industrial Trainers from TNA correspondence files for both unions.

⁷⁷ Miss Rose Wedgwood (1846-1903) was the daughter of Francis Wedgwood (1800-1888) and great grandson of Josiah Wedgwood I. She lived at Barlaston, Staffordshire four miles to the south of Stoke-upon-Trent.

under my care strengthen their principles and fit them better to withstand the temptations they will meet with afterwards.⁷⁸

The guardians fully agreed to this proposal and had the school certified by the LGB as a training school for girls from the age of ten to fourteen. Following training, Miss Wedgwood would place them out to service.⁷⁹ The girls training home at Barlaston continued until the mid-1890s.⁸⁰

The 'North Staffs Ladies Association for the Help and Training of Girls' was established in 1881 at No.9, Howard Place, Shelton, mid-way between the towns of Stoke and Hanley. It succeeded because of the influential members of its committee from Lady Stamer, as President, Mrs. L. Wedgwood from Barlaston and the Marchioness of Stafford and the wives of other leading business and professional men of the district.⁸¹ The LGB certified the school for up to thirteen girls to be trained for domestic service and the guardians at Stoke took advantage of the service it provided.⁸² In addition, a number of girls were sent from Stoke in 1886 to a training home under the care of Miss Mayo of Ealing, London.⁸³ There was no such training provision in Wolstanton Union which again emphasises the spatial differences of two local unions. From 1883 'The Girls' Friendly Society' was actively involved at Stoke where their members took on the role of preparing young girls for service by inviting them to afternoon tea in their own homes for a period of one month prior to them being sent out to work to gain experience.⁸⁴ At Wolstanton it was not until 1898 before the guardians gave permission for the Society to work with the girls in their care.⁸⁵

⁷⁸ HA. Stoke Minute Book, vol.17, 25 September 1878.

⁷⁹ With an introduction from Miss Wedgwood, the girls would find that positions would be offered into the more genteel homes of the district. Some girls went on to be adopted. One girl was Fanny Cooper adopted by Mrs. Bradbury who owned a small grocers shop at Newcastle. Stoke minute book, vol.22, 2 February 1887.

⁸⁰ The last reference to the Cottage Home for girls at Barlaston was recorded on the 10th August 1892.

⁸⁰ PP. *1st Annual Report Local Government Board (1871-2)*, p.225.

⁸¹ TNA. MH12/11218, 7 October 1889. A copy of the *Annual Report* gives the list of the officials and the objective of the society.

⁸² *Ibid.*, MH12/11490, 13 December 1890.

⁸³ HA. Stoke Minute Book, vol.22, 31 March 1886.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, Stoke Minute Book, vol.20, 16 May 1883.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, Wolstanton Minute Book, vol.SD1232/14, 18 January 1898.

The process of industrial training for children to acquire skills for a future life to obtain suitable opportunities upon leaving remained difficult. The following examples emphasise several key issues. Firstly, they provide evidence that guardians at Stoke were sympathetic to young people endeavouring where possible to secure positions for them upon leaving the workhouse. Secondly, training in an occupation became an important process whereby children would break the mould of institutional care and no longer be a burden upon the poor law. Finally, these examples fill an important gap in secondary literature.

Thomas Cope, aged fifteen years of Stoke who had been returned to the workhouse from two previous positions asked in May 1876 for permission to go to sea. The chair of guardians reported that several boys had requested the same and a berth was found on the training ship '*Formidable*' at an annual cost of £18 per boy payable until the age of seventeen years.⁸⁶ (Fig.6.9) Other boys followed, travelling to Liverpool for training.⁸⁷ Admission rules stated that each boy was to be aged between fifteen and sixteen years and have a chest measurement of at least twenty-nine inches to be accepted.⁸⁸

Further opportunities offered to young boys was that of working in coal mines. Both Stoke and Wolstanton were approached in February 1877 by the Vicar of Dewsbury, stating that the local coal mines had a number of vacancies for young workhouse boys between the ages of ten and fourteen years. They would live with colliers as a member of the family and earn from eight to twelve shilling a week. Six were chosen from Stoke and three from Wolstanton.⁸⁹

The situation for girls was different as the only opportunity for employment was domestic service or working at a local potbank. At Wolstanton no records have survived of employment

⁸⁶ HMS *Formidable* (1825) was an 84-gun second rate launched in 1825. She was lent as a training ship in 1869 and was sold in 1906.

⁸⁷ HA. Stoke Minute Book, vol.20, 9 January 1884.

⁸⁸ TNA.MH12/11473, August 1876; SS. 5 May 1876, 22.

⁸⁹ SS. 21 February 1877.

for girls or any special training apart from industrial training in areas such as laundry work and needlework. The following examples from Stoke present a far more sympathetic approach by placing the emphasis on the training of girls for service in the right situation even though some were sent into service from the age of eleven years. One such girl, Eliza Perkin, had been in the workhouse since the age of nine as a deserted child. She was sent out into domestic service with a grant of £1 16s 6d for a new set of clothes and 6d a week in wages.⁹⁰ The LGB questioned the guardians as to why they agreed to this small remuneration. The answer was, ‘the mistress of the house would in future purchase what other clothes are necessary for the girl.’⁹¹ The following year it was agreed to increase the weekly pay to one shilling a week for Bridgett McCartley, aged fourteen, an orphan. The LGB agreed to pay £3 0s 4d for a new set of clothes for the commencement of her duties.⁹²

Similarly, in January 1872, Mary Smith, an orphan, aged eleven was sent to work at the home of Henry Stoaker, a joiner of Burslem, ‘who had undertaken to provide for her entirely with an allowance of six pence a week for the first year to be increased to one shilling for the second.’⁹³ The LGB agreed to the expenditure of £1 4s 7d for the purchase of necessary clothing and at the same time Fanny Viggars, aged twelve, was sent into service with Mrs. Mary Proctor of Talk on the Hill on the same terms.⁹⁴ The temptation to exploit the situation of new clothing was too great for some mothers as it was reported that a number of girls supplied with clothing for appointments were, after only a few weeks, told that they were required by their mothers and must leave. The mothers would then pawn their daughter’s new clothes to be frequently spent on drink and within a short time the girls would return to the workhouse.⁹⁵

⁹⁰ TNA. MH12/11469, 11 May 1870.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, MH12/11470, 17 September 1872.

⁹² *Ibid.*, MH12/11471, 16 January 1873.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, MH12/11203, 15 January 1872.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 16 January 1872.

⁹⁵ PP. 21st *Annual Report of the Poor Law Board (1868-9)*, p.99.

Exploitation of the young was prevalent during the period of boys' apprenticeships. In 1886 a policy was agreed by the guardians at Stoke, that during the first year the boys would receive no wages only their accommodation. During the second year 3d a week, in the third year 6d, the fourth year 1 shilling a week, the fifth year 2 shillings per week and for the final sixth year they received 2s 6d per week. No doubt this was exploitation at its worst providing cheap labour to the manufacturers and trades people of the town.⁹⁶

Workhouse Culture

This section forms an important contribution in the understanding of a child's education as the subject of culture is not normally associated with poor law welfare and neither is found in secondary poor law literature and yet the subject heading defines the experiences of individual children in the Stoke Union. It is an area of investigation that can only be achieved through a micro-study of a set area and period which therefore justifies its inclusion to illustrate the implications of spatial diversity between the north and south of the Potteries. Furthermore, to do justice to the discussion only three subjects have been identified which explore the key questions in this section as described in chapter one, that of music, leisure and pleasure.

As early as 1867 in addition to the list of industrial training subjects for boys, musical education was made available. This followed on from a PLB *Circular* recommendation as additional opportunities to secure a good occupation upon leaving the workhouse at sixteen:

It is well known that there is a difficulty in supplying recruits for the army, navy and merchant service and believe that workhouse boys can supply this want. The only part of the army that enlists such boys is the regimental bands, and for that purpose I have been encouraging guardians to introduce instrumental music among boys. This had now been done in the large workhouses and duly taught by an efficient bandmaster⁹⁷

Nationally, for the year 1867-8 the numbers that enlisted was one hundred and seventy-eight and in 1868-9 the following year one hundred and sixty-one thereby justifying the policy

⁹⁶ HA. Wolstanton Minute Book, vol.SD1232/19, 1 January 1886.

⁹⁷ PP. 20th Annual Report of the poor Law Board (1867-8), p.132.

of the PLB.⁹⁸ (Fig.6.10) Stoke workhouse embraced this idea as a way of finding employment for boys at the age of sixteen which almost guaranteed a future and an opportunity to make a final break from the life as a pauper.

A military style drum and fife band for boys was established in many workhouses with the intention of teaching drill and how to play musical instruments which, when invited, performed at fetes or other local events with any income being used to purchase new instruments. The decision to form a drum and fife band at Stoke was made in 1863 and once established was invited to perform at numerous local events. One such event was to accompany the local newspaper boys' annual outing in June 1875 to nearby Trentham Hall at the personal invitation of Mr. Porter the proprietor of *The Sentinel* on condition that they should return to Stoke railway station by nine o'clock in the evening.⁹⁹

Each invitation to perform was first sanctioned by the Board. On one occasion, an invitation in July 1875 from the Baptist Chapel at Newcastle for the boys to play at their annual bazaar was refused on the grounds that it was outside the parish.¹⁰⁰ On another occasion the guardians noted after a day out performing, that the band had not returned to the workhouse until ten o'clock at night and Mr. Emery, a guardian, suggested that in future such late engagements should be avoided as it was 'not good for the boys to be out so late.'¹⁰¹ The band was becoming so popular in the district that by June 1878 it was noted that 'a line must be drawn somewhere on engagements and the band should not be allowed to go out to perform more than once a week.'¹⁰²

In July 1880, the chairman of the guardians suggested that the drum and fife band be replaced by a brass band in line with a number of other unions such as found at Bristol,

⁹⁸ PP. 21st and 22nd Annual Reports of the Poor Law Board (1867-8) and (1869-9), pp.118 and 91.

⁹⁹ Ibid., MH12/11475, 15 January 1875.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 18 May 1875.

¹⁰¹ SS. 5 July 1880.

¹⁰² Ibid., 27 June 1878.

Manchester and Liverpool resulting in better opportunities within the military. The guardians applied for permission from the LGB to spend £60 on instruments for twenty performers plus the cost of the instructor at fifteen shillings a week.¹⁰³ The LGB approved stating that it would 'not only be very beneficial to the school but also enable the boys to enter the army.'¹⁰⁴ As the band became more proficient calls for the workhouse boys to perform at annual events increased to include Sunday school prize days and local school sports. From 1882, the band was in even greater demand appearing at festivals for numerous local churches. They even went on extended trips to different locations including Rhyl in North Wales to perform a concert on the pier. In 1883, they appeared at the Imperial State Circus, Hanley joining in the circus procession from Shelton school to the circus venue.¹⁰⁵ The guardians may have advanced their reputation by encouraging such an enterprise in the district but, nevertheless, maintained a strict approach to the care of the boys with regards to the lateness in returning to the workhouse.¹⁰⁶

By 1900, despite its continued popularity the band encountered problems resulting in the suspension of public appearances. An inspection in April 1900 reported that out of nineteen boys, sixteen knew little about music and were unable to play to the required performing standard this was because of as most of the proficient boys had left the workhouse during the previous months.¹⁰⁷ The following November saw the band and the bandmaster leave Stoke workhouse for the newly built Penkhill Cottage Homes where a band-room and store was provided.¹⁰⁸

Whilst Stoke took full advantage of the ideals of teaching instrumental techniques to children, Wolstanton failed to recognise the possibility of greater opportunities in life after

¹⁰³ Ibid., 12 July 1880.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., MH12/11478, 6 July 1880.

¹⁰⁵ HA. Stoke Minute Book, vol.19, 4 April 1883.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid. Stoke Minute Book, vol.19, 4 April 1883 refers to a performance at Barlaston some five miles away from Stoke. Stated that they boys must return no later than on the 7.55 p.m. train. Another request was refused from Hanley Temperance Hall because the performance did not commence until 7.30p.m.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., vol.28, 11 April 1900.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., vol.29, 30 November 1901.

leaving the workhouse. Despite their initial lack of interest the guardians finally recommended a drill and fife band in 1887 and the employment of a single man as an industrial trainer. However, the appointment was not primarily to teach music and discipline but to find some pastime to keep boys occupied during out of school hours following the decision to close the workhouse school and send all the children to Wolstanton Board School.¹⁰⁹

But how far does this study extend to the treatment of children as victims of the misfortune of their parents? To assess the policy of local unions regarding the treatment of children the area of investigation extends beyond the workhouse to outside visits and other privileges. The first reference is recorded in December 1876 with a visit by the children of Stoke to the Imperial Circus held in Hanley following an invitation by the proprietor. In addition, Mr. Turner of the Albion Inn Hanley invited the children to his premises following the performance for buns and milk.¹¹⁰ Visits became more regular as in March 1884; one hundred and thirty-four children were entertained at another circus at Hanley which was again followed by buns and coffee at the home of Mr. Woodcliff, a guardian of the workhouse.¹¹¹ The following year Sangster's Circus visited the town of Newcastle, where workhouse children were invited to an afternoon performance.¹¹²

In 1886, Boswell's Circus at Newcastle and the proprietor invited the children to a performance but on this occasion, the chairman of the guardians asked what type of circus it was. The vice-chairman, Mr Salmon, replied that it was based upon mesmeric and conjuring entertainment with a lot of illusions and people trained to act at being mesmerised. The chairman considered this type of act appeared unsuitable for young children and the invitation was kindly declined.¹¹³

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., Wolstanton Visitors Book, SD1232/21, 22 December 1886.

¹¹⁰ HA. Stoke Minute Book, vol.17, 6 December 1876.

¹¹¹ Ibid., vol.21, 22 August 1884.

¹¹² Ibid., 29 April 1885.

¹¹³ SS. 15 September 1866.

Circus entertainment was not the only activity for children. In an attempt to broaden young minds classical events were encouraged and in 1885 they visited the Stoke Horticultural Society Annual Show held at the Stoke athletic ground and attended the City Chrysanthemum show held at Hanley in 1888.¹¹⁴ One of the highlights for young minds would be to experience Pool's Myriorama held at the Victoria Hall at Hanley in May 1889.¹¹⁵ Children would also experience choirs such as the Spanish choir in March 1891¹¹⁶ or the Swiss choir, even a Midget Minstrel concert all held in the same year¹¹⁷ and visited Stoke Town Hall in December 1891 to listen to the English chorus.¹¹⁸ In May 1900, over a hundred children attended the Shelton annual music festival travelling by train from Newcastle to Hanley.¹¹⁹ In addition, the children each year were invited to an afternoon's performance of the annual Christmas pantomime at the Theatre Royal in Hanley.¹²⁰

The guardians expressed their concern that boys should learn to swim so arrangements were made for them to visit the swimming baths at Hanley and Stoke each week during the swimming season. These commenced in 1883 and forty boys were taken on condition that they returned to the workhouse by ten o'clock.¹²¹ Visits to Hanley baths always concluded with a visit to the home of Rd. Crapper, a dental surgeon, living in Broad Street where children were provided with tea and buns. On other occasions children were escorted to the Victoria athletic ground in Stoke to watch sports and competitions.¹²²

This interest in sport and the value of young children associating with other children

¹¹⁴ Ibid., 7 November 1888.

