The Blind, the Deaf and the Halt: Physical Disability, the Poor Law and Charity c. 1830-1890, with particular reference to the County of Yorkshire.

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Abstract

This thesis examines the situation of the physically disabled poor over the period c.1830-1890. It concentrates initially on the treatment of these individuals under the Poor Law and then proceeds to examine voluntary provision, focusing in particular on the special schools that were established at this time. Although a national (English) perspective is adopted for an analysis of the Poor Law, the impact of special education is examined in the form of a Yorkshire regional case study.

The 1834 Poor Law Amendment Act created a distinct administrative category encompassing the blind and deaf. This differentiation between groups of those hitherto classed as the 'impotent' poor was to have important consequences for all sectors of the disabled population. Whereas increasing numbers of blind and deaf children were gradually removed into the care of the voluntary institutions, other 'non-able-bodied' persons found themselves under the auspices of a deliberately harsh state system.

Schools operating within the voluntary sector soon began to extend and diversify the benefits they could offer. They fostered a sense of community and perhaps even a distinctive identity amongst their pupils. In the longer term they helped to alter public attitudes towards blind and deaf people. Schools encouraged the development of professional expertise and their staff served as advocates and campaigners on behalf of their pupils. The growing availability of special education operated as a counterweight to economic and social exclusion.

The absence of comprehensive specialist provision meant that the situation of other physically disabled people was often grim. Such individuals tended to merge into the mass of the poor and details about their condition can be hard to distinguish from other groups who comprised the 'residuum' of Victorian society. The impact of changing attitudes to poverty and the role of the state, particularly in the areas of child education and health, are further examined.

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Abbreviations

COS	Charity Organisation Society
BDDA	British Deaf and Dumb Association
ICAA	Invalid Children's Aid Association
ILP	Independent Labour Party
LGB	Local Government Board
n/d	not dated
OPL	Old Poor Law
PLAA	1834 Poor Law Amendment Act
PLB	Poor Law Board
PLC	Poor Law Commission
PP	Parliamentary Papers
WSB	Wilberforce Memorial School (Yorkshire School for the Blind)
YIDD	Yorkshire Institute for the Deaf and Dumb

Introduction

Writing the History of Disability in the Nineteenth Century: Key Issues and Challenges

The factory cripple, the rachitic child, the blind beggar, the heroic injured soldier – the literary and artistic stereotypes of nineteenth century physical disability are vivid and familiar. The prosaic reality of the experience of this form of disability during the period is far less well known; indeed it is an area that has scarcely been explored by historians at all.[1] In many ways this is a surprising omission, for disabled people presented a particular challenge to a developing industrial society. The essence of the problem was economic: in such a society, where an individual's worth was determined by his or her ability to add value, many disabled people were disadvantaged because they were seemingly unproductive. They were viewed as being expensive and a burden, both to their families and to the community as a whole. What, then, was a society that valued its members for their productivity to do with its disabled citizens? What duties did it owe them? What rights did they have?

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[1] Until recently, mental disability, as distinct from mental illness, had also received comparatively little attention from historians. See D. Wright, *Mental Disability in Victorian England: The Earlswood Asylum, 1847-1901* (Oxford, 2001), for a recent survey. There is now however, quite a substantial literature relating to mental illness, much of it written from a feminist perspective. This may be due to the continuing fascination with all things psychological in a post-Freudian world, and the impact of such classics as Foucault's *Madness and Civilization* (1965). There is ample evidence to suggest that the Victorians, too, were more interested and concerned with the problems posed by the mentally disabled; see E. M. Palmegiano, *Health and British Magazines in the Nineteenth Century* (1998). This is a useful source, which lists contemporary magazine articles, a number of which are relevant to this thesis.

That said, there are some obvious reasons for the neglect of this subject. The first relates to the nature of the available primary sources. For many disabled people, particularly those who were blind or deaf from childhood, impairment was accompanied by educational deprivation. Consequently, very few accounts of their experiences as members of the disabled population were likely to have been written by this sector, and even fewer are still extant.[2] Other disabled people may simply have assumed that their lives and experiences were not worthy of record.[3] This dearth of direct information is particularly evident when examining, as this thesis aims to do, the position of the poorest sectors of disabled people – those in receipt of welfare, either through state or voluntary agency.[4] The knowledge we have of these individuals is thus largely second hand; it is the perspective of those who ministered to the needs of disabled people rather than that of the disabled individual him or herself. The available sources, which generally take the form of official reports or records of charitable enterprise, necessarily entail an 'institutional' approach to the subject.

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[2] Indeed relatively few accounts, even from people who were educationally or socially privileged, survive from this period. Henry Fawcett, the blind post master general, was a life long supporter of the blind but his personal papers have not survived. Various of his comments relating to his blindness were recorded by his wife Millicent Garrett Fawcett and his friend and biographer Leslie Stephen. Harriet Martineau wrote on the subject of her deafness in her *Autobiography* (1879). Alfred Hollins, the eminent blind composer, who was educated at the WSB during the 1870s, recorded his experiences in *A Blind Musician Looks Back* (Edinburgh, 1936). The most famous account of disability is probably that of Helen Keller, whose *The Story of My Life* was first published in 1903.

[3] Mayhew's 'maimed Irish crossing sweeper' was one such. Mayhew recorded that 'it was very difficult to make him understand my object in getting information from him: he thought that he had nothing to tell, and laid great stress upon the fact of his never keeping 'count' of anything.' H. Mayhew, *London Labour and the London Poor* (Harmondsworth, 1985), p.262.

[4] Since poverty has generally operated to increase susceptibility to disease and disability, it is likely that not only numerically, but also proportionately, the disabled poor formed the largest sector of the nineteenth century disabled population.

Elizabeth Bredburg, whilst acknowledging the strengths of the 'institutional perspective', has criticised its tendancy to 'depersonalise' the way in which disabled people are represented.[5] She observes that the adoption of such a perspective creates a situation whereby '...The problem that a society perceives itself posed by the presence of impairment supplants the individuality of the person. It is addressed through the agency of one or another dominant institution within that society'.[6] Thus, to use her examples, accounts of ritual practice dominate discussion of disability in biblical times and legal transactions assume central importance in classical civilization. Bredburg claims that in the eighteenth century 'the dominant institution to address disability as a social problem became medicine.'[7] It is arguable that in the nineteenth century poverty and pauperism provide the principal lens through which disability was viewed.[8] Bredburg's criticism that the use of an institutional framework – in this thesis that of the poor law and charity – may distort the wider picture and direct attention away from the individual is certainly valid. However, these areas were of such central importance during this period, that in a thesis of restricted length, they must necessarily dominate. Perhaps, then, the primary methodological challenge facing the historian of disability is to extract, from what initially seems unpromising material, evidence of the factors conditioning the lives of

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[5] E. Bredburg, 'Writing Disability History: Problems, Perspectives and Sources', *Disability and Society*, 14 (1999), pp.189-210.
[6] Ibid., p.194.
[7] Ibid.
[8] Significantly the 'vernacular' sources that Bredburg suggests as providing an alternative perspective – Mayhew's blind boot lace seller and the evidence given by the disabled to employment commissions – form part of this discourse of poverty.

disabled people. It may thus be possible, albeit by indirect route, to resurrect some elements of their actual experience.

The study of disability is also fraught with difficulties of a conceptual nature. The definition of terms such as disability or disabled remains contentious. In the words of Dr Tom Shakespeare, what it means to be disabled constitutes 'the million-dollar question'.[9] Over the past three decades disability theorists have sought to challenge medical or clinical definitions, which centre round the impairment and its effect on the individual, with the 'social model' of disability. They argue that disability should no longer be seen as a 'personal tragedy' that has befallen the individual. Instead the focus shifts to the role of society and the environment in disabling the individual.[10] To apply retrospectively definitions or models of disability when these would have held little or no meaning for contemporaries is arguably ahistorical. However awareness of current theory and debate within the wider field of disability studies can provide the historian with useful insight and a wider sense of context. Similarly, access to a range of theoretical models drawn from a variety of disciplines can help to extend our understanding of the implications of disability.[11]

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[9] Dr Tom Shakespeare, interview with Peter White, BBC Disability Correspondent, *Independent On Sunday*, 18 June 2000.

[10] In 1976 the London Union of Physically Impaired Against Segregation (UPIAS) defined disability as 'the disadvantage or restriction of activity caused by contemporary social organisation which takes no or little account of people who have physical impairments and thus excludes them from participation in the mainstream of social activities.' Cited in C. Barnes 'A Legacy of Oppression: A History of Disability in Western Culture', in C. Barton and M. Oliver (eds.), *Disability Studies: Past, Present and Future* (Leeds, 1997), p.8.

[11] Thus, for example, our understanding of the impact of incarceration or stigma on the individual can be deepened by reference to sociology or psychology.

From a historical perspective, too, the issue of definition is complex. It is clear that over time definitions and concepts of disability have shifted. One of the challenges facing historians is to record and explain the reasons for these variations. Even within the same time-frame significant differences emerge between the criteria recognised by, for example, the medical profession, educationalists and the administrators of state welfare. Nor should we take it for granted that groups of disabled individuals, even those with common impairments, might recognise any community of interest between themselves. Certainly the idea that individuals with a wide variety and differing degrees of impairment might acknowledge a common 'disabled' identity is a relatively recent one, dating perhaps only to the beginning of the twentieth century.[12]

For the purposes of this thesis attention will be focused on those persons whom we might now describe as having permanent sensory and motor impairments: in Victorian parlance, the 'blind', the 'deaf' and the 'crippled'.[13] During the period upon which this thesis concentrates, c.1830-1890, these impairments may have adversely affected the health and longevity of the individual, restricted his or her educational opportunities, limited the ability to conduct relationships and generally undermined economic autonomy. This is not to deny that factors such as class, gender, education and talent could substantially

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[12] *From Rags to Rights*. Peter White, BBC Disability Correspondent, BBC Radio 4, March 2000.

[13] I do not propose to include persons with congenital deformity, or the issues raised by the freak shows of the period within the scope of this thesis; these involve different factors and have been studied elsewhere. A good starting point to investigate this literature is R. G. Thomson (ed.), *Freakery: Cultural Spectacles of the Extraordinary Body* (1996).

mitigate or even outweigh such disadvantages. However, as already indicated, the focus of attention will be on the disabled poor.

This study combines both national and regional perspectives. A national perspective provides the context – ideological, social and economic – in which developments took place. The 1834 Poor Law Amendment Act, the most significant piece of social welfare legislation of the period, was predicated upon the need to impose standard ideologies and policies through a central bureaucracy. A national perspective is therefore to be preferred when analysing its impact on disabled people. However, even when attempts were made to impose a uniform central policy, interpretation of the law remained subject to influence by local factors. Indeed one of the key characteristics of social welfare provision in the nineteenth century was that its administration was 'highly localised, amateur, voluntaristic and intimate in scale...'.[14] Within the voluntary sector there seems to have been little activity deserving of the title 'national' catering specifically for the disabled until at least mid-century. Wagg states that until 1868, when the British and Foreign Blind Association was founded, '...there was no work of national importance undertaken on behalf of the blind.'[15] It therefore seems not only apt, but to some extent unavoidable, to discuss charitable activity on behalf of the disabled within a regional framework. For

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[14] J. Harris, 'Political Thought and the Welfare State 1870-1940: An Intellectual Framework for British Social Policy', in D. Gladstone (ed.), *Before Beveridge: Welfare Before the Welfare State* (1999), p.43.

[15] H. J. Wagg, *A Chronological Survey of Work for the Blind* (1930), p.43. The Society was founded by Thomas Armitage, son of a Leeds Iron Manufacturer. Wagg notes its primary object as '...the employment and education of the blind, and the provision of embossed literature.'

reasons that will be explained at a later stage, the county of Yorkshire has been chosen as the focus for the study of voluntary activity.

Scholarship and the History of Disability

The study of the history of disability is relevant to a number of other areas of historical research, for example to the history of medicine and the body, to family history and to the history of the welfare state. It also has potentially a wide multi-disciplinary scope, with the possibility of links developing with a whole range of disciplines, most obviously to the social sciences but also to medicine and to other arts subjects such as English. Of particular importance is the relationship between the history of disability and disability studies. However the latter is of relatively recent origin: 'Twenty years ago there was no such thing as disability studies.'[16] Recently disability theorists have deplored the ahistorical nature of disability studies claiming that the absence of historical accounts 'trivialise the past' and hampers our understanding of the process of disablement. The inclusion of 'micro-histories' in more general texts and an absence of empiricism have also been derided. Mainstream historians, too, have been chided for their neglect of this important area.

Perhaps the central theme of those who have concerned themselves with the history of disability has been the attempt to provide a framework for understanding the origins and nature of disability and the attitudes which surround it. Their efforts have generated much

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[16] L. Barton and M. Oliver, 'Introduction. The Birth of Disability Studies', in L. Barton and M. Oliver (eds.), *Disability Studies: Past, Present & Future* (Leeds, 1997), p. ix.

debate as to the merits or otherwise of materialist or idealist approaches to disability history. Victor Finkelstein first outlined his interpretation of disability as 'an oppressive social relationship' in *Attitudes and Disabled People: Issues for Discussion*, a paper given to the World Rehabilitation Fund in 1980. He has subsequently elaborated upon his hypothesis in further writings.

Finkelstein sees 'disability' as a product of the development of capitalism.[17] The Industrial Revolution and the rise of the factory system operated to marginalise the disabled individual and exclude him or her from participation in the economic process. Mechanisation altered the pattern of employment away from domestic or cottage industries, where a worker could produce goods at his or her own pace, and where one individual's shortcomings could perhaps be compensated for by others in the family unit. The rigidity of the new factory-based industries transformed even the able-bodied into mere 'hands,' and excluded the disabled on the basis that they were less profitable as employees. Urbanisation brought changing social patterns and loosened the community ties which had hitherto enabled disabled individuals to subsist in the extended family unit. Barred from participation in either the economic or social life of the community, disabled people were increasingly isolated and institutionalised. Loss of income and status were the inevitable consequences.

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[17] The clearest account of the process whereby 'cripples were transformed into disabled people' is to be found in V. Finkelstein, 'Disability and the Helper/ Helped Relationship. An Historical View', in A. Brechin, P. Liddiard and J. Swain (eds.), *Handicap in a Social World* (1981). This article is now available through the Disability Archive http://www.leeds.ac.uk/disability-studies/archiveuk/archframe.htm. The quotation is taken from p.4.

Although acknowledging the significance of Finkelstein's work, other theorists of disability have criticised his approach for its over simplification and, in particular, its neglect of the impact of wider, cultural, phenomena on the experience of disability. They argue that factors such as gender, class, and the nature and degree of impairment had a significant impact on the individual's experience of disability.[18] It has also been suggested that an important factor in disabling people with perceived impairment is prejudice, which operates not simply on a personal level, but is implicit in wider cultural phenomena such as language, art and literature.

The historian Anne Borsay is amongst those questioning the assumption that disability was the product of industrial capitalism.[19] She uses her studies of the operation of the Bath Royal Infirmary in the eighteenth century to argue that impaired people were effectively disabled by mercantilism. The economic rationality which underpinned the infirmary, and the voluntary hospital movement more generally, favoured as patients those whose 'cure' could lead to their resumption of economic activity. Low wages, reliance on poor relief and a reduction in marital prospects are cited as the consequences of impairment in letters seeking admission. Within the infirmary patients were subject to medical control and their behaviour was strictly monitored. Thus Borsay uses her

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[18] For a precis of these criticisms see Barnes, 'A Legacy of Oppression', pp.9-10.

[19] Anne Borsay is perhaps the premier historian of physical disability in the United Kingdom. She is best known for her *Medicine and Charity in Georgian Bath: A Social History of the General Infirmary, c. 1739-1830* (Aldershot, 1999). She is also the author of a number of interesting articles including 'Returning Patients to the Community: Disability, Medicine and Economic Rationality before the Industrial Revolution', *Disability and Society*, 13 (1998), pp.645-663. She is due to publish a book entitled *Disability and Social Policy in Britain Since 1750: A History of Exclusion*, in November 2004.

empirical research to demonstrate how a range of societal and economic disadvantages consequent upon impairment, can be seen to operate well in advance of industrial capitalism.

Finklestein's work has thus served to stimulate much lively debate. His basic premis that changing economic circumstances have a dramatic effect on the circumstances and status of individuals with impairments must be correct. However such a view needs to be qualified by the pertinent criticisms which have been listed above. One of the principal contentions of this thesis concerns the importance of disaggregating the experiences of people with different impairments.[20] Although broad generalisations are essential at a theoretical level, they can obscure as well as elucidate our knowledge of the past. It is to be hoped that further empirical studies will provide the evidence necessary to shed light on theoretical conjectures.

Another important watershed in the historiography of disability was Deborah Stone's *The Disabled State* (1985). Stone sought to demonstrate how, through the development of the English Poor Law, previously disparate groups of disabled people were increasingly channelled into a common administrative category. She argues that disability operates as a cornerstone of the embryonic welfare state, it being one of the first exemptions accepted as a valid reason for entering a needs-based as opposed to a work-based distributive system. Developments within the medical profession saw the arbiter of

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[20] For some groups of disabled people employment opportunities may actually have improved during this period. The introduction of new methods of communication coupled with increasing access to education and greater opportunities to socialize may also have had a positive effect upon their quality of life.

disability becoming increasingly a matter of medical rather than lay judgment. Stone identifies the links between disability and vagabondage, and highlights fear of deception as being one of the principal motifs in the history of disability. Medical judgment, seemingly scientific, objective and indisputable, not only assuaged this fear of being duped by the unworthy, but also legitimated the claims of ever increasing numbers of people to the 'privileges' of disability.

Stone's approach has also proved provocative. In a summary of criticisms of Stone's work, Gleeson refers to her historiography as '...both selective and ambiguous' and deems her attempt to apply the 'distributive dilemma' to societies in general, inappropriate.[21] He also criticises Stone's 'statist' approach for its failure to engage with 'the social relations of production.'[22] Again the concern is raised that viewing disability through this rather limited perspective obscures rather than illuminates the experiences of disabled people in the past. Such an approach inevitably reduces disability history to an ahistorical '... saga of vagabondage and marginality'.[23]

Stone's work is interesting in that it views the English welfare system within a wider European context. She also provides a useful overview of the 'medicalisation' of disability. It may be, however, that the absence or minimal consideration of the role of the voluntary sector distorts the overall picture of welfare availability.

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[21] B. J. Gleeson, 'Disability Studies: A Historical Materialist View', *Disability and Society*, 12 (1997), p.189.
[22] Ibid., p.190.
[23] Ibid., p.191.

Other writers have chosen to focus on cultural or sociologial explanations of disability. In *Enforcing Normalcy Disability, Deafness, and the Body* (1995), Davis argues that changing aesthetic notions during the nineteenth century played a significant part in the stigmatisation of the physically impaired individual. According to Davis, the century witnessed the replacement of the 'ideal' as the epitome of physical perfection by the 'normal'. Whereas the 'ideal' was beyond the reach of any one individual, normality was the average, the everyday, the ordinary. The normal range or standard distribution of a characteristic was a matter of calculation, of fact; it could be demonstrated by the new science of statistics. Because certain characteristics were seen as being more desirable those who lay at the outer edges of the bell curve could be seen as gifted (for example in their possession of high intellect or admirable physical characteristics) or as subnormal. The concept of normality, valued for its apparent objective and scientific rationale, swiftly became part of the dominant ideology to the disadvantage of groups such as the disabled who were seen as deviant.

This thesis confirms that the relationship between disability and statistics is both subtle and complex.[24] The collection and collation of facts was a key characteristic of the Victorian era. Statistics were viewed as a particularly persuasive category of facts, their appeal being based on science and reason rather than rhetoric and emotion. The importance of statistical research as a tool of early social welfare policy for the disabled is amply illustrated by the institutions studied herein. The thesis looks, in particular, at the role statistics played in establishing the case for special education.

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[24] A fascination with statistics was shared by Edwin Chadwick, architect of the 1834 Poor Law Amendment Act, Charles Baker of the YIDD and Rev. Harcourt of the WSB.

Henri-Jacques Stiker's *A History of Disability* (1999), presents a most interesting examination of cultural responses to disability.[25] Stiker's approach, based on a wide historical survey, draws strongly on the social sciences and is avowedly non-empirical. Stiker exposes society's fundamental intolerance of difference through an examination of linguistics, religious practice, legal developments and so forth. Thus the drive to integrate disabled people within wider society is seen as indicative of a need to efface diversity rather than accepting it as implicit in the human condition.

Although these hypotheses and their critiques provide some very interesting points of departure for the researcher, our historical knowledge of the day-to-day experience of disabled people remains rather rudimentary, though there is evidence of increasing scholarly interest in this area. There are a number of books which either relate to the history of special education, or to that of certain classes of the disabled. In addition, a number of histories of specific charities or institutions, and several biographies of prominent individuals, provide some useful data. Information can also be gleaned from a variety of other historiographies, for example those relating to the development of medicine, to the elderly and to children, while the history of welfare provision touches upon the situation of the disabled and provides a useful means of contextualising developments.

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[25] Originally published as *Corps Infirmes et Societes* in 1982, Stiker's work was translated into English in 1999.

Obviously the parameters of this project do not permit an exploration of every aspect of the Victorian welfare nexus. For example, it has not proved possible to consider in any depth the role of friendly societies and other self-help agencies in this sphere.[26] This is partially for reasons of space, but also because their significance may have been limited to a relatively narrow sector of the disabled population. Typically membership of these organisations was restricted to younger males who had to be free of disability at the time of joining, and also in receipt of sufficient income to afford the regular subscriptions such membership entailed. Nor would payments received through these agencies have been of a sufficiently long duration or sizeable sum to support a permanently disabled individual. Indeed, the deficiencies of these mainstream forms of social indemnity spurred on the development of self-help schemes specifically intended for disabled workers, such as the scheme developed by the Wilberforce School for the Blind, which is discussed herein.[27] Other related subjects which have had to be omitted for reasons of space, include the history of welfare provision for individuals injured in the armed services.[28]

As should be clear from the above, the thesis will focus on two specific areas, the Poor Law and Charity, with particular reference to charitable activity in the areas of education and employment.[29] The principal focus of research will be on the Victorian period, however the first chapter, which covers the years immediately prior to the passage of the

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[26] These can be distinguished as forms of mutuality rather than hierarchical charity.
[27] See below, Chapter Six.
[28] A useful source of information about such provision is A. R. Skelly, *The Victorian Army at Home: The Recruitment and Terms and Conditions of the British Regular, 1859-1899* (1977).
[29] Historians of welfare now appear to accept fully the need to consider state and voluntary provision in tandem in order to fully appreciate the scope of Victorian activity. Indeed the voluntary sector is often seen as an integral part of the state itself.

Poor Law Amendment Act of 1834, provides the context without which later developments can not be properly appreciated.

The Poor Law

The Poor Law lies at the core of any study of disability in the nineteenth century for it is through the development of the law that the concept of disability as an administrative category emerges. Practically speaking, many disabled people were dependent on the law for the provision of outdoor relief and, in the absence of other institutional care, many found shelter in the workhouse. The evolution of the poor law medical service saw professional judgment displacing the lay judgment of the overseer or workhouse master as to what constituted disability. The poor law also provides an interesting insight into the attitudes of succesive Victorian governments towards the disabled. However, a study of disability which confined itself purely to the poor law would swiftly encounter problems with source material: the parliamentary papers, reports of the commissioners etc., although useful from a statistical perspective, do not provide a particularly rich seam for the historian of disability. The Poor Law Report of 1834, for example, contains only a few references to this category of the poor. The Annual Reports of the Poor Law Commissioners post-1834 seldom make separate reference to the disabled; generally they are treated alongside groups such as the aged and sick as forming the umbrella category of the 'non-able-bodied' and references to this larger category of pauper are also limited.[30]

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[30] As Dorothy Marshall noted when discussing the situation of the impotent poor in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, 'It was not a point on which discussion waxed hot.'

But, of course, silence in itself can be significant, perhaps illustrating the existence of a broad consensus, or alternatively that an issue has not yet been identified or recognised as problematic. Equally, the stress placed by the administrators and legislators of the poor law on the need for families to maintain impotent members could be seen as evidence of their concern, accurate or otherwise, that families were using the provision made under the laws to abrogate their responsibilities.

One aspect of the poor law that is relatively well-documented throughout the period is the administration of, and conditions within, the workhouse. This subject has generated a considerable literature of its own. A sizable proportion of long-term workhouse residents were persons we would now class as disabled, and therefore the workhouse dietary and regimen can play an important part in helping to reconstruct the minutiae of daily life for this section of the disabled population.[31]

Historians have expressed concern that the nature of the historical record might lead to an overestimation of the importance of poor relief. Pat Thane illustrates the distortion that this can create: whilst acknowledging that many of those who claimed relief were 'aged and impotent', she maintains that 'The great majority of older people at all times received

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D. Marshall, *The English Poor in the Eighteenth Century: A Study in Social and Administrative History* (1926), p.24.

[31] My decision to start this thesis with a discussion of the situation in the last decade of the eighteenth century is in part based on the publication date of Sir Frederick Morton Eden's *The State of the Poor* (1797). This highly influential survey is the principal non-governmental source of information about the workhouse for the early part of the century.

occasional, minimal or no relief.'[32] Other historians rightly stress the residuary nature of poor relief; that it was a resource to be called upon only when family, private charity and all other means of support, had been exhausted. The extent to which the poor themselves viewed receipt of relief as a source of stigma or as a legitimate entitlement remains contested. As we shall see, the position of certain sectors of the disabled population may have differed from the majority of the 'non-able-bodied' with regard to these issues.

Charity

In the nineteenth century, issues of social welfare were as much the province of charities and the voluntary sector as of the state. Indeed, charities were often innovative and dynamic in their approach to difficult social problems. Charities concentrating on the welfare of blind and deaf people were particularly well-supported; they not only raised huge sums of money, but also ran institutions and schools and attempted to find employment for their charges.[33] Individuals involved in the establishment or running of charities saw themselves as experts on disability, and were deferred to as such. However modern disability theorists see the residential institutions run by charities as contributing to the devaluing and isolation of disabled people. Charities are further criticised for promoting or colluding in the production of negative imagery of disabled people.

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[32] P. Thane, *Old Age in English History: Past Experience, Present Issues* (Oxford, 2002), p.11.

[33] For the extent of public support of charities for the disabled see F. K. Prochaska, *Women and Philanthropy in Nineteenth-Century England* (Oxford, 1980). Prochaska cites Samson Low's *Charities of London* (1850), as the source of his information. See Prochaska's Appendix, Table 2.

For the purposes of this thesis, focus on charitable activity will be concentrated on two principal areas of activity: education and employment. For most of the period in question education specifically designed to meet the needs of disabled children was carried out primarily under the auspices of religious and charitable organisations.[34] The thesis will look specifically at the education provided by residential schools for the blind and the deaf, and attempt to assess how successfully they prepared the young people in their charge for employment and independent living, if indeed this was their aim. Details of curriculum and everyday routine in these institutions can tell us a great deal about the expectations and the restrictions placed upon disabled people by wider society.

The situation of disabled people, or indeed their very existence, seems to have been scarcely considered by the government at the time of the passage of the 1870 Elementary Education Act (Forster's Act). In 1889, when the presence of a significant proportion of disabled children in the classroom perhaps made the scale of the problem less easy to ignore, a Royal Commission was appointed to look into the position of the blind and the deaf and dumb. The Royal Commission represented a significant acknowledgement on the part of government of the situation of disabled people. However its weaknesses and omissions led to demands, by deaf persons in particular, to be included in future consultation processes.

In order to connect the topics of education and employment the thesis will, in the case of the blind and the deaf, examine the latter in the context of the efforts made by the schools

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[34] Some regulations did exist regarding apprenticeship of disabled youths resident in the workhouse.

in the field of vocational training and in securing and supporting former pupils in their employment. Again the thesis will examine the schools' expectations of their pupils and their success or otherwise in this field.

For reasons that will be examined in the main body of the thesis, the situation of other physically disabled people differed, in some respects significantly, from that of blind or deaf people. There were, for example, scarcely any special schools catering for 'crippled' children until the very end of the century. More generally, as Young and Ashton have noted, 'Information about work among the orthopaedically deformed and crippled is remarkably scanty, considering the incidence of 'crippling' in the population.'[35] The focus upon charitable activity amongst this sector of the disabled poor, whilst still concentrating upon education and employment, is necessarily more diffuse.

There is a risk that concentration purely on the social welfare nexus obscures the obvious; namely, that many people who we would now class as disabled must have subsisted without recourse to any outside assistance whatsoever. Although those individuals who blended into the general population are in some senses the hardest to trace, there is evidence of their presence throughout the full spectrum of economic activity. For some begging provided the basic necessities; indeed the 'blind beggar' appears to have been envied for his ability to attract donations.[36] Others engaged in occupations traditionally

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[35] A. F. Young and E. T. Ashton, *British Social Work in the Nineteenth Century* (1956), p.199.

[36] See K. Chesney, *The Victorian Underworld* (Harmondsworth, 1979), p.232. See also E.
P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (1991), p.293.

deemed suitable for the disabled individual such as music-making or basket weaving. Individuals who became disabled in later life were sometimes able to continue in their occupations. Admiral Nelson provides perhaps one of the more striking examples of an individual whose various disabilities do not appear to have hindered the course of his career.

Disability theorists have highlighted the importance of changing modes of production in the marginalisation of disabled people but they have not generally considered the role of industry as an important source in itself of disability. Evidence given to the various commissions on employment in factories and mines contains important information both as to how people became disabled and how they adapted to their situation.[37] Because the evidence recorded is often that of the disabled individual him or herself, these reports are one of the few sources of direct evidence of the impact and experience of disability on the working classes. Although the activities of those who campaigned for improved working conditions can broadly be deemed philanthropic, for reasons of time and space it is only possible to touch briefly on this fascinating area.

Themes

The focus on the social welfare nexus has inevitably helped to shape the themes that will be explored in the course of this thesis. The first is the relationship between impairment, the ability or inability to work, and poverty. The thesis attempts to draw out the

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[37] The significance of the large number of Victorian charitable organisations concerned with the supply of trusses to the working classes becomes apparent here.

implications of this relationship for the lives of disabled people, for example, on their diets, their everyday routines and their family relationships. According to Finkelstein the lives of disabled people significantly deteriorated as a result of increasing industrialisation; looking at the available evidence as to their living conditions over the period *c.*1795-1890 could provide evidential support or otherwise for his claim. How did disabled people subsist in what would seem to have been an increasingly harsh and hostile environment? Historians often fail to take account of the significant proportion of disabled people amongst the "residuum" or sunken fifth of Victorian society; in so doing they neglect an important element in the make up of poverty in this era.

The thesis also examines the concept of the disabled as the 'deserving' poor. It would appear that there was a broad consensus regarding the right of the disabled to support, certainly during the operation of the Old Poor Law, and quite possibly significantly beyond that date. It may be that the prevalence of traditional, paternalistic and religious values amongst wider society helped to some extent to mitigate the harshness of life under capitalism for certain groups of disabled people.[38]

The thesis will also look at the role physical disability played in the way poverty was conceived during in the nineteenth century. In part, this will involve charting the changing thinking behind the policy and administration of the Poor Law and, for the

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[38] There is evidence, for example, of some employers, particularly in mining areas, making generous provision for workers crippled in the course of their employment. See N. McCord, 'Aspects of the Relief of Poverty in Early Nineteenth-Century Britain', in R. M. Hartwell *et al.*, *The Long Debate on Poverty: Eight Essays on Industrialisation and "The Condition of England"* (1972), p.103.

period post-1869, of the Charity Organisation Society. This is not as an extensive a task as might initially appear, as the situation of the physically disabled was largely overlooked by politicians. Social commentators, however, were more alert to the human face of poverty. The works of Mayhew, Booth and Rowntree all referred to disabled people.[39] Booth is particularly interesting from this perspective. Many of the individuals in his "Class B" were physically disabled, and his detailed analysis of their incomes and lifestyle make it clear that these people lived under the constant threat of starvation. Moreover, he singles out "Class B", whom he calls the hopeless poor, as a class whose very existence depressed the conditions of those directly above them. Rowntree defined poverty in terms of physical efficiency, but his work, because of its later date, will not strictly come within the scope of this thesis.

The second theme involves a change of perspective; a concentration upon the local rather than the national picture. The relationship between physically disabled people and their communities during this period will be examined. There are potentially three strands to this theme.

First, many of the various constituent elements of the "mixed economy of welfare", upon which disabled people would have been dependent, operated at a local level. Before turning to the provision of the state, or organised charity, disabled people might first have had recourse to support and sustenance from family and kinship networks, and also perhaps from paternalistic employers, from the church, community, trade unions, friendly

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[39] H. Mayhew, *London Labour and the London Poor* (1851). C. Booth, *Life and Labour of the People in London* (1889). B. S. Rowntree, *Poverty, A Study of Town Life* (1901).

societies or sick clubs. How important was this local 'mixed economy' and what evidence can we uncover of its nature and effectiveness during this period?

Secondly, charitable schools and institutions were often the result of local initiatives and were supported and financed by the local community. The thesis will examine the relationship between these institutions, their pupils and the community in which they were situated. How successful were they? Who supported them? What attempts, if any, were made to integrate disabled people into the wider community?

Thirdly, local autonomy was an important feature in the administration and interpretation of national policy, both in the state and voluntary sectors. How did local interests react to attempts by the state to intervene in their affairs? How did the change from local administration to faceless bureaucracy, if indeed such a change did occur during this period, effect disabled people? To what extent could local voluntary endeavour on behalf of the disabled influence state policy?

The third important theme involves the examination of some of the cultural factors which it has been argued are at least as important as economic considerations in determining the nature of the experience of disability. Disability theorists have highlighted the importance in this context of issues such as gender and the nature of the individual's impairment. The thesis will look specifically at the impact of these particular issues on the experience of disability during this period. Although it would be most interesting to examine other

factors (for example, the role of religion, attitudes towards the body or the improvement in morals and manners) considerations of space make this impossible.

The view that prejudice plays an important role in the stigmatisation and devaluing of disabled people has already been discussed briefly: part of this third theme will be an examination of the range of stereotypes of the disabled individual, in so far as these can be ascertained from a study of the areas outlined above. The thesis looks at how far attitudes towards the disabled altered during the period in question, and attempts to seek some explanation as to why this might have been the case. How far did government or charitable policies reflect or indeed promote these attitudes? One of the clearest insights into contemporary attitudes towards disability can be ascertained from a study of the language or discourse of disability during this period. It is enlightening to contrast the images of disability used by charitable organisations with those utilised by the poor law. Unfortunately, there is neither the time nor the space to investigate the fascinating area of wider cultural prejudice as expressed in literature, art or other cultural forms within the scope of this thesis.