¹¹⁵ Myriorama, was a pre-cinema entertainment that consisted of panoramas, a display of continuous paintings on a scroll of world events or important sites such as China. They were supported by lighting effects and a commentary.

¹¹⁶ HA. Stoke Minute Book, vol.24, 11 March 1891.

¹¹⁷ Ibid., vol.24, 21 October 1891.

¹¹⁸ Ibid., 2 December 1891.

¹¹⁹ Ibid., 25 April 1900.

¹²⁰ Ibid., 23 January 1895.

¹²¹ Ibid., vol.20, 13 June 1883.

¹²² This ground was later to become known as the Victoria Ground, the home for Stoke City FC.

living outside of the workhouse became an important focus for the guardians as in September 1896 the master agreed that the workhouse school be allowed to join the North Staffs Schools Football Association, a major step in the experience of institutional life.¹²³ Many other sporting activities were attended including local football matches to watch both Stoke City F.C. and Port Vale F.C. again, something quite unheard of for workhouse children and reflect on the importance given the broader issue of child welfare.¹²⁴

Patronage was the influence that inspired others to become involved in charity work. Stoke Board of Guardians, which included Sir Lovelace Stamer attracted those who were concerned in working with those who were poor and destitute. One such patron for Stoke was the Duchess of Sutherland from nearby Trentham Hall. The Duchess would invite children for afternoon tea and entertainment in the extensive grounds of Trentham Hall or walks around the lake, catching first the train from Newcastle to Trentham station accompanied by the workhouse band.¹²⁵ A further 'annual treat' was a trip to Rudyard, a regular annual visit since 1877 another trip was to Alton Towers and the press report of the day presents a special place in social history:

The annual trip was to Alton, another place of public resort and a place to spend a happy day. There were five additional coaches from Stoke railway station leaving just a little after 8 o'clock. The youngsters were accompanied by the Master and the Mistress of the workhouse and other officers including Mr and Mrs Unwin the schoolmaster and schoolmistress. The Drum and Fife Band played as they walked to the station. Alton was safely reached and the refreshments were partaken of. Later they had dinner followed by games and entertainment concluding with a stroll through the magnificent gardens.¹²⁶

Other notable ladies in support of the workhouse children were Lady Stamer, wife of Sir Lovelace Stamer and Miss Wedgwood from Barlaston who opened her home and grounds annually to the children from 1877¹²⁷ and Mrs. West, the medical officer's wife, Mrs. Hollins

¹²³ HA. Stoke Minute Book, vol.26, 18 September 1896.

¹²⁴ Ibid., Stoke Minute Book, vol.27, 14 November 1897 and vol.27, 16 February 1898.

¹²⁵ The first record of a visit is dated SS. 27 July 1877.

¹²⁶ SS. 27 July 1877.

¹²⁷ Ibid., 19 September 1877.

the wife of Michael Daintry Hollins, the tile manufacturer of Stoke who also opened her home and grounds of Oakhill Hall.

There were national events for all workhouses whereby each union were involved in celebration. One such event was Christmas day where a special meal of roast beef and plum pudding was provided together with small gifts of fruit or sweets for the children and tobacco and ale for the adults. Entertainment would be provided in the dining hall ending with a customary vote of thanks for the master and his wife. However, the events of Christmas were not excluded from spatial diversity for the treat at Stoke was held on Christmas day and served to the inmates by the guardians. Unlike Stoke, Wolstanton held their celebration two days following Christmas day on the 27th December as the 25th was reserved for the officers and guardians to enjoy time with their families.

Other celebrations such as the Diamond Jubilee of Queen Victoria in 1887¹²⁸ and the marriage of the Duke of York 1893 were celebrated at Wolstanton with a beef, mutton, or lamb dinner served with new potatoes, fruit pie, tea and plum cake with beer and ale for the adults and fruit and sweets for the children. Entertainment was provided in the evening.¹²⁹

The only recorded day out for the children at Wolstanton was the annual visit to the ‘Burslem Wakes’ and a single outing to the Wedgwood Theatre in Burslem at the invitation of the proprietor to attend an afternoon performance in March 1896.¹³⁰ Infrequently, groups visited the workhouse to entertain the children; in fact, only two are recorded, the ‘Silverdale Minstrel Troup’ in December 1895¹³¹ and a visit by Mr. Bourne, who ‘entertained’ children at the workhouse.¹³²

¹²⁸ Ibid., vol.SH1232/11, 10 May 1887.

¹²⁹ Ibid., Wolstanton Visiting Committee Minute Book, vol.SD1232/21, 30 June 1893.

¹³⁰ HA. Wolstanton Minute Book, SD1232/13, 14 February 1896.

¹³¹ Ibid., vol.SD1232/13, 26 November 1895.

¹³² Ibid., vol.SD1232/12, 14 July 1891.

No other activities or privileges are recorded and no patrons or respected influential people are known to have supported the children at the workhouse. The guardians were pottery manufacturers and local trades people whose agenda would be to use their position as guardians to maintain a frequent supply of cheap labour from dependent children in their care and the workhouse as a permanent deterrent.

What has been established throughout this section is that even within the realm of children's experiences there was no official *Circulars* from central government on how children should be educated, challenged, encouraged or to enjoy a wider experience of culture. What has become evident is that whilst one union, Stoke, exercised its concern for the wellbeing of children Wolstanton on the other hand treated children almost with contempt failing to show any compassion to their upbringing. These differences matter in the broader context as they emphasise the extent that spatial diversity can be found in unions so close to each other.

The final section of this chapter is that of emigration where secondary literature is restricted to a national view point. It is important to this study as the policy of emigration involved many thousands of children stretching over a long period of time. What is lacking however is its local dimension whereby the use of a micro-study will expose the differences of one administration against others.

Emigration of Children

The period of the 1860s and 1870s was a time when a number of philanthropists such as Miss Maria Rye¹³³ set to work with energy and zeal began to send children to Canada, releasing in the process space in workhouses to accommodate even more children and the first to send girls to Canada with the purpose of becoming domestic servants.¹³⁴ The fact that most were under

¹³³ Born in London in 1828 Miss Maria Rye daughter of a solicitor set up in 1861 the Female Middleclass Emigration Society but from 1868 she devoted herself exclusively to the emigration of pauper children.

¹³⁴ A report in the *Times* 29 October 1869 described Maria Rye as 'the most successful of the priestesses of emigration.' She was as well-known among her contemporaries as Florence Nightingale and Dr. Barnardo. Prior to 1868, Maria Rye was principally concerned with issues of women's rights and employment, becoming involved in the emigration of middle class women to Canada in 1861. Her interest in emigrating pauper and orphan

the age of eleven years acted in their favour as the Canadians felt that children were at that age far more able to adapt to a new life. Once declared a success others organisation followed including religious organisations such as the Liverpool Catholic Children Protection Society.¹³⁵

Kershaw and Slack in the context of the time make a relevant point:

From this new point of view and an alternate to life for many in a workhouse, emigrating children had practical advantages. It gave children from industrial towns and city slums a new chance, rescued from the moral as well as physical decay. Life in Canada was healthier, and in general the Canadians were regarded as more pious. It was far cheaper to send children to Canada than to bring them up at the British ratepayers' expense, followed by a possible future of destitution or crime.¹³⁶

It was argued in a government report of 1841 that the 'provision for the emigration of children had not been acted upon extensively' pointing to the fact that many districts would derive considerable benefit from the scheme. This quote emphasised the point that 'emigration was intended merely to relieve the parish of lazy and vicious persons.'¹³⁷

From the 1870s one of the population movements of modern times occurred with the emigration of some ninety-eight thousand British children to Canada.¹³⁸ In 1871, thirty-six unions had entrusted children into the care of Miss Rye and four hundred and seventy-one young children had been sent out since she began in 1868.¹³⁹ Each child was medically examined followed by an interview by a Justice of the Peace, questioning as to whether or not

children, for which she was best known, arose from this beginning. Later in life, Miss Rye suggested that her change of direction was a result of the persuasions of Lord Shaftesbury.

¹³⁵ M. Kohli, *The Golden Bridge, young immigrants to Canada, 1833-1939* (Toronto, 2003), Liverpool Catholic Children's Protection Society was founded in 1880.

¹³⁶ R. Kershaw, J. Sacks, *New Lives for Old* (London, 2008), p.8.

¹³⁷ PP. *7th Annual Report of the Poor Law Board* (1841), p.94. The report concludes that the lack in numbers was as a direct consequence of the 'recent disbranches in these provinces'.

¹³⁸ National Archives of Canada. Microfilm reel C-7327; J. Parr, *Labouring Children: British Immigrant Apprentices to Canada, 1869-1924* (Montreal, 1980); K.D.M. Snell, *Annals of the Labouring Poor, Social Change and Agrarian England, 1660-1900* (Cambridge, 1985), pp.9-14; K.D.M. Snell, *Parish and Belonging – Community, Identity and Welfare in England and Wales 1700-1950* (Cambridge, 2006), pp.49-150; Compton, *Workhouse Children*, p.53; S. J. Taylor, 'Poverty, Emigration and Family: Experiencing Childhood Poverty in Late-Nineteenth-Century Manchester', *Family and Community History* (2015), pp.89-103

¹³⁹ Kershaw, Sacks, *New Lives*, p.25.

they agreed to emigration. Once agreed, the documents were signed off and forwarded with medical reports for the final approval of the LGB and approval of the cost of transportation.¹⁴⁰

Emigration was considered by unions as a means of reducing the number of children in workhouses and therefore a corresponding reduction in the cost to ratepayers, a method to which both Stoke and Wolstanton guardians subscribed. The first Annual report of the LGB made an unusual introduction to the subject of emigration referring to the fact that:

There were in this country an excess of the female sex of 700,000, and proportionally less of males in the colonies, it is impossible to regret a movement which tends to restore the equilibrium of the sexes especially as workhouse girls do not turn out so well as boys. But the demand is so great that I do not believe that there would be any difficulty in procuring employment for them in their own country.¹⁴¹

The process of emigration to Canada continued until the end of this study period and both Miss Rye and the Liverpool Society maintained their involvement. On frequent occasions deserted children were withdrawn from the emigration lists once their names were published in the local press following objections from family members.¹⁴² In most cases the removal was not out of compassion but rather out of the realisation by their parents that the child could be of financial value once placed into work. Other cases were refused following examination by the medical officer, sometimes for only a short period as they did not pass fully the medical examination. Many conditions were not serious such as scared face by old burns, healthy but suffering from chest infection, from a double hernia, from ringworm and infection of the hand. Most were recorded as ‘well in a week’ or sometimes a longer period was stipulated.¹⁴³

Of the two local workhouses Stoke was the first to take advantage of the scheme by inviting Miss Rye to a meeting in May 1873. Following this meeting fourteen young girls were

¹⁴⁰ Other books on the subject of immigration of children include: J. Parr, *Labouring Children: British Immigration Apprentices to Canada 1869-1924*; P. Bean, J Melville, *Lost Children of the Empire (1989)*; G.H. Corbett, *Nation Builders: Barnardo Children in Canada* (Canada, 2002).

¹⁴¹ PP. *1st Annual Report of the Local Government Committee* (1872-3), p.148.

¹⁴² It was the protocol to advertise the names of those children proposed for emigration before the final submission was made to the LGB to ascertain if there were any objections.

¹⁴³ TNA. MH12/11491, 12 March 1891; MH12/11481, 20 July 1888, given as examples.

chosen as the first group for emigration to Canada.¹⁴⁴ Later the scheme extended to boys who were sent to Canada to work on farms as agricultural labourers. Most of the children were under fourteen years of age and only a minority of them orphans.

Conditions would be stressful and challenging for young children as they would have to adapt to conditions far different from those which they had experienced at home or in the workhouse including the isolation on remote farms in rural Ontario compared with life in the Staffordshire Potteries. Slacks and Kershaw contribute to the debate regarding hardships:

The climate would be harsh; particularly during the extreme cold winter and even young migrants from the age of seven upwards would be expected to work hard. Many children experienced terrible cruelty. There was always the stigma of being a child migrant and contact with siblings or relatives back home was problematic.¹⁴⁵

From 1874 there were no further emigrations to Canada as rumours circulated with regards to treatment of some children already sent. In February, 1875, a letter was received at Stoke from the LGB informing them that Inspector Doyle was to visit Canada to ascertain for himself the conditions of the children who had already emigrated and the nature of arrangements.¹⁴⁶ The final report presented to Parliament showed that if emigration of children to Canada was to continue it should be placed under systematic superintendents and controlled during the passage followed by care and placements upon landing.¹⁴⁷ The year following the report of Mr. Doyle arrangements were agreed upon with a guarantee of information of destination of the children together with the name, address and nearest post office to the children in addition to an annual visit by Canadian government official.¹⁴⁸

Miss Rye visited Stoke in 1877 to address a public meeting regarding the fourteen girls sent to Canada in 1873 and to answer questions and gave assurances of their well-being to

¹⁴⁴ TNA. MH12/11471, 4 June 1873.

¹⁴⁵ Kershaw, Sacks, *New Lives*, p.8.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 8 February 1875.

¹⁴⁷ PP. *4th Annual Report of the Local Government Board (1874-5)*, p.xxxii.

¹⁴⁸ PP. *5th Annual Report of the Local Government Board (1875-6)*, p.xxxvi.

friends and relatives of the children which was supported by over five hundred photographs.¹⁴⁹ Despite her visit and explanation it remained a further four years before the guardians' regained confidence in the process of emigration. However, the real impetus to reintroduce the scheme may have been that numbers of children in the workhouse had reached an all-time high standing at two hundred and eighty-eight, of whom two hundred and thirty-three were between the ages of six and sixteen and therefore eligible for emigration.¹⁵⁰

Questions were raised with regards to the emigration of boys as the number in the workhouse had increased with one hundred and forty-four boys out of the two hundred and fifty-seven within the prescribed emigration age group. Reference was made to the fact that boys were more expensive to maintain in the workhouse than girls therefore they should be encouraged to leave for Canada.

As a consequence seven boys agreed to go but in the case of deserted children permission was first required from their known relatives.¹⁵¹ The minutes of a Board meeting held one month later referred to the fact that there were few employment opportunities for boys locally and the view of the guardians was that they did not wish to maintain them after the age of fourteen therefore increasing the impetus for emigration.¹⁵² This resulted in a further group of boys being sent out early in 1883 at a charge of £10 for transport to Canada from Liverpool. The LGB however rejected the price of £10 and offered Miss Rye only £8. A concession was made and the sum of £8 10s was agreed upon.¹⁵³

A letter of introduction was received by the guardians a few months later regarding a new emigration society, the Liverpool Society.¹⁵⁴ The guardians noted the LGB approval of this Society and in May 1885 arrangements were agreed upon for the emigration of twenty boys to

¹⁴⁹ TNA. MH12/11475, 28 May 1877.

¹⁵⁰ Census return for Stoke workhouse 1881.

¹⁵¹ TNA. 8 June and 6 July 1881.

¹⁵² SS. 14 August 1881.

¹⁵³ Ibid., MH12/11481, 13 March 1883.

¹⁵⁴ HA. Stoke Minute Book, vol.19, 3 July 1881.

Canada using this society as agents at a cost of no more than £10 each, delivered free with new outfits to Liverpool.¹⁵⁵ The arrangements were however stopped as the Dominican Government of Canada was unwilling to agree to the emigration until they received written confirmation from the Liverpool Society of favourable reports for the care of children once delivered to Canada. In 1886 a further group of twenty-eight boys, over the age of twelve years, were selected with the view of 'setting them up for life.'¹⁵⁶ The guardians were aware that it was very hard to obtain suitable places for them at home and emigration was seen as an opportunity for employment and a new future.¹⁵⁷

Since the intervention by Inspector Doyle in 1875, reports of children emigrating were received more frequently either directly to the union or, in most cases via the LGB in London. The reports were limited in information, listing only the name and age of the child and to whom they had been assigned and the post office address followed by a short description of how the child was doing:

Elizabeth Dawson, 11. Mr Hairam Woolley, Smicoe, P.O. Ontario. Farmer has lived there 40 years, has five children, girl for service returned to the home with itch.

Annie Tunstall, 9. Mr William Sanderson, Effingham P.O. Ontario. Dry goods merchant. Has lived there all his life. Girl trained for service, but to sit at table.¹⁵⁸

Three members of the same family, Stephen, Grace and Laura Gaghan went to live with Thomas Morley, Dennis Keyes and John Corrigan all of Marysville. It was reported that 'these three children very well done for and giving great satisfaction.'¹⁵⁹ (Fig.6.11)

To overcome a reluctance to offer placements upon arrival at Canada both Miss Rye and Rev. Wallace from the Liverpool Society made personal visits to the workhouse for the selection of children reviewing the height and physical appearance and looking for those who could best work hard.

¹⁵⁵ TNA. MH12/11482, 1 March 1885; *16th Annual Local Government Board Report (1885-6)*, p. Liii.

¹⁵⁶ HA. Stoke Minute Book, vol.22, 18 March 1886.

¹⁵⁷ SS. 9 January 1866.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid., MH12/11483, 14 February 1884.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid., MH12/11486, 14 October 1886.

Rev. Wallace visited the workhouse again the following March and selected seventeen boys suitable for emigration ‘unless objections were received from relatives or friends.’¹⁶⁰ To overcome any local opposition to the further emigration of children the Board informed the press in March 1889, that ‘the master confirmed there were twelve deserted orphans in the workhouse and considered they could not do better than to send them out to Canada leaving Miss Rye to make the arrangements.’¹⁶¹ Later the same year there was a further fifteen girls that Miss Rye was willing to include in her next trip in May the following year to Canada.¹⁶²

On occasions children that had already emigrated would make attempts to contact others who they once knew at the workhouse. Whether they were successful is not known. On one occasion Miss Rye reported that a package was found in the luggage of a girl, Gertrude Simpson, who had been sent out to Canada the previous June. It was addressed to John Goodwin at Stoke but it was discovered that he had already left for Canada three months earlier. Miss Rye stated that she would make enquiries regarding his whereabouts and pass on the package. The guardians were to be kept informed.¹⁶³

Finally, a few children had to return to the UK for a variety of reasons including, dishonesty, idleness, insubordination or illness. One child, John Cotton, who emigrated in 1896, had to return home as, although he went ‘not as a bright boy’, had become mentally weaker and frequently ran away. Rev. Wallace wrote to the guardians at Stoke stating that the return would cost £6 10s for the boy’s journey and as the society had no funds to pay for this the guardians agreed to the payment in advance.¹⁶⁴

The implementation of the scheme from Wolstanton Union commenced several years later. In June 1881, the secretary to the Board of Guardians submitted a report whereby boys

¹⁶⁰ HA. Stoke Minute Book, vol.23, 20 February 1890.

¹⁶¹ SS. 28 March 1889.

¹⁶² Ibid., vol.23, 20 April 1890.

¹⁶³ Ibid., vol.24, 15 June 1892.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid., vol.28, 18 July 1900.

and girls could either emigrate to Canada or be part of a scheme for sea service in an attempt to relieve the union from the cost of maintenance. Ten boys and girls between the ages of nine to twelve years offered to go to Canada and four boys aged thirteen for sea service.¹⁶⁵ It was two years later in May 1883 when the Board sent a further group of children to Canada probably on account that during the intervening years there were far fewer children in the workhouse. The guardians wrote to the LGB asking for particulars on how to proceed with the emigration of a number of girls via Miss Rye in view of the report by Inspector Doyle. No assurances were received and it took a further four years until September 1887 until another group of ten children were sent.¹⁶⁶ (Fig.6.12) The final number was subsequently reduced by two as the medical officer refused permission for them to sail on health grounds.¹⁶⁷

A parent, Mrs. Sadler of Dunstable Street, Burslem objected to having her child Rebecca sent to Canada. The Justice of the Peace questioned the mother asking why she had left her daughter in the workhouse for five years. Furthermore, the child had asked herself to go to Canada and not to return home. The application for removal from the workhouse by the mother was refused and the child was subsequently sent to Canada as arranged.¹⁶⁸

The Liverpool Society wrote to the guardians in March 1888 asking if there were any Roman Catholic children in the workhouse considering emigration. The reply was 'no there are none'.¹⁶⁹ At times the organisations were amenable to requests. One such child John Gibson, waiting for the party to leave Liverpool on the 12th April, requested to go to where his sister was already placed in Canada. The response came that this 'was not possible but that he would be placed in a home as near as can be arranged.'¹⁷⁰ Frequently, guardians were asked both by Miss Rye and the Liverpool Society if they had any children to join with others being sent to

¹⁶⁵ SS. 4 June 1881.

¹⁶⁶ TNA. MH12/11213, 31 May 1883 and 6 August 1883.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid.

¹⁶⁸ HA. Wolstanton Minute Book, vol.SD1232/11, 13 September 1887.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid., vol.SD1232/11, 27 March 1888.

¹⁷⁰ Census returns 1881 and 1901.

Canada. On most occasions the reply was negative. The total number of children sent amounted to around thirty-five over a period of nearly thirty years, the number covering the same period from Stoke amounted to two hundred and seventy-five.

These figures identify significant spatial variations between the two unions. It is important therefore to consider the rationale as to why. In 1862 the government deployed Mr. F.D. Longe to report on the evidence of the Children's Employment Commission. The findings produce statistics which suggest that the spatial variations between Stoke and Wolstanton with regards to emigration lies in the need for child labour to be retained at the north of the city for employment in addition to that of sustaining family cohesion. As a consequence of this policy fewer children were placed in the workhouse. This conclusion is drawn from the fact that the number of children housed at Wolstanton was significantly lower than Stoke. Further clarification is found by considering the percentage of children placed in full-time education as opposed to that of employment. The number quoted in Lounge's report for Wolstanton was 5.4 per cent whereas Stoke it was 10.5 per cent nearly double the number found at Stoke than Wolstanton.

Mr. Longe provides further evidence to substantiate the figures stating that out of seventy children attending Sunday school over ten years of age, fifty-two could not read the New Testament amounting to seventy-four per cent. At a school attached to St. John's Church in Burslem it was reported that 'in a district containing six thousand seven hundred children the average attendance has been kept down to about sixty' the implication being that most children would be working with no free time for learning. Mr. Longe concluded by quoting a report from Mr. Joseph Lowndes, clerk to the guardians, which implied that children, despite either working for a pittance or remaining at home enabled parents to obtain outdoor poor relief which was 'absorbed by improvidence and extravagance' rather than the education of their children:¹⁷¹

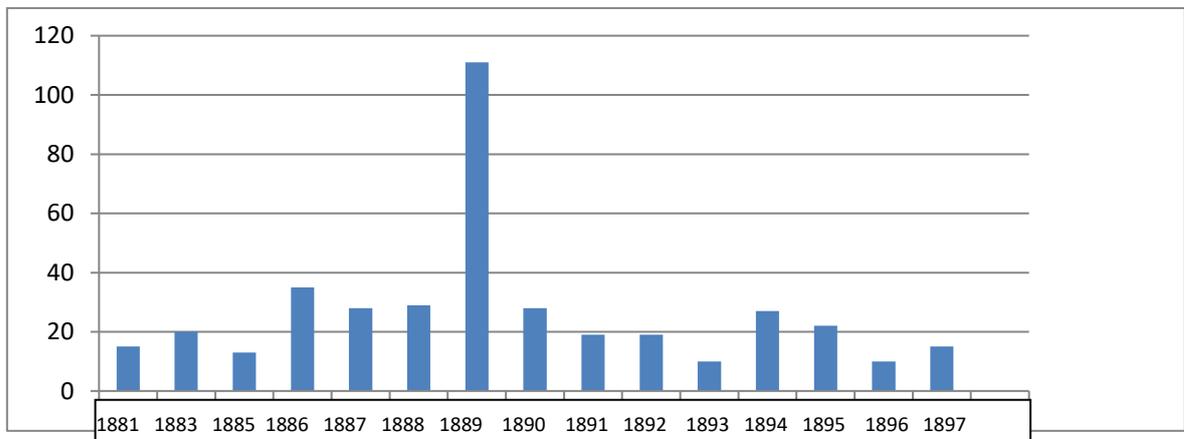
¹⁷¹ Ibid., p.25

I have no doubt that the children's' earnings are used properly, and help the parents to abstain from application to the parish, [meaning poor relief through the workhouse] but at the same time I should say that in many cases their little earnings are absorbed by the improvidence and extravagance of their parents. When all the family are in work, they will towards the end of the week still be short of money.¹⁷²

These figures and statements support the theory as to why the numbers of children at Wolstanton workhouse remained low. Even the meagre income of young children was a necessity of life for many parents to support their life-style.

In conclusion, the following graphs show the number of children that emigrated to Canada over a period of sixteen years. At Stoke the process of emigration commenced in 1873 reaching its height in 1897 during which time three hundred and ninety-five children left for Canada. The numbers at Wolstanton differed greatly at only thirty-five children.

Fig.7.3 Years and Number of children emigrating from Stoke workhouse

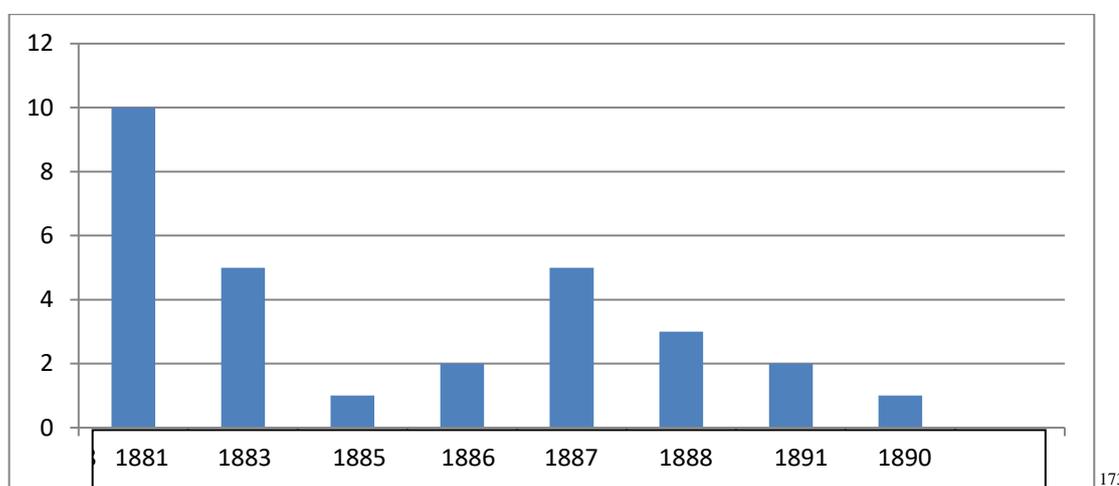


There are several factors that may account for this. In general terms, more children were employed within the factories earning a few shillings to support the family than at Stoke. Other reasons such as family members may have objected to emigration of workhouse children as they saw possible financial benefit to be gained by placing them into labour locally. Secondly,

¹⁷² Ibid., p.30

there were considerably more children at Stoke either orphaned or deserted making the process of emigration inevitable to reduce the costs of maintenance.

Fig.7.4 Years and Number of children emigrating from Wolstanton workhouse



National figures record the total number of children that immigrated to Canada over the same thirty-year period was six thousand four hundred and sixty-four.¹⁷⁴ The total contribution from Stoke-on-Trent is represented by 0.65 per cent of the total national number.

Conclusion

This chapter represents a new perspective in assessing the welfare and treatment of children found in union workhouses on three accounts. Firstly, it has established the diversity of child welfare from a local perspective which is wide-ranging and frequently complex and enables the experiences of pauper children to be expressed. Secondly, it is resourced by primary archival material whereby evidence has been uncovered to support the theory of spatial disparity showing that two totally different experiences of child welfare can operate within a small area under the same poor law. This justifies the importance of micro-studies into the life-cycle of pauper's subject to the poor law in a relatively small geographic area challenging preconceived

¹⁷³ TNA. Figures extracted from actual emigration lists from the years listed. In addition, LGB correspondence and minute books. Although it cannot be claimed as totally inclusive it represents the best information currently available.

¹⁷⁴ Numbers calculated from extracted figures quoted in the *Annual Local Government Reports* over the thirty-year period 1871-1901.

perceptions. Thirdly, it focuses on a little known and under researched period 1871-1901 producing significant data that has changed the understanding of institutionalised child poor law welfare from that of current secondary literature.

The discussion in chapter three reflects on the continuation of parochialism under the New Poor Law and represents how one union, Wolstanton, continued to apply this principle within the context of the welfare of children. The data provides extensive evidence of spatial diversity to the detriment of one set of children at Wolstanton in all areas of a child's workhouse experience whereby the key questions of chapter one have been the conduit to this investigation.

With regards to education at Stoke, although not perfect, it was taken seriously. The guardians erected separate buildings the last in 1866 - a prestigious large school with its own dormitories accommodating up to three-hundred children. Children at Wolstanton were originally taught in the dining/dayroom and in mixed classes later having a single classroom built. No special accommodation was provided for the children or any attempt to segregate them from contamination by adults. Evidence has shown that the guardians at Wolstanton failed to employ experienced teachers and to implement recommendations by the LGB following inspections that reflected upon children's academic achievements.

A further aspect of education was that of industrial training. Stoke excelled in this with a wide range of training programmes giving boys an opportunity for employment following institutional life. For girls, there was found an unprecedented approach in providing opportunities for girls to train for a future life of in-service with more prestigious families. At Wolstanton there were no such ideals.

For children's extra-curriculum experiences Stoke provided a wide range of sporting and cultural activities such as playing musical instrument, attending concerts and the theatre, visiting agricultural exhibitions and sports days even days' trips something quite unheard of within the administration of the poor law. At Wolstanton guardians would be aware of these

activities at Stoke but continued to operate status quo under the strict guidelines of the 1834 Act.

The diversity of the workhouse experience for children raises important issues regarding the policy of the LGB in setting bench-marks for the treatment of children. Apart from the inspection of teachers and assessing academic achievements and industrial training there was no *Circulars* from the central authority of what activities should be included in a child's workhouse experience. What Stoke achieved was with the full knowledge and support of the LGB and yet they failed to extend this experience found at Stoke for the benefit of all children under poor law care.