The decision to concentrate upon these themes: poverty; the relationship of the disabled person to his or her local community; and the range of public attitudes towards the disabled, has been taken in the hope that they will provide a valuable insight into the nature of the problem posed by disability in the nineteenth century, what was happening about it, and the effect this in turn had on the experience of disability.

Thesis Propositions

Examination of these themes has assisted in the formulation of a number of propositions relating to the development of the concept of disability, both as an administrative category and as a distinctive identity during this period.

1. Although this thesis does not take issue with the claims that disability consciousness was a relatively late phenomenon, it suggests that a range of disabled identities were emerging during this era and that these formed the basis on which later activists were to build. Thus the period covered by this thesis is seen as one of developing awareness of collective identity or community of interest amongst certain groups of disabled people, in particular the blind or deaf. Evidence of this phenomenon can be found in the voluntary participation of disabled adults in common social, economic and religious activities. Involvement in such activities further reinforced nascent feelings of group identity.
2. The role and importance of the schools in the development of these multiple identities is seen as crucial.[40] By concentrating their attention on educational controversies, such as that between the proponents of oralism and signing for the

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[40]A strong case for the importance of schooling in the formation of identity has been made in the case of the deaf by Lennard Davies. Davies argues that 'It was only by attending the residential schools created in the eighteenth century that the deaf became a community.' This community was subsequently consolidated in the nineteenth century by the dissemination, through the education system, of a universal language. L. Davis, *Enforcing Normalcy Disability, Deafness and the Body* (1995), p. 82. In England special education for the Deaf was slower to develop than on the continent. One would therefore expect to see, as this thesis suggests, that the development of a communal identity occurred at a slightly later date. Braddock and Parish note that '... the congregation of people with similar disabilities for treatment and services also made possible the development of group identities, which ultimately facilitated the rise of political activism in the modern era.' D. L. Braddock and S. L. Parish, 'An Institutional History of Disability', in G. L. Albrecht, K. D. Seelman and M. Bury (eds.), *Handbook of Disability Studies* (2001), p.11.

deaf, commentators have tended to overlook the role of the schools as a bonding mechanism for the communities they served. Nor should the social benefits of education, for example in easing communications, in developing friendships and combatting isolation, be underestimated. One direct consequence of special schooling, recognised by contemporary experts, was the increased rate of intermarriage amongst deaf people. The schools generated a range of services and activities, both social and economic, which supported former pupils long after their school careers had ended. Employment in specialist workshops, often sponsored by the schools, maintained and strengthened links between disabled people. Conversely, it has been argued that by removing disabled people from their families and local areas, the schools alienated their pupils from the wider community. Whilst accepting some elements of the latter argument the thesis argues that the schools were of clear benefit to the majority of their pupils.

3. Voluntaryism provided much of the impetus for administrative reform on behalf of disabled people. It was instrumental in helping to generate and stimulate professional expertise in a range of fields. Subsequently a number of those who had developed their expertise in the voluntary sector were prominent amongst the ranks of those calling for increased state aid and intervention for and on behalf of disabled people. Hence to concentrate purely on the role of the state, or to otherwise fail to give due emphasis to charitable endeavour, cannot but distort our understanding of the position of disabled people in the nineteenth century. Again no issue is taken with the contention that the majority of activity during this period was undertaken on behalf of disabled people rather than through their own

agency, but these activities should be seen as providing a basis for future collective action by disabled people.

4. As a consequence of multiple factors, (including the particularity of voluntary organisation, the shifting parameters of the concept of disability and the development of special education), the speed at which groups developed identities or awareness of communality of interest was variable. This can best be illustrated by examining the position of relatively 'advanced' groups such as the deaf or blind and contrasting this with the situation of other groups of physically disabled people. Thus by the end of the century many blind or deaf people had access to a basic communal infra-structure and had begun to develop their own representative organisations. Other sectors of the disabled population, lacking such opportunities for social contact or communication, showed no evidence of a distinctive identity.

5. Following the above, generalisation about the situation of disabled people is difficult. Thus although the economic position of certain groups of disabled people may have deteriorated as a result of industrialisation, it is likely that other groups, with access for perhaps the first time to education, and comprehensive charitable support, may in fact have improved. In addition, individual factors such as age, class, gender and the nature or degree of impairment played a vital role in determining the experience of disability. The perception and prejudices of wider society regarding the nature of disability strongly influenced the social and economic status of disabled people.

The Demography of Disability

Where possible, the thesis will refer to contemporary statistical evidence to illustrate the scale of physical disability in Victorian England. However the accuracy of much seemingly 'objective' material is suspect, for reasons that will be discussed below, and thus needs to be approached cautiously. Notwithstanding this, its collation and subsequent deployment is of intrinsic interest, and tells us much about the Victorian perception of disability. Examination of available evidence as to the numbers of disabled people in receipt of both poor relief and charitable assistance, should make it possible to highlight variations over time, and of location.[41]

Although empirical studies can reveal much of the reality of the experience of disability in the nineteenth century, some important issues remain within the realm of conjecture. One of the most central of these relates to the scale or incidence of disability.[42] The development of statistical science during this period provides some clues; however, widescale surveys, such as the Census, are believed to have significantly misrepresented the scale of impairment.[43] The absence of precise definitions of the degree of impairment

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[41] The proportion of non-able-bodied recipients of relief at various periods during the nineteenth century has already been examined by historians of the poor law, so in a sense this research shall only be collating available information. Generally, historians engaged in this research have been concerned with calculating the proportion of recipients who were able-bodied males, so it may at least be possible to put a different emphasis on their statistics.

[42] Even today, accurate estimates of the size of the disabled population remain contested. See G. Hughes, 'A Suitable Case for Treatment? Constructions of Disability', in E. Saroga (ed.), *Embodying the Social: Constructions of Difference* (2001), p.56.

[43] From 1851 to 1911 the Census incorporated questions regarding the incidence of blindness and deafness amongst the general population. Initially householders were asked whether they, or members of their households, were 'blind' or 'deaf and dumb.' From 1891 a further enquiry sought to ascertain the numbers of those who were 'deaf but not

necessary to constitute 'blindness' or 'deafness', combined perhaps with a desire to avoid stigma on the part of respondents, undermined the accuracy of much data.[44]

Whilst the statistics provided by the Census need to be treated with great caution, it may be that they can serve to highlight broad trends. Thus the fall in proportionate terms in the number of respondents claiming to be blind, from 1:979 in 1851 to 1:1236 in 1891, probably does reflect a decrease in the incidence of this impairment.[45] Similarly the greater incidence of blindness in males than in females, a consistent feature over this period, is likely to be broadly accurate. In 1891 the proportion of blind males to the general population was 1:1114 and of females 1:1336. For the Deaf the proportion of males was 1:1008 and of females 1:975.[46] The Census also revealed that the blind and congenitally deaf had a reduced life expectancy when compared to the general

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mute'. Enquiries were also made as to whether the blindness or deafness dated 'from birth', later amended to 'from childhood'. In 1891 the General Report on the Census warned that the returns on the incidence of disability, especially those relating to deafness and 'mental derangement' were 'in all probability excessively inaccurate.' *Census* (1891), General Report, p.70.

[44] It is likely that answers to questions relating to the incidence of disability in the census were inaccurate because many parents refused to acknowledge that their child was hearing or vision impaired. One explanation is that parents were seeking to avoid the stigma that such an admission may have involved. Examples of parents in the twentieth century seeking to disguise the extent of their child's disability are recorded by S. Humphries and P. Gordon, *Out of Sight: The Experience of Disability 1900-1950* (Plymouth, 1992), pp. 27-31.

[45] In the *Census* (1891), General Report, p.71, the reduction in the proportion of blind persons was attributed to 'the greater precautions taken to prevent the ravages of purulent ophthalmia', to improvements in surgical treatment and to the reduced incidence of diseases including smallpox. The latter had been a major cause of blindness earlier in the century. In 1873 Charles Baker of the YIDD was asked by the Census Commissioners for his comments upon a fall in the proportion of deaf persons recorded in the 1871 census. See below Chapter Five p.211.

[46] The number of males with congenital deafness exceeded that of females, but where deafness was acquired, females exceeded males. This was attributed to the increased prevalence of deafness with age and the longer life span enjoyed by women.

population.[47] Also of interest are the figures relating to the regional distribution of blindness. These show a significantly lower incidence of blindness in industrial than in rural areas: this was ascribed to 'immigration, and the comparitive youthfulness of the population in these localities.' [48]

Within the Yorkshire region some evidence of the incidence of blindness during a slightly earlier period is provided by the Rev. Harcourt's 1836 survey of the Yorkshire blind.[49] Harcourt calculated that the county's blind totalled 1,339 and that the national figure, calculated on a *pro rata* basis was likely to be 13,390 of a total population of 15 million.[50] Harcourt made use of informants, specifically the local Anglican incumbent, to conduct a survey at a parish level. He then extrapolated regional and national figures from the returns. Clearly this method of sampling was subject to various pitfalls; incumbents may not have been sufficiently familiar with the situation of all their parishoners, the statistics were intended to argue a case and may have been subject to a degree of bias, and, of course, the issue of definition remains. At the very least the survey illustrates how those with a particular interest in this issue perceived the scale of the problem they faced.

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[47] *Census* (1891), General Report, pp.71-71.

[48] *Census* (1861), General Report, p.44. The proportion of blind persons in the rural South West was 1:1793, the figure for the North West was 1:1253 with the figure for York, West Riding, given as 1:1296. The report also drew attention to the inadequate distribution of schools for the blind. Thus the county of York, with a population of over 2 millions and reportedly 324 blind under 20, possessed only one school (the WSB) with 65 'inmates'. *Census* (1861), General Report, p.51.

[49] See Table Three, Chapter Six.

[50] This equates to a ratio of approximately 1:1120.

Since no attempt was made to enumerate other forms of physical disability in the Census, and only very limited and impressionistic evidence is otherwise available, information as to the incidence of 'crippling' disability remains particularly obscure.[51] The first large scale statistical surveys into the incidence of physical disability took place only in the last decade of the century. Dr Francis Warner's 1890 survey of 50,000 Elementary and Poor Law school children in London suggested that approximately fifteen per cent exhibited 'bodily defects', 'deviations from the normal nerve-state' or were 'crippled, maimed or deformed'.[52] A further ten per cent were either 'pale, delicate or thin', 'eye cases' or 'children that appear to require special care.' These figures probably underestimated the incidence of disability as they failed to take into account those registered as 'permanently disabled' in school board returns.

An interesting insight into the scale of physical disability amongst certain sectors of the adult population can be found in the furore that led to the appointment in 1903 of the Interdepartmental Committee on Physical Disability.[53] In a series of articles in the *Contemporary Review* General Sir Frederick Maurice alleged that almost three fifths of prospective recruits were rejected on medical grounds or failed to complete their first two years of service.[54] Of this number, approximately half failed because they did not attain

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[51] The nature of the available source material is discussed below, Chapter Six.
[52] See Appendices, Table Ten, below.
[53] The Committee's findings were subsequently published as the *Report of the Interdepartmental Committee on Physical Disability*, Parliamentary Papers (1904), XXII.
[54] H. Perkin, *The Rise of Professional Society: England Since 1880* (1989), p.56. Perkin quotes the army returns for 1893-1902 which showed 34.6 per cent of recruits were rejected at the time of initial inspection and 3 per cent during the first two years of service. He notes that despite this seeming discrepancy the army supported Maurice's

the minimum requirements for height, weight, or chest size.[55] Whilst these individuals were 'unfit', they were not necessarily disabled. Many were suffering from the effects of malnutrition or poor home environments. Infamously of some 11,000 Manchester men, only 1,200 proved fit for service. The remainder of those classed as 'unfit' were presumably disqualified on the basis of physical or mental disability. The majority of those rejected were young working class men; since we know that the incidence of disability rises with age these statistics suggest that the overall incidence of disability amongst the working class as a whole was very high.

Although there are many obvious pitfalls in making analogies between the situation in the United Kingdom today and that pertaining in Victorian England, the comparison is of some interest. The Labour Force Survey of summer 2002, carried out under the auspices of the Disability Rights Commision, suggests that 19 per cent of Great Britain's working age population, approximately 6.9 million people, are long term disabled.[56] Since just under 800,000 of this total are affected by learning difficulties or mental illness, the numbers with some form of physical disability total approximately 6.1 million.[57] This is

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figures: recruiting sergeants apparently 'weeded out' those recruits most likely to be rejected before inspection even took place.

[55] Ibid.

[56] See http://www.drc-gb.org/publicationsandreports/campaigndetails. Respondents were asked whether they had a disability as defined by the Disability Discrimination Act or a work-limiting disability or both. The Disability Discrimination Act of 1995 is concerned with 'people who have a long term health problem or disability which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on their ability to carry out normal day to day activities.'

[57] Of this total approximately 116,000 cited difficulties with their sight and 123,000 hearing problems. The RNIB estimates that there are approximately 1.7 million people in the U.K. with 'serious sight problems or blindness.' The RNID suggest that 9 million people are 'deaf or hard of hearing'. Of this total, some 698,000 are severely or profoundly deaf. Numbers of Deafblind people are estimated to be in the region of

approximately 17 per cent of the working population. This total excludes the young and the elderly, and so the figure for the population as a whole should be revised upwards to take account of the many elderly disabled people.

It does not seem likely that the Victorian labouring population would be less prone to physically disability than the population today; rather the prevalance of hard physical labour and the limited nature of effective medical intervention would tend to suggest that a higher proportion of the population were likely to have been disabled. Indeed the figures from the Interdepartmental Committee would suggest this to be the case. On this basis it might not be unreasonable to suggest that a minimum of two fifths of the labouring population would have been physically disabled and the overall figure was in all probability significantly higher than this. Whether those so included would have considered themselves disabled is, of course, a moot point. Obviously rates would have altered over time, and regional differences, as well as variations between the social classes, would have been significant.

The historian may be on firmer ground in attempting to delineate some of the factors which influenced the demography of disability in the nineteenth century.[58] It may be surmised that working class children would have been at a higher risk of disability than their middle class peers because of the link between poverty and maternal/ foetal

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23,000. See http://www.rnid.org.uk/htm/factsheets/general-statistics-on-deafness.htm. The discrepancies between these figures and those of the Labour Survey may be explained by the fact that the survey excludes the elderly who are more likely to experience these conditions.

[58] For an extensive survey of the many factors adversely affecting the health of the Victorians see A. S. Wohl, *Endangered Lives: Public Health in Victorian Britain* (1984).

malnutrition. Sickly or diseased mothers would commonly have produced underweight or premature infants. Alcohol abuse, with its consequences for foetal development, was commonplace. Fevers, epidemics, and common diseases such as syphilis in the adult population could all have traumatic effects on the baby in utero. Childbirth itself was a hazardous enterprise for mothers of all social classes, and complications at the time of delivery could result in disability. Childhood rickets often deformed the mother's pelvis, adding to the dangers of childbirth.

Horrific rates of infant mortality no doubt operated to substantially reduce the numbers of those born physically disabled. Mortality rates remained high throughout the century, only beginning to fall in the first decade of the twentieth. This probably meant that a child born with severe or multiple physical disabilities was unlikely to survive until its first birthday. Many babies died as a result of neglect, of parental or medical ignorance, or simply as a consequence of poverty and malnutrition. Infanticide was not uncommon, with illegitimate children particularly at risk. Inappropriate medical care, often taking the form of over interference, was responsible for many deaths of infants of the middle and upper classes.

For individuals who survived infancy, the risk of illness or injury causing debility or handicap remained. Exposure to a variety of diseases such as polio and tuberculosis, could result in permanent disability, as could diseases associated with malnutrition or

environmental factors such as rickets.[59] The employment of working class children in factories and mines led frequently to accidents. The new technologies required speed and agility, and basic safety requirements were often neglected leaving workers at risk of injury or death. Various forms of industrial disease were commonplace and injuries and disabilities were often linked to occupation. Seamstresses and tailors who spent long hours in ill lit rooms doing close work were at risk of injuring their sight. Workers in the cotton or textile mills could suffer from dust entering their lungs. Miners also suffered from respiratory diseases. Agriculture accounted for many serious injuries, especially at harvest time when the fields were filled with casual and inexperienced labour. Assaults, floggings and physical chastisement, street brawls and domestic violence were common sources of lasting injury.

The early years of the century saw Great Britain involved in the protracted conflict of the Napoleonic wars; and various other colonial wars and skirmishes, as well as international and European conflicts, continued to contribute to the numbers of disabled throughout the century. Battlefield surgery was of necessity swift and primitive. Amputation was the best means of avoiding gangrene. For years after the termination of the Napoleonic wars, disabled soldiers and sailors formed the largest category of beggars on the streets of London.

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[59] The incidence and hence the significance of epidemic disease varied over time. We have already mentioned that smallpox was an important cause of blindness in the earlier part of the century but of very little consequence in the latter half.

Finally, old age could also bring with it a whole range of infirmities and potentially disabling conditions – poor sight, poor hearing and reduced mobility. Until the passage of the Old Age Pension Act by the Liberal Government of 1908 there existed no statutory definition of old age or concept of retirement. For working class people old age occurred with the waning of physical prowess – a Victorian could be old in his forties. Disability was a realistic prospect at every stage of the life cycle.

Marginalised and devalued by their contemporaries, and largely overlooked by historians, disabled people have effectively been written out of the history of nineteenth century England. This thesis aims to take some preliminary steps towards redressing this neglect. In so doing, it is hoped that a fresh perspective might be brought to bear on some of the poverty-related issues which dominate historical discourse on the nineteenth century. It is hoped that a study of the nature outlined above could contribute significantly to the opening up of a new and exciting field of historical research.

Chapter One

The Old Poor Law (OPL) c.1795-1834

Although this thesis concentrates on the condition of the disabled poor in the years following the 1834 Poor Law Amendment Act, it is neither possible nor desirable to overlook their situation in the decades immediately prior to its passage. The Old Poor Law established the legal basis for state support of this sector of the poor and at the same time underpinned their moral claims. Those who shaped the new law were determined to return to what they believed to have been the true spirit and clarity of the old. Indeed the old law was not repealed by the new act and remained in force until 1948. Without an understanding of the OPL and its administration it is difficult to appreciate both the motivation for, and the nature of, the changes introduced by the new.[1] Contemporary debate concerning the theoretical and practical issues raised by the disabled poor continued to have resonance well into the nineteenth century and beyond.

The first aim of this chapter is to outline the legal basis for support of the disabled as established under the old law. It will then examine how relief of the disabled poor was managed in the decades immediately prior to the 1834 Poor Law Amendment Act (PLAA). What factors governed eligibility for relief and what forms of relief were available? How significant a sector of the poor were the disabled? How well did the

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[1] Some historians have questioned the extent to which the changes of 1834 affected practices regarding distribution of aid at a local level. See P. Dunkley, *The Crisis of the Old Poor Law in England, 1795-1834* (New York, 1982), p.3. Dunkley cites articles by N. McCord and M. Rose as providing support for this view. See also R. N. Thompson, 'The Working of the Poor Law Amendment Act in Cumbria, 1836-1871', *Northern History*, 15 (1979), pp. 117-37.

system work and what were its strengths and weaknesses? This will lead on to a discussion of the extent to which the situation of the impotent poor influenced the debate preceding the PLAA. In particular, the chapter will look at some of the solutions proposed by contemporaries to the problems this sector of the poor raised. It shall examine what the 1832 Royal Commission had to say about the condition of the physically disabled poor and its proposals for their future care. What implications did these proposals have? The significance of the Act itself will be explored in succeeding chapters.

Although the focus of the thesis is on the disabled poor, it is not always possible or desirable to isolate their situation from that of other sectors of the poor. The use by contemporaries of the term 'impotent' to designate all those who were unable to work makes it difficult to distinguish the experience of the physically disabled from others in this category, for example the aged and the sick. In fact, the absence of a more precise classification is in itself revealing about contemporary attitudes to this sector of the poor. Nor can the situation of the able-bodied poor be ignored. Those who framed the 1834 PLAA were motivated by the need to find a solution to the problems raised by able-bodied male pauperism; unless this is appreciated it is not possible to understand the Act and its consequences for the disabled poor.

This chapter will also introduce several themes which recur throughout the remainder of the thesis. The first of these themes relates to the attempts of policy makers to balance collective and individual responsibility for the disabled poor. To what extent should the

state or voluntary organisation assume responsibility for the support of the disabled poor, and how could individuals or their families be encouraged to contribute to their welfare? Another theme examines the significance and consequences of regional administration of the law. In subsequent chapters this will be contrasted with the role of central government, but such a comparison would not be valid at this stage.[2] The relationship between the relief of poverty and issues of morality, on the part of the pauper, his kin and wider society, should also become apparent.

Operation of the Old Poor Law

The 1601 Poor Law confirmed the right of the 'lame, impotent, old, blind and such other among them being poor and not able to work' to receive support from the parish. These individuals formed part of the great mass of the 'deserving' poor; that sector of the poor whose poverty was rooted in circumstances largely beyond their control and could not be attributed to moral failure. As such these individuals were recognised as having a moral claim to assistance from the collectivity and the law carefully distinguished between the relief offered to them and the harsher treatment meted out to those labelled as undeserving.

Although the law acknowledged collective responsibility for the support of the 'deserving' it was not intended that their close family or kin should entirely abrogate their

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[2] Although the OPL was statute based its administration and interpretation was largely the province of the magistracy. The 1834 PLAA saw the implementation of centralization at the expense of local control. See D. Eastwood, *Governing Rural England Tradition and Transformation in Local Government 1780-1840* (Oxford, 1994), pp.100-101.

responsibilities. The Act stated that 'The father and grandfather, mother and grandmother, and children of every poor, old, blind, lame and impotent person, or other poor person not able to work, being of sufficient ability, shall at their own charges relieve and maintain every such poor person...' at a rate to be determined by the justices. D. Thomson, looking specifically at the situation of the elderly, suggests that this provision was narrowly interpreted and only rarely enforced. He maintains that '... this much-quoted statement of apparent familial responsibility was a minor qualification incorporated within a much more powerful and significant declaration of collective duty and obligation.'[3] Since obligations towards children appear to have been interpreted more strictly than those owed to parents, the law may have been more diligently applied to ensure disabled children received adequate support. However this was likely to have been countered by the recognition that disablity imposed a disproportionate financial burden upon the family.

Ambiguities of definition and a lack of relevant statistical information make it difficult to calculate how many disabled people benefited from the law, or what proportion they comprised of the total on relief. The percentage of paupers amongst the general population was very high. John Marshall calculated that in 1801 the proportion of paupers to total population was approximately twenty eight per cent.[4] J. D. Marshall quotes Professor Krause's suggestion that between 1817 and 1821 the numbers on relief

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[3] D. Thomson, 'The Welfare of the Elderly in the Past a Family or Community Responsibility?', in M. Pelling and R. M. Smith (eds.), *Life, Death and the Elderly Historical Perspectives* (1991), p.197.

[4] J. Marshall, *A Digest of all Accounts relating to the Population...* (1833), p.33. See Appendix, Table One.

exceeded twenty per cent of the population.[5] It is probable that the close link between disability and poverty would have ensured that many, perhaps even a majority of more severely disabled people, claimed relief at some point in their lives. Where statistics are available they confirm that the 'impotent' formed a significant proportion of those in receipt of relief. In 1802-3, the Abstract of Return of those relieved revealed that the elderly, the sick and the infirm constituted approximately sixteen per cent of the total.[6] J. D. Marshall calculates that in the Speenhamland Counties this category of the poor accounted for '... between 9 and 20 per cent of all pauper relief cases ....'.[7] Counties operating this system, predominantly southern and rural, subsidised the low wages of agricultural labourers out of the Poor Law funds and therefore supported a larger percentage of able-bodied paupers than was the case elsewhere. It is therefore likely that in the more industrialized counties of the North the impotent poor comprised a greater proportion of those relieved. Regional differences aside, it can be seen that the Poor Law was of central importance to people with disabilities in this era. Variations in the regulations regarding the receipt of outdoor relief, or factors effecting the quality of indoor relief, would have had a profound effect upon their lives.

The basic unit of Poor Law administration was the parish. There were 15,535 of these in England and Wales, roughly 12,000 of which had less than 800 parishioners. The

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[5] J. D. Marshall, *The Old Poor Law 1795-1834* (1968), p.31.
[6] K. Williams, *From Pauperism to Poverty* (1981), pp.149-50.
[7] There were significant variations between the Speenhamland counties: '... it must be conceded that each region and county had its own peculiarities and the cases of Sussex (with comparatively large number of children on permanent outdoor relief, and few sick or elderly adults) and Dorset (with a large contingent of aged or infirm persons, and relatively few children), will long provide a challenge to interpretation.' Marshall, *The Old Poor Law,* p.35.

emphasis on local responsibility for the parish poor led to the development of a series of complex laws governing settlement and hence the acquisition of rights to relief within a particular parish. Rights of settlement brought entitlement to a variety of welfare benefits which could encompass outdoor relief, indoor relief, medical relief, and, in the Speenhamland Counties, allowances in support of low wages. Conversely, failure to obtain rights of settlement could result in persons likely to become chargeable to the rates being evicted from their homes. A majority of parishes, particularly those in rural areas, did not have the facilities to provide indoor relief. Indeed John Knott states that 'Of the 14,600 parishes and townships which sent in their returns in 1804, only 3,765 maintained paupers in any form of workhouse. The situation had improved slightly by 1815... but even so three out of four parishes had no access to a workhouse.'[8] Knott calculates that in 1804 6.7 per cent of paupers received indoor relief, this figure rising to 9.9 per cent in 1813-15.[9]

It is therefore a reasonable assumption that, like their able-bodied counterparts, a large majority of disabled people in receipt of relief, and particularly those resident in rural areas, would have received outdoor relief – a regular, normally monetary, dole.[10] Not only was this the simplest and most commonplace form of provision: it had the advantage of ensuring that wherever possible families remained intact and a degree of independence

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[8] J. Knott, *Popular Opposition to the 1834 Poor Law* (c.1986), p.27.
[9] Ibid., p.23. Knott's calculations are based upon *Abstracts... Maintenance of the Poor*, Parliamentary Papers (1803-4), XIII; *Abstract... Poor in England 1813-15*, Parliamentary Papers (1818), XIX. Obviously these figures are national averages, and regional patterns could vary significantly.
[10] Knott notes that in Halifax in 1802 the infirm and idiots comprised seven per cent of the recipients of outdoor relief. Information derived from the Halifax List of Out-Poor, 22 April 1802. Other records show a similar pattern. Knott, *Popular Opposition*, p.26.

was preserved. For the parishes it had the additional benefit of being the cheapest form of relief. Eligibility for relief and the sum granted were at the discretion of the parish overseers, although there was a right of appeal to the magistrates. Parents were able to claim relief on behalf of disabled offspring and adult children could also make claims on behalf of elderly or disabled parents. The sums paid were often small, but when combined with earned income or assistance from private charitable sources, could provide an adequate subsistence.[11]

One of the most valued services provided by the parish was medical relief. The practice of appointing medical officers to attend to the needs of the poor seems to have originated in the second half of the eighteenth century. It was more common in the Midlands, the South and the East and little known in the North of the country.[12] Relief was not restricted to the indigent or paupers, but extended to the labouring poor generally. It could take a variety of forms including the provision of extra food, wine or fuel to a sick person, or of medical attendance in the event of injury or lengthy illness.[13] A few parishes, generally in the older towns or cities such as Bristol or Liverpool, had the

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[11] Sir F. M. Eden records a Banbury labourer of the 1790s receiving an annual allowance of £2 12*s* 'to maintain the second girl, who is lame…'. The labourer earned £20 16*s* and an older girl £3 18*s*. F. M. Eden, *The State of the Poor: A History of the Labouring Classes in England, With Parochial Reports* (edited by A.G. L. Rogers, 1928), p.281. By the 1830s most elderly people received between 2*s* 6*d* and 3*s* a week. D. Thomson suggests this was equivalent to between '70 to 90 per cent of the spending power of the average, younger adult of the "Working Class"…'. Thomson, 'Welfare of the Elderly', p.204.

[12] M. W. Flinn, 'Medical Services under the New Poor Law', in D. Fraser (ed.), *The New Poor Law in the Nineteenth Century* (1976), p.47.

[13] R. Hastings quotes examples of nursing services being provided for a blind man and a chronic invalid. A lame pauper had his expenses paid for a month at the county hospital. R. Hastings, 'Poverty and the Poor Law in the North Riding of Yorkshire c.1780-1837', *Borthwick Papers*, 61 (York, 1982), p.14.

benefit of hospitals or other charitable institutions and endowments to which they could divert certain classes of their needy parishioners. P.W. Anderson gives some indication of how the care of the sick was managed in Leeds during this period. He suggests that in Leeds 'the fact that the majority of those in need were receiving out-door relief enabled the workhouse to divert resources to treating special cases.'[14] The Leeds workhouse also developed an effective working relationship with local charities. Anderson notes referrals of inmates by the Workhouse to the Leeds Eye Dispensary in St. Peter's Square. This institution had been established by the surgeons of the town for 'affording to the poor an opportunity of receiving gratuitous relief.'[15] Other individuals were referred to the care of local Lunatic Asylums. Blind residents were taught to play the violin as a means of earning money.[16]

In circumstances where outdoor relief was inadequate or inappropriate, those disabled people unable to provide for themselves might have the facility of applying for admission to a parish institution. Where such accommodation was provided it generally took the form of the mixed workhouse; only a tiny minority of parishes could support specialised institutions for different sub groups of the poor.[17] Once formal inquiries into means and questions of settlement had been determined, the decision as to whether an individual should be admitted to the local poorhouse or workhouse was based upon the discretion of

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[14] P. W. Anderson, 'The Leeds Workhouse Under the Old Poor Law: 1726-1834' (M. Phil. thesis, University of Leeds, 1977), p.50. At p.77 Anderson refers to the Leeds Workhouse Minutes of 11 June 1766 which record an order 'that John Jowett be sent and maintained at Ilkley Wells for his eyes.'

[15] Ibid., p.127.

[16] Ibid., p.50.

[17] The terms poorhouse, workhouse, almshouse were used indiscriminately to describe the various parish institutions.

the parish officers or the workhouse master. In rural areas the officials might well have local knowledge of the applicant which they could use in the decision making process. In urban areas, particularly in an era where towns were growing rapidly, the parties were less likely to know each other and the process may well have been more arbitrary.[18]

Sir Frederick Morton Eden provides the most comprehensive account of conditions in workhouses, and the personal circumstances of those who lived in these institutions, at the turn of the nineteenth century. Eden's *The State of the Poor*, published in 1797, is a detailed inventory and commentary based on extensive research undertaken between 1793-96. Eden, whilst not going so far as to advocate abolition of the law, was critical of its operation and effects which he felt encouraged improvidence on the part of the poor. He believed that the needs of the impotent were being neglected by overseers, and money which could have provided more adequately for their requirements was instead being squandered on less deserving categories of pauper. Like many of his contemporaries, Eden urged a greater role for discriminate private charity in the relief of the poor, with public relief available only as a last resort. He approved of friendly societies, believing that they encouraged providence on the part of their membership.[19] He was also

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[18] L. Hollen Lees suggests that the process of admission to the workhouse, in common with other transactions between the poor and authority figures, was a two-way process. She demonstrates how the poor were adept at manipulation of the system and were keenly aware of their entitlements under it. L. Hollen Lees, *The Solidarities of Strangers: The English Poor Laws and the People, 1700-1948* (Cambridge, 1998).

[19] One of Eden's more detailed accounts relates to Newark where there were 10 friendly societies with about 800 members altogether. The one meeting at the White Hart was typical. Its membership was limited to 81 males who at the time of admission had to be over 18 and below 30. A prospective member had to be free from 'the King's evil, falling sickness, lameness, venereal disease or any other distemper whatever that may render him incapable of getting his living.' After a year's payments a member falling sick or

interested in regional variations in diet and the implications that these had for good husbandry, health and economy.

Although often all we learn from Eden about the workhouse inmates is their sex and age, with little or no information as to their physical condition, on occasion a more detailed record is given. One of his more extensive accounts relates to the Isle of Wight where the workhouse had been erected under an Act of Parliament in 1771.

> The Poor are chiefly relieved in a House of Industry at Newport... The house can accommodate 700 people, but the number seldom exceeds 550. On Ap. 3, 1796, there were 86 men, from 20 to 90 years of age, cripples, blind, idiots etc. 115 women, from 20 to 90 years; the younger part are blind, etc., or sent hither in cases of bastardy. 131 boys from infants to 13 years, among whom are many cripples. 163 girls from infants to 13 years, cripples etc...[20]

The proportion of disabled residents at Newport seems high when compared to other workhouses. At Banbury, for example, there were 39 persons in the workhouse, 27 of

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lame, unless due to quarrelling or venereal disease, recieved 6*s* weekly. However any member claiming relief whilst in receipt of charity was to be expelled, as was any member caught spending more than 2*d* on drinking in a public house. Members with incurable sickness or lameness were allowed 2*s* 6*d* a week for life. Rogers, *The State of the Poor,* p.273. Hopkins notes that by 1801 there were approximately 7,200 societies with a membership of 648,000. These were mainly concentrated in the industrial areas. E. Hopkins, *Working-Class Self-Help in Nineteenth Century England: Responses to Industrialization* (1995), p.10.

[20] Eden, *The State of the Poor,* p.202.

them under the age of 15. Of these 39 '... one is blind, one insane, and four lame.'[21] The most obvious explanation for this discrepancy is that Banbury paid outdoor relief to disabled people whereas at Newport the by-laws forbade payments other than to the families of sailors press-ganged into government service. Clearly, the availability and amount of outdoor relief were crucial in determining the ability of disabled people to maintain their independence.