The next chapter investigates how examples of care to children was extended into providing homely comforts for elderly paupers by giving them opportunities like those provided to the young of the privileges and pleasures received both inside and outside of institutional care.

Fig.7.5 Stoke-upon-Trent Union – School Block 1842



Fig.7.6 Stoke-upon-Trent Union – School Block Plans 1842

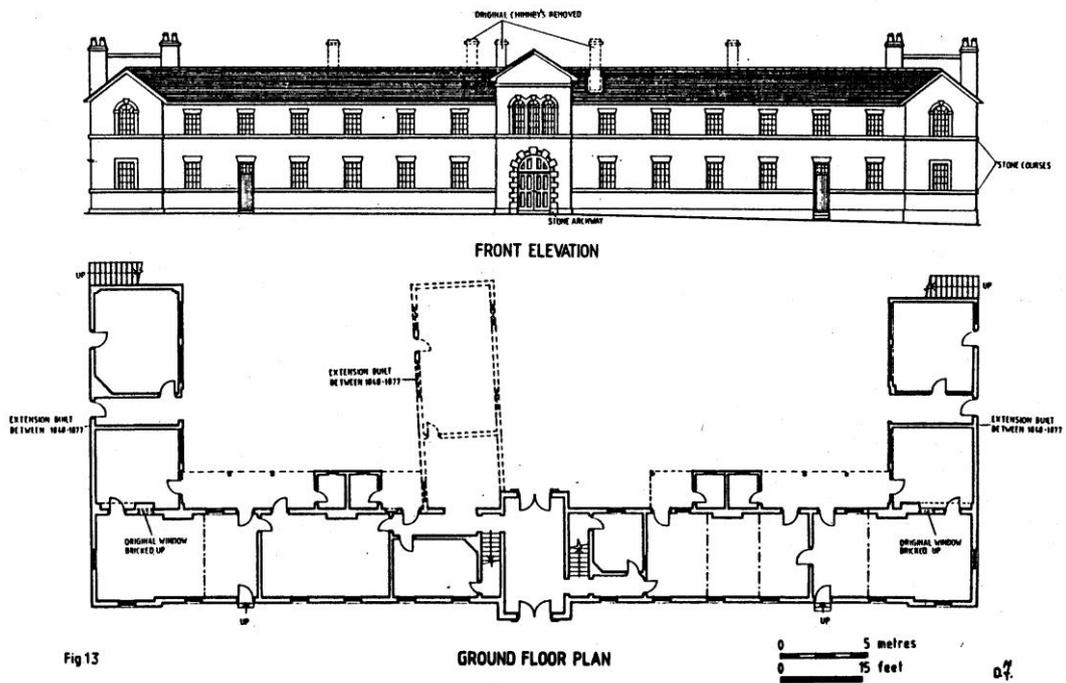


Fig.7.7 Stoke-upon-Trent Union –School Block 1866-8



Fig.7.8 Stoke-upon-Trent Union –School Plans Erected 1868

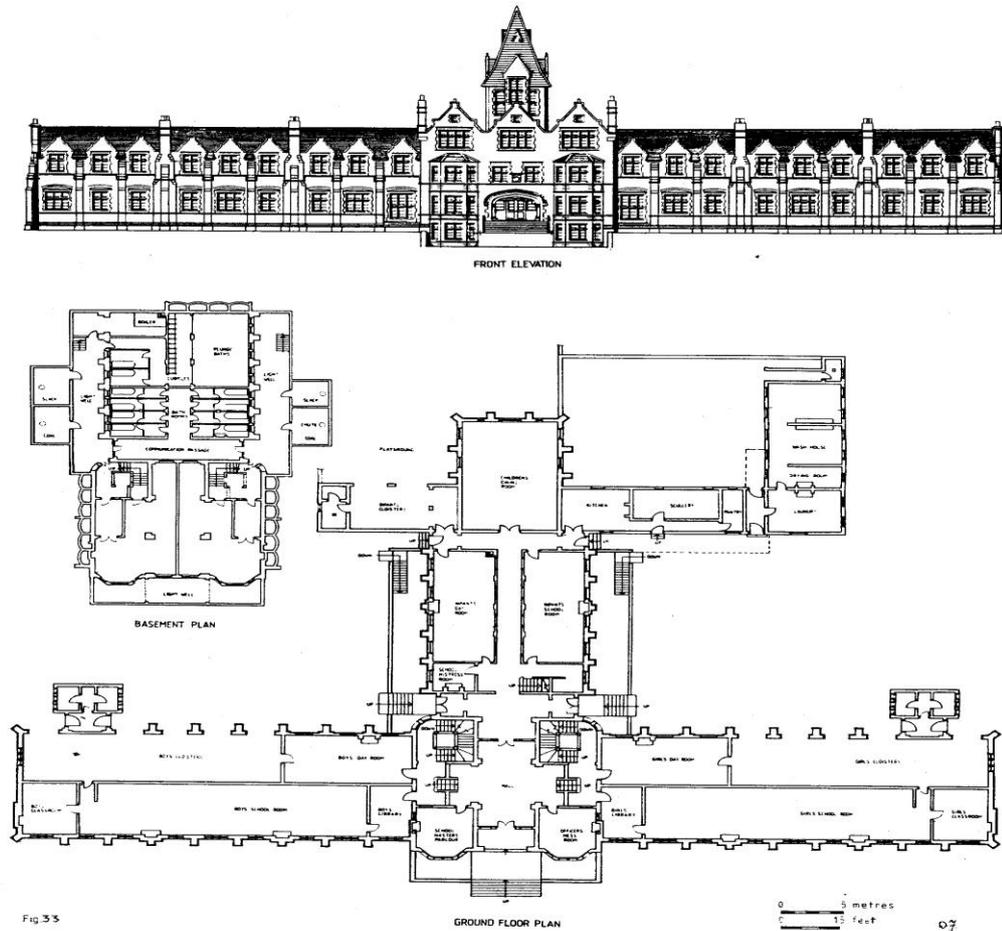


Fig.7.9 Inspectors Report on education at Stoke Workhouse 1874

D. 9491
1874

Local Government Board,
Whitehall, S.W.,
27 Feb 1874.

Certificate of Schoolmaster.

Stoke upon Trent Union Workhouse School.

SIR,

THE Local Government Board have considered the Report of H. G. Bowyer Esq., Inspector of Schools, respecting your Examination before him on the 3rd day of January, 1874.

The estimate of your qualifications is stated below :-

Qualifications as shown by the Papers.	Religious Knowledge....	} Not re-examined,
	Spelling	
	Penmanship	
	Arithmetic	
	Grammar	
	History	
Qualifications as reported by Inspector.	Geography	} Good, Good.
	Reading	
	Industrial Skill	
	State of School	
	Skill as a Teacher	

The Board have not been furnished with any means of judging of your proficiency in those subjects of the foregoing list to which no qualifying word is added.

The Class of Certificate which the Board have awarded to you is a Certificate of Efficiency, First Division, and it appears that the average number of Scholars under your care during the year preceding the date of your examination was 49. The sum therefore to be allowed to the Guardians from the Parliamentary Grant on your behalf for the parochial year ending Lady Day, 1874, according to the existing scale will be at the rate of £ 60.0.0 per annum.

By Order of the Board,
(Signed) J. F. Fletcher
Asst. Secretary.

Thomas Unwin,
Schoolmaster of the Stoke upon Trent Union Workhouse.

This Certificate will be required to be produced to the Inspector when he visits the School again. You will therefore carefully preserve it.

9 | 71-II & S 3319 [TURN OVER

Fig.7.10 School Inspectors Report at Stoke Workhouse 1874

Attainments as Exhibited in Examination.

Subjects	School-master	School-mistress	Assistant Teacher	Children					
				In First Class			In Other Classes		
				Boys	Girls	Infants	Boys	Girls	Infants
Religious Knowledge..			g	g	g		g	g	
Reading			g	g	g		g	g	
Spelling			g	g	g		g	g	
Penmanship			g	g	g		g	g	
Arithmetic			g	g	g		g	g	
English Grammar ..			g	g					
English History ..			g						
Geography			g	g	g				
Industrial Skill ..			g	g	g		g	g	g

Whether School is improved or otherwise since last visit, and the cause.

Boys - Good
Girls - Very fair
(This school is much reduced in numbers as well as the average age of the children).

Fig.7.11 Training Ship – Formidable



Fig.7.12 Typical Workhouse Brass Band - East London c1909



Fig.7.13 Report from Canada with the address of emigrated children, their employer and a brief account of their progress - 1884

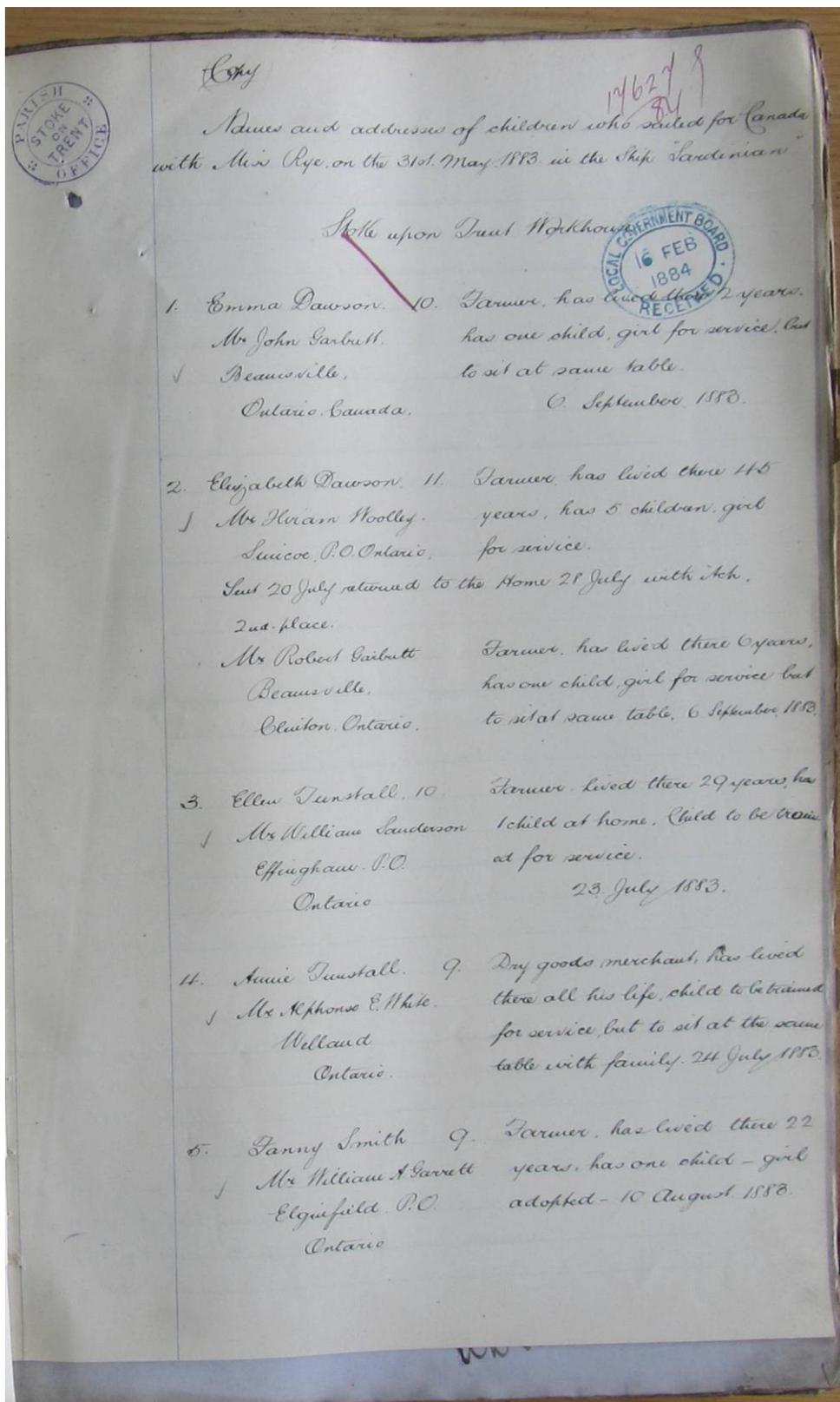


Fig.7.14 List of children to be emigrated to Canada in September 1887 from Wolstanton workhouse

At a Meeting of the Guardians of the Poor of the Wolstanton Workhouse Union, held at the Board Room, on the 13th day of September 1887

It was Resolved that the Five Orphan and Deserted Children whose names are set forth in the Statement below, being chargeable to the Wolstanton Workhouse Union, and having consented* to emigrate to Canada, the necessary steps be immediately taken to effect the emigration, and that a sum not exceeding £100 pounds be drawn out of the Common Fund to be expended for each Child and be charged upon the Common Fund of the Union.

J. Saunders Clerk to the Guardians.

STATEMENT REFERRED TO IN THE ABOVE RESOLUTION.

Name of Child	Age	Sex, whether male or female, as ascertained by the Guardians	Name and Address of Person under whom the Child is in charge.	Are the Guardians satisfied that the Person, and not the Child, is the proper person to be entrusted with the care of the Child, and that the Child is a fit subject for emigration?	Have the Guardians been satisfied from the parent or other person making the Child chargeable, and from any other person who may be acquainted with the Child, that the Child is a fit subject for emigration, and that the parent or other person making the Child chargeable is a fit person to be entrusted with the care of the Child, and that the Child is a fit subject for emigration?	CHARGES INCLUDED IN THE AMOUNT TO BE EXPENDED BY THE GUARDIANS.				
						10/11	12	13	14	
<u>Rebecca Madhu</u>	<u>10</u>	<u>Female</u>	<u>Mr. J. R. Roper</u>	<u>Yes</u>	<u>Yes</u>	<u>£2</u>	<u>3/6</u>	<u>2/6</u>	<u>2/11</u>	<u>7/6</u>
<u>William Rostock</u>	<u>12</u>	<u>Male</u>	<u>Mr. J. R. Roper</u>	<u>Yes</u>	<u>Yes</u>	<u>£2</u>	<u>3/6</u>	<u>2/6</u>	<u>2/11</u>	<u>7/6</u>
<u>Elizabeth Gordon</u>	<u>10</u>	<u>Female</u>	<u>Mr. J. R. Roper</u>	<u>Yes</u>	<u>Yes</u>	<u>£2</u>	<u>3/6</u>	<u>2/6</u>	<u>2/11</u>	<u>7/6</u>
<u>Lucy Wood</u>	<u>9</u>	<u>Female</u>	<u>Mr. J. R. Roper</u>	<u>Yes</u>	<u>Yes</u>	<u>£2</u>	<u>3/6</u>	<u>2/6</u>	<u>2/11</u>	<u>7/6</u>
<u>Miss E. Roper</u>	<u>9</u>	<u>Female</u>	<u>Mr. J. R. Roper</u>	<u>Yes</u>	<u>Yes</u>	<u>£2</u>	<u>3/6</u>	<u>2/6</u>	<u>2/11</u>	<u>7/6</u>

* It will not be regarded as essential that such period of instruction shall immediately precede the emigration.

Dated the 13th day of September 1887

J. Saunders Clerk to the Guardians.

Chapter 8 – The Workhouse in the later years of life

Overview.

It has been shown in chapter one that a considerable amount of secondary literature on the aged available, though rather less on the institutional aged poor and, for the period covered by this thesis at least. The situation of the aged was placed into sharp relief in the later nineteenth century as their importance in the pauper population seems to have increased. Workhouses, certainly by the 1880s were becoming thought of as institutions for the elderly and yet a time of conflicting debates regarding the issue of how to manage the poor and the changes needed to provide elderly relief and national benefits.

Apart from the work by Thane and Crowther,¹ there is little secondary literature which develops the theme or gives an insight into the national challenges concerning the treatment of institutionalised elderly paupers. Pat Thane's research on the aged has done much to stimulate discussion on how the aged were looked after post-1885.² However, few studies cover in detail the day to day of institutional life and of its administration at a critical time in poor law history. Nor has there been much consideration of the differences found between Poor Law Unions in attitudes or the treatment of the aged on the basis that it was considered that treatment was uniform, a thought to pervade the fractured secondary literature. Gaps in the empirical study of the aged for Staffordshire are particularly notable.

This chapter firstly examines secondary literature on how the elderly were treated under the poor law and the wider society. Secondly it identifies the motivators for change to improve the lives of the poor elderly and the government's response to the escalating burden on society. Thirdly, it evaluates the growth of institutionalised elderly populations during the third-quarter of the nineteenth century and establishes and contextualises local findings with other areas that

¹ P. Thane, *Old Age in English History, Past Experiences, Present Issues* (Oxford, 2000); M.A. Crowther, *The Workhouse System, 1834-1929: the History of an English Social Institution* (London, 1981).

² Thane, *Old Age*

identify spatial diversity. Fourthly, it will assess the external support for the elderly from influential people and the contribution it made to the quality of life of the elderly through patronage and will investigate to establish how this affected the care of the elderly under the authority of the poor law. Lastly it will investigate if the two unions approached the experiences of the elderly to be similar or not, and if not, what differences were found in the areas of diet, couple's privacy, homely wards and activities.

The Dilemma of the Elderly Poor.

In the latter years of the nineteenth century the Webbs observed that much of the treatment of the elderly was based on the concept of the 'deserving' and 'undeserving' in relation to the past and present character of the individual. Outdoor relief was only available to the 'deserving', but, if they entered the workhouse it was suggested they would receive more generous treatment.³

A *Circular* was issued by the President of the LGB in September 1890, in which he stated:

I have prepared a series of new regulations affecting the classification with a view to securing separate accommodation for the aged and deserving poor . . . that persons who have led decent and deserving lives should, if requiring relief in old age, receive different treatment from those with unsatisfactory habits . . . [and] be granted certain privileges, not accorded to every inmate.⁴

The complex issue of the *Crusade* against outdoor relief from 1871 concealed this expanding dilemma as for many poor law unions the main concern was that of providing accommodation for the growing demand for elderly care. Karel Williams argues that from 1871 there were concerted attempts to withdraw able-bodied relief and Englander argues that older men were frequently more in need of long-term care than were women:⁵

older women were less helpless than old men and were more likely to remain with their families. So long as they could perform household duties and take care of the children, they were an asset. Old men were less of an asset. Fathers, as disciplinarians, may have

³ These policies are discussed in detail in Webb and Webb, *Poor Law History*, pp.349-374.

⁴ BCL, VGPC, GP/B/2/8/1/10, 25 September (1900).

⁵ K. Williams, *Pauperism to Poverty* (London, 1981), p.68-90.

been less loved than mothers, and, therefore, more readily placed in an institution once they had become a financial burden to their families.⁶

LGB Inspector Davy⁷ in his annual report for the Counties of Sussex, Kent and a part of Surrey noted that in 1894 there had been no material change of the number of paupers from previous years and although there was a reduction in able-bodied inmates the numbers of indoor and outdoor remained unaltered⁸. This suggests that despite numbers remaining static, and the number of able-bodied paupers was lower, the balance of inmates found in workhouses was made up of far more elderly, sick, imbeciles and children. The report on outdoor relief suggests that even if paupers were given an allowance of five shillings a week and free medical treatment, the majority would still have no friends to look after them in times of need and concludes that ‘none of them (inmates) would voluntarily accept such relief in preference to their present condition’ in the workhouse.⁹

Ritch notes that guardians at Birmingham were not as compromising, refusing to implement many of the LGB recommendations, although it was recorded that ‘the supply of tobacco, dry tea, and sugar were now compulsory.’¹⁰ Anderson argues that for some, elderly welfare of the aged was provided within networks determined by kinship or co-residency which was a preferred method of supporting those unable to maintain economic independence.¹¹ On the same subject Anne Digby established in 1895 that there was a joint policy of either outdoor relief (the preferred option) or in-door workhouse relief relating to the Norwich area. She suggests that despite the allowance being below starvation levels that the elderly preferred to remain in their homes with the support from their families.¹² However, she cites the findings of

⁶ D. Englander, *Poverty and Poor Law Reform in the 19th Century* (London, 1998), p.34.

⁷ James S. Davy was the Poor Law Inspector for Northern and York districts as well as the Southern districts of Sussex, Surrey and Kent later to become the head of the Poor Law Division of the Local Government Board.

⁸ PP. *24th Annual Report of the Local Government Board* (1894-5), p. 21.

⁹ PP. *Ibid.* p.22.

¹⁰ A. Ritch, ‘English Poor Law Institutional Care for Older People: Identifying the ‘Aged and Infirm and the Sick in Birmingham Workhouse, 1852-1912’ *Social History of Medicine* (2013), p.4.

¹¹ M. Anderson, *Family structure in nineteenth-century Lancashire* (London, 1971), pp.265-86.

¹² A. Digby, *Pauper Palaces* (London, 1978), p.163.

the Royal Commission that 46.6 per cent of those who received poor relief were over sixty and nearly half were accommodated in workhouses.¹³

Growth of Workhouse Elderly Populations.

Although the poor law generated much statistical data there is nothing prior to 1891 found in LGB reports to provide a level of detail that is required for a realistic assessment of workhouse populations. In general terms the age of sixty was adopted by guardians as the dividing line between able-bodied and non-able-bodied pauper.¹⁴ The census enumerators' returns give accurate information regarding gender, age groupings, occupations, family status and place of birth therefore opening up opportunities such as those explored by Marguerite Dupree,¹⁵ Nigel Goose and the work of Hinde and Turnbull¹⁶ on the population of two Hampshire workhouses in the mid-nineteenth century.¹⁷ Hurren discusses Northamptonshire and Driver, Huddersfield.¹⁸ These published snapshots give historically distinct indications of the characteristics of workhouse populations; but, as Hinde and Turnbull recognised workhouse populations by nature could change quickly, especially in rural areas.¹⁹ Despite these scholarly contributions, King argues that the period between 1880 and 1906 lies in historiographical limbo since most detailed work has been directed towards the first fifty years of the New Poor Law followed by two decades thereafter.²⁰

Peter Laslett argues in his assessment of census enumerators' returns that the proportion of those aged sixty-five and above in England and Wales remained static between 4.6 and 4.7

¹³ M. A. Crowther, 'The Later Years of the Workhouse', in P. Thane, (ed.) *The Origins of British Social Policy* (London, 1978), pp.44-5. The Royal Commission's calculations will be scrutinised later in this chapter, with comparisons taken from census returns.

¹⁴ Thane, *Old Age*, pp.4-5.

¹⁵ M. Dupree, *Family Structure in the Staffordshire Potteries* (Oxford, 1995).

¹⁶ N. Goose, 'Workhouse Populations in the Mid-Nineteenth Century, a case for Hertfordshire', *Population Studies* (1999), pp.52-69.

¹⁷ A. Hinde, F. Turnbull, 'The Population of Two Hampshire Workhouses, 1851-1861'. *Local Population Studies* (1996), pp.38-52.

¹⁸ E. Hurren, *Protesting about Pauperism* (Woodbridge, 2007); F. Driver, *Power and Pauperism, the Workhouse System 1834-1884* (Cambridge, 1992).

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p.43.

²⁰ S.A. King, *Women, Welfare and Local Politics 1880-1920 'We might be trusted'* (London, 2006), p.6.

per cent throughout the second half of the nineteenth century. Over a thirty-year period 1861-1891 there was an increase of numbers from 932,000 to nearly 1.4 million in 1891²¹ identifying the national problem of growth in the elderly population. Thomson suggests that the proportion of older paupers relieved in workhouses was much greater than that of the population as a whole ranging from around thirteen per cent of those aged sixty-five and over in 1851, to about twenty per cent in 1911.²² In Lancaster, Gritt and Park observe that only in Barrow-in-Furness workhouse did the elderly proportion amount to under one-fifth and that the elderly consisted of more than one-third in twenty-one workhouses, and formed two-fifths in eight other workhouses.²³

It has been established that by the end of the nineteenth century there was a growth of the elderly in workhouses but the period also witnessed a change in attitudes towards their welfare. As a consequence, families began to suggest the advantages of workhouses as a permanent shelter for the elderly in their declining years. This was a far cry from the period following 1834 when the workhouse was perceived as an unequivocally wretched place but by 1895, for the most part, they were viewed in similar terms to alms houses and places of refuge, a sentiment that continued until the early part of the 20th century. LGB Inspector, Mr. Preston Thomas, reported:

the aged and infirm enjoy a large amount of liberty; they are only set to such light duties as are sufficient to occupy them pleasantly, and in all material conditions of feeding, housing, and clothing, they are very much better off than the aged poor outside. When one sees knots of the old men gossiping by the fire or basking in the sun; when one finds the bed-ridden old women carefully nursed and appropriately fed, it is difficult to help contrasting their condition with that of the outdoor poor.²⁴

²¹ P. Laslett, *Family Life and Illicit Love in Earlier Generations* (Cambridge, 1977), p.193.

²² D. Thomson, 'Workhouse to Nursing Home. Residential Care of elderly people in England since 1840', *Aging and Society* (1983), pp.3, 47.

²³ A. Gritt, P. Park, 'The Workhouse Populations in Lancaster in 1881', *Local Population Studies* (2011), pp.37-65.

²⁴ PP. 24th *Annual Report of the Local Government Board* (1894-5), p.29.

In Chester, it was reported the elderly might routinely be granted their ‘indulgencies’ where all male inmates over fifty years of age were allowed one half-ounce per week of tobacco and snuff and women had their half-ounce of tea and a quarter of a pound of sugar. Several old people also received half a pint of ale a day and, added the report, ‘some are allowed gin’.²⁵ In this respect it should be noted that the national annual consumption of alcohol in workhouses for 1892 amounted to 112,906 pints of ale at a cost of £13,124.²⁶

Digby argues in other unions such as Norwich, some workhouses still retained classification for the aged which meant variations in welfare and privileges between the deserving and the non-deserving while other unions allowed the elderly a later time to rise in the morning and in the chapel forms fitted with backs for more comfort and additional portions of snuff, beer, tea milk and sugar.²⁷ Crowther makes an interesting comment for the same period which seems at odds with the experience at Chester and Norwich as recorded by Digby:

patients no longer died from the lack of attention, but there were complaints of insufficient food and lack of comfort. The workhouse in 1900 was less criticised for its cruelty than for its dreariness in regimented squalor and its inability to deal appropriately with different types of inmates, and any improvements were described as inadequate.²⁸

National Concern to the Welfare of the Elderly Poor.

There was a determined desire for change in society towards the end of the century as the growing problem of poverty in old-age was becoming a national issue. The tide was flowing against the mid-Victorian ideals of self-help and individualism. Social reformers were increasingly willing to accept a more positive role in the making of social policy. In the early 1890s philanthropists’ such as Charles Booth,²⁹ Joseph and his father Seebohm Rowntree were

²⁵ Thane, *Old Age*, p.158.

²⁶ PP. 24th *Annual Report of the Local Government Board* (1894-5), p.xcix.

²⁷ Digby, *Pauper Palaces*, p.165.

²⁸ Crowther, *The Last Years of the Workhouse*, p.36.

²⁹ M.A. Crowther, *The Relief of Poverty 1834-1814*, 2nd edition. Basingstoke (1986), p.21. The advocacy of Charles Booth on old-age pensions was based upon the belief that if the aged poor could be removed from the poor law, it would be possible to abolish outdoor relief entirely.

highlighting the plight of old-age poverty and pressing the need for a state old-age pension³⁰ claiming that many older workers were being forced out of the labour market by the demands of modern industry. Rowntree argued that as much as ten per cent of household poverty in York was attributable to illness or old-age.³¹

Booth was a wealthy Liverpool ship owner who became concerned by the increasing prevalence of urban poverty in the 1880s. He investigated the extent of pauperism in the East End of London between 1887 and 1903 at a time when concerns were being expressed as to the state of the poor nationally. It was this concern that prompted him to survey the living and working conditions of people and to publish his findings in 1889.³² Following on from this, Booth published a further volume of statistical evidence: *Old Age Pensions and the Aged Poor – a Proposal*.³³ This promoted a revised pension plan, suggesting a pension of seven shillings per week on the grounds this was the lowest amount upon which any individual could subsist.

Inspired by the work of Charles Booth, Joseph and Seebohm Rowntree, embarked on a lengthy investigation of poverty in York where they talked to poor and working-class people in the city to assess what they spent their money on and the extent to which they could afford what he defined as the minimum necessities to survive (which did not, as far as he was concerned, include alcohol). Seebohm Rowntree also had an interest in statistics, as his work - *Poverty - A study in Town Life*³⁴ testifies and his published work confirmed the findings of Booth in 1899. It was their analysis of life for the poor elderly and the extent of poverty that was instrumental in stimulating investigations into old-age poverty and listening to the voices of the poor following the Commissioners report of 1894/5. Booth's contribution was hugely influential in the thinking which ultimately led to the foundation of the welfare state.

³⁰ G. Drage, *The Problem of the Aged Poor* (London, 1895), p.42.

³¹ Crowther, *The Workhouse System*, p.57.

³² M.E Rose, 'The Relief of Poverty 1834-1941' *part 1, Studies in Economic and Social History* (London, 1972), p.28.

³³ C. Booth, *Old Age Pensions, and the Aged Poor – A Proposal* (London, 1894).

³⁴ B.S. Rowntree, *Poverty – A study in Town Life* (London, 1899).

The Royal Commission of the Aged Poor was set up in 1893 to consider whether any alteration in the system of poor relief was needed in respect to those whose destitution was due to incapacity found in old age. While the Commission was still deliberating, the President of the LGB issued a *Circular* recommending that outdoor relief should be granted readily to older people and that those who entered the workhouse should have greater ‘comforts and freedom’. Thane argues that this advice was taken up far too slowly and unevenly by guardians across the country.³⁵ There is no evidence to suggest it was taken-up at Stoke or Wolstanton; nor was it, as Ritch confirms, adopted in Birmingham.³⁶

The fabric of the *Report of the Royal Commission of the Aged Poor*, questioned the resources available to old people based on outdoor relief and including that of begging.³⁷ The compilers of the report remained adamant that despite improvements in the treatment of the aged in some workhouses, for the majority the institution remained hated and feared, and yet there was no stigma attached to receiving outdoor relief³⁸ which amounted to between two shillings and three shillings and six pence a week, an amount that the Permanent Secretary of the LGB regarded was ‘impossible for a man to live upon ... unless he is helped in some way’.³⁹ This report was fundamentally a social document addressing the issues of the period which condemned the lack of any coherent social policy.⁴⁰ The implications are important as it commenced by deploring the fact that such a large proportion of the working class were elderly and in receipt of poor relief, asserting that two-fifths of those over sixty-five were paupers. It continues to suggest the greater use of Friendly Societies as a solution but this argument was

³⁵ Thane, *Old Age*, p.192.