Conditions within the workhouses varied considerably. The Newport workhouse offered its industrious poor a varied diet including bread and rice, beef and pork, vegetables, milk, butter and cheese. Beer was served with supper. At Preston the diet was rather more monotonous with a staple food being "Hasty Pudding", an oatmeal gruel served with a little milk, butter or treacle.[22] Beef, bread, vegetables and beer were also served. The size of the Newport workhouse and its recent erection, together with the nature of its pauper body, meant that the facilities provided for the residents were unusual. These included 'a common sitting room for the impotent and aged... Sick wards... two common sitting-rooms adjoining for the old and infirm who are unable to go downstairs... pest house... a building for persons under inoculation.' At Preston the aims of the workhouse included provision of 'a comfortable asylum for the deserving whom age, disease or infirmity have disabled from pursuing their various employments.'[23] However Eden noted a lack of apartments for the sick and a neglect of basic cleanliness.The accommodation and conditions in other workhouses were less satisfactory and indeed often squalid. The

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[21] Ibid., p.280.
[22] Ibid., p.222. Hasty pudding was a dietary staple of the poorest labourers in the North.
[23] Ibid., p.220.

workhouse at Wolverhampton was described as having 'the appearance of a prison'. The lack of hygeine meant that the regular epidemic illnesses which swept the house were accompanied by 'very great' mortality. [24]

The good nature and inclinations of the master were crucial in determining the character of an institution. Eden praised Mr Linsley, the master of the Leeds workhouse, as 'in every respect highly qualified for the very arduous and complicated duties of his important office, in the discharge of which he has happily been able to render those under him contented, without permitting them to be idle, and to provide for their wants without losing sight of economy.'[25] The office of workhouse master was sometimes made subject to tender, with the lowest bid generally proving the most acceptable. This 'farming' of the poor naturally produced a system whereby expenditure was kept to a minimum in order to maximise profits. Thus staff were likely to be untrained, often they were themselves pauper residents of the institution, and in such circumstances the standard of care must have been very low and the potential for abuse of already vulnerable residents high. Nonetheless, a resident of a workhouse was unlikely to starve or freeze to death; for many individuals the parish was the only alternative to such a fate.

War, the cycles of trade and industry, seasonal employment, epidemics, and the climate all operated to alter the profile of those on relief. *The State of the Poor* was written and researched at the start of the Napoleonic Wars; distressed wives, families of soldiers and

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[24] Ibid., p.310.

[25] Ibid., p.361. At the time of Eden's inspection there were '... 154 inmates ... of whom 42 are old and infirm men or lunatics, 56 women, many of them soldier's wives, and 56 children mostly under 12. There are a few cripples or idiots between 12 and 20.'

pressed sailors form a large proportion of those on poor relief. From 1795, economic hardship forced increasing numbers of able-bodied men on to the roll. When the wars finally ended, the economic situation deteriorated further as the labour market struggled to reabsorb the returning soldiers, and rents, wages and profits fell. The years of crisis were reflected in increasing pressure on the Poor Law as the number of those claiming relief rose sharply. Over-stretched local officials, limited resources, and overcrowding within the workhouses could only have resulted in declining standards within the system as a whole. This must have had a particular impact on the disabled inmates whose residence within an institution was more likely to be long term than that of the able-bodied or casual poor.

A variety of interpretations over time as to the purpose or function of parish institutions also affected the nature of the inmates and the conditions in which they lived. Gilbert's Act of 1782 (22 Geo. III c. 83.) provided *inter alia* that 'no person shall be sent to the house, except such as become indigent by old age, sickness or other infirmities; and except such orphan children as necessarily go with their mothers for sustenance...'.[26] The Act can be seen as merely confirming the identity of the pauper body commonly found in a majority of workhouses during times of plenty.[27] Other parishes strove to ensure that their workhouses had more of the character of a house of correction than of an asylum. Southwell in Nottinghamshire was praised in the Poor Law Report of 1832 for its policy

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[26] Like so many other pieces of Poor Law legislation the Act was permissive rather than mandatory and was adopted by around 1000 parishes.

[27] P. Dunkley notes that administrative developments were generally followed by Government legislation rather than the other way round. Hence there was 'rarely any real connection between the statute book and the way in which local authorities ordered relief.' Dunkley, *The Crisis of the Old Poor Law*, p.114.

of supporting the able-bodied poor, '... but under such restrictions as to induce them to prefer to it a life of independent labour.' In 1819, Sturges-Bourne's Act permitted the setting up of select vestries to supervise the administration of the law. This increased the power of the major rate payers who tended towards a harsher interpretation of the law. Since most poor law legislation was permissive rather than mandatory, the policies and practice of poor law administration varied from parish to parish. It seems possible that disabled people in one parish could be amply provided for and those in a neighbouring parish receive a pittance.

By the early nineteenth century the Elizabethan Poor Law had become the subject of mounting criticism. To its defenders, the 43rd of Elizabeth was part of old England, a product of a glorious era, carefully evolved over generations.[28] To its increasing number of detractors it was an awkward relic of a bygone age, outmoded, old fashioned and based upon false and unscientific presumptions. Changing demographics, patterns of employment and the simple passage of time had created an immense variety of interpretations and applications of the law. Regional autonomy influenced its interpretation in accordance with local custom, preferences and needs. Stigmatised by critics as irregular, unsystematic and chaotic, the administration of the Poor Law could also be seen as flexible, finely tuned to local conditions, and an important element in the maintenance of a healthy, organically integrated society.

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[28] Dunkley suggests that this 'popular veneration for "ancient" institutions' may have operated as an obstacle to reform, although such veneration was fading fast by the 1830s. Ibid., p.113.

Criticisms of the Old Poor Law

At the heart of the debate leading up to the Poor Law Amendment Act lay fundamental questions as to nature of English society and the bonds which held its members together. Agrarian distress and the shadow of the French Revolution focused ruling class attention on the need to maintain authority, order and stability. Increasingly the relationship between the spiralling poor law and rising levels of working class discontent came under public scrutiny. Questions were raised as to the entitlement of the poor to public relief and sympathy. Edmund Burke was amongst those urging a reigning in of public compassion and a more discriminating approach to the concept of the 'poor'. Attempts to relieve the 'labouring poor', to extend pity to those who must labour in order to survive, were not only foolish but 'trifling with the condition of mankind.' The true poor were those who could not labour: compassion should be reserved for 'the sick and infirm, for orphan infancy, for languishing and decrepit age...'.[29]

The dramatic rise in the level of pauperism attracted the attention of a wide cross-section of society including political economists, liberal statesman and evangelical Christians. Unlike poverty, which being divinely ordained was not generally seen as evidence of personal culpability, able-bodied pauperism was widely believed to result from moral failure on the part of the individual.[30] Orthodox political economy held that a free labour

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[29] Edmund Burke, *Letters on a Regicide Peace* (1797), cited in D. Winch, *Riches and Poverty: An Intellectual History of Political Economy in Britain, 1750-1834* (Cambridge, 1996), p.198.

[30] Pauperism thus became increasingly stigmatised, morally and legally. The Representation of The People Act 1832 provided that. 'No person shall be entitled to be

market could, over time, accommodate all who wanted to work; those who failed to obtain employment must therefore bear responsibility for their own predicament. A claim for public support seldom arose other than through the failure of the claimant to practice the cardinal and Christian virtues of self-help, independence and thrift. The existing laws were demoralising both the poor man and the pauper. By removing the need to work for sustenance, they placed the idle and improvident on the same footing as the diligent and hardworking. The poor man, observing the artificially elevated status of the pauper, would lose all incentive to support himself independently.[31] The temptation to quit the class of labourer for that of pauper might thus prove irresistible. The poor law was contributing to, rather than alieviating, the problem of pauperism.

Many social evils were believed to follow from this process of mass demoralisation. Freed of the burden of supporting his wife and family the pauper swiftly forgot his moral duties to kith and kin. He saw no need to support his aged or impotent parents or children because the parish would do so in his stead. Nor was it necessary any longer to postpone marriage until a degree of financial security had been achieved. Early marriage produced more children who would themselves become charges upon the parish. Pregnancy outside marriage was no longer feared, for the parish would support illegitimate offspring.[32] Instead of gratefully accepting public charity, paupers were insolently claiming a right to relief. The rate paying classes, forced into the provision of public charity, but receiving

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registered in any year as a voter in ... any city or borough who shall within twelve calendar months next previous... have received parochial relief or other alms.'

[31] J. Stone and S. Mennell (eds.), *Alexis de Tocqueville on Democracy, Revolution, and Society; Selected Writings* (Chicago, 1980), p.28.

[32] The tendency of the poor laws to produce 'surplus population' formed the essence of Malthus' critique as expounded in *An Essay on the Principles of Population* (1798).

neither deference nor gratitude in return, were less inclined to participate in acts of private charity. Thus the very bonds of society were being weakened.

Concentration on the problem of able-bodied male pauper led to the demonisation of this one particular category of pauper. Inevitably the issues and problems raised by other categories, such as the aged and infirm and children were neglected. Thus in the lengthy debate which proceeded the Poor Law Amendment Act of 1834, the needs of the 'impotent poor' were scarcely considered at all. Perhaps the existence of a general consensus as to the moral right of most categories of the disabled to some form of economic assistance rendered examination of their situation cursory. The only real point of contention concerned the appropriate source of funding of such relief, many contemporaries favouring the discrimination of private charity over the arbitary nature of public. The plight of those disabled by injury or accident at work was more problematic, perhaps because the moral issues were not so clear cut. Some would-be reformers argued that injury was a forseeable consequence of employment and that individuals should be encouraged to make provision either through some form of indemnity or a friendly society to provide cover in the event of ill health or injury. Failure to do so was evidence of a lack of prudence or foresight which the state should not be expected to subsidise. Pitt, in his abortive Bill of 1797, advocated compulsory indemnity, but his scheme was only loosely sketched out and the Bill itself was the object of considerable derision.

One of the few theorists to give full consideration to the practical needs of the disabled was Jeremy Bentham. His approach therefore merits careful attention. Bentham is

significant because his ideas have been seen as heralding the beginning of a hardening of attitudes towards the poor.[33] In particular, his workhouse test took no account of subjective notions of the 'deserving poor', and sought to apply an objective test to distinguish the merely poor from the indigent, who were to be the true objects of public relief. The influence of Benthamite ideas, particularly those expressed in *Panopticon*, on the New Poor Law is marked.[34]

Bentham had first considered the issue of disability in his *Principles of Penal Law*: 'To disable an organ is either to suspend or destroy its use, without destroying the organ itself.'[35] His pauper plan, as outlined in his *Tracts on Poor Laws and Pauper Management*, displayed a clear appreciation of the interconnection between pauperism and disability. A 'Table of Cases Calling for Relief' provided 'a General Map of *Pauper-Land* with all the *Roads* to it.'[36] These *Roads* included infirmity of body or mind.[37] The plan involved the compulsory confinement of the infirm of body or mind in appropriate

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[33] U. R. Q. Henriques, *Before the Welfare State: Social Administration in Early Industrial Britain* (1979), p.22.

[34] Bentham's influence is reflected in the definition of indigence, the less eligibility principle and the centralization at the heart of the new scheme. A utilitarian concern with fact finding and cost cutting is also evident. However Chadwick, Bentham's secretary, denied the influence of Bentham on his own designs.

[35] J. Bowring (ed.), *The Works of Jeremy Bentham* (Edinburgh, 1843), vol. I, p.417. In *Principles* Bentham contemplated the consequences of the infliction of deformation or mutilation as an exemplary punishment. His writings provide us with an interesting insight into his views of the practical and psychological consequences of deformation and mutilation, injuries which might well occur in other, particularly industrial, contexts.

[36] The table accompanied a letter, dated 8 September 1797, on the 'Situation and Relief of the Poor Addressed to the Editor of the Annals of Agriculture'. The letter prefaces *Tracts on Pauper Management.* Bowring, *The Works of Jeremy Bentham,* Vol. VIII, p.360.

[37] Imperfect hands, the designation Bentham utilised for persons with sensory and motor disabilities, were carefully distinguished from the chronically ill, the epileptic and those suffering from hernias and other bodily weaknesses.

institutions.[38] All the residents of these establishments were to be employed, the nature of the employment being suited to the nature of their disability. 'On the part of the deaf and dumb, and the blind, the stock of ability lies oftentimes unemployed, for want of those appropriate means and opportunities of employment which could not be afforded to any profit in any other than an establishment on the largest scale.'[39] In this way even the most unproductive elements in society could be set to work.

Within each institution the *Principle of Vicinity* should be applied. 'Next to every class, from which any inconvenience is to be apprehended, station a class unsusceptible to that inconvenience. Examples: 1 Next to raving *lunatics*, or persons or *profligate conversation*, place the *deaf and dumb*, if (included in the same establishment and) separate as to sight... 3 Within view of the abodes of the *blind*, place melancholy and *silent* lunatics, or the shockingly *deformed*.'[40] In addition to housing and employing their charges the establishments would offer medical care and education – 'the Deaf and Dumb are of sound mind, or upon the footing of idiots, according to the care bestowed upon them at an early age.'[41] Additional benefits of institutional life for 'feeble hands, incapable of self-conveyance' included attendance at religious service, access to fresh air and exercise: the 'blind' and 'the deaf and dumb' would benefit from ease of matrimony.[42]

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[38] All the inhabitants of Pauper Land were compulsorily detained, although there was some prospect of parole for the able-bodied if they could literally earn their freedom.
[39] Bowring, *The Works of Jeremy Bentham,* VIII, p.382.
[40] Ibid., p.373.
[41] Ibid., p.395.
[42] Ibid., p.432-33.

Although elements of Bentham's strategy, particularly those involving compulsion, were repressive, they can be seen as presaging a change in attitudes towards the treatment of disabled people. Bentham saw his scheme as progressive in that he believed that his reforms would increase the happiness both of the wider community, who would be spared the economic burden of caring for the disabled, and of the disabled themselves. Certainly the emphasis on treatment, primarily through education, rather than simple confinement, as a solution to the problems posed by non-able-bodied pauperism should be viewed in this light. His insistence that treatment could not take place without appropriate classification was also important. Bentham's emphasis on classification, albeit taken to inordinate lengths in his *Principle of Vicinity*, was to be followed both by the administrators of the new poor law and by the pioneers of private charity for the disabled. Similarly, his recognition of both the need to find suitable employment for the disabled, and the fact that profitability might depend on the economies of scale only possible with large enterprise, was echoed by later experts. The 'manufacturies' or sheltered workshops, set up under charitable auspices in the course of the following century, were not so vastly different from those originally envisaged by Bentham.

Ironically ease of matrimony, suggested by Bentham as one of the benefits of classification, was roundly condemned as one of the chief sources of pauperism by Thomas Malthus in his influential *Essay On the Principles of Population,* first published in 1798.[43] Malthus wrote his Essay in response to the utopian visions of William

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[43] Malthus argued that poverty was the inevitable consequence of surplus population. If population growth, which increased in mathematical proportions, continued unabated, it would inevitably outstrip the supply of food, which could only increase by mathematical

Godwin's *An Enquiry Concerning Political Justice, and its Influence on General Virtue and Happiness* of 1793. Godwin envisaged a society intent on higher pursuits and governed by reason and the intellect. The members of this society would master, through the mind, the vagaries and appetites of the body. As a consequence sexual intercourse, physical disability, ageing and even death would in due course be eliminated. Malthus argued that the destiny of an increasingly populous humanity was poverty rather than perfectability. As a Christian moralist, deeply opposed to the godless visionaries of the Enlightenment, Malthus' views had a substantial impact on later generations of Christian economists.[44]

Malthus believed that the poor laws acted to depress the condition of the poor and should therefore be abolished. He condemned the workhouse as wasteful, '... the quantity of provisions consumed in workhouses upon a part of the society that cannot in general be considered as the most valuable part diminishes the shares that would otherwise belong to more industrious and more worthy members, and thus in the same manner forces more to become dependent.'[45] If the safety net provided by the parish was removed then the labourer would logically opt for providence rather than squandering his earnings. Malthus insisted that dependent poverty should always be viewed as a disgrace no matter how

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proportions. Population could only be kept within tolerable limits because of the existence of checks of misery or vice.

[44] Winch notes that 'By the late 1820s and early 30s, a number of Christian political economists were more than willing to take up Malthus's combination of political economy and natural theology...'. In addition to Thomas Chalmers, subsequently Moderator of the Assembly of the Church of Scotland, Malthus attracted the support of the Noetics, a group of Oxford divines based at Oriel College. This group included Sumner, Whately, Otter and Coplestone. Winch, *Riches and Poverty,* p. 371 and p.403.

[45] T. Malthus, *An Essay on the Principle of Population; and A Summary view of the Principle of Population* (edited by A. Flew, Harmondsworth, 1976), p.97.

harsh this might appear in individual instances. Truly indigent members of society, those suffering from unforseeable and 'unmerited calamities', might have recourse to discriminate private charity.[46]

Attempts to 're-moralise' political economy, to interpret it in accordance with Christian doctrines, widened the impact of the 'dismal science.' Boyd Hilton believes that economic orthodoxy was to some extent created, but also buttressed, by contemporary theology – primarily by moderate evangelical eschatology. This dominant ideology centred on the Christian doctrine of the Atonement with its emphasis on original sin, divine punishment and redemption through faith. Hilton argues that for the Evangelical, life was an 'an ethical obstacle course', and its moral trials and tribulations extended into the economic arena.[47] The market place was seen as yielding 'not material but moral and spiritual benefits,' education rather than growth being the desired end of competition. The poor laws distorted the natural providential operation of this market and prevented men from working towards their own salvation. Hence, 'Moderate Evangelicals supported laissez-faire economic and social policies precisely because these would best nurture individual morality.'[48]

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[46] Malthus believed the giving of charity to be both a natural impulse and a moral obligation. Charity should be private, active and discriminate. Indiscriminate charity was contrary to the laws of nature and thus harmful. D. Owen, *English Philanthropy 1660-1960* (Cambridge, Mass., 1965), p.98.

[47] B. Hilton, *The Age of Atonement: The Influence of Evangelicalism on Social and Economic Thought, 1785-1865* (Oxford, 1988), p.8.

[48] Ibid., p.17.

The influence of Christian economics on generations of Liberal Tories in particular, meant that, according to Peter Mandler, 'the ideas which mattered in the making of the New Poor Law... were derived from a Tory as much as a Whig tradition...'.[49] Mandler highlights the impact of the 'crisis of paternalism' on landed society in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century and the need to reassert authority that resulted. He suggests that the growing industrial and commercial interests of the aristocracy encouraged accommodation between political economy and traditional Tory ends. This synthesis was achieved through the influence of the Noetics on generations of Liberal Tories from the 1800s onwards. The Noetics championed rule by the virtuous who were the guardians of morality; naturally wealth was seen as being evidence of virtue. Improvement was to be measured in terms of an increase in virtue. Thus, according to Mandler, the landed interest came to favour radical change in the law as a means of reasserting their authority.[50]

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[49] P. Mandler, 'Tories and Paupers: Christian Political Economy and the Making of the New Poor Law', *Historical Journal,* 33 (1990), p.81-103.

[50] The extent to which the landed interest, or a section thereof, had, or had not, become converted to the cause of reform has been the subject of lively debate. In his article 'The Making of the New Poor Law Redivivus', *Past and Present*, 117 (1987), pp.131-157, Mandler suggests that the landed gentry had gradually become receptive to a 'new ethos', in part as a reaction to their own impotence when confronted with the reality of rural poverty, but also as a result of a gradual diffusion of ideologies, theological and of the Scottish Enlightenment, which favoured reform. Opposition to the law was based primarily on its centralizing tendencies rather than concern over the abrogation of paternalistic responsibilities. In a response to this article A. Brundage criticizes Mandler's definition of paternalism as overly restrictive and suggests that paternalism was entirely compatible with contemporary economic doctrine. The new law should be seen as bolstering this evolved form of paternalism, and its passage as the culmination of a lengthy process of modernization on the part of the gentry. 'The Making of the New Poor Law *Redivivius.* Comment', *Past and Present*, 127 (1990), pp.183-86. D. Eastwood argues that far from greeting the new reform with any degree of enthusiasm the aristocracy was forced, in the absence of effective alternative, to acquiesce to 'the essentially alien prescriptions of the Royal Commission.' Ibid., pp.186-194.

Political economy and Malthusian theory provided the 'scientific' rationale for the onslaught on the poor laws, and Christian economics reinforced the moral basis for their amendment. However, the political will to act was also based upon pragmatic considerations. One of the most important sources of dissatisfaction with the laws, and a prominent factor in motivating demands for their amendment, was their cost. The poor rate had risen from £4,250,00 in 1800 to £8,800,000 by 1825.[51] This was not wholly disproportionate given the growth in population, but to contemporaries the figures seemed shocking. The system of rating which financed poor law provision was also unpopular because it fell upon the occupier of land rather than the landlord. As critics were keen to point out, often those paying the rate were scarcely more affluent than the paupers they supported. The slump in the price of grain and consequent fall in the profitability of agriculture which followed the end of the French Wars, increased complaints from rural rate payers. The reduction of the poor rate remained an important practical and political consideration at both national and local levels.

Not only was the old system of relief expensive, but the law itself was increasingly seen by the governing classes as an ineffective means of maintaining social harmony. The laws were failing to function as a mechanism for social control. The regular payment of relief was believed to create inappropriate expectations and promote discontent. The large numbers of the poor who rioted at Peterloo, or who took part in other less publicised acts of civil disobedience, were neither grateful for the assistance they received nor were they

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[51] C. Cook (ed.), *The Longman Companion to Britain in the Nineteenth Century 1815-1914* (1999), p.122.

showing signs of economic or moral improvement. For many years landowners had blamed the laws as the source of agrarian distress.[52] The Swing riots of the 1830s were widely interpreted as evidence of mass demoralisation, raising spectres of social degeneration. They provided the final momentum necessary to precipitate reform. With property threatened and rural discontent heightened the landed classes recognised the need for decisive action.

Over time many contemporaries had come to see the Old Poor Law as in conflict with current ideologies. Laissez-faire economics and popular notions of the value of self-help militated against the intervention of government in the lives of its people.[53] The poor laws were seen as detrimental both to the moral well being of the individual and to the economic health of the nation. Theoretical and pragmatic considerations alike favoured radical change. The balance of informed opinion swung between complete abolition and amendment of the poor laws, but by the 1820s those wishing to amend rather than abolish were in the ascendancy. The situation of the impotent poor was never more than a peripheral feature in the debate.

The 1834 Report

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[52] The view that the urgent need to deal effectively with agrarian distress was the chief motivating factor in the amendment of the laws is argued cogently in I. Newbould, *Whiggery and Reform, 1830-41* (California, 1990), p.124.

[53] P. Dunkley notes that at local government level the '... amount of time, attention and money devoted to poor law matters exceeded all other concerns put together.' Dunkley, *The Crisis of the Old Poor Law*, p.1.

It was the Whigs under Earl Grey who, in February 1832, finally took the initiative and appointed the *Royal Commission for inquiring into the administration and practical operation of the Poor Laws*. Decisive in shaping the Report and its recommendations was the analysis of the nature and causes of indigence put forward by two of the Commissioners, Edwin Chadwick and the political economist Nassau Senior.[54] The remainder of the Commissioners were Liberal Tories allied to the landed interest; although their concerns may have differed from those of Chadwick and Senior, they endorsed the recommendations of the Report as the best means of achieving their agenda. The Report's clinical, scientific and forceful analysis singled out the relief of the able-bodied male as the most pernicious element in the current operation of the Law. It was through unwarranted interventions in the labour market, such as the Speenhamland system, that the line which separated the poor man and the pauper was being eroded. Once this distinction was reinstated the social and economic consequences of demoralisation would be reversed. The restoration of a free market for labour would ensure that individual enterprise and hard work received their reward and idleness and sloth their punishment. The current operation of relief had strayed too far from the clarity and simplicity of the 43rd Elizabeth. It was necessary to restore the principles established under that act.

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[54] Edwin Chadwick was initially appointed as an Assistant Commissioner. His diligence and innovative approach ensured his swift promotion to the rank of full Commissioner.

The Report recommended the abolition of all outdoor relief to the able-bodied. Relief to this category of pauper should only be available indoors, through the workhouse.[55] Conditions within the workhouse were to be governed by the principle of less eligibility: the pauper's existence should be rendered inferior to that of the lowest independent labourer through the imposition of hard work and discipline. 'The strict discipline of well-regulated workhouses, and in particular the restrictions to which the inmates are subject in respect to the use of acknowledged luxuries, such as fermented liquors and tobacco, are intolerable to the indolent and disorderly, while to the aged, the feeble, and other proper objects of relief, the regularity and discipline render the workhouse a place of comparative comfort.'[56] It was differences in moral character as much as their physical characteristics that distinguished the two groups. Since only the genuinely destitute would accept such conditions the workhouse would act as an objective test of destitution. Relief would thus be targeted at the truly indigent.

The Report also sought improved standards of professionalism which were to be achieved through administrative reform. It was hoped that central control and the appointment of an inspectorate would help reduce some of the corruption and other abuses that were believed to plague the current system. A consistent national approach would put an end to chaotic regionalism. Parishes were to unite to form unions under the aegis of boards of guardians, and these were to be answerable to a central board in London. The Board

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[55] K. Williams emphasises that the thrust of law was against male pauperism; the Report made no recommendations with regard to groups such as the sick, the aged and young widows. Medical relief provided the one important exception to this general prohibition. Williams, *From Pauperism to Poverty*, p.56.

[56] S. G. and E. O. A. Checkland (eds.), *The Poor Law Report of 1834* (Harmondsworth, 1974), p.338.

would help to ensure uniformity in the application and administration of the law. The finer details of the administration of the new system were to be determined via orders and regulations issued by the central authority.

The cursory attention given to the 'impotent' by the Report confirms their marginality as regards the terms of the enquiry. The word 'impotent' itself was defined as 'comprehending all except the able-bodied and their families.' No further attempt was made to disaggregate this group nor was any attempt made to calculate how the pauper body as a whole was constituted.[57] The Commissioners first considered the administration of outdoor relief to the impotent. They identified the principal source of Poor Law maladministration in this area to be 'the desire of many of those who regulate the distribution of the parochial fund to extract from it a profit to themselves'. The outdoor relief of the impotent was subject to less abuse than that of the able-bodied because little use could be made of their labour and hence there was less opportunity for administrators of the law to gain through it. Since the pensions of the impotent were paid in money there was little opportunity for jobbing. 'Accordingly, we find that even in places distinguished in general by the most wanton, parochial profusion, the allowances to the aged and infirm are moderate.' [58]

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[57] F. B. Smith, *The People's Health 1830 to 1910* (c.1979), pp.350-51. Smith notes that only four of the report's 260 pages refer to the impotent and the term does not appear in the index to the Report. No question about this category of pauper appeared in the sets of 41 questions for towns.

[58] Checkland, *The Poor Law Report,* p.114.

The provision of medical relief was included in the Report only as an afterthought and merited only a brief discussion. Again the main source of complaint was the possibility of 'great peculation' with the surgeon allegedly charging parishes an inordinate sum for treating their non-resident paupers. It was however acknowledged that generally medical attendance was adequately and economically supplied.[59] This implicit recognition of medical relief as a proper function of the poor law was important because it was later interpreted as legitimizing the extension of the service. However the extent of provision was reduced with relief previously available to the poor now restricted to the pauper. The Report praised the establishment of dispensaries 'for the purpose of enabling the labouring classes to defray, from their own resources, the expense of medical treatment.'[60]

Finally, the Report commented on the failure to enforce the clause of the 1601 Act which directed that family members of the impotent should be assessed for their support. It emphasised the existence of a moral duty of caring for impotent family members which it felt was being neglected because of the general expectation that the Parish would operate as a safety net. 'Why should I tend my sick and aged parents, when the parish is bound to do it? or if I do perform the service, why should I excuse the parish, which is bound to pay for it?'[61] Where moral obligation went unheeded, the law should supplement this deficiency through sanctions. Although those framing the report recognised that the law

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[59] Ibid., p.115.
[60] Ibid.
[61] Ibid., p.178.

would have to act as a safety net for the impotent they were keen to promote individual and family responsibility as their primary recourse.

The Report's general findings on conditions within the workhouses also highlighted maladministration as the chief source of concern.[62] Only in a few instances was the workhouse a place where 'the aged and impotent are maintained in comfort' and the able-bodied supported in such a manner as to encourage them to return to independence. In the vast majority of cases the workhouse was:

> ... a large almshouse, in which the young are trained in idleness, ignorance, and vice; the able-bodied maintained in sluggish sensual indolence; the aged and more respectable exposed to all the misery that is incident to dwelling in such a society, without government or classification; and the whole body of inmates subsisted on food far exceeding both in kind and in amount, not merely the diet of the independent labourer, but that of the majority of the persons who contribute to their support.

Chadwick's intention was that the general mixed workhouse should be abolished and existing workhouses converted into separate specialized institutions for the different classes of the poor.[63] There were to be initially at least four of these institutions with appropriately qualified staff, catering for the needs of the 'aged and really impotent', the

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[62] Ibid., p.124.
[63] See *Hansard*, 8 February 1867, CLXXXV, p.160.

children, and the able-bodied of each sex.[64] In due course Chadwick hoped to further differentiate between these categories and his plans included the provision of separate accomodation for the mentally and physically disabled.[65] Provision for the aged and infirm would be in the character of the almshouse. Within this specialist institution the old might enjoy their indulgences, and the impotent receive proper care. Chadwick had envisaged the provision of 'collateral aids' for this category of pauper, presumably taking the form of small ameliorative perks, but these sketchy provisions did not form part of the Report in its final version. Nor were details as to the proposed regime within the almshouses spelled out in the Report. Presumably Chadwick, who envisaged a leading role on the Poor Law Commission, hoped to be able to expand on his rudimentary plans at a future date.[66]

The Act itself set up the mechanisms through which it was intended that the Report's recommendations would be carried out. A Poor Law Commission was established in London to oversee the operation and administration of the law and three Commissioners were subsequently appointed. The Commissioners were aided by Assistant Commissioners upon whom the task of negociating the boundaries of the new unions subsequently devolved. Provision was made for the appointment of a range of salaried officials who would be responsible for the day-to-day running of the new unions.

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[64] Checkland, *The Poor Law Report,* p.429.
[65] Henriques, *Before the Welfare State*, p. 49.
[66] M. Rose, 'The Crisis of Poor Relief in England', in W. J. Mommsen (ed.), *The Emergence of the Welfare State in Britain and Germany* (1981), p.53.

The Act for the first time differentiated the status of the blind and deaf from the mass of the impotent poor. Section 56 exempted the husbands or parents of blind or deaf women and children who were in receipt of relief from pauper status. This exception had been procured by Lord Harewood at the behest of Charles Baker of the Yorkshire School for the Deaf and Dumb at Doncaster.[67] Harewood had originally attempted to make the payment for schooling of deaf and dumb children compulsory on their local Boards of Guardians. He was unsuccesful in this and the revised clause merely sought to enable the payment of non-reclaimable advances for the education of the "the deaf and dumb and blind" by Boards of Guardians. This provision can be interpreted as the start of a lengthy process by which these groups were removed from the ambit of the poor law and encouraged instead to make use of specialist provision.[68]

The Report and the Act which followed have been criticised for providing an incorrect and inadequate diagnosis, and consequently an inappropriate medicine, for the disease of pauperism.[69] Certainly the Report's fixation with the able-bodied rural poor in the Southern counties blinded its writers to the many other social and economic facets of the problem. But few contemporaries would have disagreed with the stress placed by the Report on the rekindling of the qualities of independence and self-help. Similarly, proposals that promised a reduction in the rates and a rationalisation of the current system were attractive to the newly enlarged electorate. The Whig government that passed the

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[67] See Chapter Five below.

[68] See for example R. A. Abel, 'Visually Impaired People, the Identification of the Need for Specialist Provision: a Historical Perspective', *The British Journal of Visual Impairment*, VII (1989).

[69] P. Wood, *Poverty and the Workhouse in Victorian Britain* (Stroud, 1991), p.72.

Act saw it as an enlightened measure of legislation based on rational and scientific principles. Despite William Cobbett's labelling of the act as 'the Poor Man's Robbery Act', few questioned the need for a radical revision of the law.

Chapter Two

The New Poor Law 1834-1847

As we have seen, the principal concern of the legislators and administrators of the new law was the suppression of able-bodied male pauperism. The years immediately following the passage of the Poor Law Amendment Act saw zealous attempts by the Commissioners to eradicate outdoor relief to this sector of the poor and to establish a deterrent workhouse system. It swiftly became apparent that there was no room within the administration of the new law for the fulfillment of Chadwick's comprehensive vision of an integrated network of health care provision. The status of the disabled under the new law was therefore ambiguous. Their right to outdoor relief was not disputed, but it was obvious that many could not be expected to survive independently outside the workhouse and it was recognised that some duty was still owed to them. The nature and extent of this duty will be explored in this chapter. How far could care of the aged and impotent be provided within a deterrent system? What impact did the passage of the law have on the disabled, on the rates of relief they received out of the house and on their treatment within it?

These issues were sensitive because it is clear that the concept of the disabled as the 'deserving' poor remained deeply embedded throughout society. Allegations that the deserving poor were suffering unjustly under the new law played into the hands of the Commission's enemies. The Commission's constitutional weakness rendered it vulnerable to such criticism, and wild rumours about conditions within the new 'bastiles'

proved difficult to refute. The Commision was quick to use the situation of the 'aged and infirm' to counteract damaging allegations that the Act was unduly harsh or was harming the 'deserving' poor.[1] The aged and infirm thus became something of a test case for the new law, one eagerly adopted for propaganda purposes by the Commissioners and their enemies. This use of the disabled poor as both a test case and a source of propaganda for the new law forms the second theme of this chapter.

Although the disabled poor were *prima facie* 'deserving', they did not escape the moral scrutiny visited upon other sectors of the poor. It will be seen that, in their attempts to reduce the numbers of aged and infirm paupers, the administrators of the new law used moral as much as physical criteria to judge eligibility for relief. The absence of precise definitions of disability or infirmity meant that eligibility was often a matter for the exercise of discretion. Thus another theme of this chapter is to examine the various attempts made by the administrators of the new law to classify disabled people and to assess their eligibility for relief.

The final theme relates to the impact of regional hostility on the administration of the law and the effect this had on disabled people. In basing their investigations and recommendations on the situation pertaining in the Southern rural counties, the Commissioners had overlooked the very different economic and social traditions of the industrial North. In the early years of the new law Northern reluctance to exchange 'a

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[1] The term 'aged and infirm' encompassed the elderly and those who were disabled, whether or not they were also elderly. References to the 'impotent', the term formerly used to denote these categories of pauper, can occasionally be found in the early reports of the Poor Law Commission.

system that has worked so well, and has produced so much good…', with one untried and untested was marked.[2] The contrast between the unreformed Northern workhouse and the Commission's ideal highlights the strengths and weaknesses of both systems.