³⁶ Ritch. *Identifying the ‘Aged and Infirm’*, p.81.

³⁷ PP. *Report of the Royal Commission of the Aged Poor* (1895).xiv, pp. viii-xxxvii.

³⁸ PP. *Ibid.* 211, 76715.

³⁹ PP. *Ibid.* 247, 572, 1162, 2799

⁴⁰ A. Kidd, *State, Society and the Poor in 19th Century England* (New York, 1999), p.56; Crowther, *The Workhouse System*, p.57.

counter-balanced by re-emphasising the point where the needs of the elderly were considerably fewer than the rest of the population.⁴¹ In this respect the report concluded:

we are of the opinion that no fundamental alterations are needed in the existing system of poor law relief as it affects the aged, and that it would be undesirable to interfere either by statute or order with the discretion now vested in the guardians as to the manner in which such relief should be given, since it is in our view of essential importance that guardians should have the power to deal on its merits with each individual case.⁴²

The Commissioners failed to quantify the serious problem of poverty in relation to the aged by allowing the guardians to continue as they wished with no compulsion to change. On a positive side, they held the view on outdoor relief that ‘the amount should be adequate to meet fully the extent of the destitution in all cases for which application is made’⁴³ but it lacked detail as no specific minimum rate or guidelines were recommended, thus allowing relieving officers the freedom in assessing outdoor relief to determine what support was offered. The Commission did emphasise one controversial condition in the determination of relief:

we (the Commission) are of the opinion that the mode of relief should always be settled with a due regard to the character of the applicant, health, and surroundings, and should be fully adequate to meet the destitution.⁴⁴

This reiterated their stance on classification of the elderly poor ignoring the hardship that it brought to many elderly inmates. The Royal Commission remained reluctant to recommend its abolition:

The classification of the aged male and female inmates which is prescribed by the regulations must in our opinion be always carried out. Every effort should be made to keep apart those whose language (swearing) or behaviour makes them unfit companions for the well-conducted inmates. Opportunities for privacy and for forming their companionships should, we consider, as far as possible, be given to the aged inmates

⁴¹ PP. *Report of the Royal Commission of the Aged Poor* (1895). Reproduced in the *25th Annual Report of the Local Government Board* (1895-96). Appendix A.1, p.156.

⁴² *Ibid.*, p.156.

⁴³ *Ibid.*

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p.157.

generally. However, we feel that classification by past character would present great difficulties, and therefore we are not prepared to recommend this regulation.⁴⁵

It continued in the report that there ‘was no doubt that the cases of pauperism were due to misfortune’, which was much more frequent among women than men.⁴⁶ With regard to life in the workhouses, again the Commission was complacent, failing to recognise the plight of the elderly in many of the institutions:

we have noted with great pleasure the efforts which are being made to brighten the lives of the aged inmates of workhouses, and we think that such efforts should receive every encouragement. We attach special importance to the provision of light and interesting occupations and employment, such as we have seen may be afforded through the agency of the Brabazon Scheme, and to the supply of literature, amusements, and some small luxuries.⁴⁷

There is little evidence to support these optimistic statements in the report although Crowther suggests in some areas inmates were allowed out for half or a full day once a week.⁴⁸

Witnesses to the Commission stated that because the average wages for women was lower than men, and because they also contributed towards insurance against sickness and death by joining a club or society, it was impossible for them to make any provision for old age. In addition, it was noted in the Midlands that servants were employed at very low wages, making it difficult for them to save. The Commission concluded that women seldom had opportunities to save for themselves if they kept house for their husbands and that it was cruel to say that pauperism was mainly due to the paupers themselves.⁴⁹

The Report showed no real appreciation to the injustices carried out in the name of the Poor Law to the elderly on several accounts; to retain classification, stating once more that the

⁴⁵ Ibid., p.158.

⁴⁶ PP. *Report of the Royal Commission on the Aged Poor* (1895), p.8145.

⁴⁷ Ibid., Digby also refers to the Brabazon scheme being in operation in Norwich. p.165.

⁴⁸ Crowther, *The Workhouse System*, p.45, describes the situation in 1895 at Newport Workhouse, where aged inmates received half a day out every week, whereas Cardiff allowed a whole day once a week and also supplied inmates with outside clothes.

⁴⁹ Drage, *The Problem*, pp.41-42.

past character of an inmate must be considered and placed the burden of financial support onto Friendly Societies and Charities frequently emphasising that there was no alternative to thrift to provide for old age, which for most was impossible. The Commissioners' final contribution to the debate pointed beyond the workhouse as a means of support in old age:

having regard, however, to the widespread expectation, in and out of Parliament, that some provision other than that provided by the poor law should be devised for the assistance in old age of those among the poor who have led respectable lives, we do not desire that our consideration should preclude the future consideration of any plan which may hereafter be proposed and be free from the objections which have prevented the adoption of the scheme submitted to us.⁵⁰

This section of the report contradicts its own argument illustrating that the Commission was not fully committed to any improvements in the conditions prevailing for the aged concluding that the emphasis on old-age care was the responsibility of the individual and not the state.

There is no evidence to suggest that guardians at either union, Stoke or Wolstanton debated the Royal Commission's report probably on account that there was nothing to recommend or to implement that would affect the welfare of pauper inmates. The Report could therefore be assessed as an exercise in public relations which failed to lead to any immediate recommendations for improvements, but rather critically placing the situation for pauper's predicaments directly upon themselves with no solutions to the growing numbers of the elderly seeking support. Ultimately the report led to workhouses becoming known as 'Institutions for the Aged'.⁵¹ Noting the methodological difficulties in attempting to identify sick older inmates in poor law records as Rich states: 'The lack of distinction between the effects of the normal ageing process and the manifestation of disease in old age in the nineteenth century adds to the difficulty'.⁵² David Thomson takes a different view arguing that the workhouse had not become

⁵⁰ Ibid., p.160.

⁵¹ Thomson, 'Workhouse to Nursing Home', pp.3, 47.

⁵² Ritch, *English Poor Law*, p.4.

a primary institution for the elderly poor and that the workhouse only played a minor part in providing care for the aged but fails to identify where the majority of care came from.⁵³

The Royal Commission made reference to talks regarding the introduction of a state old-age pension but was not to commence until individuals had reached the age of seventy but recommendation was not approved by Parliament until 1908.⁵⁴ In the meantime, and despite parliamentary conversations, little took place regarding the status of workhouses until a report was issued in January 1918:

that the Board of Guardians and unions should be abolished and their functions merged with those of county and municipal councils, who would ultimately take local control of all social services; the general mixed workhouses should cease to exist and be replaced by separate institutions for separate categories of need.⁵⁵

Finally, in 1929 legislation was passed allowing local authorities to take over workhouse infirmaries as municipal hospitals. Although they were formally abolished by the same legislation the following year many continued their existence, under the new title of 'Public Assistance Institution' controlled by local authorities. It was not until the National Assistance Act of 1948 that the last vestiges of the poor law disappeared a period which is excluded from the remit of this thesis.

Growth of the Elderly Workhouse Population.

The third quarter of the nineteenth century witnessed dramatic changes in the life of pauper inmates as workhouses become known as institutions for the elderly, but how much of this change was down to LGB *Circulars* or the initiatives of guardians? It is important to compare workhouse populations from 1871-1901 to summarise the findings between Stoke and Wolstanton urban

⁵³ D. Thompson, 'The welfare of the elderly in the past: a family or community responsibility', M. Pelling, R.M. Smith, (eds.) 'Life, Death and the Elderly', *Historical Perspectives* (1991), pp.207-8.

⁵⁴ The Old-Age Pensions Act 1908 is an Act of Parliament. The Act is often regarded as one of the foundations of modern social welfare in the United Kingdom and forms part of the wider social welfare reforms of the Liberal Government of 1906–1914. The Act provided for a non-contributory old age pension for persons over the age of 70. It was enacted in January 1909 and paid a weekly pension of 5s a week (7s 6d for married couples) to half a million who were eligible.

⁵⁵ P. Thane, *Foundations of the Welfare State* (London, 1983), p.140.

industrial areas with those of Stafford a relatively rural area. To illustrate further the complexity of the poor law these findings will be viewed against those of Goose for Hertfordshire, Hinde, and Turnbull for Hampshire and Leivers for Derby to establish the extent of spatial diversity. Once these population differences have been assessed the subject turns to that of the elderly experiences of the poor law and develops further the theme of diversity and how this was seen in the daily lives of paupers. The following figures represent in general terms the population increases experienced in workhouse for the period 1851-1901.

Table 8.1 Per-cent Increase in union population numbers for the period 1871-1881

Stoke	1871	80,269	
	1881	104,603	increase of 30 per cent
Wolstanton	1871	61,642	
	1881	72,648	increase of 18 per cent

As a further comparison, the next set of tables assess the proportion of workhouse inmates against the total population of each union

Table 8.2 Proportion of workhouse inmates as a percentage proportion of the total union population

Stoke	1871	611	represented by .008 per cent of population.
Stoke	1881	859	.008
Wolstanton	1871	150	.002
Wolstanton	1881	275	.004 ⁵⁶

The figures identify a situation at Stoke that despite a significant increase in union population from 1871-1881 of thirty per cent the percentage of workhouse inmates remained constant at .008 per cent. For Wolstanton the Union population increased by eighteen per cent and the proportion of inmate population slightly from 0.002 in 1871 to 0.004 per cent the year later suggesting that at both unions experienced an increase in growth and therefore a reduction of able-bodied inmates.

The following table breaks down the numbers of inmates in Stoke and Wolstanton into

⁵⁶ Figures reproduced from the 1st and 10th Local Government Board Annual Reports.

age groupings together with the proportion of those over the age of sixty-five listed in census returns 1851- 1891.

Table 8.3 Age grouping of inmates aged 65 and over male and female with the total number in the workhouse

Stoke 1851	men	women	total	No. In workhouse	% of total in workhouse
65-70	4	4	8	121	13.2%
71-75	4	1	5		
76-80	0	0	2		
81 plus	1	0	1		
Stoke 1871	men	women	total	No. in workhouse	
65-70	35	12	47	611	17.5%
71-75	22	10	32		
76-80	16	4	20		
81 plus	4	4	8		
Stoke 1881	men	women	total	No. in workhouse	
65-70	38	21	59	859	16.6%
71-75	25	15	40		
76-80	14	17	31		
81 plus	4	4	8		
Stoke 1891	men	women	total	No. in workhouse	
65-70	14	5	19	760	20%
71-75	56	29	85		
76-80	19	13	32		
81 plus	5	13	18		
Stoke 1901	men	women	total	No. in workhouse	
65-70	33	36	69	998	28%
71-75	46	75	121		
76-80	36	22	58		
81 plus	18	16	34		
Wolstanton 1851	men	women	total	No. in workhouse	% against number in workhouse
65-70	11	5	16	157	29%
71-75	13	1	14		
76-80	4	1	5		
81 plus	4	1	5		
Wolstanton 1871	men	women	total	No. in workhouse	

65-70	6	2	8	150	16%
71-75	5	0	5		
76-80	5	3	8		
80 plus	1	2	3		

Wolstanton 1881	men	women	total	No. in workhouse	
65-70	20	6	26	275	18%
71-75	9	4	13		
76-80	7	1	8		
80 plus	3	1	4		

Wolstanton 1891	men	women	total	No. in workhouse	
65-70	14	11	25	212	25.5%
71-75	13	7	21		
76-80	4	1	5		
80 plus	2	1	3		

Wolstanton 1901	men	women	total	No. in workhouse	
65-70	32	15	47	372	33%
71-75	26	18	44		
76-80	18	6	24		
80 plus	3	7	10		

Stafford 1881	men	women	total	No. in workhouse	
65-70	20	12	32	369	12%
71-75	13	16	29		
76-80	21	7	28		
81 plus	2	14	16		

At Stoke the number of old people increased between the years 1851-1901 by over eight hundred per cent whereas at Wolstanton the number was significantly lower at one hundred per cent. The 1901 census records that inmates at Stoke, the population stood at nine hundred and ninety-eight of which those over the age of sixty-five amounted to twenty-six per cent whereas at Wolstanton it was considerably lower at three hundred and seventy-two per cent of which the proportion over the age of sixty-five amounted to thirty-three per cent. As rough comparison Stafford workhouse in 1881 for the same age groups was twelve per cent.⁵⁷

⁵⁷ Figures extracted from the enumerator's return for the Stafford workhouse, 1881.

The rationale is probably accounted for as Stoke and Wolstanton were industrialised and therefore subject to regular trade fluctuations whereas at Stafford, a rural area, may have experienced a more constant period of employment. The percentage of those over sixty-five at Stoke was seventeen per cent and Wolstanton almost identical at eighteen per cent. To break down these numbers further they are contextualised by those married, single and widowed and by gender from 1851 – 1891. As a comparison with industrial north Staffordshire the rural union of Stafford for 1881 will be used.

Table 8.4 The gender of the over 65 years of age group for Wolstanton, Stoke, and Stafford

Workhouse	Year	married		<u>Total</u>	single		<u>Total</u>	widowers	widows	<u>Total</u>
		male	female		male	female				
Stoke	1851	2	0	2	0	0	0	8	6	14
Stoke	1871	4	2	6	13	4	17	56	26	82
Stoke	1881	5	6	11	29	7	36	47	44	91
Stoke	1891	16	10	26	34	3	37	70	58	128
Stoke	1901	9	10	19	6	51	57	105	78	183
Wolstanton	1851	3	2	5	2	1	3	25	7	32
Wolstanton	1871	1	0	1	5	3	8	13	5	18
Wolstanton	1881	4	2	6	8	2	10	23	12	35
Wolstanton	1891	3	3	6	9	3	12	20	16	36
Wolstanton	1901	10	3	13	15	1	16	49	39	88
Stafford	1881	8	3	12	21	7	28	41	23	64 ⁵⁸

Married inmates over sixty years at Stoke showed a steady increase from six to nineteen from 1871 to 1901 and Wolstanton from five to thirteen. However, the variance between those listed as married reflect a higher number over the last two decades 1891-1901 at Stoke males

⁵⁸ Numbers extracted from Census Returns for years listed from the age of 65 upwards.

were sixty per cent higher in 1891 of than 1901 and identical numbers of ten for both decades for females. At Wolstanton both male and females were identical at three for 1891 but ten years later the males have increased to ten whereas the females remained at three. This may be accounted for by the fact that in severe cases of poverty that the wife may be supported by her elderly children as a house keeper or child minder in the same family unit as Dupree has suggested and for the husband, perhaps disabled and a burden would have no other alternative than to enter the workhouse.⁵⁹

For single inmates, Stoke showed an increase from seventeen to fifty-seven and Wolstanton from eight to sixteen over a period of thirty years which is probably accounted for as in old age or infirmity they had no one to care for them. The final grouping, widows, and widowers increased from eighty-two to one hundred and twenty-eight for Stoke an increase of fifty-five per cent over thirty years whereas Wolstanton increased from thirty-two to eighty-eight a higher increase of one hundred and seventy-five per cent over the same period. Within this number, it may be assumed that the majority came from backgrounds where their partner had died they fell on the poor law for support.

The outcomes of these statistics draw further attention to the spatial diversity between the two unions found within the marital status of aged inmates and even more so in the widowed group of inmates. The gender balance of inmates throughout concluded that male significantly out-number female. For 1881 the statistics for the rural area of Stafford, as a comparison, are not as divisive for married couples as numbers were comparative with Stoke whereas at Wolstanton as they were twice as high. The single statistics show that Stoke totalled thirty-six whilst Wolstanton only ten compared with Stafford at twenty-eight suggesting that as the majority were male may have been accounted for on the basis that they could have been single farm labourers with no permanent home in old age. The last section, widowers show that at

⁵⁹ Dupree, *Family Structure*, pp.309-325.

Stoke the numbers were ninety-one compared with Wolstanton at thirty-five and Stafford sixty-four all three proportionally likened to the figures married couples.

To obtain a wider perspective of the statistics for the years 1851 and 1891 the findings of Goose and Leivers provide necessary contrasts.⁶⁰

Table 8.5 Inmates over 60 years of age as % of total workhouse inmates for the years 1851 and 1901

	1851	1901
Hertfordshire	25.3	
Hampshire	22.3	
Derby	28.4	47.9
Stoke	23.0	39.7
Wolstanton	30.0	41.4 ⁶¹

For 1851, the results for Hertfordshire and Hampshire are comparable with each other reflecting a rural community, but surprisingly they reflect similar results as Stoke, an industrial area. At Derby, by comparison, a town characterised by a mixed rural-industrial economy, the figure is higher at just over twenty-eight per cent. So too are the figures for Wolstanton at thirty per cent no doubt influenced by the higher density of industrialisation around the towns of Burslem and Tunstall and a mixed economy.

It has been established that the number of inmates at Stoke totally out-numbered those of Wolstanton and within the analysis of census data it is shown that there was considerable disparity between both unions when calculated as percentages exposing subtle differences in the composition of the workhouse elderly populations. The following section views the experiences of the elderly and assesses the quality of poor law welfare to the elderly population.

⁶⁰ As the figures used for Hertfordshire and Hampshire by Goose and Leivers are calculated from the age of 60 and not 65 as they are in Stoke and Wolstanton these figures have been adjusted to those used by Goose and Leivers so accurate comparisons can be made.

⁶¹ Statistics for Hertford and Hampshire: Goose, *Workhouse Populations*, pp.56-57; For Derby: C. Leivers research notes: 'Housing for the elderly in 19th century Derbyshire: a comparison of alms houses and workhouse provision', *Local Population Studies* (2009), pp.59-60.

Local Experiences

At Stoke Union, the moving force for change was not as a result of guardian's involvement or LGB *Circulars*, but by the direct intervention of probably the most influential person in North Staffordshire, Millicent Sutherland-Leveson-Gower, Duchess of Sutherland.⁶² (Fig.7.1) By 1882 she was arranging visits to her home at Trentham Hall for the 'Annual Treat' for children and the elderly, suggesting they held there for some years.⁶³

But the concerns of the Duchess extended further into the workhouse conditions of the elderly as by 1885, bed-side tables were purchased for the personal use of elderly inmates (Fig.7.2)⁶⁴ and the following year the Duchess and other ladies presented gifts to the elderly at Christmas.⁶⁵ At the same time, the guardians, no doubt motivated by the Duchess, were proactive in arranging boxes to be placed at Stoke Railway Station for the collection of daily used newspapers from commuters returning by train to Stoke from London every evening.⁶⁶ The patronage of the Duchess and her friends was fundamental in improving the quality of life for the elderly no doubt because of her status in society and her connections, small but meaningful improvements were made. One of the highlights of the year was when Mr. Beech of Burslem came to exhibit the new phonograph to the elderly in September 1895⁶⁷ which was followed later in the year by Mrs. Wedgwood presenting to the elderly ladies' ward a 'poly-phone' with twelve cylinders of different tunes.⁶⁸ In the same year, the Duchess invited all the elderly and children (in total numbering around four hundred and fifty) to Trentham from 2 p.m. until 7 p.m. Using her connections she also secured thirty-four pairs of reading eye glasses from Messrs Piddock of

⁶² Millicent, 20 October 1867 – 20 August 1955. The Duchess of Sutherland was well known for her charity work, especially on behalf of the crippled. She was instrumental in the foundation of the Cripples' Hospital at Hartshill, Stoke-on-Trent.

⁶³ HA. Stoke Minute Book, vol.19, 23 June 1882.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, vol.21, 30 September 1885.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 8 January 1885. It does not list what the gifts were.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, vol.22, 21 June 1887.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 25, 4 September 1895.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, vol.25, 20 March 1895. A poly-phone is a small mechanical player of music similar to a musical box with speakers for amplification. Tunes were pre-set on exchangeable cylinders.

Hanley⁶⁹ and in February 1896, she was responsible for the supply of tobacco for the men in the workhouse.⁷⁰ Later the same year, Mrs. Wedgwood arranged for a conjuring show to be given⁷¹ and by October 1900 guardians agreed to purchase a piano at a cost not exceeding thirty guineas rather than to pay ten shillings a week rental.⁷²

The highlight of the decade was the celebrations of the 60th Diamond Jubilee of Queen Victoria, held on the 22nd June in 1887. The LGB took the initiative to inform all guardians of the coming event and the need to request for the modification of regulations concerning the discipline and diet of the inmates. In response Stoke formed a committee to undertake the organisation of the day whereby a special meal of beef and plum pudding which was followed by fruit for the children and extra tobacco, beer and snuff for the adults. Entertainment was also organised, and it was agreed that no work by inmates should be done on that day except what was deemed to be necessary.⁷³ At Wolstanton on this occasion the guardians also arranged for a special meal followed entertainment.

In addition to local initiatives the LGB conscious to the changes in the ideals of the workhouse institution worked towards making indoor relief more acceptable for the aged poor. From 1894 as they encouraged more freedom and a better diet for the elderly including tobacco and snuff rations to the all deserving poor.⁷⁴ The following year they suggested that tea, milk and sugar were to be made freely available to elderly female inmates so that they had the means of making tea for themselves. However, upon the examination of the Wolstanton minute books nothing in relation to the elderly or the need to provide privileges, treats or special privileges except those of national festive occasions. One trip only is recorded to attend an afternoon performance at the Wedgwood Theatre in Burslem in March 1896. The question therefore must

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 15 May 1895.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, vol.26, 5 February 1896.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 5 February 1896.

⁷² *Ibid.*, vol.28, 24 October 1900.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, vol.27, 12 May 1897.

⁷⁴ *PP. 24th Annual Report of the Local Government Board (1894)*, p.xcix.

be asked – was the treatment received by elderly inmates at Stoke as a direct result of patronage or did it reflect the policy of the Board of Guardians? It may be argued that the former and not the latter were more likely to have been the case and the Board therefore discovered that their prestige to the electorate was increased.

Throughout this thesis, the emphasis has focused upon the differences of pauper experiences between two adjacent Poor Law Unions but it now turns to those in the latter years of their life to determine if spatial diversity existed even in this final life-cycle experience. In 1878, the LGB sent out a *Circular* reminding the guardians of the need to provide separate accommodation for the elderly but the Board at Stoke decided to take no action.⁷⁵ The matter was again referred to in 1896 when it was agreed to accommodate such a request by the purchase of thirty-six framed portable decorated screens, bolsters, and double blankets.⁷⁶ There was no reference to the provision of double beds recorded at Wolstanton although like all other unions they would have received an LGB *Circular* for the need to offer this facility.

Nationally a Ladies Visiting Committee has been established in many unions.⁷⁷ The Committee at Stoke had arranged for a number of elderly inmates to participate in the Brabazon Scheme,⁷⁸ referred to in the report of the Royal Commission in 1901. The group displayed their results at a public sale opened by the Duchess in the school room the following May. At their following Annual meeting it was reported that the sum realised at the craft sale amounted to £30⁷⁹ and an entertainments committee was established as a sub-group.⁸⁰ Wolstanton failed to identify

⁷⁵ HA. Stoke Minute Book, vol.17, 8 March 1878.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, vol.26, 9 December 1896.

⁷⁷ King, *Women, Welfare*, King extensively uses the diaries of Mary Haslam to illustrate the opposition from male workhouse guardians to the point of proposing that the Ladies Visiting Committee be discontinued; Crowther, *The Workhouse System*, pp. 69-70; Wolstanton Union Visiting Committee Minute Books 1869-1894 have survived and located in Hanley Archives.

⁷⁸ HA. Stoke Minute Book, vol.29, 13 March 1901. The Brabazon scheme was initiated in 1882 by Lady Brabazon to provide occupation for the non-able-bodied inmates in workhouses in crafts such as knitting, embroidery, and lace-making.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 12 March 1901.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 11 September 1901.

the need for a Ladies Visiting Committee, but had a Visiting Committee, comprising of only male members that focused not on the welfare on inmates but the day to day running of the workhouse.

Conclusion

Historiography has shown that spatial diversity of poor law elderly welfare is a complex framework of variations. Towards the end of the nineteenth century, the proportion of age groupings found within workhouses nationally had changed to the point where the majority consisted of more elderly over the age of sixty-five. This has been illustrated by the fact that at Stoke the proportion of the elderly had increased over a period of ten years by thirty per cent against a much lower number of eighteen per cent at Wolstanton.

The work of Hinde and Turnbull make a significant contribution to population studies in their research on two Hampshire workhouses for 1851 and 1861. Goose also makes a valuable input with regards to his assessment of the elderly population in Herefordshire⁸¹ but in comparison with those for Stoke and Wolstanton shows little diversity despite the rural setting of Hampshire and Herefordshire. However, the figures for Derby, a mixed economy stand out as higher in proportion to Stoke but lower than those at Wolstanton.

Nationally, parliament lacked solutions to the increasing problem of the aged poor even though people like Booth and Rowntree had suggested a scheme of old age pensions. However, to satisfy public concern they appointed a Commission to report on the plight of the elderly poor to allay growing public concerns. The rhetoric of the Royal Commission brought no real change and was regarded as a political exercise to appease concerns with no clear solutions. It may be argued that 1895 report of the Commission could be considered an exercise in public deception as there were no constructive outcomes to assist in the care of the elderly poor. Their report was

⁸¹ A. Hinde, F. Turnbull, 'The Population of Two Hampshire Villages 1851-1861', *Local Population Studies* (1996), pp.38-53. The material was re-worked and incorporated by N. Goose. 'Workhouses in the Mid-Nineteenth Century – The Case of Hertfordshire', *Local Population Studies* (1999), pp.52-69.

little more than a confirmation of fact, stating that the guardians should continue their good work with more reliance on Friendly Societies and charities.

Care for the workhouse elderly is identified by their treatment received and privileges, such as facilities, occupational activities and additional provisions either in kind or in practical ways promoted by philanthropists as seen at Stoke. At Wolstanton, there was no benefactor, and little recorded as that would indicate any quality of life experiences except those based upon national celebrations.

This chapter has achieved its main objectives and has responded to the key questions framed in chapter one. The use of census returns has enabled comparisons of age and gender to be contextualised to establish the trends and spatial diversity found in one classification – the aged. It has shown that even in a small geographical area of north Staffordshire how inconsistent care of the elderly was found under the same poor law. In each area of enquiry observations demonstrate that the two unions, Stoke and Wolstanton despite being within a single industrial conurbation operated independently from LGB *Circulars* and has produced significant evidence of spatial diversity.

Fig.8.1 Her Grace the Duchess of Sutherland 1894. Patron of Stoke workhouse



Fig.8.2 The women's day-room at Cambridge workhouse c1910. By this date provisions for the elderly in many workhouses had been improved.



Chapter 9 - Conclusion

The central aim of this study was to explore a region of the West Midlands which has been neglected in the appraisal of the poor law and for the period 1871-1891. There was one main area of investigation: was the LGB successful in its cause in creating a relatively uniform practice of administration at a local union level or to allow two contiguous unions to pursue radically different policies and radically different pauper experiences. To achieve these goals the subject has for its basis three thematic drivers which deliver the aims of this thesis.

The first thematic driver is the nature of administration, workhouse life and the understanding of outdoor relief. The second, to investigate the life-cycle experiences of individual groups of pauper's as a micro-study and to contextualise comparisons found in poor law welfare. The third thematic driver links these two together by an analysis of the comparisons on how policies and directives of the LGB were devolved through the administration of local guardians and throughout each life-cycle experience and if they varied between local interpretation and that of national implementation in the later period of the New Poor Law.

This will be followed by an assessment on how this thesis has changed our knowledge of the poor law administration, its links with the LGB and finally in the life-cycle experiences of the paupers themselves. It illuminates the findings and considers the overall importance of these points in the wider context of the New Poor Law and what these say to us of the nature and power of the workhouse.

The first thematic driver touches every chapter. Chapter one has its focus on how the poor law developed in the Staffordshire Potteries from the Old Poor Law and how its roots of parochialism overflowed into the New Poor Law. The study discovered first-hand the early conflicts between local guardians and the Potters Union and between guardians and the PLB. In chapter two, the thematic drivers were seen through an examination of the progress in the

administration, the new laws and lines of authority and the principle architects of change from the from the Old Poor Law to the establishment of the LGB in 1871. Chapter three further reflects on the authority of the local unions and how the theme of parochialism once carried over from the previous administration hindered the objects of the New Poor Law with disparity and little unity of purpose on how the guardians of two unions applied directives especially those relating to outdoor poor relief and the *Crusade*.

In chapter four, the first of the life-cycle chapters show a totally different perspective in the administration of religion. It was established that each of the three denominations, the Established Church, the Non-conformists and the Roman Catholic found it impossible to work together whereby the conflict reflected that of power and dominance by one denomination over another. At Wolstanton, where the guardians were predominantly Non-conformists they persistently tried to reduce the salary of the Anglican chaplain and diminish the authority of the Bishop with regards to appointments and the consecration of a proposed new workhouse cemetery chapel. Similarities were discovered in chapter five regarding vagrancy where the adjacent Board of Guardians was quite divided over the approaches they should follow to reduce the problems regarding the work ethic in payment for accommodation. Sentiment and intent was also found within the subject of health and lunacy in chapter six where the core theme flows throughout. The first is that of infirmaries, their design and the need for more wards to meet the growing demand. There was major disparity found between the unions, Stoke, taking the initiative to expand whereas Wolstanton failed to recognise the need as the policy was to treat the parish poor within their homes.

The same applies to the recognition of lunatics, and the need to separate this classification from general inmates. Stoke provided the necessary accommodation and Wolstanton sent the majority directly to the county asylum. In the area of care, Stoke had a policy which extended where possible to the return to work of amputees with the provision of artificial legs and feet

and additional care in convalescent homes for others. At Wolstanton there was no such provision.