The Poor Law Commission

The proponents of the new law had criticised the old for its chaotic, uneven and amateur administration. They saw centralisation as the key to a consistent, uniform and professional approach to relief. However the initial period following the passage of the PPLA was characterised by the continuing existence and operation of several conflicting systems of relief. The Act had repealed part of Gilbert's Act, but it left intact the administrative framework of the Gilbert Unions.[3] The continuing autonomy of those unions, and of areas covered by other local acts, was to prove difficult to overcome.[4] Centralisation remained a major point of contention; many of those active in local government disapproved of it in principle. It was felt to be unEnglish, an affront to a long

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[2] Joseph Ellison, member of the Dewsbury Board of Guardians, giving evidence before the 1837 Parliamentary Select Committee on the Act. Cited in M. E. Rose (ed.), *The English Poor Law 1780-1930* (Newton Abbot, 1971), p.112. Of course the Northern reaction was not uniform, and in some areas the law was enforced without difficulty.

[3] Gilbert's Act of 1782 enabled parishes to combine in order to share the administrative costs of the old law.

[4] By 1839, 90 per cent of the parishes of England and Wales had been unionised. P. Wood, *Poverty and the Workhouse in Victorian Britain* (Stroud, 1991), p.84. However many important urban centres retained considerable independence. Ashforth calculates that 'as late as 1856 twelve of the fifty most populous parishes and unions in England and Wales were administered by local acts'. D. Ashforth, 'The Urban Poor Law', in D. Fraser (ed.), *The New Poor Law in the Nineteenth Century* (1976), p.128.

tradition of regional autonomy.[5] 'Talk of Irish Oppression indeed when every Parish in England is prevented from conducting their own affairs!!', complained Robert Sharp of South Cave.[6] Indeed such sentiments were particularly strong in the North of the country. The 'three Bashaws of Somerset House' were castigated for their ignorance about the realities of life in the regions. Other criticism was directed at the Commission's constitution, firstly because it combined legislative and judicial functions and secondly because it operated with a considerable degree of independence from the direct control of parliament. Hence the Commission was often viewed with intense suspicion by those whose progress it was supposed to oversee.

The Commission's efficiency was also hampered by internal factors including power struggles which emerged as a consequence of the different goals and philosophies of its members.[7] Half-hearted government support meant rhetoric and bombast were sometimes the only means at the Commissioner's disposal to brow-beat reluctant local authorities into compliance.[8] Often, the successful implementation or otherwise of the Act at the

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[5] In fact Lord John Russell vehemently denied any suggestion that the New Poor Law represented an attack on local government. The intention was that whilst the broad principles of the laws were to be laid down by the Commissioners, the 'details' were to remain subject to local government. See D. Eastwood, *Government and Community in the English Provinces, 1700-1870* (Basingstoke, 1997), p.164. Eastwood suggests it would be '...peverse to deny the Whig's commitment to local self-government'. Rather, advanced Liberal ideology had now arrived at a different conception of local power with 'details' becoming 'the substance and limit of local discretion.'

[6] J. E. Crowther and P. A. Crowther (eds.), *The Diary of Robert Sharp of South Cave: Life in a Yorkshire Village 1812-1837* (Oxford, 1992), p.530. Diary entry dated 8 June 1836. Sharp was the local school master, but he was also active in parish administration.

[7] Wood, *Poverty and the Workhouse,* p.79. Chadwick was himself ousted from the Commission in 1841, and his influence was waning for some time prior to this.

[8] Ibid.

local level was dependent upon the tact and discretion of the Assistant Commissioners.[9] Uncooperative and obstructive boards of guardians could also undermine significantly the work of the Commissioners, for example by refusing to sanction the expense involved in the building or upgrading of a workhouse.[10] Equally in some areas over zealous boards of guardians who operated the law more stringently than had been intended also thwarted the Commissioners' efforts. The Commissioners stressed the need for caution in the implementation of the new law and were keen to distance themselves from, 'cases of precipitate and violent change made by some of the overseers on their own responsibility'. They particularly condemned severity in the cases of the aged and infirm, the sector of the poor most vulnerable to such change.[11] The belief that this category of the poor were deserving of sympathy still retained some power. Evidence of harsh or ill treatment of the 'deserving' provided effective ammunition for the anti-poor law movement. The Commissioners reminded the new Boards of Guardians of their 'duty to treat the sick, the aged, and the infirm, with tenderness and care...'.[12]

Although the Law had had relatively little opposition in parliament, the forces of dissent were to gather in strength culminating in the short-lived but violent opposition of the anti-poor law movement. The movement, which peaked in the years 1837-8, cut across party

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[9] Thus the able Assistant Commissioner Walsham in the North-East had more success than the more intransigent Mott, Assistant Commissioner for Lancashire and the West Riding. Ashforth, 'The Urban Poor Law', p.132.
[10] No new workhouses were built in the West Riding during the 1840s. Ibid., p.133.
[11] *First Annual Report of the Poor Law Commissioners* (1835), p.7.
[12] Ibid., p.73.

and class lines, combining popular radicalism with paternalist Toryism.[13] The popular radicals, already angered by the limitations of the 1832 Reform Act, saw the Law as a further attempt to crush the poor.[14] Tory radicalism focused on a nostalgic vision of a past where paternalism and the operation of a moral economy had out weighed the cash nexus. The two were never likely to form a lasting alliance and the popular branch of the movement soon merged with the Chartists. The movement was strongest in the industrial North, where it forced the Commissioners to delay temporarily the implementation of the law.[15]

The Commission's strategy was dominated by the need to eradicate able-bodied male pauperism; the non-able-bodied were in effect a residuary category who were not considered or recognised as being problematic in their own right. For the Poor Law Commissioners, disability meant simply that an individual's ability to be self-supporting, to practice self-help and achieve independence, was compromised through physical or mental impairment. A distinction was made between those individuals who were partially disabled, *i.e.* whose disability did not prevent them from earning some money, and those

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[13] See M. E. Rose, 'The Anti-Poor Law Agitation', in J. T. Ward (ed.), *Popular Movements, c.1830-1850* (1970).

[14] Some historians have condemned the Law in similar terms. 'The Act of 1834, and its subsequent administration by men like Chadwick and Kay, was perhaps the most sustained attempt to impose an ideological dogma, in defiance of the evidence of human need, in English history.' E. P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (1963), p. 295. U. Henriques sees it as 'part of a body of class legislation based on selfishness and class interest.' U. Henriques, 'How Cruel Was The Victorian Poor Law?', *The Historical Journal*, XI (1968), p.371.

[15] In June 1837 the Home Secretary John Russell, fearing the issue would be exploited by the Tories at the forthcoming general election wrote to the Commission seeking a delay. See F. Driver, *Power and Pauperism: The Workhouse System, 1834-1884* (Cambridge, 1993), pp. 121-22.

who were totally disabled and therefore *by definition* unable to earn.[16] Only the latter group, being entirely without resources, were eligible for outdoor relief. Individuals who were only temporarily disabled, whether through sickness or injury, and had therefore at some stage the prospect, even if theoretical, of work, were classed as able-bodied. No distinction was made between the enfeebling consequences of old age and impairment arising from other circumstances, whether congenital or as the result of illness or accident.[17]

The New Poor Law was never intended to be the primary recourse of the destitute aged and infirm. Its role was to provide this sector of the poor with a safety net if other means of support proved inadequate. Where outdoor relief was provided it was hoped that, supplemented by the assistance of family and perhaps private charity, it would enable the disabled to continue to reside at home. Where institutional care was the only means of support available then the workhouse was intended to be an appropriate receptacle for the accomodation and treatment of this category of pauper.

The Administration of Outdoor Relief

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[16] One of the first acts of the new Commission was to ask the parishes to supply details of the numbers relieved during the year ended Lady Day, 1834. For males and females above the age of 16 there were 3 separate categories: able-bodied; infirm, being partially disabled; and totally disabled.

[17] Thus in the *First Annual Report,* p. 230, Assistant Commissioner Power's report exhibits a list of able-bodied paupers which includes Philip Jackson aged 80 and Thomas Belsham aged 74. Paupers over the age of sixty were exempt from prohibitions on outdoor relief to the able-bodied. *Third Annual Report of the Poor Law Commissioners* (1837), p.58. Complaints that 'able-bodied persons below the age of 60 obtain allowances under the pretence of being above that age' were made in the *Fifth Annual Report of the Poor Law Commissioners* (1839), p.15.

Although the new law sought to end outdoor relief to the able-bodied only, the Webb's contend that 'some persons of authority and repute' privately favoured the complete abolition of outdoor relief for all categories of pauper.[18] Chadwick, though not himself an advocate of abolition, had recommended to the Cabinet that medical relief should only be available through the workhouse.[19] Such a move may have been attractive in theory, but it was neither practical nor expedient in the sensitive political climate of the 1830s.[20] Instead the Commissioners sought to prune the lists of outdoor paupers, and hence reduce costs, by encouraging the Guardians to concentrate on the removal of abuses and the closer scrutiny of claims. Robert Humphreys sees evidence of attempts to restrict outdoor relief in the Commission's campaign against partial relief.[21] Guardians were encouraged to emphasize the responsibility of the individual to make provision for his or her old age

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[18] S. and B. Webb, *English Poor Law History, Part II. The Last Hundred Years*, 1 (1897, Reprinted 1963), pp.142-43. Bentham had suggested compulsory institutionalisation as a panacea for all forms of indigence and destitution in his *Pauper Management Improved* of 1798. Henriques notes that 'Malthusian influence never really died out of Poor Law thinking. It was revealed in the appointment of Sturges Bourne, Chairman of the Select Committee of 1817 to the Royal Commission of 1832 (although he did not take an active part in it); in the avowed opinions of various Assistant Commissioners, and in some of the Poor Law Commission's regulations after 1834.' U. Henriques, *Before the Welfare State: Social Administration in early Industrial Britain* (1979), p. 24.

[19] F. B. Smith, *The People's Health 1830 to 1910* (c. 1979), p.351.

[20] In fact the Commissioners had little alternative but to continue with outdoor relief for the aged and infirm. There was insufficient workhouse accommodation to satisfy the potentially huge increase in demand that would follow withdrawal of outdoor relief to this sector. Even a small increase would significantly reduce the availability of indoor accommodation for the able-bodied. The primary purpose of the workhouse, the treatment of the able-bodied pauper, would become unviable. Nor could it have been cost effective to maintain the aged and infirm in this way. Finally public sympathy for this 'deserving' sector of the poor, meant that it would have been politically disastrous to abolish outdoor relief.

[21] Partial relief was the payment of relief to the partially disabled - those capable of earning some income, however small or inadequate.

and infirmity.[22] In effect the operation of a more stringent approach to outdoor relief extended the policy of deterrence to the aged and infirm and their relatives.

Publicly the Commissioners acknowledged that 'a large proportion of the population, the aged and the crippled, who are wholly helpless and have no friends to contribute to their support ... will remain dependent on the public provision.'[23] It was therefore necessary to pay careful attention to their requirements. To this end, the Guardians were to give relief where necessary, but such relief was to act as a supplement to the efforts of relations or private charity.[24] Family ties and responsibilities had been eroded by the lax application of the old law: the new stricter regime was intended to instill a renewed sense of responsibility. It was hoped that families would be persuaded to take in, or otherwise contribute to, the maintenance of their indigent relatives. Reports that the working class were making their own arrangements, via medical clubs, for sickness, accident or old age, were seen as a sign of the effectiveness of the Act.[25] Assistant Commissioner Hall welcomed the formation of medical clubs at various locations within his area. Here was evidence to show that the labouring classes, when no longer able to rely on state handouts, were capable of acting with foresight and providence.[26]

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[22] R. Humphreys, *Sin, Organized Charity and the Poor Law in Victorian England* (Basingstoke, 1995), p.16.
[23] *Second Annual Report of the Poor Law Commissioners* (1836), p.35. Some of the more optimistic proponents of the new law hoped that in the long term a combination of self-help, charity and deterrence would drastically reduce the numbers even in this class.
[24] Ibid., p.42.
[25] Many of the working class could not afford even the few pennies necessary for payment of a weekly subscription to such a club.
[26] *First Annual Report*, p.55.

The task of assessing the eligibility of claimants for outdoor relief fell upon the relieving officer. All outdoor paupers, regardless of age or sex, were to be classified as either able-bodied or disabled. If a pauper was disabled, a description of the disablement was to be given. Thus : 'In describing the causes arising from Infirmity of Body, you will specify them in the manner following: as "Deaf and dumb;" "Deaf, totally." In the case of Cripples, the loss, or the loss of the use of "one hand," of "one leg." In cases of Helplessness or Feebleness, you will designate the description of the helplessness or feebleness; as, "Helpless, old age;" "Helpless, epilepsy." '[27] The parallels with Bentham's designations of disability are obvious. However, there is no indication as to what action, if any, the Commission intended to take upon receipt of this information. Since the relieving officer was not medically trained the system depended heavily on his *bona fides* and good sense. There was thus considerable scope for the exercise of discretion.

The Commission remained concerned to limit the provision of medical relief in so far as was possible. It was contrary to the principle of less eligibility that the medical treatment accorded to the pauper should exceed that available to the independent labourer.[28] In theory the permission of the relieving officer was necessary before medical relief could be obtained.[29] However, disabled individuals, or those who suffered from chronic complaints, may have benefited from the issue of annual tickets, which enabled them to

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[27] Ibid., p.137. Form 22, The Pauper Description Book, Schedule D, Instruction 9.
[28] *Seventh Annual Report of the Poor Law Commissioners* (1841), p.11.
[29] Medical relief was an important exception to the prohibition of outdoor relief for the able-bodied. Acceptance of medical relief automatically brought pauper status upon the recipient for the period of treatment. Disqualification from the franchise was unlikely to deter those most in need of this form of relief.

bypass the relieving officer.[30] Since the guardians and relieving officer were, at least theoretically, motivated by the need to eliminate pauperism in all its forms, their decisions were strongly influenced by considerations of political economy and moral worthiness. The medical officers, over stretched and underrated, often shared this emphasis but many were also motivated by other, more humanitarian, concerns.

The relieving officer was instructed to keep a keen eye out for cases of fraud, particularly from non-resident persons claiming to be aged and infirm. Officers were not to be hasty in their withdrawal of payments to this class of pauper, but were instructed to revise their lists regularly in order to detect frauds.[31] David Ashforth quotes Alfred Power, the first Assistant Commissioner for Lancashire and the West Riding who '...argued that in his district the workhouse test was needed most for the aged and infirm "on account of the dissimulation and fraud constantly practised by the relatives of the paupers at the expense of the poor rates." '[32] The appointment of salaried officers by the boards of guardians, and the beginnings of a system of inspection, probably did help to promote professionalism and reduce levels of abuse. Conversely, the closer vetting of applicants would have exposed some individuals who had hitherto received outdoor relief to great hardship. Nonetheless, it is clear that the majority of aged and infirm paupers continued to receive outdoor relief much as they had done under the old act.[33] In 1839, the

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[30] M.W. Flinn, 'Medical Services under the New Poor Law', in D. Fraser (ed.), *The New Poor Law in the Nineteenth Century* (1976), p.50. The means of obtaining this ticket and its form were laid down in the 1842 General Medical Order.
[31] *First Annual Report*, p.73.
[32] Ashforth, 'The Urban Poor Law', p.131.
[33] Often the elected boards of guardians were comprised of former parish overseers who simply continued previous local practice.

Commissioners lamented that four-fifths of relief expenditure went on outdoor relief, and because this form of relief was considerably cheaper than indoor relief, (hence in part its popularity with many local boards of guardians), this almost certainly represented more than 80 per cent of the total number of paupers.[34]

The payment of outdoor relief to the aged and infirm was one of the issues examined in the Report of the 1837 *Select Committee on the Poor Law Amendment Act.* The Committee reported that in Petworth (Sussex) 'the aged and infirm are relieved, whenever they prefer it, at their own homes, or at the houses of relations or friends with whom they live; and by the general testimony of the witnesses their condition has been improved by an increase of pay.'[35] Mr Foard of the Petworth Board of Guardians stated that the allowance given to the aged and infirm was the same whether or not they were relieved in or out of the house: 'it is their own feelings we consult'.[36] Mr Raper clerk of Westhampnett Union stated that aged and infirm people were rarely relieved in the workhouse and generally received outdoor relief.[37]

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[34] *Fifth Annual Report,* p.13. David Roberts states that in 1839 and 1840 86 per cent of relief was outdoor. See D. Roberts, 'How Cruel Was the Victorian Poor Law?', *The Historical Journal*, VI (1963), pp. 97-107.

[35] *Select Committee, Inquiry into the Administration of the Relief of the Poor under the Provisions of the Poor Law Amendment Act with Minutes of Evidence and Appendices*, Parliamentary Papers (1837), XVII, i, p.7. Petworth was the subject of investigation following allegations of maltreatment of paupers and as a pocket borough cannot be considered typical. However, the continuation of outdoor relief to the aged and infirm does seem to accord with more general practice.

[36] Ibid., *First Report,* p.31, Q.587.

[37] Ibid., *Second Report*, p.24, Q.3166.

The amount of relief, and the form it took, was again a matter for the exercise of discretion at a local level. It was unlikely in most instances, given the concerns and influence of the rate payers, to have been generous. The Webbs suggest that outdoor relief generally amounted only to a shilling or two a week, though 'deserving' paupers may have received more than this depending on local practice. At Petworth the highest allowance paid out of the house was *2s 6d.* [38] In some cases relief in kind, often taking the form of bread, was given in addition to the monetary dole.[39] This was the case at Droxford, where the Rev. J. Cockerton stated that the usual payment to single women out of the house was, 'Half a gallon of bread and *2s*'.[40] He was asked if he considered this amount sufficient for 'a person labouring under that infirmity?' (*Blindness*). He replied: 'They never complain to me; I say, " If ever you want any thing apply to me, and I will give it you; if you want any soup, or anything of that kind, go to the rector, and you will obtain it."[41] Asked for his private opinion as to whether the dole was sufficient, Cockerton responded ' ... the poor women are generally living with their children or their friends, and, therefore, living with others, I think it is sufficient.'[42]

It seems unlikely that such limited provision would, in the absence of support from family or friends, have enabled a disabled person to live independently. Low rates of

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[38] Ibid., *First Report*, p.38, Q.772.
[39] The Commissioners were keen to encourage relief in kind believing that it 'operated as a self-acting test of the validity of the claim for relief. Advances in money, it should always be recollected, are advances only of the means of obtaining relief which means the pauper is under constant temptations to misapply, and in a large proportion of cases is incompetent to apply properly.' *First Annual Report*, p.7.
[40] *Eighth Report from the Select Committee on the Poor Law Amendment Act*, P.P. (1837), XVII, i, p.11, Q. 9521. Evidence of Rev. J. Cockerton, 8 May 1837.
[41] Ibid., p.11, Q.9522.
[42] Ibid., p.11, Q.9524.

relief would have accorded with the commissioners' policy that the role of public charity was to act as a supplement or spur to help from the family or other private sources. The commissioners were adamant, however, that those in receipt of relief should not themselves earn money. Outdoor relief was only be given to those 'in a state of complete destitution.'[43] To relieve 'inferior workman or, persons only slightly disabled', was to give aid to individuals who could or did work, and thus had some earning capacity.[44] In such instances outdoor relief was partial relief, 'a form of relief as mischievous as it is illegal.'[45] The partially or slightly disabled should be relieved in the workhouse, or be employed on account of the parish or union.[46] The independent able-bodied labourer deserved protection 'from those who, deriving part of their support from the poor-rates, can afford to sell their labour for an inadequate remuneration.'[47]

The low rates of outdoor relief were criticised in *The Times*, which ran a concerted campaign against the new law in the years between 1837-1842.[48] D. Roberts notes that 42 cases of inadequate outdoor relief were reported during this period, including that of an aged man in Suffolk who received only 1*s* 1½*d*. a week.[49] A further 33 cases of refusal of relief to those in desperate need were also reported. Mr Hamlin, the relieving officer of St. Luke's 'refused the ill and lame George Wilde and the consumptive Martin Malloy

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[43] *Fifth Annual Report*, p.15.
[44] Ibid.
[45] Ibid., p.13.
[46] *Sixth Annual Report of the Poor Law Commissioners* (1840), p.30.
[47] Ibid.
[48] G. Himmelfarb suggests that in part the opposition of *The Times* 'can be explained in terms of professional interests and personal feuds.' However 'personal issues represented differences of principle.' G. Himmelfarb, *The Idea of Poverty: England in the Early Industrial Age* (1984), p.178.
[49] D. Roberts, 'How Cruel was the Victorian Poor Law?', p.99.

relief of any kind. Malloy died a few hours later.'[50] Roberts found that many of the stories in *The Times* did not stand up to closer investigation, but the cases of Malloy and Wilde were confirmed by special hearing. Such instances were, as Roberts concludes, the result of local rather than central malfeasance.

Although there were clearly some cases where discretion was exercised inappropriately, those supervising the operation of the law argued that overall the position of the outdoor aged and infirm had improved as a result of it.[51] The Annual Reports of the Commission contained testimony from Guardians stressing that reduction in expenditure had not been at the expense of the 'deserving' poor. The Guardians of the Wayland Union maintained that many of the aged and infirm received a more liberal allowance than had been the case under the old system.[52] At Hoxne Union the paupers received increased levels of relief and in cases of sickness and accident more careful and efficient assistance than previously.[53] In the *Fourth Annual Report* the Commissioners listed as the first of the 'higher results' of the new Act, 'The more prompt and adequate relief to the aged, the infirm, and the sick.' They supported this assertion by printing comments to that effect from the Boards of Guardians in the counties of Gloucester, Worcester and Somerset.[54]

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[50] Ibid.

[51] Clearly the evidence in the Annual Reports needs to be viewed with a degree of detachment. The Commissioners were naturally eager to illustrate the operation of the law in the best possible light.

[52] *Third Annual Report* (1837), p.59.

[53] Ibid., p.60.

[54] See response to inquiries concerning 'the aged, impotent and helpless.' *Fourth Annual Report of the Poor Law Commissioners* (1838), pp. 73-75.

It was not until 1844 that the general prohibition on outdoor relief to able-bodied persons was officially enshrined in Article One of the Outdoor Relief Prohibitory Order. A number of exceptions significantly mitigated the stringency of the order. The second of these exempted persons who required relief 'on account of any sickness, accident, or bodily or mental infirmity affecting such person, or any of his or her family.' In other areas, predominantly in the industrial North, where local protest or economic conditions had made it impolitic to insist upon a workhouse test, the 1842 Outdoor Labour Test Order enabled the able-bodied to claim outdoor relief in return for work done for the Union. No mention was made of the aged and infirm, the expectation being that they would continue to receive outdoor relief.

Naturally, the Commissioners kept a close eye on the numbers of aged and infirm persons in receipt of outdoor relief. [See Table 1.] Their figures distinguished between the counties, between male and female, and resident and non resident paupers. Despite the Commission's attempts to squeeze relief to this sector of the poor a marked increase in their numbers can be observed. This perhaps reflected the harsh economic climate of the early 1840s and possibly a corresponding gradual return to older more liberal practices of relief by local authorities.

Table 1. Numbers of Aged and Infirm Outdoor Paupers in England and Wales at the quarter ended Lady Day.

Year	Wholly Disabled	Partially Disabled	Total Disabled

1839	148,606	87,802	236,408
1842	171,331	100,438	271,769
1845	191,661	111,033	302,694

Source: Tables in 6th, 9th and 12th Annual Reports on the Poor Law Commissioners. The population of England and Wales in 1841 was approximately 15.9 million. It had increased to 17.9 million by 1851.

It is interesting to note that women significantly outnumbered men in all categories of these returns; this strongly contrasted with the situation within the workhouse, where men consistently outnumbered women throughout this period. *Prima facie* this could be taken to indicate that women were more likely than men to become aged and infirm. But it might simply have been that their chances of employment and hence of fending off destitution were more restricted. The greater number of men in the workhouse might have reflected a more limited ability to cope without the support of a partner out of the house, or possibly that aged and infirm men were of less value to their families domestically and hence more likely to be placed in an institution.

Table 2. Numbers of Resident Aged and Infirm outdoor paupers in England and Wales at the quarter ended Lady day, Divided by Sex.

Year	Wholly Unable to work Male	Wholly unable to work Female	Partially unable to work Male	Partially unable to work Female
1839	43,054	80,202	22,753	50,470

1842	51,376	93,562	26,999	58,696
1845	59,385	104,949	31,447	64,392

Source: Tables in 6th, 9th and 12th Annual Reports on the Poor Law Commissioners. I have not included the figures for non resident paupers here, but the proportions of male to female are similar.

The Administration of Indoor Relief

Inevitably, many disabled people were unable to survive either financially or physically outside the workhouse. One such individual was Elizabeth Bristow whose plight was discussed briefly during the evidence given to the 1837 *Select Committee on the Poor Law Amendment Act.* The Rev. J Cockerton of Westmeon in the Droxford Union was familiar with the girl, who had a child of her own, as she was one of his parishioners. His evidence went as follows:-

Q 9525 'Is Bristow living with her child?' – 'She is an unmarried person; I think the workhouse is the best place for her, she being a helpless sort of person, and nearly blind.'

Q 9526 'Has she any relations or friends to take her in?' – 'No, not in Westmeon.'

Q 9527 'She would not feel the restraint of the workhouse in the same degree as a person with sight would?' – 'No, I do not think she would'.

Bristow had been in the workhouse briefly previously and had since reapplied '... which is a proof, I think, that she was satisfied with her comforts.'[55]

The 1834 Report had envisaged the replacement of the general mixed workhouse by a series of separate institutions, each adapted for the treatment of a specific class of pauper.[56] But this system proved unpopular with the Assistant Commissioners who deemed it administratively impractical and few unions therefore adopted it.[57] The Commissioners, wishing to proceed apace with the implementation of their policies towards the able-bodied, acceded. In most unions a single multi-purpose institution, the Union Workhouse, was the sole accommodation provided for the indoor poor.[58] If a workhouse lacked capacity, the accommodation of the able-bodied adult and thereafter children and infants, was to take priority over that of the aged and infirm.[59] Inevitably the regime within the workhouse, the personnel, the requirement of work, even the structure of the building, were dictated by the perceived needs of the able-bodied, with only minimal variations or exceptions to the norm permitted for other classes. Thus the care and comfort which the Report had envisaged as appropriate for at least some sectors of the aged and infirm was now to be provided within the context or environment of a

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[55] *Eighth Report from the Select Committee on the Poor Law Amendment Act*, P.P. (1837), XVII, i, p.11.
[56] See above, Chapter One.
[57] Petworth, one of the unions under investigation, was unusual in having a separate workhouse for the aged and infirm.
[58] The Commissioners appear to have accepted this *volte face* with little protest. Probably they saw it as a compromise necessary to enable the swift implementation of their policy towards the able-bodied. Subsequently both Chadwick and Senior disassociated themselves from this rather fundamental change in policy.
[59] *First Annual Report*, p.97.

deterrent workhouse. The implications of this situation do not seem to have aroused contemporary comment or concern.

One of the Report's principal criticisms of the old mixed workhouse had been the failure to classify paupers in order that each category could be treated in an appropriate manner. The Commissioners, faced with the retention of the single workhouse, proposed to achieve such classification through the segregation of different pauper groupings within the one building. Indoor paupers were divided into seven separate classes.[60] Adults with serious or substantial physical disabilities fell into class one 'aged or infirm men' or class four 'aged or infirm women'. The actual process of classification was the responsibility of the workhouse medical officer.[61] As in the case of the outdoor relieving officer, there was scope for considerable discretion. According to M. A. Crowther, 'Some medical officers classified all the aged or handicapped as non-able-bodied in order to obtain special privileges for them; others did the reverse. The description able-bodied of course carried implications of moral culpability which the workhouse discipline was designed to correct; and it was the doctor who actually made the moral judgment.'[62]

The standard form of Orders and Regulations in the *First Annual Report* detailed the responsibilities of those associated with the workhouse. It was the duty of the Master, for

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[60] These categories were aged and infirm men, able-bodied men and youths over 13 (increased to 15 in 1842), boys aged from seven to 13, aged or infirm women, able-bodied women and girls over 13 (increased to 16 from 1842), girls from seven to 13 and children under seven.

[61] The master of the workhouse had to complete the Admissions and Discharge Book 'if partially or wholly Disabled, and cause of Disability.'

[62] M. A. Crowther, *The Workhouse System, 1834-1929: The History of an English Social Institution* (1981), p.164.

the men, or Matron, for the women, 'to keep the partially disabled paupers occupied to the extent of their ability.'[63] The Visiting Committee, a weekly inspectorate appointed by the guardians, were to complete a "Visitor's Book". This asked visitors to ensure that the aged and infirm were employed and properly attended to.[64] Work for the aged and infirm primarily took the form of domestic service to the house, although it could include the unpleasant task of picking oakum. Such work was generally regarded as part of the paupers duties, although occasionally some payment was made. At St.Marylebone in 1846 one shilling a week was paid to two blind paupers who taught the children sing.[65] The Orders and Regulations provided that aged or infirm females might, if the master deemed them fit, perform the duties of nurse or assistant to the matron for other females and children under seven. Men of this class might assist with the youths and boys above seven.[66] Although critics scorned these provisions as making a nonsense of the principles of classification, it may have been that labour of this nature did something to break up the monotony of the day for some of the individuals in this class.

The obligation to work was an important part of the less elegibility principle which the Commissioners now sought to apply indiscriminately in order to ensure that only the truly destitute should enjoy the privilege of maintenance from the public purse. In effect the Commissioners made a pragmatic decision. They were prepared to subject the present generation of aged and infirm paupers to the deterrent workhouse in order encourage future generations to make provision. Indeed the Report had argued that a disciplined and

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[63] *First Annual Report,* p.102.
[64] Ibid., p.100.
[65] A. R. Neate, *The St.Marylebone Workhouse and Institution, 1730-1965* (1967), p.19.
[66] Ibid., pp. 97-98.

regulated environment would not be experienced as a punishment by the respectable elements of this sector of the workhouse populace. It is likely also that there remained a distinct ambivalence towards many of the aged and infirm within the workhouse system. The suspicion that their predicament was the result of a failure to apply principles of thrift or self-help in youth, and was thus the result of moral failure, seems to have persisted. Certainly in 1840 the Commissioners criticised what they saw as misguided attempts to mitigate the condition of the aged and infirm within the workhouse:

> With regard to the aged and infirm there is a strong disposition on the part of a portion of the public so to modify the arrangements of these establishments as to place them on the footing of almshouses. The consequences which would flow from this change have only to be pointed out to show its inexpediency and its danger. If the condition of the inmates of a Workhouse were to be so regulated as to invite the aged and infirm of the labouring classes to take refuge in it, it would immediately be useless as a test between indigence or fraud.[67]

The 'collateral aids', or small ameliorative perks, which Chadwick at least had envisaged as being appropriate for this class of pauper had no place within a deterrent workhouse system.

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[67] *Report of the Poor Law Commission on the Continuance of the Poor Law Commission etc.* (1840), p.47. Quoted in Webb, *English Poor Law History*, p.158.

Work was not the only means of imposing discipline within the workhouse. Every aspect of the inmate's existence was governed by rules and regulations. The inmate wore uniform and regulation haircut, meals were taken in silence, waking and sleeping times were prescribed. Contact with the outer world was strictly controlled, families were separated, only religious books and pictures were permitted. Although in theory the workhouse differed from the prison in that the inmate was free to leave as and when he or she chose, this freedom was often illusory. For the disabled or elderly inmate leaving the workhouse could rarely have been a realistic option. Contemporary critics argued that poverty was being treated as a crime, indeed that the workhouse inmate fared less well than the criminal. Modern commentators tend to stress the psychological cruelty of the workhouse, its dehumanising and stultifying effect upon its hapless charges. U. Henriques accuses the Commissioners *inter alia* of insensitivity, self-defeating parsimony and disingenuous promotion of their ill considered policies. She emphasises the cruelty inherent in the removal of the aged and infirm from their families and communities.[68] M. Crowther, however, sees many of the workhouse practices as being the corollary of institutional life in any of its varied guises.

The Commissioners clearly did not intend that their policy should entail physical cruelty towards paupers.[69] Their insistence on certain minimum standards of diet and accommodation, heat and ventilation might indeed, when attended to diligently, have

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[68] U. Henriques, 'How Cruel was the Victorian Poor Law?', p.366.

[69] See above Chapter One. Even when discipline had been breached the flogging of adults or girls was forbidden, and that of boys restricted. Adults could be placed on 48 hour reduced diets, which were not to fall below stated amounts. Only the magistrate had the jurisdiction to deal with more serious offences. Crowther, *The Workhouse System*, p.44.

done much to improve the physical condition of the workhouse inmate. 'The warmth and cleanliness, and the wholesomeness of the workhouses, as well as the regularity of the diet, could scarcely fail to be manifested in the general health of the aged and infirm inmates of the workhouses. We have been assured that the number of deaths within the workhouse has been less in proportion than the number of deaths of persons of the like age and class living out of the workhouse.'[70] Legislation, centralisation, the employment of Assistant Commissioners (*de facto* inspectors), and the administrative guidelines issued by the Commission, were intended to promote consistency in the application of these standards. Inspection ensured, for example, that the medical officer was not able to neglect his duties.'[71] Conditions within the well regulated institution were such, according to Chadwick, that '... the refusal of the workhouse under such circumstances by the aged and infirm person, the refusal of this very careful provision and attendance, may be compared to the refusal of an abode in a well-arranged hospital by a sick or lame person.'[72]

The analogy between the workhouse sick ward and the well-arranged hospital was in most cases specious. Sick wards were included as a matter of course in the newly constructed workhouses, but they were intended only for pauper inmates who might become ill and the quality of care received therein was often very poor. No attempt was

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[70] *Third Annual Report*, p.58.
[71] Ibid., p.58.
[72] *Twenty First Report from the Select Committee on the Poor Law Amendment Act*, P. P. (1837), XVII, ii, p.506.

made to classify the sick.[73] Overcrowding and squalid conditions spread infection and hindered recovery. Although minimum standards of qualification were introduced for medical officers in 1842, the stigma of poor law work, and the low levels of renumeration on offer, rarely resulted in the appointment of superior candidates. Medical professionals often saw poor law work as simply a means of bolstering their private income. Nurses during this period were drawn from the ranks of the pauper inmates and lacked even basic training. Crowther, paraphrasing the Webbs, concluded that 'the professionalism of the medical staff suffered from the limitations imposed by confusing the treatment of the sick with the discouraging of pauperism.'[74]

In practice, all facets of the day-to-day operation of the law remained dependent upon local goodwill and inclination. Some unions built substantial new workhouses, heated and ventilated in accordance with the Commissioner's wishes. Others refused to spend the money necessary and their paupers remained condemned to squalor. However, by 1850, it was a rare union that did not possess a workhouse.[75] In the *Third Annual Report* the Commissioners, possibly attempting to deflect criticism as to the treatment of the aged and infirm within the workhouse, published some extracts from the 'special provisions' made for the benefit of this category of pauper. The general rule was that each class of pauper was to be allotted that portion of the workhouse best fitted for its reception. However, this rule could be suspended in the case of elderly and infirm married couples if the Guardians found that there was a special reason for so doing. The

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[73] 'The chronically disabled were not distinguished from infection cases, lying-in cases or the insane.' Smith, *The People's Health*, p.352.
[74] Crowther, *The Workhouse System*, p.156.
[75] K. Williams, *From Pauperism to Poverty* (1981), p.78.

master and matron of the workhouse were to fix such hours of rising and going to bed, and the occupations and employment 'as may be suitable to their respective ages and conditions.' Some minor variations were also permitted in the dietary for those 'whose age and infirmities it may be deemed requisite.' [76]

The extent to which these minor variations were of benefit to the aged and infirm clearly depended upon the spirit in which those who exercised responsibility chose to interpret them. Paupers were often isolated, vulnerable and unaware of their 'rights', and as such can rarely have been in a position to challenge the masters. The 1842 *Annual Report* reminded local authorities of their power to permit 'poor persons to be sent to establishments out of the Union, intended for the treatment of their respective infirmities, as hospitals for the sick, asylums for the insane, and schools for the blind or deaf and dumb.'[77] The extent to which the various localities made use of this provision is unknown, but the fact that the Commissioners saw fit to remind them of its existence, and the continuing presence of this class of pauper within the workhouse, suggests it was not over used.

Some workhouses went further than the minimum standards dictated in an attempt to make life for their aged and infirm inmates less harsh. The Bye-Laws of Westhampnett (which had been sanctioned by the Poor Law Commission), provided *inter alia* that:

15 'That the aged and infirm of both sexes be furnished with feather-beds.

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[76] *Third Annual Report*, pp.58-59.
[77] *Eighth Annual Report of the Poor Law Commissioners* (1842), p.77.

20 'That one mattress, three blankets, and one pair of sheets shall be furnished to every bedstead.'

21 'That the surgeon may, if he thinks expedient, order more blankets to be furnished to the paupers specified in Rules... 15.'

22 'That the paupers mentioned in Rule 14 shall have clean sheets once a fortnight and oftener if required.'[78]

However parsimony and petty regulation were also evident:

23 'That one candle in a glass case be placed in every bed-room, and that the paupers be not suffered to have any other, or to remove the candle from the glass case.'[79]

Rumours as to conditions within the 'bastiles' generated much of the hostility towards the new law.[80] Although the Commissioners were not adverse to the spreading of such rumours as would serve to deter pauperism, they were sensitive to allegations of mistreatment of the 'deserving' poor, and acted swiftly to deny unsubstantiated charges. One of the most unpopular aspects of the law was the separation of aged and infirm married couples and it was on this subject that on the 27 July 1836 a statement was made in the House of Commons by Mr Wakeley, M.P. for Finsbury.[81] Wakeley alleged that at Stowmarket an old woman had been denied permission to attend her blind husband on his

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[78] The reference is to sick paupers.

[79] *Second Report of the Select Committee on the Poor Law Amendment Act*, P.P. (1837), XVII, i., p.59.

[80] G. R. Wythen Baxter, *The Book of the Bastiles* (1841), is the most notorious compilation of such accounts. On p.142 the book quotes Rev. C. Fowell Watts' letter to *The Times* of 25 August 1840: 'I have heard from those who witnessed it, of a poor female cripple being hurled down headlong in the yard upon rough stones, because she did not go quite fast enough to the confinement cell.'

[81] *Second Annual Report*, p.638.

death-bed until a special order had been obtained from the Commissioners in London. Subsequently the Stowmarket Guardians examined the Governor of the workhouse and discovered that there were only two married couples in the house. In both cases the wives were bed-ridden and their husbands were allowed to see them whenever they wished.[82] Wakeley subsequently claimed to have been misreported and said that the case of the blind man related to the Bosmere and Claydon Union. On the 3rd August, Dr. Kay, Assistant Poor Law Commissioner, reported the 'unequivocal and direct denial' of the charge by the Guardians of that Union and exhibited a number of depositions including that of Edward Death, a pauper chargeable to Bosmere and Claydon Union. Death, a blind man of 56, denied ever having been separated from his wife. Instead the couple lodged together in the former sick house where Death claimed to enjoy considerable freedom: 'I am not at all confined; I do just as I like, as much as if I were in my own cottage.' He concluded his deposition 'I am much better off now than I was before under the old Board, because the children do not plague me now; there is no noise where I am; and I can get the sun and air so nicely.'[83]

The evidence of Edward Death appears to illustrate humane and indeed generous provision, for which Death was suitably grateful. But other paupers, less compliant than Death, were treated with little sympathy. The following is an extract from a Copy of a Report from the Master of the Workhouse at Hatfield to the Marquis of Sailsbury dated 5th March 1837, and was quoted, evidently with approval, in the *Third Annual Report*:

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[82] Ibid., p.639.
[83] *Second Annual Report*, p.522.

> I beg leave to place before your Lordship how the relief ordered to be given to traveling mendicants has operated in Hatfield Union since the commencement of the last month. The first was a blind man, with a boy, whose office it was to conduct him, and having a large dog, applied to me on a Sunday, when I offered to give him something to eat, but objected to give him anything for the dog, and refused to let him depart until the next day, when he refused to accept of any relief and insisted on going away... it is my opinion that with a strict attention to this mode, and when it becomes generally known, there will not be a beggar to be seen throughout the union...[84]

The examples of Death and of the Hatfield beggar illustrate the interpretation of disability as a moral as much as a physical condition. They also demonstrate the operation of the Workhouse in its dual role as a refuge and a place of deterrence.

Despite the best efforts of the Commission and the Assistant Commissioners, the aged and infirm remained vulnerable – perhaps especially vulnerable – to abuse in ill run and poorly supervised institutions. The post of workhouse master inevitably attracted some sadistic and depraved individuals. At Andover the master was a bully and a drunkard. He starved the paupers under his control to such an extent that they ate the rotten meat and marrow of the bones which they were supposed to crush. Cruel and excessive punishments and the sexual assault of female paupers were also reported. The master of Hoo infamously inflicted frequent beatings on his semi-naked female charges. Scandals

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[84] *Third Annual Report*, p.139.

such as these brought infamy upon the whole system and proved fatal to the already weakened Commission.[85] Even in the best run workhouses, whilst the disabled pauper may have escaped physical abuse from the staff, there was little to protect him or her from the depredations of the other inmates.

The Spotland Poorhouse

In these early years of the new law the writ of the Commissioners was often limited by the recalcitrance or opposition of local boards of guardians.[86] One of the principal centres of opposition to the New Poor Law was Rochdale, where implementation was delayed until 1846. At Spotland, one of the parishes of Rochdale, the masters and mistress of the poorhouse submitted regular written reports to the vestry. These reports, basically diary entries covering the years 1836-45, provide a fascinating insight into an unreformed house of the period. [87] Although some attempts were made to set the able-bodied inmates to work, Spotland was first and foremost an alms house. Throughout the diary the master refers to the the residents as 'oure fameley.'[88]

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[85] The Select Committee of 1846, appointed to investigate the Andover scandal, also revealed the tensions within the Poor Law Commission.

[86] The volume of correspondence received from the Commissioners may also have proved daunting to local administrators. 'Another packet of Explanations and Instructions from the Poor Law Commrs. Which only makes confusion worse confused: however dark it is we shall grope our way out in some manner.' Cowther and Crowther, *The Diary of Robert Sharp*, p.542. The entry is dated 3 November 1836.

[87] The diary is reprinted in full in J. Cole, *Down Poorhouse Lane: The Diary of a Rochdale Workhouse* (Littleborough, 1984).

[88] The chaining of violent and insane inmates, an apparent exception to this rule, was probably the only treatment available at the time.

Obviously the numbers of paupers resident in the house varied, and the diary only occasionally offers some indication as to their numbers – 'December 20th 1843 We are at present, 38 men 34 women 7 Boys, and 11 Girls'.[89] Some inferences as to the physical condition or general health of these paupers can be made from references in the diary. Thus, on February 13th 1839, the master recorded the presence of '... a deale of helples folks in the House at presant they are dayley some of them dirtying theire Beds and Blankets'.[90] The most commonly mentioned form of physical disability is injury to the legs. At least some of these injuries were the result of factory accidents. '1836 Sepr 14th we have a Boy Jas Whitehead went to the Factory 3 Days last Week and yesterday he was caught by a strap and both ancles where broken his right shoulder arme elbow and legg. we sent for John Stott and his son came with him it took them nearly 3 hours to put to rights his limbs he got his head into the inside of a drum so that it was not hurt his chest was not much hurt'. Perhaps surprisingly the boy recovered. The boy's employers, Messrs Procter and Hirst, continued to pay his wages throughout his convalescence.[91] Other entries such as that of the 15 July (1840) 'we had onley one lame Man more than we had last Week' and references to inmates such as 'Lame John Howorth' again testify to the ubiquity of this form of impairment.[92]

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[89] Ibid., p.92. A year earlier there had been 121 in the house, see p.84.
[90] Ibid., p. 60.
[91] Ibid., pp.43-44.
[92] Ibid., p.69 and p.49. One of Cole's illustrations is a cartoon from the *Rochdale Spectator* of 1 November 1844, which shows the poor with their sticks, crutches and bent backs being whipped into the workhouse by the relieving officer. See also F. Engels *The Condition of the Working Class in England* (edited by D.McLellan, Oxford, 1993), which contains many references to the lame and is based on Engels' observations of nearby Manchester during this period.

The diary also illustrates the role of the house as a surgery where amputations and the setting of bones seem to have been the most frequently recorded procedures. One amputation was attended by four doctors. [93] References to alcohol and trusses for ruptures provide some evidence of other treatments available. Inmates were also referred for treatment to the infirmary, the dispensary, and frequently, to the asylum. Although a visitor from London was reported to be impressed with the cleanliness of the house (it was free of bugs), and with the quantity and quality of the food at Spotland, the institution illustrated some of the worst features of the general mixed house. The control of unruly inmates was often beyond the ability of the masters and there are frequent references to inmates, often mentally ill themselves, creating disturbances and abusing the elderly and infirm. Thus: 'Pensioner Butterworth is beyond oure rule there is none that has been sent from here to the newbailey deserved to go so well as he does he insult the Inmates and kicks and abuseses them Shamefully and is a common disturber'.[94] In December 1843 it was reported that 'The Doctor finds great fault with the accomodation which we have for the nasty ladies you send us, and also that the Mad people, and ideots cannot be kept from among the other inmates. One of the former, a young man who came from the Asylum last August, is both very troublesome and dangerous... The old people are so afraid of their lives, that we are obliged to keep him fast both night & day.'[95] There was also some suggestion that more vulnerable inmates could face sexual abuse. '1837

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[93] Cole, *Down Poorhouse Lane* p. 65.
[94] Ibid., p.59.
[95] Ibid., p.92.

1st March Old Diggle as been takeing improper liberteys with Mary Grindrod she is not in her right mind she is 25 years of age'.[96]

The workhouse masters were no less keen to detect and discourage fraudulent or exaggerated claims than those in reformed institutions. Individuals claiming disability were often viewed suspiciously. Thus: 'June 7th 1843 ...On Monday James Schofield, a man who came in on the 14th of last December, after getting his dinner went out and has not returned since. When he came he pretended to be nearly blind; and he moped & groped to find his way more than any blind person I ever saw. But after about 2 months residence, finding the shop to be rather dry, & the Ruler rather stringent, he told me that he thought his eye sight had not got worse during the last three weeks and if I would give him leave he would see if he could get a weaving shop...'.[97] A man called Mill who complained that a rupture prevented him from making a living was described by the master as ' a lusty able bodied man for any thing that I can see.'[98]

Even from the perspective of the workhouse master, Spotland was clearly a chaotic, sometimes riotous institution, where the inmates exercised considerable autonomy. The contrast with the Commissioners' ideal of a well run workhouse is marked. Roberts criticises the Northern unions for their oppositional stance: 'No unions did less for the aged and ill, the ignorant child and occasional insane than those managed by opponents

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[96] Ibid., p.46.
[97] Ibid., p.86.
[98] Ibid.,p.101.

of the Law.'[99] Although this verdict may not be just in the case of Spotland, conditions at other unreformed workhouses, such as those of Leeds and Huddersfield, were regarded by contemporaries as little short of disgraceful.[100]

Assessment

In assessing the impact of the new law on the disabled poor it is necessary to differentiate between the situation of the outdoor and the indoor pauper. The Commissioners recognised that in the short term the continuation of outdoor relief to the present generation of paupers, those who had not had the time to insure against old age and infirmity, was essential. The Rev. Cockerton's evidence suggests that he at least considered that in his parish outdoor relief, when supplemented by family and charitable help, did enable those in receipt to subsist adequately. Individuals devoid of such support were truly destitute. Pressure from both the rate-payers and the Poor Law Commission to reduce the poor rate probably induced most guardians to operate a more stringent vetting system than had been the case under the old law. Some indivdiuals hitherto accustomed to relief, chiefly the non-resident and the slightly disabled, might thus have been deprived of it. However there is also clear evidence that, despite the Commissioners' efforts, the numbers of aged and infirm outdoor paupers grew dramatically in the 1840s. It seems that the levels of out relief to the aged and infirm may actually have risen in some areas

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[99] D. Roberts, 'How Cruel was the Victorian Poor Law?', p.104. Thirty five unions refused to provide adequate accommodation.

[100] At Huddersfield the Guardians refused to provide a new single union workhouse. In 1847-8 a combination of economic distress and a local outbreak of typhus produced acute overcrowding in local workhouses resulting in the sick being mixed with the healthy and children mixing with adults. Driver, *Power and Pauperism*, p.152.

following the passage of the act. The disabled probably continued to receive a more sympathetic hearing from the guardians than other categories of pauper because of their continuing status as 'deserving' poor. The development of the poor law medical service would also have had a positive impact on this sector of the pauper population.

The single union workhouse scotched Chadwick's earlier vision of a series of separate specialist facilities for the treatment of paupers. The union workhouse was accepted by the Commissioners as a compromise, necessary to enable the swift implementation of their policy. Although deterrence was aimed primarily at the able-bodied, the Commissioners hoped also to pare down the number of aged and infirm paupers to a bare minimum. Suspicion of, and ambivalence towards, all of those dependent upon relief, enabled the Commissioners to justify the sacrifice of the 'small ameliorative perks' originally intended for the aged and infirm for the sake of efficiency. In effect, the Commissioners made a utilitarian calculation. They were prepared to sacrifice the comforts of the present generation of aged and infirm paupers to the deterrent house in order to encourage future generations to make provision.

The Commission also clearly failed to anticipate the extent to which the aged and infirm and the sick would clog up the workhouse system. The workhouse, designed to administer a short sharp shock to the able-bodied poor, instead found itself having to cater for the long term resident. In many cases, it was ill-equipped to do so, and the treatment meted out to the aged and infirm bore little resemblance to that envisaged in the Report. The application of the principles of deterrence to the sick, the aged and the infirm

was inappropriate and cruel. No amount of discipline or deterrence could make the majority of this most vulnerable sector of the population capable of independence and self-help. However the best run workhouses probably did succeed in providing a safety net where physical conditions were almost certainly an improvement over those that many of the aged and infirm could manage independently.

The consistency and uniformity which the Commissioners had hoped to achieve in the application of the law remained elusive. Regional variations in the implementation of the law could in some cases operate to the benefit of paupers and in others to their detriment. It did not take the unions long to realise that most of the Commission's edicts could easily be circumvented. Assistant Commissioner Day complained of unions following the letter of the law but not the spirit. He was particularly aggrieved by the issuing of dubious medical certificates to the able-bodied.[101] Equally other unions seem to have adopted the spirit of the law whilst neglecting the minimum standards laid down by the Commission. In these unions the position of the pauper was truly wretched. In practice the Commissioners were to find that cost cutting, appeasement of the rate payers and rationalisation were all easier to achieve than the effective targeting of relief.

Finally we must not omit from this analysis the often subversive impact of the pauper him or herself upon the system, and in particular upon the workhouse and its regime. The Spotland diary illustrates a theme also referred to by Crowther; namely the ability of the

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[101] William Day Esq., *Correspondence with the Poor Law Commissioners* (1844), pp. 23-29. Quoted in Rose, *The English Poor Law*, p.126.

inmate to renegotiate the boundaries and rules of the institution.[102] Although powerless against sadistic officers and the physical abuse of fellow inmates, paupers may well have developed their own alternative system of relationships or hierarchies. Trusted long term inmates such as the elderly and infirm often benefited from preferential access to the currency of an institution – tobacco or tea, for example – and could have used this to increase their bargaining power.[103] No one was better placed than the long term resident in knowing how to manipulate the system for his or her own ends.

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[102] Crowther, *The Workhouse System*, p.221.
[103] It may also, of course, have left them open to blackmail.

Chapter Three

The Operation of the Poor Law 1847-1890

The period covered by this chapter witnessed the administration of the law by two bodies: the Poor Law Board from 1847 until 1871, and thereafter the Local Government Board. Although it would be possible to deal with the issues discussed herein in two separate chapters they can appropriately be merged; many of the developments which were to take place in the period post 1871 had their roots in the anxieties and concerns expressed during the last years of the PLB. In any event, the era of the PLB lacked both the dynamism and verve of its predecessor, and the renewed vigour and impetus of its successor, and hence there was comparatively little in the way of new policy or fresh initiatives during its period of office.

This chapter traces the growing strains and stresses within the poor law system during this period, and the corresponding development of an awareness of the need for further reform. One of the principal sources of tension at this time was the evident mismatch between the form and function of the deterrent workhouse and the large numbers of residents for whom such provision was clearly unsuitable. This was the era of the 'silent revolution'; the process whereby the able-bodied were gradually displaced from the workhouse by the sheer numbers of non-able-bodied persons who had no other place to go.[1] One consequence of the 'revolution' was a mounting public concern for the plight of

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[1] R. Hodgkinson uses the phrase 'silent revolution' to describe the process whereby the sick displaced the able-bodied in the workhouse. R. Hodgkinson, *The Origins of the*

certain sectors of the non-able-bodied poor; notably the sick, but also to some lesser extent, the aged and infirm, amongst whose numbers were many physically disabled persons. The chapter will examine how the fate of the disabled was affected by this 'revolution' and its consequences.

Although both the PLB and the LGB sought to generate and implement new policy, increasingly the impetus for change came from outside agencies. This chapter will look at the sources of such calls for reform and the role of wider public opinion in this process. One area which served as a focus for those seeking reform was the failure to adequately classify inmates. As we shall see, many of the difficulties in this area arose from the continued absence of definition of terms such as 'sick' or 'able-bodied.' Attempts by doctors and administrators to clarify this situation will be discussed herein. A number of 'shifts in the interpretation of classification' can also be detected during the period.[2] These include a renewed stress on classification as a necessary precusor to appropriate specialist treatment of the poor, as distinct from the earlier emphasis on its role as a deterrent and as a means of avoiding moral cross-contamination of the various strands of pauperdom. Change was sometimes reflected in spatial terms with distinct buildings or pavillion style architecture reinforcing attempts to disaggregate the pauper mass.[3]

National Health Service: The Medical Services of the New Poor Law, 1837-1871 (1967), p.451.

[2] The phrase is from F. Driver, *Power and Pauperism: The Workhouse System, 1834-1884* (Cambridge, 1993), p.66.

[3] Ibid. Driver provides a fascinating insight into workhouse architecture. I do not propose to deal with the geography of the workhouse herein.

The inadequacies of classification raise methodological problems for the historian. These centre around the difficulty in identifying physically disabled individuals within the system. In the first instance classification for the disabled remained dependent upon objective criteria such as the degree and nature of their impairment, their age, sex, and general state of health. However, as we have seen, classification also necessarily involved the exercise of discretion and took into account a wide range of subjective factors. Thus individuals with virtually identical physical disabilities could find themselves subject to differing classifications, and hence to widely varying treatment under the law. Whilst recognising that disabled people were dispersed throughout the system, and that their experiences were accordingly wide ranging, this chapter concentrates on those sectors where their numerical presence was likely to have been most significant. Hence it looks in particular detail at the situation of the sick and of the aged and infirm.

A further issue, arising from the above, is the extent to which it is possible to differentiate the experience of the disabled pauper from that of other individuals in the non-able-bodied category. For example, how far can the experience of an elderly disabled pauper be distinguished from that of an elderly but able-bodied pauper? It should be recognised from the outset, however, that such an exercise is to some extent artificial and quite often simply not possible. As we shall see, many of the aged people who entered the workhouse did so when increasing debility meant they were no longer fit enough to maintain an independent existence. In many cases the waning of physical strength was accompanied by failing sight, deafness and impaired mobility. In addition, the admissions policies of the voluntary hospitals meant that the workhouse sick wards were crowded

with those suffering from chronic and disabling illnesses; spinal complaints and 'bad leg' cases being particularly common. The line between physical disability, sickness and the consequences of ageing cannot easily be drawn.

Another complicating factor is that the policies of the Boards rarely make distinctions between the various groups comprising the non-able-bodied. Although it is possible to trace some coherent strands of policy directed specifically at the physically disabled, most notably in the case of blind and deaf pauper children, much relevant policy was of a more general nature. An example of such a policy was the 1852 Outdoor Relief Regulation Order, considered below, which was clearly pertinent *inter alia* to the physically disabled and therefore merits discussion here. Other policy developments, whilst seeming to apply only to the able-bodied or to the acutely ill, also had indirect consequences for disabled people. This chapter has thus adopted what might appear to be a rather broad approach, both as regards the sectors of the poor encompassed herein and the range of issues discussed.

A number of earlier themes will also be re-examined in the context of this later period. The relationship between central authority and local administrators continued to reflect anxieties about the roles and duties of both forms of government and the balance of power between the two. It is arguable that in the period following the Metropolitan Poor Act of 1867 differences in the administration of relief between London and the provinces, and between urban and rural unions, grew rather than contracted. Naturally these disparities had important implications nationally for the quality and nature of services

offered to the pauper, and these will also be explored. Another recurring theme is the distrust evinced by both central and local authorities of the *bona fides* of the disabled pauper. During this period a number of initiatives were made which appeared to question the status of the disabled as the 'deserving poor'. In particular, efforts were made to impose moral criteria in the administration of relief. How succesful were these efforts and what opposition did they face? To what extent did notions of the disabled as the deserving poor retain their power?

The Poor Law Board and the provision of Outdoor Relief

The replacement of the Poor Law Commission by the Poor Law Board in 1847 was effectively a change of administrative form rather than of fundamental policy. In an attempt to make the Board less vulnerable to criticism than its predecessor, the Poor Law Board Act provided that a member of government should be appointed as president. The new Board was thus rendered more accountable and responsive to Parliamentary control than had been the case prior to 1847. The Act made no attempt to increase the Board's statutory powers; persuasion was still its most effective weapon. In addition, under staffing remained a serious problem, not only in the field, where the inspectors who had replaced the assistant commissioners were severely over stretched, but also amongst the clerical and administrative workers at head office. The personality clashes and empire building, characteristic of the Commission, were superseded by a rather faceless bureaucracy. 'The Poor Law Board has now become purely administrative and has no

character or policy of its own,' wrote Sir George Cornewall Lewis in 1851.[4] The low profile of the Board enabled the local authorities to retain a high degree of autonomy and may have helped to ease some of their concerns about, and hostility towards, the idea of centralisation.

Official confidence in the principal tenets of the Poor Law Amendment Act remained undimmed and the PLB retained a strong commitment to the policy and ideology of 1834. The restriction of outdoor relief to the healthy able-bodied male, the application of the workhouse test, deterrence and less eligibility remained central features of its programme. The optimism and buoyancy of the mid-century served to augment public faith in the virtues of self-help and independence which the 1834 Act had sought to cultivate. This was the era of Samuel Smiles; those who preached the gospel of work and the immorality of idleness met with a receptive audience. Pauperism remained inextricably linked to moral failure in the public mind, and dependency to stigma.[5]

Official policy on out relief to the able-bodied remained as set out in the Outdoor Relief Prohibitory Order of 1844, modified in certain areas by the Labour Test Order of 1842.[6] The expectation was that the non-able-bodied would continue to receive outdoor relief. The definition of the terms able-bodied, sick, aged or infirm, remained a matter for the

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[4] S. and B. Webb, *English Poor Law Policy* (1910, Reprinted 1963), p. 89.
[5] Kilvert records the suicide of William Jones who 'becoming helpless and infirm... was put upon the parish. It is supposed that this preyed upon his mind.' F. Kilvert, *Kilvert's Diary: Selections from the Diary of the Rev. Francis Kilvert* (W. Plomer (ed.), 1977), vol.I, pp.282-3. The diary entry is dated 18 December 1870.
[6] See above Chapter Two. By 1847 the 1844 Prohibitory Order was applied in 396 unions, and the 1842 Labour Test Order in more than 200 unions. K.Williams, *From Pauperism to Poverty* (1981), p. 65.

discretion of the relieving or medical officer; no guidance was issued by the central authority.[7] In any event, as B. Abel-Smith notes, 'Poor Law medical officers had neither time, prestige nor diagnostic tools to make clear and acceptable distinctions between the healthy and the sick – if such distinctions can be made in any community, particularly one at a low level of living.'[8] This absence of definition enabled local authorities to exercise a significant degree of discretion over both the recipients and the nature of the various forms of relief offered.[9]

Accordingly, and despite the efforts of central authority, the administration of relief at a local level was still characterised by variety rather than uniformity of practice. One manifestation of local autonomy was the unwillingness of some authorities to send able-bodied paupers to the workhouse. In some instances a lack of workhouse accomodation made the offer of the house impractical, particularly during periods of recession.[10] Other local authorities continued to favour outdoor relief for the able-bodied as a cheaper, and therefore more desirable option than the workhouse.[11] Some Guardians were sensitive to the social stigma and dislocation which resulted from admission to the workhouse and

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[7] Probably the first such guidance was issued by Dr Edward Smith in his 1866 *Report on the Metropolitan Workhouse Infirmaries and Sick Wards*. See below pp.140-142.
[8] B. Abel-Smith, *The Hospitals, 1800-1948: A Study in Social Administration in England and Wales* (1964), p.47.
[9] The preoccupation with able-bodied pauperism meant that local administrators were '... offered little guidance on the everyday dealings with the bulk of pauperism – the old, the sick, widows and children.' R. N. Thompson, 'The Working of the Poor Law Amendment Act in Cumbria, 1836-1871', *Northern History,* 15 (1979), pp.136-37.
[10] In the West Riding only nine of the twenty-seven unions could provide a place for one in a hundred of their inhabitants. D. Ashforth, 'The Urban Poor Law', in D. Fraser (ed.), *The New Poor Law in the Nineteenth Century* (1976), p.133.
[11] D. Ashforth quotes an estimate of *£5 10s* as the average annual cost of relieving each workhouse inmate in Lancashire and the West Riding during the 1850s. This compared with only *£3 11s* for out relief. Ashforth, 'The Urban Poor Law', p.132.

chose to send there only the most recalcitrant or incorrigible of paupers. [12] Where possible such Guardians would utilise the Labour Test to keep the able-bodied out of the workhouses. By mid-century nearly 5 per cent of the population were in receipt of outdoor relief.[13]

In August 1852 the Board issued an Outdoor Relief Regulation Order. Article One provided that at least a third of any outdoor relief allowed to a person 'who shall be indigent and helpless from age, sickness, accident, or bodily or mental infirmity', or to a widow with dependent child, should take the form of food, fuel or articles of 'absolute necessity'. In the case of an able-bodied person such items should form at least a half of the relief given. Article Two stated that if out relief was allowed for longer than a week without the recipient being required to enter a workhouse then such relief should continue to be given on a weekly basis only.[14]

This was the first time that any official restriction had been made on the granting of relief to the non-able-bodied. The Board claimed to be motivated by a desire to protect the aged

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[12] D. Fraser quotes the radical, W. E. Forster, who told the *Bradford Observer* in 1850 that, 'he would not consent for the honest well disposed pauper to be compelled to enter the workhouse because he was obliged to apply to the parish for relief.' D. Fraser, 'The English Poor Law and the Origins of the British Welfare State', in W. J. Mommsen (ed.), *The Emergence of the Welfare State in Britain and Germany* (1981), p.13. A similar reluctance to send the able-bodied to the house was shared by some rural guardians.

[13] R. Humphreys, *Sin, Organized Charity and the Poor Law in Victorian England* (Basingstoke, 1995), p.18. The proportion had dropped to 4 per cent by 1869.

[14] Quoted in M. Rose (ed.), *The English Poor Law, 1780-1930* (Newton Abbot, 1971), p.146.

and infirm from having their cash payments misappropriated by avaricious relatives.[15] However the payment of relief in kind rather than in cash was also a means of making it less eligible or attractive to the pauper, in that it reduced his freedom to spend or squander a cash payment as he wished. It was thus interpreted as implying that the recipient was not to be trusted, that he or she was morally suspect. Article Two, as well as involving considerable inconvenience to the non-able-bodied, again appeared to cast doubt on the *bona fides* of the claimant. To apply such restrictions without exception was to deny that any distinction existed between the claims of the able-bodied male, and those of the non-able-bodied. A deluge of protest and petitions from local boards followed, and the PLB was forced to retract the order. In December an amended version of the Regulations, applying restrictions only to the healthy able-bodied male, was reissued. The protest seems to have been based on a combination of factors. Certainly local boards of guardians strongly objected to what they saw as an unwarranted interference with their discretionary powers.[16] But their protests also evinced sympathy for the situation of the non-able-bodied poor. The regulations were condemned for imposing an unjustified moral slur on those who were widely perceived as 'deserving.'

Although the local authorities might sometimes champion the rights of 'deserving' paupers, considerations of economy generally carried more weight in their deliberations. Local Boards tended to be dominated by members of the lower middle classes who were

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[15] S. and B. Webb, *English Poor Law History, Part II. The Last Hundred Years, 1* (1897, Reprinted 1929), p.351.
[16] See for example the response of the Blackburn Union, quoted in Rose, *The English Poor Law,* p.149.

seldom inclined to generosity with the rates.[17] Electoral vulnerability made them particularly sensitive to ratepayers concerns over unnecessary expenditure. It appears to have been openly accepted that the small sums provided by way of outdoor relief represented no more than a contribution to the 'economy of makeshifts' that enabled the poor to subsist.[18] The component parts of this economy might include income in cash or kind from a variety of sources such as work, rent, sick club, family, friends, or private charity. An example of how disabled people, or their families on their behalf, utilised this economy during this era is provided by a Mrs Richardson whose circumstances were raised before the 1861 *Select Committee on Poor Relief* by the Rev. C. H. Carr.[19] Mrs Richardson, who supported a bed-ridden sister, received 1*s* 6*d* a week from the Guardians, sometimes supplemented by half a pound of meat a day. She earned between 1*s* 6*d* and 2*s* 9*d* from her needlework and between 1*s* 6*d* and 2*s* 3*d* in rent from her lodgers. She spent 1*s* 6*d* on her own rent, which left her and her sister 2*s* 9*d* to live upon.[20] Rev. Carr maintained in evidence that the Guardians 'do not profess to give out-door relief sufficient to maintain life.'[21]

One element of the 'economy of makeshifts' that may have been of particular significance for some categories of the physically disabled was private charity. The

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[17] Abel-Smith, *The Hospitals*, pp. 62-4.
[18] The phrase 'economy of makeshifts' was first used by the historian Olwen Hufton in her book *The Poor of Eighteenth-Century France, 1750-1789* (Oxford, 1974).
[19] The evidence of Rev. C. H. Carr cited below appears in the *First Report of the Select Committee on Poor Relief,* Parliamentary Papers (1861), IX, i, p.150, Q.3728.
[20] This would accord with K.Williams' calculation that by mid-century the average outdoor dole was around *1s 4d* per week. Williams, *From Pauperism to Poverty*, pp.169-70, Table 4.5. The rate had risen to nearly *1s 9d* by 1869.
[21] *First Report of the Select Committee on Poor Relief,* P.P. (1861), IX, i, p.150, Q.3728.

importance of charity to this economy will be discussed in the second half of this thesis. However it is worth noting at this point that receipt of charity may sometimes have operated as a double-edged sword. D. Fraser suggests that '... the flowering of philanthropy, which was the almost self-justifying concomitant of the Victorian Poor Law, itself inhibited the Guardians from paying subsistence benefits.' He quotes a Marylebone Guardian in 1874; 'The Guardians know full well that, under the present conditions of charity... any really deserving case is perfectly sure to be supplemented by charity, and in the interests of the ratepayers they naturally refrain from giving a larger sum when a smaller one is practically sufficient.'[22]

It seems likely, given the low rates of outdoor relief paid during this period, that only those disabled people with access to other sources of income or support would have been able to survive out of the house. Probably those who fared best were younger, healthier individuals who were capable to some extent of contributing to their own support. Obviously the nature and degree of their impairment would have been decisive in their ability so to do. Geographical factors, such as the availability of suitable work or the spread of voluntary organisations willing or able to provide support where necessary, were likely to have been significant. Individuals whose condition or personal circumstances could attract charitable attention were also at an advantage. Much of this charity would have been private and unrecorded. Contemporary literature, and indeed social commentary such as the reports of Mayhew, provide numerous examples of the many disabled people who survived through marginal activities such as begging and

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[22] Fraser, 'The English Poor Law', p.11.

street selling.[23] The difficulties of maintaining an independent existence almost certainly increased the numbers of the disabled forced to rely upon indoor relief.

The Poor Law Medical Service

The process by which the non-able-bodied gradually came to replace the able-bodied as the majority in the workhouse has been called a 'silent revolution.' This section explores further both the origins and consequences of this revolution.[24] How and why did increasing numbers of sick, aged and infirm paupers enter the workhouse system? How did officialdom respond to their presence? The growing numbers of non-able-bodied within the system meant that the role of the medical officer and the poor law medical service assumed a far greater importance than had been anticipated at the time of the PLAA. This had important implications both for the day-to-day management of this group of paupers and for the system as a whole. This chapter examines the role of the service, and of the medical officers in particular, as a motor for change within the system.

The development of an efficient poor law medical service continued to be confounded by ambiguity as to the correct interpretation of the law. The right of paupers to medical relief outside the house, and of inmates within the system to receive care, were not at issue. A strict interpretation of the law suggested that all other classes of society should be

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[23] See K. Chesney, *The Victorian Underworld* (1970), pp. 229, 232-3, 231-5, 237-8. Chesney notes that disabled beggars were viewed with the familiar mixture of sympathy and suspicion. Clearly pronounced disability increased the profitability of such an existence.