The second thematic driver was that of life-cycle experiences of individual groups of pauper's which commences with chapter four. What this chapter has established is the attitudes to the framework of the religious services provided to the inmates which was dependent upon denomination. At Stoke, the Established Church was the dominant religion which over time took the initiative to prepare children for confirmation, to play an active part in the religious education of the young and to organise missions in the chapel. The major debate was focused around the approach to the denominational Sunday services where the Anglicans and Non-Conformists held their own but the Roman Catholic guardian protested on a regular basis for the inclusion of a permanent Catholic instructor or priest.

Vagrancy witnessed a diverse experience between the two unions as found in chapter five. Chell immediately followed the LGB directives in 1871 and implemented a new form of vagrant accommodation, based upon the 'cell system'. The successes of this in the reduction of vagrants were well documented but Stoke on the apparent grounds of finance ignored the evidence until several years later. In the area of accommodation for vagrants regarding the day and times of discharge were changes in 1882. Stoke immediately applied the new rule as it would further act as a deterrent whereas Wolstanton was slow to act taking four years to implement resulting in more vagrant numbers.

Under the same theme chapter six discusses the health and lunacy experiences by inmates within the workhouse. At Stoke trained nurses were appointed by the mid-1870s at an earlier date than at Wolstanton who continued to use inmate and un-trained nurses for a further decade. Stoke also improved it pauper experience by the expansion of its accommodation and a structure of authority for nurses. In the area of lunacy Stoke aimed to provide trained nurses and porters, and improved facilities and separate wards and exercise yards. Wolstanton failed

on each account to improve pauper experiences.

Chapter seven - that of the care of children, occupies an important area under the second thematic driver. At Stoke there was found a more conscientious approach to the wellbeing of children. The facilities were appropriate with separate rooms for each gender and a better standard of education received by children than at Wolstanton where only a dayroom was provided for combined lessons. Both unions supported industrial training, but Stoke had a wider range of trades for the boys and girls and the opportunity of expert training with regards to 'service' in two external residential establishments ran by the influential ladies of the time.

Other areas of experiences at Stoke included outside trips; visits to the theatre; the appreciation of culture and numerous sporting activities. A further experience was that boys had the opportunity of learning to play a musical instrument and performing giving them a greater scope to secure a position in the military upon leaving the workhouse. Children at Stoke also enjoyed the patronage of the Duchess of Sutherland with annual visits to Trentham Hall for games and refreshments.

Chapter eight is the last example of life-cycle experiences of the elderly pauper. Stoke stands alone in the treatment of the elderly probably on the account of its association with the Duchess of Sutherland. She and her friends took time to provide those additional benefits such as musical instruments, newspapers, reading glasses and other comforts that made the elderly more comfortable in their old age. In addition, the guardians undertook to provide facilities for married couples and additional tobacco for the men and tea, sugar and milk for women. At Wolstanton none of these were provided except that of tobacco and tea making facilities which were provided under a LGB directive.

The third thematic driver established how the policy and directives of the LGB were devolved through the administration of local guardians throughout each life-cycle experience and if they varied between local interpretation and that of national implementation. Chapter

one establishes the extent of parochialism in the independent framework of the Old Poor Law. Parochialism was again identified in chapter three as an issue whereby it became woven into the fabric of local administration of the New Poor Law. There were however two areas of diversity for the two unions to negotiate. Firstly, the new system of poor law failed to overcome the established roots of independence from a distant central authority and secondly, that of parochialism between the two contiguous unions which remained based upon their original parish boundaries. The strength of parochialism first showed itself in chapter three as the PLB attempted to create a union between the Burslem and Wolstanton parishes took a number of years to achieve and only then when the PLB forced this upon them.

LGB directives regarding the need to eliminate outdoor relief were issued to every union as part of the *Crusade*. Secondary literature shows that in many unions they were ignored, some were implemented and the two local unions, Stoke and Wolstanton viewed them differently implementing them but in different ways.¹ In chapter four, the area of vagrancy is an area where directives were both implemented and ignored. In a concerted effort, the LGB identified several areas where numbers of vagrants could be reduced within unions. It has been shown that a number took advantage of the 'cell system' of accommodation with remarkable results including those of Wolstanton. Stoke ignored the evidence on financial grounds for several years. The same applied to other rules such a labour in exchange for accommodation and the rules of admission and the times of discharge.

The chapter on religion reflects a totally different scenario whereby Stoke Union failed to refer the power struggle between denominations to the LGB for clarity guardians preferring to stand against the challenges alone. Finally, after several years under the concerted pressure from the Roman Catholic Church to implement the position of a paid religious instructor they

¹ E.T. Hurren, *Protesting about pauperism: Poverty, Politics and Poor Relief in the Late-Victorian England 1870-1900* (Suffolk, 2007); K. Williams, *From Pauperism to Poverty* (London, 1981).

finally decided to write to the LGB for clarification. The response from the LGB was that this proposal was not allowed. If, therefore, the guardians had sought clarification in the first place it would have staved off years of turmoil from the hands of the Roman Catholic guardian.

At Wolstanton it was different. The issue of the chaplain's salary was constantly referred to. On most occasions the guardians requested the LGB to clarify and each time the guardians ignored the advice received from the LGB. On one occasion they refused to accept the decision of the Bishop regarding an inappropriate appointment which had not previously been agreed by the LGB. Here the guardians come to an agreement to pay the chaplain directly but this was disallowed by the LGB. From the evidence the Non-conformist guardians were opposed to 'the establishment' in both forms - the church and centralised authority.

Chapter six, not unlike the previous chapter, was complex as although LGB approval was sought over the appointment of nursing staff at Wolstanton, their views were ignored to the detriment of inmates. On one occasion following the case of a nurse in dispute over her age whereby she lost her case in court regarding her rights to a state pension the LGB criticised the guardians for their incompetence in making the appointment. Other areas where LGB directives have been ignored were found within the employment of trained staff as opposed to un-trained. Stoke commencing as early as the mid-1870s whereas Wolstanton did not implement the LGB directives until a decade after.

Following the visit of the LGB Lunacy Inspectors a written report with recommendation was sent to guardians. Stoke took note of these and implemented their recommendations especially in the areas of accommodation by the building of new wards for both the sick, lunatics and those of infectious diseases. At Wolstanton, the guardians failed to recognise the importance of medical care to the general poor and failed to expand their facilities for lunatics despite the wards being declared unsound at a later LGB inspection.

In the area of welfare it would appear that the LGB were not involved directly in a child's

life but did set the guide-lines in areas of education, industrial training, general policy, the daily time-table of a child's and that of emigration where each list of children had to be approved by the LGB regarding the cost of transport and fitness to travel etc. This established the format for many of the directives from the LGB to be interpreted, leaving the decision of how entirely in the hands of local guardians with little scrutiny except in the areas of educational achievements, additional expense and the insistence of a child's original religious affiliation being adhered to.

The final chapter eight on the care of the elderly is a further example where the LGB appeared to be lax in its involvement. Apart from a few privileges granted to the elderly there was little else with regards to policy. However, in the area of diversity this revolved around the patronage of the Duchess of Sutherland and her influential friends who made significant improvements in elderly care in the areas of entertainment, improved facilities and a craft scheme together with visits to Trentham Hall for afternoon tea. To the inmate elderly paupers these few but meaningful experiences would help to make institutionalised life more acceptable as workhouses towards the end of the eighteenth century were increasingly thought of as places for the aged.

What this study has established.

This complex and wide-ranging investigation into poor law experiences in the Staffordshire Potteries has highlighted a number of previously unknown aspects of poor law welfare. The first three chapters have focused upon the historiography of the poor laws and in a broad sense how it developed in Stoke and Staffordshire an area that has figured lightly in literature and which more broadly is characterised by the lack of any previous detailed micro-studies.

It has been shown that Stoke-on-Trent is unique in the sense of structure as it consists of a large urban linear conurbation stretching over a distance of six miles with its roots firmly set within its original parochial boundaries. These boundaries, which throughout the middle-

ages, through the period of the Old Poor Law, the New Poor Law and the later period after 1871 has throughout maintained its early influence.

It is important therefore to summarise what has been established by this study within the context of the thematic drivers. The first theme that of sentiment and meaning has explored the nature of workhouse life, operated by a fine line of mixed authority between local guardians and the LGB whereby the retained experience of the Old Poor Law, independence, was firmly fixed in the agenda of guardians. This was found in areas of vagrancy, religion and to some extent in the areas of health and lunacy directives were more acceptable at Stoke than at Wolstanton. It was also shown that in the important area of outdoor relief and the *Crusade* there was no definitive compliance to LGB directives.

Within the second theme of life-cycle experiences there was a wide range of subject areas. The investigation of these has established that although each compiled to the standard workhouse format identified under the poor law the unions operated independently and where appropriate in such areas of health, children and the elderly treatment their experiences were subject to local interpretation. At Stoke it has been found there were considerable benefits in the three areas, health, children and the elderly recorded which made the lives of inmates more bearable. At Wolstanton it was found that the life-cycle experiences were in line with the strict rules of the poor law.

The conclusion of the third thematic driver has clearly established that parochialism remained a strong component of guardian's policy. Both unions chose which directives from the LGB to implement or not whereby guardians consistently interpreted them to suit their own agendas which affected each life style experience.

A final assessment

Given the generalisation of much of the secondary literature in chapter one it was not envisaged that the results of this study would be so decisive. The analysis of two workhouses,

geographically so proximate, serving the same industrial area, and governed by the same Act of Parliament has illustrated the strength of spatial disparity that can be experienced within the life-cycle of inmates.

The New Poor Law was a product of its time with the prime objective of stabilising the cost of escalating outdoor poor relief which was no longer sustainable under the parochial system. Under the Act of 1834 saw a different approach to curtail the problem by the incarceration of those unable to maintain themselves and their families with no outdoor relief except for the sick. This new Act was designed as a deterrent as it involved segregation of families, classification and hard labour to deter those in need from seeking help and thereby reducing the financial burden and to establish a uniform New Poor Law throughout the country.

What this study has shown is that the original intentions of the Act had no direct authority to enforce its rules or recommendations thereby almost remaining within the shadow of the Old Poor Law, whereby Boards of Guardians fiercely defended their independence as separate identities within a national system ignoring as they saw an unwarranted distant interference in local matters. It is not surprising therefore, to identify the inconsistencies of guardians' thoughts and actions that confirm the notion that, notwithstanding the intentions of the LGB, the law was not uniform but in fact there were in reality in excess of six-hundred separate poor laws operating in the country.

Since the poor laws allowed considerable interpretation, it was found common for poor law practice to vary between parishes in the same locality, as found in the case of the Potteries. Broad refers to this as 'the local autonomy of need',² Hindle commented on the 'highly localised nature of the social welfare provision',³ and King has shown it was possible for 'two

² J. Broad, 'Parish economies of welfare 1650-1834', *Historical Journal* (1999), pp.985-1006

³ S. Hindle, *One the parish? The micro-politics of poor relief in rural England c.1550-1750* (Oxford, 2004), p.285

contiguous parishes to be recognised as serving two different groups of poor people.⁴ Yet despite these views Crowther argues that the New Poor Law was based upon the perception of the workhouse system was to represent a national structure of confinement whereby groups of people were isolated from the wider society.⁵

This thesis has revealed the ways in which local administrative policies affected the lived experiences of pauper inmates and has filled a national void in formulating a broader reflection of workhouse life and pauper welfare that the law provided. The wider implications of such finding contest the one size fits all theory which has been implicit in many historical accounts. It has concluded that two unions serving the same industrial area and falling under the same central authority could be administered in totally different ways. The LGB, it must be concluded, failed in its inability to enforce its own rules on an equal basis.

These findings have proved that the north-south divide did exist particularly during the period 1871-1901 in an area and time-frame nationally under researched. It has identified the inadequacies of the system, mainly the LGB's lack of authority, its inability to enforce its *Circulars* and the parochial and self-interested attitudes of guardians that has exposed the inadequacies of a system thereby changing current literature.

⁴ S.A. King, 'Introduction, Narratives of the poor in eighteenth-century Britain' in S.A. King, T. Nutt and A. Tomkins (eds), *Narratives of the poor in eighteenth-century Volume 1 Voices of the Poor: Poor law depositions and letters* (London, 2006), xxxix

⁵ M.A. Crowther, *The Workhouse System, 1834-1929; the History of an English Social Institution* (London, 1981).

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APPENDICES

Tabulated results from LGB School Inspectors of Education for the years 1896-1898

Inspection on the 5th March 1896

Standard	1	2	3	4	5	6	Total Pupils
Reading Boys	21	24	13	8	3	1	70
Girls	13	13	9	4	0	2	41
Writing Boys	21	19	12	7	3	1	63
Girls	13	11	9	4	0	2	39
Maths Boys	21	19	9	5	3	0	57
Girls	13	13	9	2	0	0	37

Inspection on the 16th March 1897

Standard	1	2	3	4	5	6	Total Pupils
Reading Boys	19	9	14	5	4	5	51
Girls	15	13	13	6	0	0	47
Writing Boys	20	9	15	5	3	0	52
Girls	16	13	14	6	0	0	49
Arithmetic Boys	20	10	10	4	1	0	45
Girls	16	13	11	5	0	0	45

Inspection on the 10th March 1898

Standard	1	2	3	4	5	6	Total
Reading Boys	15	10	10	7	5	2	49
Girls	7	11	6	5	3	0	32
Writing Boys	16	4	8	4	4	2	38
Girls	9	6	5	5	3	0	28
Arithmetic Boys	13	9	6	2	0	0	30
Girls	9	11	5	5	1	0	31

These statistics do not represent good standards of examination of the three 'Rs'. If these numbers are represented by percentage they are found alarming:

Levels of Standard pass marks on the scale of 1-6

Inspection on the 5th March 1896

Boys reading standard	1-2:	64 per cent	Standard 5-6:	0.06 per cent
Girls reading standard	1-2	63 per cent	Standard 5-6	0.05 per cent
Boys writing standard	1-2	63 per cent	Standard 5-6	0.05 per cent
Girls writing standard	1-2	61 per cent	Standard 5-6	0.06 per cent
Boys arithmetic standard	1-2	70 per cent	Standard 5-6	0.05 per cent
Girls arithmetic standard	1-2	70 per cent	Standard 5-6	0.00 per cent

Inspection on the 16th March 1897

Boys reading standard	1-2	49 per cent	Standard 5-6:	0.06 per cent
Girls reading standard	1-2	60 per cent	Standard 5-6	0.00 per cent
Boys writing standard	1-2	56 per cent	Standard 5-6	0.06 per cent
Girls writing standard	1-2	59 per cent	Standard 5-6	0.00 per cent
Boys arithmetic standard	1-2	67 per cent	Standard 5-6	0.00 per cent
Girls arithmetic standard	1-2	64 per cent	Standard 5-6	0.00 per cent

Inspection on the 10th March 1898

Boys reading standard	1-2	51 per cent	Standard 5-6:	0.01 per cent
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Girls reading standard	1-2	56 per cent	Standard 5-6	0.01 per cent
Boys writing standard	1-2	52 per cent	Standard 5-6	0.05 per cent
Girls writing standard	1-2	53 per cent	Standard 5-6	0.01 per cent
Boys arithmetic standard	1-2	70 per cent	Standard 5-6	0.01 per cent
Girls arithmetic standard	1-2	70 per cent	Standard 5-6	0.03 per cent