[24] The role of low levels of out relief and the attitudes of Guardians in this process has already been discussed above.

encouraged in their efforts to achieve or maintain their independence. In terms of medical relief, this involved either saving privately or through a medical club to pay for future care, or alternatively utilising the services of a charitable dispensary or hospital. However many individuals who came before the Guardians to appeal for relief, whilst not indigent, were nonetheless evidently too poor to afford private medical treatment. Although to deny medical care might seem unduly harsh, to give relief was automatically was to stigmatise the recipient by making him or her a pauper.[25] The possibility that the superiority of medical care provided by the parish might tempt the independent labourer to claim relief remained a concern. Whilst the 1834 legislation contained no indication that less eligibility was to be applied to the sick, to give aid freely seemed contrary to the entire tenor of the Act.

There were other factors which also influenced the development of this sphere of relief. Many guardians remained sceptical of the benefits conferred by medical relief and saw wider public health measures as more cost effective. The ever present desire to keep expenditure to a minimum ensured that a tight reign was kept on medical relief. M. Flinn notes that in 1840 when total poor law expenditure amounted to £4.5m, medical relief accounted for only £150,000 of this.[26] This low level was achieved through parsimony and penny pinching. Many Boards insisted that medical officers purchased their own

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[25] The sanction of disenfranchisement, which was intended to emphasise the degraded condition of the pauper, was applied to medical as to other forms of relief. Although having little practical deterrent effect it was a further means of stigmatising the recipient.
[26] M.W. Flinn, 'Medical Services under the New Poor Law', in D. Fraser (ed.), *The New Poor Law in the Nineteenth Century* (1976), p.51. This proportion was to remain static for the next thirty years.

medicines.[27] They encouraged the competition for posts which ensured that salaries remained at a low level. Central authority attempts to lay down minimum qualifications for medical officers and basic regulations concerning their duties were often circumvented at a local level.[28] Thus overwork and underpay characterised the unhappy lot of the medical officer. Low status further undermined the officer's position with the lay officials who constantly questioned and challenged his expertise. Thorold Rogers wrote about the isolation of the medical officer during this period. 'The practice of the Poor Law Board at this time was to assert on paper the supremacy of the medical officer in his own department, to give him no personal support when he did his duty, to visit on his head all the consequences of their own negligence or dilatoriness, and, right or wrong, to support the Guardians when they took offence at conscientiousness and zeal.'[29] For Rogers, these public expressions of concern on the part of the Board were a sham, serving merely to mask official indifference.

A more liberal attitude towards the service evolved gradually. One factor influencing this was the perception on the part of the central authority that the structure that had developed around the provision of poor relief in general and medical relief in particular, could be effectively utilised for public health measures, such as vaccination and the combating of nuisances.[30] Although the performance of these tasks placed additional

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[27] Abel-Smith, *The Hospitals*, p.47.
[28] Ibid., p.54.
[29] J. Rogers, *Reminiscences of a Workhouse Medical Officer* (1889). The quote is from the introduction by Professor Thorold Rogers, p. xvi.
[30] The Vaccination (Amendment) Act of 1841 made it clear that the costs of the vaccination service should be paid by the poor rates. Vaccination did not incur disenfranchisement. M. Bruce, *The Rise of the Welfare State* (1973), p.86.

pressures on the underfunded and over-stretched service, they also served to raise its profile and emphasise its utility. Perhaps in response to pressure from below, or in acknowledgment of current practice, the PLB gradually widened access to outdoor medical relief to include those who were not strictly destitute. Thus in 1848 widows with illegitimate children were allowed to claim out relief if the children were sick, and the revised 1852 Outdoor Relief Regulation Order provided that relief might be given in cases of sickness even where the head of the family was receiving wages.[31] By the 1850s the inability to afford doctors fees rather than pauperism *per se* had become the criteria for the receipt of medical relief.[32]

In 1851, possibly in acknowledgement of the limitations of the poor law medical service, the PLB condoned the practice whereby Boards of Guardians subscribed to medical charities in return for use of their specialist services. H. Marland notes that the Huddersfield Guardians subscribed to and made use of the facilities of the Manchester Eye Institution, the Doncaster Deaf and Dumb Institute, and the York and Liverpool Schools for the Blind.[33] However Marland also observes that the subscriptions paid by the Huddersfield authorities were very small and only a few paupers were sent to these institutions.

Access to the medical officer continued to be through the relieving officer. Some exemption was made for those of the sick, infirm and old on the list of permanent paupers

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[31] Webb, *English Poor Law Policy*, pp.115-16.
[32] Hodgkinson, *The Origins of the National Health Service*, p.275.
[33] H. Marland, *Medicine and Society in Wakefield and Huddersfield* 1780-1870 (Cambridge, 1987), p.86.

who were entitled to medical relief at all times.[34] D. Fraser links the increased contact between the wider public and the medical officers with a further development: the wider use of workhouse wards for the treatment of the sick poor.[35] Certainly, medical officers found it more convenient to monitor and care for their sick patients under one roof. B. Abel-Smith notes that the small sum paid to the medical officer did not encourage him to 'linger over diagnosis or provide a course of domiciliary treatment which extended over a long period.' [36] According to Mr. Farnall, Poor Law Board inspector, the officer's object was '...either to make them well as soon as possible, and get them off his hands, or to send them to the workhouse.'[37] Often relieving officers colluded in this process as a means of reducing their own workload. As increasing numbers of sick paupers were channelled towards the workhouse wards, they displaced the able-bodied inmates whom the Guardians were obliged to place on out relief.[38]

Numbers within the workhouse system were augmented by those refused treatment by the voluntary hospitals: children, the chronically sick, the incurable and the dying.[39] The chronically sick included those suffering from the wasting effects of diseases such as tuberculosis and polio, the victims of respiratory diseases, malnutrition and accidental injuries. The majority of individuals suffering from these illnesses would have been

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[34] The provisions for by-passing the relieving officer were set out in the 1842 General Medical Order.
[35] D. Fraser, *The Evolution of the British Welfare State: A History of Social Policy since the Industrial Revolution* (1984), p.91.
[36] Abel-Smith, *The Hospitals,* p.48.
[37] Ibid.
[38] R. White, *Social Change and The Development of the Nursing Profession: A Study of the Poor Law Nursing Service 1848-1948* (1978), p.67.
[39] Rose, *The English Poor Law,* p.31. Individuals with tuberculosis, venereal diseases, dropsy, cancer and epilepsy filled the workhouse wards.

permanently disabled; in many cases their limbs would have been distorted, withered or twisted. Individuals with respiratory diseases would in many instances have been bedridden.

The elderly made up a large proportion of those refused treatment by the voluntary hospitals. Dickens, attending a Chapel service at a workhouse in 1850, noted that 'Aged people were there, in every variety. Mumbling, blear-eyed, spectacled, stupid, deaf, lame; vacantly winking in the gleams of sun that now and then crept in through the open doors.'[40] Occasional insights as to how and why the elderly entered the workhouse emphasise the role of increasing physical discrepitude and disability in this process. The workhouse was a last resort for individuals no longer fit enough to earn a living. Louisa Twining's first visit to the workhouse was to see a lady who had gone into the house 'when strength and eyesight failed her.'[41] Elderly people often cited their wish to save their families the expense of their further maintenance as a motive for entering the house.[42] Joseph Rogers encountered a woman of 104 in the Strand Workhouse. She had outlived her children and grandchildren, and 'her great grand children, ... had grown tired of waiting on her, and that was why she had come into the house.'[43] Rapid population

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[40] Extract from Charles Dickens, 'A Walk in a Workhouse', *Household Words*, 25 May 1850, cited in M. Slater (ed.), *Dickens' Journalism The Amusements of the People and Other Papers: Reports, Essays and Reviews 1834-51* (1996), vol.2, p.236.
[41] L. Twining, *Recollections of Workhouse Visiting and Management during Twenty-Five Years*, p.6. Cited in Abel-Smith, *The Hospitals*, p.69.
[42] N. Longmate, *The Workhouse* (1974), p.148.
[43] Rogers, *Reminiscences of a Workhouse Medical Officer*, p.36.

growth and migration from country to town may also have left increasing numbers of elderly people isolated and threatened family support networks.[44]

By the 1850s some local authorities were at last becoming alert to the proportion of workhouse admissions resulting from sickness, old age or infirmity. D. Ashforth quotes the master of the South Shields workhouse who in 1854 complained that he was 'superintendent of a general hospital as well as master of the workhouse'[45] Ashforth gives figures based on 1854 estimates that suggest that in Lancashire and the West Riding 47.2 per cent of workhouse inmates were non-able-bodied adults, with 40.8 per cent being children and only 12 per cent being able-bodied.[46] Central authority also began to take some account of these changes. Increasingly plans for the construction of new workhouses allowed for ample sick wards and regulations laid down appropriate fittings and fixtures. However the Board's concern was primarily of a pragmatic nature; it was hoped that the creation of specialist facilities for the sick would free more space within the workhouse for the able-bodied. As the Webbs' note, 'How many of the paupers were sick, and of what diseases, what was the case-rate or the death rate; whether they were in fact being medically treated or properly nursed, even according to the standards of the time, was not known, and was not inquired into.'[47] In 1854, the inquiry into medical relief ignored the role of the workhouse, and the subject was scarcely mentioned until the

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[44] Abel-Smith, *The Hospitals*, p.49.
[45] Ashforth, 'The Urban Poor Law', p.148.
[46] Ibid., p.135.
[47] Webb, *English Poor Law History, Part II. The Last Hundred Years,* 1 (1929), p.315.

situation reached a crisis in the mid 1860s.[48] By 1861, workhouse sick wards were providing 50,000 of the 65,000 hospital beds available in England and Wales.[49]

Conditions within the workhouse sick wards remained dependent on regional and local factors. Local authorities were often more willing to sanction expenditure for the benefit of children or the sick than for other categories of pauper. Probably this was because these categories were viewed as the most 'deserving' of paupers.[50] However considerations of less eligibility continued to hamper efforts to raise standards in the majority of Unions. Many guardians felt it was inappropriate for the care and comfort of the pauper to approach that offered by the voluntary hospital. Most workhouses already offered treatment that was beyond the pocket of the labouring poor. Other guardians had vested interests to protect and were motivated more by the desire to save money than by the interests of paupers. Rogers recalled one chairman whose 'thoughts, words and deeds were actuated by the consideration of his personal and private interests.'[51] Visiting Committees were generally dilatory and disinclined in all but the most outrageous of circumstances to challenge the Guardians.[52] In the last resort ratepayers were unwilling to support increases in taxation of the scale necessary to effect a significant improvement.

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[48] Hodgkinson, *The Origins of the National Health Service,* p.452.
[49] Fraser, *The Evolution of the British Welfare State,* p.92.
[50] Longmate, *The Workhouse*, p.194
[51] Rogers, *Reminiscences of a Workhouse Medical Officer,* p.31.
[52] Indeed Dr Edward Smith was to condemn the failure of the visiting committees and inspectors to report faults within the system as the most pernicious aspect of the workhouse system. See *Report on the Metropolitan Workhouse Infirmaries and Sick Wards,* House of Commons Sessional Paper 372, Parliamentary Papers (1866), LXI.

Although the guardians held the purse strings, the character of the workhouse master or matron continued to be of major importance in determining the nature of the inmate's experience. When the sadistic George Catch left the Strand workhouse the inmates greeted his departure with cheers and rough music. Even when the appointees were of good character they often had to battle against insuperable odds. Soon after Catch left, a couple called Thorne were appointed as Master and Matron of the Strand Workhouse. The Thornes managed the workhouse well and treated the paupers with kindness, ' ... but do as they would they could not alter the structural deficiencies of the building, make it larger, nor prevent the fearful overcrowding with its disastrous results, nor improve upon the wretched system of pauper nursing, which was the curse of that and all similar institutions and which the powers that were in those days at Whitehall made no genuine effort to change.'[53] Structural defects were a particular problem in London where many of the Workhouses were very old. In 1867 the wall of the female infirm wards at St Marylebone fell into the yard whilst the paupers were sleeping.[54] Shortly thereafter, the stone staircase collapsed.

The inadequacies of the pauper nursing staff were one of the major sources of complaint of those working within the poor law system. At the end of his long career as workhouse medical officer Joseph Rogers recalled the difficulties this created. Almost without exception the nurses he encountered were '... infirm, drunken, and generally profligate...

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[53] Rogers, *Reminiscences of a Workhouse Medical Officer*, p.29. Rogers also praised members of the clergy, both Anglican and Catholic, for their attention to the paupers.
[54] A. Neate, *The St Marylebone Workhouse and Institution 1730-1965* (1967), p.20

It was a miracle to find an honest one among them…'.[55] Dependent for their appointment upon the will of the master or matron, the nurses felt no obligation to the medical officers and obeyed their orders '…just as much and no more than fancy let them.'[56] Many of the nurses were in scarcely better health than their patients. Louisa Twining observed with some sympathy that 'the nurses are only worn-out remains of lives whose strength has been spent elsewhere.'[57] Annie Pruett, by 1899 Superintendent of the Sunderland Workhouse, recalled that 'once upon a time… the sick poor died with curses ringing in their ears.'[58]

The unsuitability of the nursing staff frequently resulted in the ill treatment of patients. Those working within the system observed neglect, cruelty, incompetence and sadism. Miss Beeton, a paid nurse at the Rotherhithe workhouse gave evidence to a House of Commons Special Committee in 1866. One of her nurses, a confirmed drunkard, regularly beat the patients '... till they were black with bruises, more especially those who were unable to help themselves and friendless…'.[59] The patients resorted to bribing the nurse with beer.[60] When Miss Beeton first took office the sick patients were dirty and "crawling with vermin."[61] The wards lacked even basic equipment and the bed-ridden

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[55] Ibid., p.246.
[56] Ibid.
[57] Hodgkinson, *The Origins of the National Health Service*, p.558.
[58] A. S. Pruett, *Life in a Provincial Workhouse Hospital* (Sunderland, 1899), p.10.
[59] *Report of the Inquiry lately held by the Metropolitan Inspector into the Complaints of Miss Beeton against the management of the Rotherhithe Workhouse Infirmary*, House of Commons Sessional Paper 518, Parliamentary Papers(1866), LXI, p.2.
[60] Ibid..
[61] Ibid., p.1

had to wash themselves in the urinals.[62] The beds were of flock, and hard, foul smelling and infested with maggots.[63] The sick diet was wholly insufficient, the mutton broth and beef tea being 'a mockery; that the meat was oftener than not one lump of fat; that the port wine was bad; that the gin and brandy were always mixed with water... and that milk was not heard of in the sick ward until her arrival there.'[64] The Master and Matron ignored her complaints, the latter telling her that 'workhouses were not like hospitals.'[65] Mrs. Bateman, a trained nurse gave evidence about the conditions in the sick wards of the Paddington Workhouse.[66] She testified that 'I have myself seen three children in one bed; one had inflamed eyes, the other water on the brain, and the third chicken-pox.'[67]

Agitation for improvement came initially from those working within the system, primarily the workhouse medical officers and subsequently from the professional nursing establishment. Doctors trained in voluntary hospitals were accustomed to higher standards of patient care and sought to highlight the patent deficiencies they found in poor law hospitals. Dr Joseph Rogers founded the Poor Law Medical Reform Association in 1856. This was the first of a series of associations which sought to draw attention not only to the condition of the sick in the workhouse but also to the lowly status of the

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[62] Ibid.
[63] Ibid., p.3.
[64] Ibid., p.2.
[65] Ibid., p.1.
[66] *Copy of the Evidence taken in the recent Poor Law Inquiry at Paddington, and the Report of Mr Farnell thereupon*, House of Commons Sessional Paper 517, Parliamentary Papers (1866), LXI.
[67] Ibid., p.4. The inflamed eyes of the workhouse children were notorious. The spread of ophthalmia, which often resulted in blindness, was facilitated by the sharing of dirty towels.

workhouse medical officer.[68] The status of the medical profession as a whole had been rising gradually as public confidence in the efficacy of medicine and surgery increased. The 1858 Registration Act and formation of the General Medical Council meant that Doctors now had the weight of powerful and influential body to support their agitation for improved conditions.

A further important development was the establishment in 1860 of the Nightingale Training School for nurses. One of the earliest demonstrations of the impact and efficacy of trained professional nurses on the workhouse wards was instituted at Liverpool in 1863. A local philanthropist, William Rathbone, paid for a team of trained nurses headed by Agnes Jones, to be employed on the workhouse wards. The experiment was a great success, and the value of trained nurses generally acknowledged.[69] The employment of these nurses brought about significant improvements in the hygiene and discipline of the wards, with obvious benefits to the health of the patients.[70]

The 1850s also saw the beginnings of increasing attention from outside 'experts' as to the plight of the more vulnerable workhouse residents. One of the earliest critics was Robert Pashley who in an oft quoted passage from *Pauperism and Poor Laws* 1852 condemned the failure of classification within the workhouse system.[71]

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[68] Indeed the two were closely connected. The low status of the doctors meant the Guardians could afford to ignore their demands. The poor conditions of the post did little to attract the most able applicants, and those who did apply were often too busy with private practice to devote overmuch time to their workhouse commitments.
[69] *Eighteenth Annual Report of the Poor Law Board*, P.P. (1866), XXXV, p.16.
[70] Abel-Smith, *The Hospitals*, p.67.
[71] Quoted in Webb, *English Poor Law Policy*, p.132.

> Each of the buildings which we so absurdly call a workhouse is in truth a general hospital, an almshouse, a foundling hospital, a lying-in hospital, a schoolhouse, a lunatic asylum, an idiot house, a blind asylum, a deaf and dumb asylum, and a workhouse... It is at once equally shocking to every principle of reason and every feeling of humanity, that all these varied forms of wretchedness should be thus crowded together into one common abode, that no attempt should be made by law to classify them and to provide appropriate places for the relief of each.

Charles Dickens who had already made the plight of children in the workhouse the subject of his novel *Oliver Twist*, serialised in the late 1830s, returned to the topic in an article in *Household Words* in 1850:

> In one place, the Newgate of the Workhouse, a company of boys and youths were locked up in a yard alone; their day-room being a kind of kennel where the casual poor used formerly to be littered down at night. Divers of them had been there some long time. 'Are they never going away?' was the natural enquiry. "Most of them are crippled, in some form or other," said the Wardsman, "and not fit for anything." They slunk about like dispirited wolves and hyaenas, and made a pounce at their food when it was served out, much as those animals do. The big-

> headed idiot shuffling his feet along the pavement, in the sunlight outside, was a more agreeable object in every way.[72]

Dickens also commented on the consequences of the failure to properly classify inmates. He was particularly disturbed by the plight of an epileptic girl 'of most respectable appearance...'. The girl was constantly in the company of 'six or eight noisy mad-women' which she claimed was making her condition worse. Dickens noted that the girl would have been better treated had she been a thief.[73]

The National Association for the Promotion of Social Science, founded in 1857, also took up the cause of workhouse reform.[74] Again attention focused on the failure of classification and its consequences for the treatment of the various categories of pauper. By this date the process of removing the children and the insane from the workhouse was already advanced; it was acknowledged that it was inappropriate and indeed self defeating to subject these groups to a deterrent system.[75] Increasingly, the same argument

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[72] Charles Dickens, 'A Walk in a Workhouse', *Household Words*, 25 May 1850. Cited in Slater, *Dickens' Journalism*, p.238. It is interesting that Dickens should make the analogy between the disabled boys and wild beasts. References to the animal nature of the disabled, and the need to 'civilize' them were commonplace during this era. See Chapter Five.

[73] Ibid, p.237.

[74] The organisation sponsored Louisa Twining's Workhouse Visiting Society. See L. Goldman, *Science Reform and Politics in Victorian Britain The Social Science Association 1857-1886* (Cambridge, 2002), p.121.

[75] In 1862 the 25 & 26 Vict. c.43. s.1. gave Guardians the power to maintain and educate poor children to certified schools at a charge not exceeding that which would have been paid for the child's maintenance in the workhouse over the same period. The word "school" was extended to any institution established for the instruction of 'blind, deaf, dumb, lame, deformed or idiotic persons.' In 1868 it was provided that poor deaf and

was used regarding the sick. Criticism that workhouses were failing to treat their inmates adequately developed into an attack on the concept of the general workhouse in its entirety. The Association advocated the replacement of the large mixed workhouse with smaller specialist institutions where different sectors of the pauper population could receive appropriate care.

Influential amateurs and philanthropists, many of them women, also campaigned against the injustices perpetrated by the workhouse system. Amongst these reformers a range of concerns is evident. Louisa Twining visited the Strand Workhouse in 1853 and 'saw at once how much good could be done by many more than I could make.'[76] She believed that women were particularly fitted for the 'mission' of improving the condition of the sick, aged and children within the workhouse system. Members of her Workhouse Visiting Society, established in 1858, attempted to ameliorate the wretchedness of the sick and lonely through regular visiting, religious services, bringing flowers to the workhouse, and persistent approaches to the authorities with the aim of implementing a more humane policy towards the sick. The Society's journal focused on the plight of the long term inmate. Louisa Twining had herself been particularly affected by their miserable condition. At St Giles she had encountered 'one poor young man ... who had lain on a miserable flock bed for fourteen years with a spine complaint, was blind, and his case would have moved a heart of stone; yet no alleviation of food or comforts was ever

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dumb or blind children could also be sent to uncertified schools. 31 & 32 Vict. c.122. s. 42.

[76] L. Twining, *Recollections of Life and Work* (1893), p.113.

granted him...'. His only relief was provided by another inmate who read to him daily.[77] At the Strand workhouse she met a middle-aged woman who was, '... always seated upon a low stool for which there was just room, between two turned-up bedsteads, under a window. She was quite unable to walk from some cause, and I never saw her in any other position...'. Twining was probably correct in her view that Church Service 'was the only ray of light in her dark and dreary life...'.[78]

Other female campaigners included Frances Power Cobbe who was particularly concerned with the plight of the chronic sick. Her *Plea for the Destitute Incurable*, published in 1861, highlighted the absence of even basic comforts and amenities for this category of inmate. Other pioneers such as Mrs Jameson and Mrs Shepherd focused on the condition of the aged, sick and infirm within the workhouse.[79]

At first these reformers had only limited impact. The Workhouse Visiting Society was met with polite indifference by central authority and ignored by many local authorities. The testimony of doctors and nurses to select committees and inquiries was often not acted upon. Sometimes this was because the PLB lacked the power to compel Guardians to act. However on occasion minor improvements were carried out. In 1862, Rogers gave evidence to a select committee as to the composition of inmates in the Strand workhouse. Of the 530 persons resident in the workhouse in an average year, 350 were old and

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[77] Ibid., p.116.
[78] Ibid.
[79] Hodgkinson, *The Origins of the National Health Service*, p. 545.

infirm, 50 temporarily sick and 125 permanently sick.[80] According to Rogers, the chief difficulty occasioned by the increase in the numbers of aged and infirm concerned the workhouse dietaries, which many could not manage to chew. Rogers drew up a standard diet which was approved by the Board and swiftly adopted by other London workhouses.[81] Whilst the public remained apathetic the government, the Board and local guardians could afford to ignore the demands of doctors and other critics of the system. In 1864, following inquiries into medical relief by a Commons Committee, 'no evidence was given nor allegation made that in the metropolitan workhouses the medical attendance or nursing was insufficient, or that the sick themselves were neglected.'[82]

Commissions and Reports

In 1865, *The Times* carried reports of the appalling treatment and subsequent deaths of two paupers in the London workhouses. Public receptivity was at this time heightened by a growing fear of epidemic disease in London. The editor of the *Lancet*, James Wakley, announced the setting up of *The Lancet Sanitary Commission for Investigating the State of the Infirmaries of Workhouses*. A lead article in *The Lancet* condemned the conditions that had led to the death of the paupers and outlined the purpose of the Commission; 'Such examples of neglect, of suffering, of insufficient care, bad nursing, and cruel privation, are the necessary incidents of a scheme which aims solely at escaping public ignominy by a bare fulfillment of necessary public duties, but thinks only in doing so of

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[80] Ibid., p. 547.
[81] Ibid.
[82] *Nineteenth Annual Report of the Poor Law Board*, PP. (1867), XXXIV, p.15.

saving the farthings... This state of things cannot continue. It is necessary that public opinion should be fully enlightened and deliberately directed.'[83]

The Lancet's commissioners emphasised the changing role of the workhouse. In the metropolitan workhouses the numbers of able-bodied inmates were dwarfed by the numbers of the sick. The vast majority of the sick, some 85 per cent, were chronically rather than acutely sick. It was these sufferers from chronic diseases who crowded the infirm wards of the workhouse and swelled their mortality rates. Failure to classify these individuals appropriately had dire consequences:

> The fate of the 'infirm' inmates of crowded workhouses is lamentable in the extreme; they lead a life which would be like that of a vegetable, were it not that it preserves the doubtful privilege of sensibility to pain and mental misery. They are regarded by the officials connected with the establishment as an anomalous but unavoidable nuisance. Their position is ill-defined, and they are constantly experiencing the force of the old proverb, "Between two stools," &c. They get neither the blessings of health nor the immunities and the careful tending which ought to belong to the sick.[84]

The Report highlighted the unsuitability of buildings designed to deter the able-bodied for the treatment of the sick. Structural defects were compounded by inadequate ventilation and heating. Overcrowding assisted the spread of infection, a situation

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[83] *The Lancet* quoted by Hodgkinson, *The Origins of the National Health Service*, p.470.
[84] *The Lancet* cited by Rose, *The English Poor Law*, p.174

exacerbated by the lack of suitable toilet or washing facilities. The absence of basic equipment such as towels, soap, toilet paper, combs, seats and lockers was noted. The application of less-eligibility to sick inmates was roundly condemned. *The Lancet* proclaimed that it was in society's best interests to acknowledge that the 'infirm' were in fact patients, and as such in need of appropriate medical care. The situation in these 'real hospitals of the land' was contrasted with the 'princely munificence' of the voluntary hospitals.

The PLB reacted swiftly to the allegations in *The Lancet* and in 1865 appointed Dr Edward Smith as their medical advisor. Smith was instructed to investigate the situation in the capital's sick wards, with particular attention being paid to the 'adequacy of the accommodation provided in respect of the site and ventilation and suitableness of the wards and their beds and bedding, and other furniture; to the sufficiency of the arrangements for the supply of medical attendance and medicines; and to the provision for the nursing and care of the sick.'[85] His *Report on the Metropolitan Workhouse Infirmaries and Sick Wards* was completed in 1866.[86] Although Smith's report was less damning than that of *The Lancet* it strongly reinforced the message the term 'workhouse' was a misnomer, and that on that basis a policy of less eligibility was inappropriate.

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[85] *Report on the Metropolitan Workhouse Infirmaries and Sick Wards,* House of Commons Sessional Report 372, Parliamentary Papers (1866), LXI, p.171.
[86] The co-author was Mr Farnell.

The first challenge faced by the investigators was to determine which of the inmates should be regarded as sick.[87] Smith recognised that the sick in the separate sick wards 'by no means comprehended the whole.'[88] It was necessary to extend investigations to the wards of the aged and infirm, the lunatic, and the children. The aged and infirm were not generally classed as sick, but Smith found that many of them were effectively bed-ridden or incapacitated by chronic disease. He decided to treat as sick all those who were listed in the medical relief book, regardless of their assigned wards.[89] He then subdivided the classes of sick into cases of Fever and Small Pox, (which were only admitted at Paddington and Poplar), Itch cases (treated in the foul ward in common with venereal and bad leg cases), cases of Venereal Disease and Children. Once these classes of sick had been eliminated it would be found that 'chronic cases and the aged and infirm constitute nearly the whole.'[90] Smith found that of the 23,500 inmates in the capital's workhouses at the time of inspection, fewer than one in ten were able-bodied:[91]

> Hence it appears that the workhouses are now homes for the aged and infirm, a last refuge for destitute sick persons, places where a great number of women give

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[87] This was a problematic issue. R. Pinker notes that the eight sick pauper censuses ordered by the Board between 1865 and 1869 all used different definitions of 'sickness'. R. Pinker, *English Hospital Statistics 1861-1938* (1966), p.9.

[88] *Report on the Metropolitan Workhouse Infirmaries and Sick Wards,* P. P. (1866), LXI, p.1.

[89] Ibid., p.2.

[90] Ibid., p.5. In January 1865 there had been 14,000 acute cases and 6,000 chronic cases in the Metropolitan workhouses.

[91] Ibid., p.6. Smith also noted that the term able-bodied 'does not necessarily imply that the inmates of that class are able to work, but only that they are under 60 years of age, and free from serious bodily ailment. Hence, pregnant women, numerous imbeciles, persons who have lost the sight of one eye, &c., are thus delegated, and the class is somewhat differently constituted in different workhouses.' Ibid., p.33.

birth to illegitimate children, and a temporary shelter for tramps and very destitute persons suffering from some disease. They are not, on the one hand, workhouses in the sense of institutions where the inmates are able to work, neither, on the other, are they hospitals where all are sick and temporarily received in and treated, but asylums where the aged and infirm are provided for during life; and where consumptive and other chronic cases, most of whom have been in-patients and out-patients of hospitals, and being entirely without resources, end their days. They are institutions *sui generis*, and fulfill a purpose not contemplated by any others.[92]

In addition to bringing to the Board's attention deficiencies in the management of workhouses and the operation of visiting committees, the report made a number of recommendations. These included the replacement of pauper nurses by paid non-paupers.[93] Guardians were told they could double the existing numbers of such nurses. The Report found that medical attendance upon the sick was 'generally good', but it was felt that the medical officers should devote more time to their duties.[94] Guardians, rather than medical officers, were instructed to supply all necessary medicines and surgical appliances. A number of recommendations were also made as to the treatment of the aged and infirm. It was suggested that those of the aged and infirm who were sick should be treated in their own wards rather than in the infirmary. It was depressing and unhygenic

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[92] Ibid., p.6.
[93] Ibid., p.70. Pauper nurses could still be employed in subordinate positions.
[94] Ibid.

for all bedridden or old inmates to be congregated together.[95] The Report ended by suggesting that less-eligibility was now an irrelevance. Although the system had 'many defects', anyone familiar with the situation of the lowest class of the poor could not fail to appreciate that the condition of those in the workhouses was superior. 'Little is left now but the restriction to the building, the submission of their own will to that of others, and certain distinguishing marks, as that of clothing, to render the workhouse undesirable to those whose sense of self respect and independence is not strong...'.[96]

Smith was then instructed to investigate the dietaries of workhouse inmates, a matter which he had criticised in his original report. His Report again emphasised the changing role of the workhouse.[97] Because workhouses had become *de facto* infirmaries, their benefits were almost solely reserved for 'such as may fittingly receive them, viz., the aged and infirm, the destitute sick, and the children.'[98] There was therefore little reason to fear that 'the comforts' they provided would be the subject of 'abuse.'[99] Less-eligibility in matters of diet could therefore be rejected. Since the State had undertaken to protect these vulnerable inmates it was bound to maintain them properly but not extravagantly. The fundamental guiding principle in matters of diet was henceforth to be 'that the inmates of workhouses should be fed in a manner the most consistent with economy and the maintenance of growth, health, and strength.'[100]

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[95] Ibid., p.37.
[96] Ibid., p.71.
[97] Dr Edward Smith, *Report to the Poor Law Board on Dietaries of Inmates of Workhouses,* Parliamentary Papers (1866), XXX, pp.19-25.
[98] Ibid., p.24.
[99] Ibid., p.25.
[100] Ibid., p.24.

Improvements in dietaries and in the spacing of pauper beds heralded the begining of a gradual amelioration of the conditions in workhouses for the sick poor.[101] The PLB issued a number of directives to boards of guardians detailing the equipment to be provided in workhouses, particularly in sick wards.[102] Public interest and debate on the condition and appropriate treatment of the sick pauper continued to be fanned by the press. The *Manchester Examiner* investigated the sick wards of provincial workhouses and this was soon followed by the PLB's own Inquiry into Provincial Workhouses. In 1866, an Association for Improvement of the London Workhouse Infirmaries, a combination of prominent physicians and laymen, was formed to lobby for change.[103] In the face of such determined opposition it was clear that major reform was both necessary and inevitable.

The Metropolitan Poor Act

In his introduction to the 1867 Metropolitan Poor Bill, Gathorne Hardy, President of the Poor Law Board, publicly renounced the application of less-eligibility to the sick: 'there is one thing... which we must peremptorily insist on, namely the treatment of the sick in the infirmaries being conducted on an entirely separate system, because the evils

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[101] Because there had been a number of discrepancies between Smith's Report and Farnell's as to the appropriate spacing of beds in sick wards the Board appointed another committee to investigate this matter. *Nineteenth Annual Report of the Poor Law Board,* P.P. (1866-67), XXXV, p.16.

[102] See for example the Appendix to the *Twenty-first Annual Report of the Poor Law Board,* P.P. (1868-69), XXVIII, pp.45-6.

[103] Members included Dr Hart, Sir Thomas Watson, Charles Dickens and J.S. Mill.

complained of have mainly arisen from the workhouse management – which must to a great degree be of a deterrent character – having been applied to the sick, who are not proper objects for such a system.'[104]

The Metropolitan Poor Act introduced wide ranging administrative change which was intended to clear the path for reform and strengthen the hand of the Board. The Board was given power to combine parishes or unions into larger districts to facilitate inspection and control. In order that one uniform system of administration could be enforced, the remaining Gilbert or Local Acts were finally abolished. A Metropolitan Asylums Board was established to manage cases of insanity, typhus and smallpox. Asylum districts were to be set up to support and manage a further range of institutions for the 'reception and relief of the sick, insane, or infirm, or other class or classes of the poor...'.[105] Where current provision for the sick or other classes of the poor was deemed inadequate, the Board could order new buildings to replace the old. These new institutions were to be run by managing boards elected by the Guardians. A system of dispensaries was to administer outdoor medical relief to the poor. The new structure was financed by a Common Poor Fund, contributions to which were based not on the scale of pauperism within the unions, but in proportion to their annual rateable value.

The creation of the common fund enabled the unions to claim back expenditure for the cost of the maintenance of lunatics and those afflicted with fever and small-pox, and also

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[104] *Hansard*, 8 February 1867, CLXXXV, p.163.
[105] The Metropolitan Asylums Board was subsequently ordered to assume responsibility for these.

for medicines and surgical appliances. Provided guardians complied with the directions of the PLB regarding the creation of asylums for the remaining sectors of the sick poor, they could reclaim salaries of doctors and nursing staff from the fund. The separation of function between those who raised the rate and those who had control over expenditure enabled guardians to spend without fear of antagonising local rate payers. The Poor Law Amendment Act of 1868 was intended to extend the application of the new principles to the provinces, but the absence of a common fund meant that there was less incentive for provincial Guardians to act.[106]

The physical and administrative separation of the care of the sick from the workhouse to the infirmary or hospital represented a major change of policy. Freed of the constraints imposed by the workhouse system and the principle of less-eligibility in particular, the hospitals were able to concentrate upon the specialist care of the sick. The distinction between the poor man and the pauper in matters of medical relief was now officially obsolete. In accepting its responsibility to provide health services for the sick poor as a whole, the state had acknowledged that pauperism derived from sickness should not be accounted morally blameworthy and neither should it be stigmatised. The final link between medical relief and pauperism was severed in 1885 when the Medical Relief (Disqualifications Removal) Act allowed those in receipt of medical relief the vote.

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[106] In 1879 the Leeds Infirmary became the first provincial Poor Law Infirmary to be administered separately from the workhouse. S. Anning, *The History of Medicine in Leeds* (Leeds, 1980), p.220.

The Metropolitan Poor Act was followed by a dramatic increase in expenditure as new buildings were constructed and old ones subjected to renovation. F. B. Smith notes that 'within six years £4,500,000 was spent... nearly as much as was spent on Poor Law building in the 30 years after 1834.'[107] By 1883, all but three of the thirty metropolitan poor law areas had separate infirmaries.[108] Much still remained to be done. Critics such as Joseph Rogers protested that 'architects, surveyors and builders gobbled up the money meant for the poor.'[109] There were still insufficient trained nurses, a mere 354 in total throughout the country by 1870, but the benefits of appropriate nursing were widely acknowledged.[110] In 1879, an Association for Promoting Trained Nurses in Workhouse Infirmaries and Sick Asylums was formed.[111] Although standards continued to lag behind those of the more prestigous voluntary hospitals, the metropolitan hospitals proved increasingly attractive to the poor.

Without the incentive of the common fund, progress in the provinces was much slower. In 1899 Annie Pruett could still write 'In a large workhouse hospital the nursing is conducted with as much thoroughness and *espirit de corps* as in our General Hospitals. But in a provincial Union Hospital, connected with and under the same management as the Workhouse itself, things are very different.'[112] The LGB proved no more able to influence the pace of change or the attitudes of provincial guardians than the PLB. Rural unions with comparitively few sick or elderly inmates found it impractical to implement

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[107] F. B. Smith, *The People's Health 1830 to 1910* (c.1979), p.361.
[108] Abel-Smith, *The Hospitals*, p.94.
[109] Rogers, *Reminiscences of a Workhouse Medical Officer*, p.84.
[110] White, *Social Change and The Development of the Nursing Profession*, p.71.
[111] Hodgkinson, *The Origins of the National Health Service*, p.572.
[112] Pruett, *Life in a Provincial Workhouse Hospital*, p.12.

classification. Trained nurses were almost unheard of outside the major provincial cities, and even there they were greatly outnumbered by the pauper nurses. The life of such nurses was 'isolated and monotonous... This may probably account for the difficulty in obtaining really efficient Nurses for the smaller workhouse infirmaries.'[113] Although many unions did build infirmaries, these were almost always annexed to the workhouse and remained under the same management, a situation deplored by Miss Pruett. Very few separate infirmary blocks had been built by the 1890s. Old notions of less eligibility still retained some power; Birmingham Guardians continued to insist that patients entered the infirmary through the old workhouse.[114]

The largesse extended to the sick did not encompass the aged and infirm. Mr Longley, inspector for the metropolitan district, maintained that there should be no exception in the deterrent aspects of the indoor regime for this category of pauper. A strict regime was necessary in order both to impress the younger generation and to encourage relatives to fulfill their obligations.[115] Individual workhouse masters, however, sometimes allowed the old some privileges: 'At least twenty years ago I quietly permitted the old women to have a private teapot and make their own tea, conditionally that it was done at the one time, four o'clock, and that both the pot and tea were supplied by friends.'[116] In 1876, The Divided Parishes and Poor Law Amendment Act provided that the guardians could permit aged and infirm couples over the age of sixty to live together, but only where one

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[113] Ibid., p.6.
[114] Webb, *English Poor Law Policy*, p. 215.
[115] Ibid., p.236.
[116] 1892 Report of George Edward Douglas, master of the St. Marylebone Workhouse. Quoted in Neate, *The St Marylebone Workhouse and Institution*, p. 26.

of them was infirm, sick, or disabled by injury. All such cases had to be reported to the LGB. The limited availability of accommodation, combined with widespread ignorance as to their rights on the part of paupers, meant that fear of separation continued to be one of the major traumas facing elderly people seeking admission to the house.

There is some limited evidence that the authorities had begun to give more careful consideration to the needs of certain groups of the physically disabled. This may have been the result of the increasing flow of information about these groups which was now becoming available.[117] The 1861 Census, for example, had asked for information as to whether an inmate of the workhouse was deaf and dumb or blind. In 1867, Boards of Guardians were given discretionary powers to provide for the 'reception, maintenance and instruction of "adult Paupers" being blind or deaf and dumb in any hospital or institution established for the reception of persons suffering under such infirmities.'[118] The LGB accepted that Guardians could make arrangements for reading aloud to the aged blind. Similarly, deaf adults could be given instruction in reading and writing either in their own union workhouse or under contract at a neighbouring workhouse, if it was felt they would profit thereby.[119] In some cases the teaching of handicrafts to the adult blind was also sanctioned.

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[117] The flow of information was to increase greatly as the century progressed. The 1889 Royal Commission necessarily engendered the collection and collation of many statistics relating to the disabled poor. The 1887 returns of the numbers of blind and deaf persons in receipt of relief, both indoor and outdoor, are reprinted in the Appendix to this thesis.

[118] See 30 & 31 Vict. c.107. s.21. Such hospitals were often unwilling to admit the adult deaf because of communication difficulties.

[119] Webb, *English Poor Law Policy*, p.227. 'But it was held to be illegal to pay for the technical instruction of blind workhouse inmates at a non-Poor-Law institution.'

As the sick were removed from the workhouses, the proportion of elderly residents continued to rise until by 1871 they constituted approximately 70 per cent of all inmates.[120] The harsher policy towards out relief practiced in the 1870s, which was itself a corollary of improved indoor facilities, drove yet more of the elderly to the workhouse. There was little public interest in their predicament, and recognition that old age was in itself a major component of poverty had to await the investigations of Booth in the 1890s.[121] The dire situation of the elderly was compounded by the continuing lack of interest in routine and chronic cases shown by the medical profession. In the workhouse infirmary '... are received the helpless, hopeless, and homeless: a class of people whom everyone else is tired of, or whom no one else will have anything to do with.'[122] The workhouses 'had become effectively barracks for the infirm and closets for the dying.'[123]

The 'Crusade' against Outdoor Relief

As costs rose, senior figures within the PLB became concerned that the mounting expenditure threatened the achievement of 1834. The Board attributed most of this growth to an increase in the 'more costly group of pauper', but it was significant that

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[120] Smith, *The People's Health,* p.383.
[121] Booth's works, *Pauperism, a Picture and the Endowment of Old Age, an Argument* (1892) and *The Aged Poor in England and Wales* (1894) identified old age as one of the major sources of claims for relief. *The Royal Commission on the Aged Poor* of 1895 and the *Select Committee on the Aged Deserving Poor* of 1899 also helped to bring about some change of policy, however as the name of the latter Committee indicates, issues of character retained their importance.
[122] Pruett, *Life in a Provincial Workhouse Hospital,* p.5.
[123] Smith, *The People's Health,* p.383.

expenditure on outdoor relief had also risen by 25 per cent during the decade.[124] The granting of outdoor relief to the able-bodied male remained an anathema to economic and moral orthodoxy; it was roundly condemned by the blind economist Henry Fawcett in 1870.[125] Out relief thus provided the obvious target for those seeking to cut costs.

By the late 1860s a combination of factors made the abolition of out relief a more credible policy than had previously been the case. During the decade the Board had taken steps to replace the antiquated fiscal structure which underpinned the poor law with a range of measures designed to strengthen the financial basis of the Unions. The new structure, which involved reforms to the rating system, also reduced obstacles to the free movement of labour. The union rather than the parish was now the place of settlement, and the period of irremoveability was reduced, first to three years and then to one. In the event of local economic distress a free labour market would enable those who were not idle and feckless to obtain employment. The building of specialist facilities for the sick, and the removal of the children and the lunatic from the workhouse, freed space for the accomodation of the able-bodied. 'The offer of the house' had become a practical proposition. With classification and the targeting of relief now advanced, the deterrent workhouse could concentrate upon the treatment of the able-bodied pauper unhindered by the distracting presence of a mass of non-able-bodied paupers.

Concern about the operation and administration of the law was heightened by a series of relief crises in London in the 1860s, and by the Lancashire Cotton Famine of 1862-64.

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[124] P. Wood, *Poverty and the Workhouse in Victorian Britain* (1991), p.143.
[125] Kidd, *State, Society and the Poor in Nineteenth-Century England*, p. 45.

The suspicion that Guardians in London were using relief in support of wages, or as a means of reducing social unrest, brought about a renewed call for the strict interpretation of the principles of 1834. Guardians were reminded of the benefits derived from the workhouse test. Increases in demand for relief were blamed on the inferior moral character of the East End poor, rather than the chronic underemployment from which they suffered. In contrast, the Lancashire poor, acknowledged as innocent victims of the cotton famine, were recognised as 'deserving' of relief and the local authorities justified in their creation of public works.

The crises in the East End also raised concerns about the distribution of charity to the poor.[126] It was argued that profligate or careless charity was merely a short term palliative, potentially more harmful than beneficial, because it undermined the recipient's ability to develop and practice independence and self help. The chaotic and uncoordinated administration of the various funds in the capital had failed to distinguish between the honest or deserving recipient and the idler. Thus the dishonest or deceitful, who might in any event be in receipt of outdoor relief, could claim alms from any number of different charities. It was concerns over the potential 'deformation of the gift', and the need to protect the unwary donor, that led the the formation of the Charity Organisation Society in 1869. As their title indicated, the COS sought to apply the principles of rational and scientific organisation to the giving of charity. They believed that their approach would enable a more accurate targeting of relief. Rather than a profligate and

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[126] In 1869 London alone boasted some seven hundred philanthropic societies. G. Himmelfarb, *Poverty and Compassion: The Moral Imagination of the Late Victorians* (New York, 1991), p.186.

wasteful distribution, methodically conducted investigations would determine whether an applicant was 'worthy', i.e. likely to benefit from carefully channelled assistance.

The situation in the East End and the precedent set by the authorities in Lancashire, where a Central Relief Committee had had some success in regulating the distribution of charitable aid, highlighted the advantages to be gained from a closer coordination of public relief and private charitable bodies. A few months after the formation of COS, their activities received the official seal of approval from the PLB. In his famous minute of 1869 Goschen argued that:

> ... the Poor Law authorities could not be allowed without public danger to extend their operations beyond those persons who are actually destitute and for whom they are at present legally bound to provide. It would seem to follow that charitable organisations, whose alms could in no case be claimed as a right, would find their most appropriate sphere in assisting those who have some, but insufficient means, and who, though on the verge of pauperism, are not actual paupers, leaving to the operation of the general law the provision for the totally destitute.[127]

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[127] *Twenty Second Annual Report of the Poor Law Board,* P.P. (1870), XXXV, Appendix A, no.4.

Guardians were also urged to be more scrupulous in their decision to grant outdoor relief and to look to the applicant's character in determining the form that relief should take. [128]

Such a division of responsibilities between the Poor Law and charity was intended not only to avoid a duplication of effort and relief, but also to serve to reinforce the distinction between the poor man and the pauper. The poor law would relieve and treat the indigent: the able-bodied in workhouses of a deterrent character, and the 'deserving' non-able-bodied in appropriate institutions. Charity would be directed towards those 'on the verge of pauperism,' those whom timely and approproriate intervention might preserve from 'the abyss'. As G. Himmelfarb notes, the COS themselves created a further distinction between those of the poor who would benefit from the types of assistance COS hoped to offer, and those who would not.[129]

Goschen and Stansfeld had inaugurated the new drive for austerity but what subsequently became known as 'the crusade against outdoor relief' was launched by the Local Government Board in 1871. The Board had been created by the merger of the PLB with the General Register Office, the Local Government Act Office and the Privy Council. This ensured that the central authority now had the benefit of a medical imput, but that imput remained subject to poor law control. A. Brundage suggests that whilst the merger

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[128] J. Harris sees the distinction between 'reputable and disreputable applicants' in the circular as the first tacit admission by the Central authority that pauperism could arise through 'external social circumstance rather than individual will'. J. Harris, *Private Lives, Public Spirit: A Social History of Britain 1870-1914* (1993), p.238. This claim is perhaps rather too broad given the earlier recognition of the special claims of the blind and the deaf.

[129] Himmelfarb, *Poverty and Compassion,* p.189.

had 'a clear logic... a struggle for the nature of direction of central policy provided the dynamic.'[130] Certainly many medical 'experts' were disgruntled by their subordination to bureaucracy and penny pinching. Fleming, for the LGB, reiterated the case for the reduction of outdoor relief in entirely conventional terms. The Board's first report painted a picture of mounting relief costs 'so great, as to excite apprehension', lax administration by Guardians, and a demotivated labour force.[131]

Although the rhetoric of the Board targeted the able-bodied pauper – women as well as men – these actually constituted only a small minority of those in receipt of outdoor relief. R. Humphreys calculates that: 'Of the 824,600 outdoor paupers in England on 1 Jan 1872, only 3.6% were able-bodied men, and this figure included those who were temporarily sick. In contrast, 31.2% were destitute old women or were suffering permanent disability, 13.5% were men similarly disadvantaged, 35.2% were children, 4.4% were lunatics or insane persons or idiots, 7.5% were women with dependent children, 3.8% were wives whose husbands were absent or in receipt of benefit and 0.7% were single women.'[132] The instructions issued as to the stricter administration of outdoor relief made no specific mention of any change of policy towards the non-able-bodied, but neither were any exceptions on their behalf. They were generally interpreted therefore as condemning outdoor relief in all cases. Now that classification was effective and

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[130] A. Brundage, *The English Poor Laws, 1700-1930* (Basingstoke, 2002), p.110.
[131] *First Annual Report of the Local Government Board*, Parliamentary Papers (1872), XXVIII, Appendix 20, c.516.
[132] Humphreys, *Sin, Organized Charity and the Poor Law*, p.22.

improved indoor facilities available, the workhouse test might be applied to all categories of pauper.[133]

Because the central authority stressed the need to differentiate between the 'deserving' and 'undeserving' applicant for relief, the Guardians were urged to stress moral criteria in their decisions. The aged and infirm were not exempt from the application of these criteria. Inspector Longley provided specimen rules for this category of pauper whom he referred to as 'the disabled class.'[134] Such applicants were to be refused relief if their homes were deemed unsuitable for the provision of care, or if they were of 'bad character'. Relief was also to be denied to applicants who had relatives capable of contributing to their maintenance, and to those who having previously been in receipt of adequate wages had yet failed to make provision for the future. These criteria were to be widely publicised because they were intended to serve an educative as much as an administrative function. It was to be made clear that family ties and responsibilities were no longer to be neglected and that attempts would be made to enforce orders against liable relatives.

The means adopted by the local authorities to reduce the numbers of outdoor poor, and the enthusiasm with which they pursued the crusade, varied. Some authorities sought to disguise the numbers of these paupers by sending the sick and children to specialist institutions and paying the costs of voluntary provision from the poor rate. Thus

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[133] It was hoped that the refusal of outdoor relief would put pressure on the relatives of the non-able-bodied pauper to support him or her rather than expose the family to the shame of having a relative in the workhouse. Webb, *English Poor Law Policy*, p.229.
[134] *Third Annual Report of the Local Government Board*, P.P. (1874), XXV, p.192.

ironically the crusade seems to have coincided with the increased use of special facilities for certain groups of physically disabled people. The Webb's note the growth from 1871 of 'certified schools for children of all denominations, and with all kinds of defects; certified sanatoria and convalescent homes for the sick; voluntary hospitals of all kinds and sorts; asylums for the crippled and the epileptic...'.[135] In other instances the infirm were simply reclassified as able-bodied in order to remove them from the lists.[136] At Brixworth, a particularly zealous Union, the partially disabled were specifically targeted. The familiar charges of imposition and abuse of an over generous system were reiterated. The partially disabled, those 'getting into years and more or less infirm', were castigated for falling 'back on idleness' rather than accepting lower wages. 'The instances of total disability for work are extremely rare, and are for the most part confined to deprivation of limbs or eye-sight, or to extreme old age...'.[137]

R.Humphreys believes that 'by the mid 1870s around 90% of Poor Law Unions largely disregarded further Local Government Board exhortations to reduce outdoor relief dramatically.'[138] However the crusade did succeed in reducing both the expenditure on outdoor relief and the numbers of people in receipt thereof. The brunt of the cutback, given the limited numbers of able-bodied actually in receipt of relief, must have been borne by the elderly and non-able-bodied. These individuals would also have been particularly affected by the cutbacks in domicilary medical relief. Although the intention

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[135] Webb, *English Poor Law Policy*, pp. 226-27.
[136] Smith, *The People's Health*, p.384. Smith suggests 10,000 of this class were reclassified between 1871 and 1877.
[137] *Second Annual Report Local Government Board*, P.P.(1873), XXIX, p.71, c.748.
[138] Humphreys, *Sin, Organized Charity and the Poor Law*, p.29.

had been that 'deserving' cases should be referred to charity, the extent to which this compensated the aged and infirm for the loss of outdoor relief is uncertain. Certainly the COS were frustrated by their inability to offer more than a pittance, even to the most deserving of applicants.[139] By the 1880s there were signs of a divergence between the hardline approach of the COS, which continued to view character failure as the source of indigence, and the views of the more advanced members of the LGB. Joseph Chamberlains' decision in 1886 to officially endorse work schemes was both an acknowledgement that unemployment could result from outside causes, and a recognition of the role of the state in providing non-punitive support in these circumstances. It also signalled the end of the special relationship between COS and the LGB. The abolition of outdoor relief, rather than encouraging the aged and infirm towards independence or self-help probably had the opposite effect. Persons hitherto able to subsist with the aid of a few shillings of relief were now forced into dependence on charity, relatives, or institutional care.

Assessment

Throughout the period changing conceptions of the duty owed by the state to the poor, and of the nature of poverty itself, were important factors in determining the extent and character of state intervention in the lives of its citizens. Whilst poverty was seen as a direct result of moral failure then such intervention was necessarily of a punitive or deterrent nature. Once environmental or determinist explanations were admitted, the

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[139] Ibid.

plight of the pauper could be viewed in a more sympathetic light and his treatment assume a rehabilitative character. However, even in the late 1880s, when environmentalist explanations became more widely accepted and the ability of *laissez-faire* policies to combat mass unemployment was increasingly questioned, issues of character and moral fibre retained their importance.[140]

The decision that some groups of pauper should receive relief outside the workhouse, and the early removal of others from the workhouse system, can be seen to accord with what might be termed the 'moral hierarchy of pauperdom'. Hence those groups to whom the least moral opprobrium could be attached, children, the insane and the young blind and deaf, whose status could scarcely be attributed to their own volition, were the first to receive a more sympathetic treatment. The aged and the sick, whilst privileged in their entitlement to relief out of the house, remained subject to the constraints of less eligibility if they were admitted as inmates. Probably this is because their position was regarded as morally ambiguous. Their presence within the workhouse was seen as indicative of a collapse of family values, and hence a breach of respectable *mores*. The suspicion remained that their poverty was the result of earlier lack of prudence or foresight, and hence might be attributed to inferior moral character. Attempts to impose moral criteria

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[140] G. Steadman-Jones suggests the focus of concern switched from the demoralisation of the pauper to his degeneration. This was particularly worrying as degeneration, the consequence of urban slum dwelling, was thought to be hereditary. Advances in medicine and public hygiene meant that Darwinian survival of the fittest no longer applied and the physically and mentally unfit were surviving and breeding, creating a sub-class of loafers and semi-criminals. This 'residuum' not only threatened middle-class London but also risked over-whelming the 'respectable' working class. G. Steadman-Jones, *Outcast London: A Study in the Relationship Between Classes in Victorian Society* (Oxford, 1971), pp. 282-314.

upon the granting of relief to individual disabled people were but a further refinement of a general policy.

Medical officers who wished to treat patients rather than paupers, were amongst the first to appreciate the need for a more objective and effective system of classification. However, reliance on objective criteria to determine eligibility for treatment was severely hampered by the absence of clear and accurate definitions of the various classes of paupers. We have seen how the distinction between able-bodied and non-able-bodied, between sick and healthy, remained nebulous and hence a matter for the exercise of discretion. The failure to adequately classify inmates became a major source of complaint because to deny the 'deserving' appropriate treatment seemed both inhumane and contrary to natural justice.[141] The demand for expert rather than seemingly arbitary amateur decision-making was taken up by organisations representing the interests of professionals such as doctors and social scientists.

Practical considerations also played a part in determining what has been termed the break up of the poor law. Groups could only be catered for outside the workhouse if alternative provision could be made for them. The role of charities in catering for the blind and deaf ensured not only that such aid was increasingly available, but also that spokesmen were available to lobby for their claims. The expansion of voluntary provision for the blind and deaf was itself linked to changing attitudes towards their education and rehabilitation.

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[141] Young and Ashton note that untold numbers of deaf paupers, whose condition had never been properly assessed, languished in lunatic wards or asylums. A. F.Young and E. T. Ashton, *British Social Work in the Nineteenth Century* (1956), pp.190-91.

Hence these groups fared better than other groups of physically disabled people whose more diverse needs and greater numbers meant that charitable assistance was not as readily forthcoming. The development of specialist services for the aged and chronically ill was inhibited by the absence of adequate charitable provision and sustained pressure group agitation for an improvement of their condition. The medical profession tended to be apathetic in its attitudes towards a field of medicine regarded as unglamorous and unrewarding. Since the plight of the elderly was not a direct threat to public health, and the elderly themselves tended to be quiescent, their condition failed to generate the scandalous publicity which was often the motor for change within the system.

Another factor which both contributed to tensions within the system and inhibited the rate of change was the weakness of the central authority itself. Conflicts between local and central authority, and the inability of the latter to enforce its will on local boards, meant that even when central guidance was issued, it was often ignored. Local boards, subject to electoral whim, remained more concerned with the rights of rate payers than with their duties to paupers. But critics like Rogers were probably correct in detecting a lack of real appetite on the part of the central authorities during this period for anything other than piecemeal change. The autonomy of the various local authorities had important practical consequences for those dependent upon their services.

Some variations in the facilities available for disabled paupers were the result of local demographic factors rather than deliberate policy decisions. Because blind and deaf paupers were scattered throughout the country, there were rarely more than one or two in

each workhouse and this rendered appropriate specialist care difficult. It is likely that disabled people in rural workhouses were even more isolated than those in the towns. Urban institutions were more likely to be able to offer some form of training to disabled inmates and also to benefit from the services of visiting societies.

Where change did occur, it was often the consequence of shifts in wider public opinion, itself stimulated and generated by pressure groups. The membership of these groups tended to comprise the emerging professional classes, whose own status derived from their specialist knowledge or expertise.[142] The growth of professional bodies, which often themselves operated as pressure groups, provided individual 'whistle blowers' with a degree of protection and support which enabled them to challenge lay administrators.[143] Attacks on the *status quo* were most effective when groups or individuals were able to utilise the mass media to educate and influence public opinion. Although the public might remain largely indifferent or hostile to the situation of those regarded as lacking in moral fibre or character, the reporting of scandalous conditions affecting the sick or children could be relied upon to generate moral outrage. These scandals challenged the Victorian self-image of themselves as a civilized, caring, charitable and Christian people.[144] Even so, public opinion was most likely to be galvanised into action if its own interests were at

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[142] H. Perkin identifies '...ability and diligence in one's chosen field of expertise...' as signifying merit in accordance with the professional ideal. H. Perkin, *The Origins of Modern English Society 1780-1880* (1969), p.258.

[143] For the growth of professional institutions see ibid p.429. Perkin notes of professional men that, '...their increasing professionalism led many of them increasingly to differentiate themselves from the business class and to play an important part in criticizing the entrepreneurial policy of *laissez-faire* and replacing it by collectivism.'

[144] The shift in theological emphasis from atonement to incarnation which B. Hilton dates to the mid-century might have heightened public receptivity to the claims of the poor.

stake, as for example when the lack of provision for the sick poor could be presented as a threat to wider public health.

Chapter Four

Introduction to Yorkshire Charities

The second half of this thesis takes the form of a study of charities and charitable provision for the physically disabled within Yorkshire. The thesis focuses on Yorkshire because of its combination of industry, agriculture and trade, its size and early experience of urbanisation and industrialisation. Moreover, the county has a proud tradition of independence and hostility to centralisation which makes it a good candidate for a study of regional voluntary endeavour. During the nineteenth century it was at the centre of some of the most important debates about the nature of the state's responsibility for its citizens. In the 1830s, Oastler's letter on 'Yorkshire Slavery' ignited the debate over the employment of children and women in the textile mills. Later in the century sectarian conflict flared over the role of the state in education, with Edward Baines of the *Leeds Mercury* heading the 'voluntaryist' party. Within the context of the rights and duties owed to disabled citizens, the Yorkshire schools were to play an important part in debates over the government's role in the education of disabled pupils. The Yorkshire School Boards were amongst the first in the country to make provision for disabled pupils within mainstream schools, and Bradford, in particular, gained a reputation as a progressive education authority.[1] Leeds was the site of the first meeting of the British Deaf and Dumb Association, one of the earliest organisations run by, rather than for, disabled people.

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[1]As early as 1871 the Leeds School Board had set up a committee to investigate provision for local blind and deaf children. Classes were provided for deaf children at Salem school in 1881 and at Central Higher Grade School from 1889. Sheffield School Board started classes for deaf children in 1879. See A. J. Boyce, *The Leeds Beacon* (Feltham, 1996),

One of the advantages of a regional study is that it allows for a more detailed exploration of the contexts in which charities operated. The thesis looks at how local religious, political and social factors influenced the development of some important local charities and at the impact they had on their communities. It also aims to reach some conclusions as to the economics of support for the disabled within the county and identify individual activists. In this way, it is hoped to build up a useful picture of charitable provision for the disabled in nineteenth century Yorkshire, and to assess how effectively the charities promoted their causes and served their respective communities. However given the rapid growth in the number of missions, visiting societies and schools within the county during the period even a regional study can not hope to be comprehensive. On this basis it is hard to see how such enquiries could be undertaken with any confidence of obtaining a meaningful result if the study was extended beyond county boundaries.

The first two of the following three chapters relate to the blind and the deaf. The thesis looks at the work of charities operating in the fields of education and employment. This is because the issues raised in these contexts were recognised at the time as central to the welfare of these groups. Although medical charities catering for blind and deaf people were of undoubted importance, their interest in their charges was necessarily specific and short term. R. A. Abel notes that 'a characteristic of social policy evolution is the way in

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pp. 12, 33, 50, 63. In 1885 Bradford School Board started a class for blind children at Carlton Street School. See Appendix, Table 6.

which certain groups become identified as worthy of specialist concern.'[2] The thesis argues that the development of this status for blind and deaf persons was primarily as a consequence of the efforts of educationalists. It was the educationalists rather than the doctors who were to emerge as the principal advocates on behalf of the deaf and the blind. Confirmation of the importance of education and employment for these groups was underlined by the appointment of the 1889 Royal Commission to enquire specifically into these areas.

The first two chapters take the form of detailed case studies of two Yorkshire Schools; The Yorkshire Institute for the Deaf and Dumb in Doncaster (1828) and the Wilberforce Memorial School for the Blind in York (1833). Their foundation dates and continuous operation throughout the period of this thesis, together with ample and almost complete archival collections, make them in many ways obvious candidates for this study. Further, both schools are acknowledged to have played an important role nationally in their respective fields of endeavour. Although the schools were not the first charitable enterprises on behalf of the disabled in Yorkshire, they do represent the first 'county' initiatives for these groups and they generated much of the subsequent activity for the benefit of the deaf and blind adults as well as children of Yorkshire. They also acted as springboard for other charitable work for the disabled in the fields of employment, after care, the provision of accomodation and so forth. The thesis treats the education of the

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[2] R. A. Abel, 'Visually Impaired People, the Identification of the Need for Specialist Provision: A Historical Perspective', *The British Journal of Visual Impairment* (1989), p.47.

blind and deaf separately in order to highlight the differences in their situations, particularly in the field of employment.

One potential criticism of the approach adopted rests on the perceived limitations of the source material which consists principally of annual reports, minutes and other publications of the institutions themselves. Such an approach, it has been argued, inevitably provides an institutional and one sided perspective. It has to be conceded that the voices of the disabled themselves are largely absent from these accounts and clearly this is to be regretted. But the reports are much more than dry and characterless records of achievement and self congratulation on the part of the charities. The strength of personality and dynamism of the founders of the schools, and of their more energetic masters and superintendents, are amply illustrated in their writings. At their best the reports serve as passionate, polemical and political manifestos rather than the sycophantic attempts to flatter and mollify subscribers that one might expect. In addition to the subjective insight they offer into the personalities of their authors, they provide the historian with a wealth of objective and carefully compiled statistical information, accounts and details of contributions. The rules and regulations of the institutions, their philosophies, curriculum, dietaries and records of pupils' health and achievement enable the researcher to reconstruct in some detail many aspects of the day-to-day existence of disabled people.

It is not my intention to examine in any depth the mechanics or technicalities of special education; the development of embossed types for the blind or the struggle between

advocates of oral and manual communication for the deaf. Obviously their impact on the charities which are examined in the second half of this thesis will be discussed. However these subjects have received much attention elsewhere and it would be tedious to repeat their history herein. It is important however not to lose sight of the central issues that were at stake in such debates for these are fundamental to the conception of disability itself. They relate primarily to the ability of disabled people to integrate themselves in able-bodied society. If a Roman type was used then blind pupils could in theory be educated beside their sighted peers, since their teachers would not have to go to the trouble of learning a script. Braille, it was argued, '...would tend to increase that very isolation of the blind which it is sought to lessen, and to cut them off more and more from the rest of the world.'[3] The advocates of Braille maintained that it was the simplest system for the blind themselves to use and was cheap to produce. Similarly, it was argued that if the deaf could communicate orally they would be able to connect with wider society and their horizons and opportunities would be much expanded. Use of sign language isolated the deaf and encouraged inter-marriage. Proponents of sign argued that it was 'the natural language' of the deaf, that it enabled genuine, fluent and extensive conversation to take place and thus aided rather than restricted the development of language. It was also easier to teach, which left more time available for a broader education. The strength of feeling that these issues generated was a measure of their importance.

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[3] Report on the 1878 Blind Congress at Paris cited in W. H. Illingworth, *The History of the Education of the Blind* (1910), p.145.

The final chapter looks more generally at charitable endeavour on behalf of the crippled of the county. Since charitable activity for this sector of the disabled population was of a more multifarious nature, a single case study would not be appropriate. Certainly there is no one institution catering specifically for the needs of crippled children or adults in the county during this period. It is one of the contentions of this thesis that the process of policy evolution for the crippled took a different path from that of the blind and deaf. The chapter will seek to explain why this was the case and to examine the nature and impact of such voluntary activity as can be detected. As will be explained in the chapter, there is some evidence to suspect that much charitable activity on behalf of this sector of the disabled population was 'hidden', for example under the guise of relief for the elderly.

The thesis attempts to chart through these chapters the relationship between private charitable enterprise and the state.[4] Neither sphere operated in a vacuum and both formed part of the 'mixed economy' of welfare to which the poor could resort for the services they needed. It would seem that in Yorkshire as elsewhere the disabled poor subsisted on a mixture of earnings, outdoor relief, charitable alms and whatever other form of income or support in kind they could obtain. Those who could not make ends meet, or were unable to physically care for themselves, and had no kin willing or able to undertake the task, had little option other than the workhouse. Although some sheltered accomodation was provided by the charities, the provision of residential 'homes', in Yorkshire at least,

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[4] There is a gap in the historiography concerning the day-to-day relations between poor law and charity. S. King notes that 'the issue of how regular and irregular relief combined at individual level to generate a total welfare package has been largely ignored.' S. King, *Poverty and Welfare in England, 1700-1850: A Regional Perspective* (Manchester, 2000), p.233.

had to wait until the end of the century. The extent to which the poor themselves shared in the value system which discriminated between 'demeaning' public aid and voluntary charitable provision has been the subject of much debate amongst historians. The non-pauperising exemption in favour of the blind and deaf contained within the 1834 Poor Law Amendment Act was not widely appreciated; however it may have contributed to what seems to have been a commonly held view amongst the poor that claiming relief as a disabled person or on behalf of a disabled relative was an entitlement and as such, without stigma. Notwithstanding this, it was common for a testator or donor to expressly limit their largesse to 'deserving' individuals who were not in receipt of relief.[5]

Charitable activity for the disabled could take many forms and serve a multitude of purposes. Many charitable organisations catered for the spiritual as well as the temporal needs of their beneficiaries. By the end of the century there was a growing recognition of their social needs too. Practical assistance offered included monetary doles; the provision of medical aid; and education, both intellectual and vocational. Missioners not only provided spiritual guidance but served an important role in assisting the transition from the cloistered world of the schools into the wider community, and, in particular, the workplace. Charities varied in their nature from pension funds to educational foundations, from home visiting societies to missions, residential homes and sheltered workshops. Mutual aid was also encouraged and took the form of benefit clubs, funds and

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[5]A Yorkshire example is provided by Anne Irving's Charity for the Aged Blind, which expressly excluded those in receipt of poor relief. Mr J. Kerr, solicitor for the trustees told the Charity Commissioners that no distribution had been made because no qualifying individuals could be found. *Endowed Charities Yorkshire West Division* (1899),vol.III, pp.73-74.

eventually a trade union. Some charities combined practical assistance with a political agenda, agitating on behalf of the disabled, lobbying or forming pressure groups to assert their interests.

The charitable gift could also vary in format but probably the earliest and most widely practiced form of charity prior to the nineteenth century was the informal gift of alms. In their paper *Charitable Provision in Late Medieval York: 'To the Praise of God and the Use of the Poor.'* P.H. Cullum and P.J. P.Goldberg list instances of charitable bequests to the blind, the lame and the aged of York.[6] In 1384, for example, John De Roucliff senior, a married clerk, left the sum of 12*d* to every blind person in the city.[7] The city's poor also benefited from the establishment of 'maisondieu', small hospitals or almshouses, many of which date from the later fourteenth century. One early example was St Mary in the Horsefair, which was founded in 1318 to care for aged blind and infirm chaplains.[8] As the geographic, religious and administrative centre of the region, and one of its oldest settlements, York was well endowed with charitable institutions.[9] Other newer cities within the county fared less well, but provision also varied within cities with Testators specifying residents of particular parishes as their intended beneficiaries. Thus Harriet Haigh, resident of Huddersfield, specified in her will that an annual distribution of funds should favour blind persons resident in the parishes of St Paul's, Armitage Bridge and the

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[6] P. H. Cullum and P. J. P. Goldberg, 'Charitable Provision in Late Medieval York: To the Praise of God and the Use of the Poor', *Northern History,* XXIX (1993), pp.24-39.
[7] Ibid., p.24.
[8] Ibid., p.31.
[9] David Owen labels the city '...a kind of Mecca for the aged; no other English city has such adequate – and in some cases sumptuous – almshouse facilities.' D. Owen, *English Philanthropy, 1660-1960* (Cambridge, Mass., 1964), p.445.

townships of Crosland and Honley.[10] Generally, richer areas tended to benefit from a greater charitable income than poorer ones.

By the eighteenth century private trust funds for the purposes of granting annuities were becoming a popular format for gifts to the aged or blind. The York blind were the beneficiaries of Dorothy Wilson's Charity, which was founded in 1717 by bequest and provided eight annuities of £8 for blind persons resident in the city or suburbs of York.[11] In 1781, York Emanuel Charity was founded for granting annuities of £10 to £20 to ministers, their wives, widows, or children, "blind, nearly blind, or idiotic."[12] The Report of the Royal Commission of 1889 listed 36 important pension charities for the benefit of the blind, of which 21 were in London and two, the Emanuel charity and a Bradford charity of 1884, were in Yorkshire.[13] Until Gardner's trust of 1882, the wealthiest of these charities was that of the Rev. William Hetherington which was created by Deed on the 29 March 1774.[14] At the time of the Rev. Harcourt's survey of the Yorkshire blind in 1834, 53 individuals were receiving payments of £10 a year under the terms of the trust.

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[10] *Endowed Charities Yorkshire West Division,* pp. 367-67.
[11] H. Wagg, *A Chronological Survey of Work for the Blind* (1932), p.5.
[12] Ibid., p.7.
[13] The recipients of these pensions lived principally in Middlesex (1,925) and Surrey (633).Yorkshire had the third largest number of beneficiaries (125). Provision for other counties was minimal with, for example, only 10 residents of Cheshire receiving pensions. The total sum distributed nationally *per annum* amounted to £31,992.
[14] In order to be eligible for a pension under the terms of the trust the beneficiary had to satisfy the trustees that he was blind, had been born in and was resident of England, had led a sober life and was sober of conversation, was not receiving and had never received alms of the parish, was not a common beggar, had an annual income not exceeding 20 *l*, had attained the age of 61, had been blind for 3 years had lived during that time in one place in England.

There is some evidence of mutual or fraternal organisations set up by blind men for self-help purposes. In eighteenth century Bradford, a group of blind persons known as 'the waits' played music as a means of support; though it has been suggested that this activity merely provided a 'tacit licence to beg.'[15] In 1809, a Musical or Blind Man's Benefit Society was established by some blind men in Leeds.[16] The society had the support of the *Leeds Mercury* which commended it as a means by which the poor blind might support themselves without resorting to the parish. Annual meetings were held in the Fleece Inn in Briggate, when the President and Stewards attended to receive propositions from all blind men from the ages of 16 to 35 who wished to become members. Unfortunately only scanty details are available concerning this society and it is not known how succesful it was or how long it lasted.

Although charities for the benefit of the physically disabled had always enjoyed popular support, the nineteenth century, particularly the years between 1820 and 1860, represented a peak period of growth. Owen calculated that forty new provincial charities for the blind and the deaf dated from this period. Sampson Low's 1862 survey of London charities revealed 16 charities for the deaf, dumb, blind and crippled, 80 hospitals and infirmaries and 124 assorted institutions for the aged.[17] It is probable that this growth was at least partially attributable to the 'quasi-medical' nature of disability. During the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries public interest in medical charity had enabled

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[15] T. Koditschek, *Class Formation and Urban Industrial Society: Bradford 1750-1850* (Cambridge, 1990), p.67.
[16] G. Black, 'The Leeds Eye Dispensary', *Thoresby Society Miscellany*, 16, 2 (1974), p.101.
[17] Low recorded 640 charities in total, a fifth having been established within the previous ten years. See Appendix, Table 2.

the numbers of first general and then specialist hospitals to expand dramatically. Here was an arena where the '.... humanitarian concern of the Victorians and their confidence in science as an agent of human progress joined in beneficient alliance.'[18] Whereas hitherto charitable provision for the disabled poor had commonly taken the form of pensions or doles, there was now the possibility of extending effective medical treatment to them. An expansion in charities such as those catering for the disabled can thus be seen as riding on the back of this swell of enthusiasm. Contemporaries were conscious of this boom and were quick to seize the initiative. 'Within these few years there appears to have arisen a feeling on behalf of the blind, which contrasts strongly with the apathy and neglect this interesting class of our fellow-men had previously experienced.'[19] This 'unwonted interest' manifested itself in a number of 'munificent bequests... left for the endowment of ... institutions.'[20]

The nineteenth century was self-consciously 'an age which boasts much of its philanthropy.' The citizens of Yorkshire could share fully in this sense of benevolent endeavour. 'It is gratifying to reflect upon the number of excellent charities which are supported by the inhabitants of this county, for the relief of bodily and mental infirmities, and for the supply of temporal and spiritual wants: the hungry are fed, the naked are clothed, the sick are visited, the ignorant are taught, the irreligious are reclaimed'.[21] By the start of the century York (1740), Leeds (1767), Hull (1782) and Sheffield (1797) all

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[18] Owen, *English Philanthropy*, p. 170.
[19] T. Anderson, *Observations on the Employment, Education, and Habits of the Blind* (1837, reprinted 1895), p.1.
[20] Ibid., p.i. The most significant of these bequests was Charles Day's legacy of £100,000 which was used to fund small pensions for the blind.
[21] YIDD, *First Annual Report*, 1830, p.7.

possessed general infirmaries.[22] These voluntary hospitals tended to concentrate on accidents or acute cases rather than on chronic diseases or palliative care. The very young and the elderly were often excluded. Many towns also supported dispensaries. These offered out patient treatment which could involve visits to the patient in his own home. Local specialist institutions followed. In 1822, the Leeds Eye Dispensary was opened. In its first month of operation 61 persons were treated of whom 30 were discharged as cured. In 1829, the Dispensary restyled itself as the Leeds General Eye and Ear Infirmary.[23] Bradford Eye and Ear Infirmary was established in 1857.[24] By 1866, it had recorded 6,400 attendances and 972 operations had been performed. By mid-century York too had a specialist eye hospital.[25]

The development of specialist facilities for the treatment of disease was dependent upon the creation of constituencies of support, and these probably formed the nucleus of early interest and activity on behalf of the disabled. Many of these institutions were founded by Doctors who had a vested interest in ensuring their success. Doctors thus played an important part in publicising their work and generating support amongst respectable

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[22] H. Marland, 'Lay and Medical Conceptions of Medical Charity during the Nineteenth Century: The case of the Huddersfield General Dispensary and Infirmary', in J. Barry and C. Jones (eds.), *Medicine and Charity Before the Welfare State* (1991), p.151.

[23] Black, *The Leeds Eye Dispensary*, pp.101-3.

[24] J. James, *Continuation & Additions to the History of Bradford, and its Parish* (Bradford, 1866, republished Manchester, 1973), pp. 214-15. The infirmary was established in 1857 by Edward Bronner, Esq. M.D., an eminent ocularist and aurist. It was supported by voluntary subscriptions. In 1863, a dispensary was added with the foundation stone being laid by Titus Salt. 'Its utility in affording relief to persons suffering from eye and ear diseases has been exceedingly great, and, with limited means, a vast amount of benefit has been conferred upon the poorer classes.'

[25] In the years between 1808 and 1889, 52 British eye or eye and ear hospitals were established. L. Davidson, '"Identities Ascertained": British Ophthalmology in the First Half of the Nineteenth Century', *Social History of Medicine*, 9 (1996), pp.313-333.

society. One convenient channel for these purposes was through the local Philosophical and Literary societies – a Leeds society was formed in 1819, Sheffield and York societies were established in 1822, and other societies in Scarborough, Whitby and Hull also date from this period. The societies attracted many medical men, and a significant number of specialist surgeons were active participants in their activities. The secretary of the Leeds Philosophical and Literary Society was Charles Turner Thackrah, a surgeon at the Leeds Infirmary. One early course of lectures was given by Thomas T. Metcalfe, another surgeon, and one of the founders of the Leeds Eye Dispensary. The lectures concerned the 'Anatomy, Physiology and Treatment of the Eye and its Appendages'. Metcalfe hoped "to make the lectures as popular as the subject would admit, affording the public an opportunity of becoming acquainted with the most delicate and useful organ in the animal creation."[26]

Members of the Leeds medical profession were also involved in the campaign for the ten hour working day which followed the publication of Oastler's 'Yorkshire Slavery' allegations in 1830. Samuel Smith, William Hey (II) and Charles Turner Thackrah, surgeons at the Leeds Infirmary, were all active participants in the agitation for reform. Smith spoke before a rally of 12,000 people about the plight of the crippled children he had treated at the Infirmary. Hey, who was also a surgeon at the Eye Dispensary, chaired the meeting. Of the 87 people who gave evidence before the Sadler Committee, 23 were from Leeds. Ten of them were cripples. Smith and Thackrah were amongst those

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[26] Black, *The Leeds Eye Dispensary*, p.103.

testifying. In 1832 Thackrah published *The Effects of Arts, Trades and Professions... on Health and Longevity*, the first book on industrial medicine.

The association between blindness, albeit metaphorical, factory reform and the scientific societies was satirized by Dickens in *Sketches from Boz* (1837). Asa Briggs summarizes the passage thus:

> When .... Dickens's Mr Tickle displayed a pair of 'new-invented' spectacles, which enabled the wearer to 'discern, in very bright colours, objects at a great distance, and rendered him wholly blind to those immediately before him', he told the sceptical President of the Mudfog Association for the Advancement of Everything, that the invention was firmly based on an understanding of 'the principle of the human eye.' Surely, the President could not fail to be aware that 'a large number of most excellent persons and great statesmen could see, with the naked eye, most marvellous horrors in the West Indian plantations, while they could discover nothing whatever in the interior of the Manchester Cotton Mills.[27]

The clergy were another group whose members played a vital role in the development of charitable activity for the disabled within the county. Clerical concern sprang not just from compassion and religious piety, but from a genuine mission to spread the gospel to groups who would otherwise be denied religious salvation. No doubt many Anglican churchmen were influenced and inspired in their charity by evangelical doctrines,

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[27] A. Briggs, *Victorian Things* (1990), pp.117-8.

although the impact of these did wane over time. Some extreme evangelicals believed that disease was a form of divine intervention and that pain was to be welcomed a means of drawing closer to God. Attempts to ameliorate suffering, other than through prayer, were sacreligious.[28] Others were more active in their range of charitable activity, although they were keen to stress the importance of discrimination in the choice of beneficiaries. Thomas Chalmers called for a distinction to be made between 'a charity for mere indigence, and a charity for disease. A public charity for the one tends to multiply its objects – because it enlists the human will on the side, if not of poverty, at least of the dissipation and indolence which lead to poverty. A public charity for the other will scarcely, if ever, enlist the human will on the side of disease.'[29]

As the following case studies demonstrate, members of the Anglican clergy were the primary instigators in the foundation of the county's schools. Their role as fundraisers, sponsors of pupils, organisers of events, gatherers of information, advocates and lobbyists was of crucial importance. In addition, their activities resulted in the development of a network of Sunday school classes, missions and visiting societies for the deaf and the blind.[30] Religious offices were rapidly supplemented by educational and social programmes aimed more specifically at adults. In this way an extended network of services was gradually made available to the disabled population, including those who had had no previous links with the county schools. The provision of regular meetings was

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[28] B. Hilton, *The Age of Atonement: The Influence of Evangelism on Social and Economic Thought, 1795-1865* (Oxford, 1988), p.85.
[29] Thomas Chalmers cited by Hilton, ibid.
[30] See Appendix, Table 5, for a list of Yorkshire missions.

important in integrating these individuals within the adult communities, and in forging and maintaining links between successive generations of disabled people.

Equally significant in explaining the proliferation of charities for the disabled in the nineteenth century, and the format they took, was the development and spread of effective means of educating those groups of disabled people who had previously been thought ineducable. The history of special education has been traced elsewhere, but it is the extension of these forms of specialist teaching to the mass of disabled poor that is of relevance here.[31] Both Rev. Harcourt, founder of the WSB, and Rev. Fenton of the YIDD, combined their religious beliefs with a strong commitment to education. Fenton's experience as an inspector of schools in Doncaster led him to a pragmatic realisation of local need for an institution for the deaf. Harcourt, a founding member of both the Yorkshire Philosophical Society and the British Academy, was a passionate advocate of science and higher learning. As the following chapters make clear, the support of the local philosophical societies, whose members were interested in both the scientific and educational implications of sensory impairments, was an important element in the growth of special education in the county. These societies linked the pioneers of special education with the doctors and surgeons of the voluntary hospitals.

Finally, it is possible to identify a range of other factors which may have had an impact on the development of charitable provision for these groups. Changing attitudes towards both children and the provision of education were both likely to have favoured the growth

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[31]See Appendix, Table 3, for a list of schools and foundations.

of special education. The activities of the state in the field of education, particularly from 1870 onwards, highlighted the patchwork nature of the provision for disabled children, and, as the activities of the School Boards increased, influenced the pattern of charitable development. A further element that should not be discounted as a factor in the establishment of the schools was a regional rivalry with the cities of Liverpool and Manchester which both supported their own institutions. Civic pride could find a worthy embodiment in the fine premises and education that the county was able to extend to those most deserving of its charity. Local pride also influenced the nature and character of the county's institutions.

Chapter Five

The Yorkshire Institution for the Deaf and Dumb

Deaf educators in the nineteenth century were confronted by a public who displayed a profound ignorance about deafness and its implications. One consequence of this lack of awareness was the prevalence of prejudice which had serious implications for the prospects of the deaf. Those connected with the education of the deaf had therefore a dual mission; in addition to teaching their pupils and preparing them for future employment, they had also to enlighten the wider world about the nature of deafness and the abilities of the educated deaf. This chapter examines the means and methods they adopted by the YIDD in order to achieve these goals.

Some supporters of deaf education believed that a further pernicious consequence of widespread ignorance was that the charitable were less than forthcoming in their support for deaf causes.[1] The need to arouse public sympathy was vital in generating the monies necessary to support an ambitious and expensive venture such as a residential school. Indeed, those connected with the YIDD spent much time engaged in fundraising activities. The chapter examines some of the ways in which the school sought to finance its operations. How did the citizens of Yorkshire respond to the school's monetary needs and who were its principal supporters?

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[1] The situation of the deaf was often contrasted with the more obvious appeal of the blind.

The struggle to advance the cause of the deaf necessitated lengthy processes of negotiation with both local and national authorities. In the early years of the school some parish officers and boards of guardians needed considerable persuasion to comply with statutory provisions. Those acting on behalf of the school sought also to influence central government policy in favour of the deaf. The chapter therefore provides an interesting case study of the interplay between the voluntary sector and the state in the field of policy formation. The complexities of these relationships expose some of the difficulties and limitations of voluntary endeavour.

It has been argued that the Deaf were the earliest group of disabled people to manifest a distinct sense of identity and that this phenomenon was intimately linked to the provision of special education.[2] To what extent does the history of the YIDD and its pupils support this thesis? The school had two headmasters during the period in question and the contrast between their methods of teaching provides a template for examination of wider debates within the field of deaf education.[3] The aims and aspirations the headmasters held for their pupils are examined and where appropriate contrasted with what can be ascertained of the views of parents and the deaf community. The chapter concludes with an examination of the recommendations of the 1889 Royal Commission: this places some of the issues confronted by the school within a broader context.

The Foundation of the Yorkshire Institute for the Deaf and Dumb

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[2] Davis, *Enforcing Normalcy*, p.82.

[3] However neither Charles Baker nor James Howard should be see as strongly doctrinaire in their teaching; both were dedicated teachers who sought to further the best interests of their pupils.

The Yorkshire Institution for the Deaf and Dumb, a charity for the instruction of the deaf and dumb children of the poor, was founded at Doncaster in 1829 by the Rev. William Carr-Fenton.[4] Prior to becoming ordained, Fenton, a member of a well-connected Leeds family and a freeman of the city of Doncaster, had had a varied career, which included a period in the military and an appointment as a schools' inspector for the Doncaster Corporation.[5] It is probable that it was as an inspector that he first became concerned for the plight of uneducated deaf children. He is known to have visited the famous Institution Nationale des Sourd-Muets in Paris and thereafter the institutions for the deaf at Exeter, Birmingham and Manchester. By 1828 he was in contact with a local labourer named Field who had two deaf children under instruction at the Old Kent Road institution; three younger deaf children remained at home.[6] Convinced of the feasibility of educating the deaf, and with evidence of the hardship caused to families by the absence of a local institution, Fenton determined to set up a school for the deaf in Doncaster.[7]

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[4] Initially the charity catered exclusively for Yorkshire children but by 1833 it was able to offer accommodation to children from the neighbouring counties of Nottinghamshire and Lincolnshire. However YIDD was never particularly successful in attracting either funds or children from these counties.

[5] Biographical details relating to the Rev. Fenton are from A. J. Boyce, *The Leeds Beacon* (Feltham,1996), p.103.

[6] P. W. Jackson, *Britain's Deaf Heritage* (Haddington,1990), p.51.

[7] Fenton was also involved in helping to establish the Wilberforce School for the Blind in York. A. J. Boyce, *The History of the Yorkshire Residential School for the Deaf 1829-1979* (Doncaster,1987), p. 44.

The first task he faced was to enlist the support of The Archbishop of York, who, claiming only ever to have met two deaf people, queried the need for an institution.[8] With the assistance of fellow clerics Fenton was able to compile 'a long list of these unfortunate objects' to place before a preliminary public meeting.[9] In order to demonstrate the techniques involved in educating the deaf, Mr Vaughan, headmaster of the Manchester Institution, was invited to Doncaster to conduct an examination of two of his pupils. 'At the commencement of the meeting held on the occasion of Mr Vaughan's visit, about twenty persons only were assembled; but when the interesting nature of the examination of the children was made known through the town, the spectators became very numerous, and before the meeting broke up, no less that 70*l* was given in annual subscription for the Deaf and Dumb in Yorkshire.'[10] The Archbishop agreed to head the list of patrons of the new charity and donated £100 to the building fund. The highly recommended Charles Baker, then aged 26, with three years teaching experience at the Edgbaston Institution, was appointed as headmaster. The school opened in rented premises on the 2nd November 1829 when eleven boys were admitted as pupils.[11]

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[8] Boyce, *The Leeds Beacon*, p.103. The 'invisibility' of deaf children may in part have been due to parents' unwillingness to acknowledge that their child was deaf and hence risk the stigma attached to the condition. The Archbishop was the Hon. Edward Venables Vernon Harcourt, whose son, the Rev. W. V. Harcourt, was the founder of the Wilberforce School for the Blind.

[9] YIDD, *First Annual Report,* 1830, p.3.

[10] Rev. W. C. Fenton, *A Brief View of the Institutions for the Deaf and Dumb in Europe and America with some Remarks relative to the Yorkshire Institution for the Deaf and Dumb* (Doncaster, 1833), p.16.

[11] Girls were not admitted until after Baker's marriage, when Mrs Baker assumed the role of matron.

The Rules and Regulations of the new institution were established by the general meeting and published in the first Annual Report.[12] It is likely, given the experience of both Baker and Fenton, that their content and format was based upon, or largely similar to, those in use at other deaf and dumb institutions at this time. The first rule provided, 'That the Institution be a school of industry as well as of religious and general education.' Other rules governed constitutional and voting rights, the election of candidates and the financing of their education. A separate set of rules dealt with the practicalities relating to the admission of pupils, who had to be between the ages of eight and fourteen. A series of questions was to be completed on behalf of the candidates and the responses certified by their Minister of Parish and Medical Practitioner. These queried the age at which the child had become deaf and the cause of deafness. The child's potential was also assessed; were his other senses perfect, did he make signs or give proof of memory? Another question asked if other members of the family were deaf, and how many siblings there were. No child suffering from an 'infectious disorder' or unvaccinated against smallpox could be admitted, nor could any child who was 'deficient in intellect.' Although the questions remained substantially the same during Baker's period in office, two new questions included in 1866 might be seen as reflecting contemporary concerns and anxieties about the body and inheritance: 'Has the Child any personal defect or deformity?', and 'Were the parents related before Marriage:- if so, in what matter?'[13]

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[12] YIDD, *First Annual Report*, 1830, p.10.
[13] YIDD, *Thirty Seventh Annual Report*, 1866, p.24.

Although a charity, the YIDD was 'not framed upon the principle of gratuitous education and support.'[14] A contribution on behalf of all pupils was necessary to ensure that the poor were neither spoiled nor pauperised by free schooling and that charitable benevolence was not abused. Hence the rules provided that the sum of 2*s*.6*d*. a week or 6*l* a year towards the maintenance of even the poorest child should be contributed either by their friends or local township, although some reduction was allowed in the case of siblings.[15] The remaining 14*l* of the estimated 20*l* cost of supporting each child was to be met by the charity. Children needing the assistance of the charity were admitted into the institution by the vote of members, although in practice the institution generally had sufficient capacity to render this a formality. Private pupils, whose parents paid larger sums according to their means, were admitted at the discretion of the Committee.[16] Once a candidate had been elected, an engagement had to be entered into by two responsible housekeepers, or by the parish officers, to pay the sum required by the Committee and to provide the child with proper clothes. This form of engagement had to be countersigned by the minister or churchwardens of the parish.

As a result of the first meeting, a committee of 44 members – including three members of the nobility, The Mayor of Doncaster, and ten Anglican clergymen – was set up. Edmund Denison, Chairman of the Committee from 1829-1869 was a Tory M.P.: William Aldam,

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[14] YIDD, *First Annual Report*, 1830, p.6.
[15] YIDD, *Second Annual Report*, 1831, p.63.
[16] There were never more than seven of these children at YIDD at any one time. This may have been because wealthier parents prefered to educate their children at home or in one of the private academies which used the oral method of instruction. Such pupils who did attend YIDD were offered an appropriate 'liberal education' and shared living quarters with the teachers rather than the other pupils. Baker's statistical work led him to believe that deafness was primarily an affliction of the poor.

Chairman from 1869-1890, briefly a Liberal M.P.[17] Amongst the remainder of the Committee can be identified members of the local gentry (Childers, Yarborough, Cooke) and of the professional classes (Dr Robinson).[18] Family connections with the charity were often maintained over several generations, with younger family members assuming the roles and duties of the older generation.[19] The Institution also had the support of an impressive list of patrons drawn largely from the ranks of the local landed elite. Local political differences, including a long running feud between the Whig Earl Fitzwilliam and the Tory Earl Harewood, did not prevent either from becoming patrons and donating generously to the building fund.[20] Other prominent local politicians were also listed as patrons, including Lord Morpeth and Lord Milton, who both served as Whig/Liberal cabinet ministers. Fitzwilliam and Morpeth in particular were more than mere figureheads for the charity. On occasion Fitzwilliam chaired the charity's Annual Meeting, thus ensuring a good attendance. Morpeth, characterised as both a stout advocate of political economy and a paternalistic lord, spoke on YIDD's behalf at York.[21]

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[17] Edmund Beckett Denison born 1781, deceased 1874. Although ranked as a Conservative, Denison was a Liberal who gave general support to Lord Palmerston's government. He voted for the repeal of the Maynooth grant and was interested in the sound religious education of the lower classes. He sat for the West Riding from July 1841 to July 1847 and again from December 1848 until his retirement in 1859. He also served as Dept.-Lieutenant and Magistrate for the East and West Ridings. William Aldam, born 1813 deceased 1890, was a Liberal who was first returned for Leeds in 1841. In 1847 he lost his seat having offended the Nonconformists in the controversy surrounding voluntaryism in education. He was Chairman of the Quarter Session for the West Riding from 1877-1890. All biographical details from the *Dictionary of National Biography.*

[18] B. Barber, 'The Landed Gentry of the Doncaster District', in B. Elliot (ed.), *Aspects of Doncaster; Discovering Local History* (Barnsley, 1997), pp. 49-74.

[19] Thus members of the Warde-Aldam family were still involved in the YIDD in 1925.

[20] F. M. L. Thompson, 'Whigs and Liberals in the West Riding 1830-1840', *English Historical Review,* LXXXIV (1959), pp. 214-39.

[21] D. Roberts, *Paternalism in Early Victorian England* (1979), p.8. Thomas Cook's letter in Fenton, *A Brief View of the Institutions for the Deaf and Dumb,* p.32.

Financial contributions at critical times in the history of the institution from such local grandees were vital to YIDD's success. There was a separate list of patronesses, although women generally do not seen to have played a prominent role in the charity. Remarkably little social change occurred in either committee or patronage during the period covered by this thesis.[22]

The cross party political support enjoyed by the YIDD would seem to confirm the wide and largely uncontroversial extent of its appeal. Educating the deaf appealed both to the paternalist, whether clerical or political, and to the advocate of political economy. Indeed the ability of education generally to appeal to both secular philanthropy (Whig-Utilitarian) and religious humanitarianism during this period has been noted elsewhere.[23] Nonetheless the potential for conflict between religious and utilitarian elements existed and on one occasion it caused Baker serious difficulties.[24] The YIDD's firm Anglican basis was also advantageous; Anglicans tended to be the wealthier and more important members of the community, and the church hierarchy provided access to a useful parish and diocesan infrastructure with invaluable potential for networking.[25]

Arguments in Favour of Educating the Deaf

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[22] See Appendix, Table 4.
[23] D. Owen, *English Philanthropy, 1660-1960* (Cambridge, Mass.,1965), p.92.
[24] In 1870 a resolution passed in Baker's absence permitted the children to appear on the balcony during race week as a means of attracting donations. Baker wrote to Aldam expressing his concern that this move would upset the 'ultra evangelicals' on the Committee. Doncaster Archives, Warde-Aldam Papers, DD.WA/M/28/2.
[25] U. R. Q. Henriques, *Before the Welfare State: Social Administration in Early Industrial Britain* (1979), p.199. Henriques notes that '...the different forms of Christianity had a close affinity with the economic position and social status of those who adhered to them.'

Although by the 1820s and 1830s education for the poor had won the support of many, differing views were expressed as to the nature and form that such education should take and what its aims and extent should be. The promoters of the YIDD had therefore to present a variety of arguments to strengthen their claim for support, to appeal to as many sectors of potential donors as was possible, and to persuade boards of guardians with a wary eye on the rates that educating the deaf was sound economic policy. The 1830 statement of the aims of the promoters reflects this desire to appeal to all sections of opinion: '...Their object is to rescue these children from the state of mental darkness in which they are usually found, and by general instruction to place them, as nearly as possible, upon a level with their fellow creatures in the same sphere of life – to teach them their duties towards God and men, which, without the assistance afforded them at an establishment of this sort, they have not the remotest chance of learning – destitute of which they would, in all probability, remain a burden upon their friends or parish, and their lives would be passed under the unrestrained dominion of their natural evil passions.'[26] A similar combination of 'religious instruction, intellectual development and material well-being' was quoted in this context by all the nineteenth century institutions for the deaf.[27] Indeed the themes of rescue from mental darkness, and teaching the poor

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[26] YIDD, *First Annual Report*, 1830, p.6.
[27] M. G. McLoughlin, *A History of the Education of the Deaf in England* (Liverpool, c. 1987), p.3.

their duties both religious and temporal, were common to the majority of voluntary schools of this era.[28]

The principal basis upon which the promoters sought to stake their appeal, as expressed in the Annual Reports, was to common humanitarianism and compassion; education for the deaf was first and foremost 'an act of justice'.[29] The deaf were innocent victims of 'infirmities which the Almighty, in his wisdom has been pleased to visit them.'[30] Without instruction they lived in a 'state of ignorance and merely animal life.'[31] Education gave them '....a place among their kind, from which, by their natural infirmity, they were excluded.'[32] It raised them from '... degradation to rank, perhaps, among the most orderly, intelligent, and worthy members of society.'[33]

The role of education as a mechanism for deterring anti-social behaviour was a popular theme. The vulnerability of the deaf person to moral peril was stressed; idleness and ignorance left him 'open to every vice, never having been made sensible of the danger of gratifying his appetites and passions...'.[34] Without the safeguard of a sound moral and religious education the deaf child or adult could easily be led astray or taken advantage of by the unscrupulous. Thus it '...was not chiefly on account of the intellectual training of

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[28] 'Rescue meant conversion to the moral and social imperatives of the rescuers, who represented the spectrum of attitudes and motives in contemporary society.' Henriques, *Before the Welfare State*, p. 202.
[29] YIDD, *Ninth Annual Report*, 1838, p.4.
[30] YIDD, *Sixth Annual Report*, 1835, p.9.
[31] YIDD, *Seventeenth Annual Report*, 1846, p.3.
[32] YIDD, *Fourteenth Annual Report*, 1843, p.3.
[33] YIDD, *Fifth Annual Report*, 1834, p.4.
[34]YIDD, *First Annual Report*, 1830, p.7.

the pupils, but on account of the valuable and permanent moral and religious principles established in their minds, which regulated their conduct in after years,' that the institution merited support.[35] Education at YIDD wrought 'a most essential improvement both in the morals and in the general behaviour of the children.'[36]

Religious sensibilities were not neglected; emphasis on the pre-eminence of religious education was popular with both high churchmen and conservative landed gentry.[37] The institution's 'great design' was that its beneficiaries should be enabled to lead 'a sober, righteous, and godly life.'[38] An evangelistic concern with the saving of souls was also expressed. With the benefit of 'a useful, a moral, and a religious education, and under the Divine Blessing,' the deaf could be 'raised to the hopes of a happy immortality.'[39] In aiding others 'to close their lives with Christian hope and joy..', the donor himself benefited spiritually, 'these will for you go up "a memorial" before the throne of that high and holy one that inhabiteth eternity.'[40]

Rational and utilitarian arguments were used in attempts to persuade boards of guardians to contribute towards the upkeep of their indigent deaf. Education did not merely enhance the prospects of the deaf, the wider community too benefited from their transformation from being a 'permanent burthen to their parishes' into individuals able 'to obtain an

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[35] *Results of an Inquiry Respecting The Former Pupils of the Yorkshire Institute for the Deaf and Dumb* (Doncaster, Ordered by the Committee, February, 1844. Re-printed with Additions, March, 1847), p.A.3.
[36] YIDD, *Second Annual Report*, 1831, p.3.
[37] Henriques, *Before the Welfare State*, p. 201.
[38] YIDD, *Third Annual Report*, 1832, p.6.
[39] YIDD, *Fourth Annual Report*, 1833, p. 5.
[40] YIDD, *Seventh Annual Report*, 1836, p.11.

ample remuneration for their labour.'[41] Those educated at YIDD were '...qualified to earn their own maintenance... to be a blessing and a help, rather than a grief and a burden to their friends.'[42] Through careful supervision and submission to the will of the master they were 'rendered competent to undertake with efficiency many of the occupations and duties of life...'.[43] Without this instruction some would have been destined to have '...dragged on their useless existence as the squalid and wretched inhabitants of a poor-house...'.[44] The 'practical utility' of the institution lay in its inculcating 'habits of industry' in its pupils. The educated deaf were '...set free from the bonds of sloth and indolence, and... taught to walk uprightly in the paths of industry and virtue.'[45] Education of the deaf was thus entirely compatible with the dictates of political economy. The Committee hoped '... that a knowledge of the immense advantages which the educated Deaf and Dumb possess in comparison with those who have received no instruction, will convince the understanding, and influence the hearts, of all to whom the administration of the laws is committed.'[46]

The YIDD also sought to appeal to the paternalistic instincts of its donors as leading members of a community of citizens of the County of York. Civic and communal pride were invoked: YIDD was a valuable addition to 'the number of excellent charities which are supported by the inhabitants of this county...'. [47] Confidence was expressed in 'the

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[41] YIDD, *Ninth Annual Report*, 1838, p.6.
[42] YIDD, *Fourteenth Annual Report*, 1843, p.3.
[43] YIDD, *Sixth Annual Report*,1835, p.5.
[44] YIDD, *Eighth Annual Report*, 1837, p.11.
[45] YIDD, *Seventh Annual Report*, 1836, p.11.
[46] YIDD, *Ninth Annual Report*, 1838, p.4.
[47] YIDD, *First Annual Report*, 1830, p.7.

humanity of the county of York.'[48] Knowledge of the work done by the charity would 'awaken... a feeling of commiseration and liberality in the hearts of the opulent part of the community.'[49] Communal generosity was celebrated; it was a matter of congratulation that at YIDD 'the pupils will be as advantageously educated as they could be at any other establishment in the Kingdom.'[50] Care was taken that members of this community of the benevolent should not be over taxed; fund raising at YIDD was suspended so as not to interfere with appeals on behalf of the rebuilding of York Minster in 1829 and to take account of a canvass to establish a Society to Aid the Indigent Blind in 1834. A canvas was suspended in 1863 on the basis that, 'the wide-spread sympathy for the suffering in the Cotton Districts seemed to preclude any effort for less urgent claims on the benevolence of the public.'[51] A sense of civic pride or responsibility may have prompted the Doncaster Corporation to donate land worth £650 to the institution on its foundation and the Corporation was the largest donor to the building fund of 1865.

In common with other similar institutions, the YIDD relied upon a number of different sources of funds. The first set of accounts, for the period April 1829 to April 1830, record the receipt of Annual Subscriptions £ 349/19/0, Donations £ 170/1/5 and Children's Payments £ 47/6/6, amounting to a total income of £ 562/3/8. Anthony Boyce calculates that the average total of Annual Subscriptions between 1832 and 1874 was £957.[52] Subscriptions were preferred to 'uneven and fluctuating' donations because they created

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[48] Ibid.
[49] Ibid., p.5.
[50] Ibid., p.7.
[51] YIDD, *Thirty Fourth Annual Report*, 1863, p.8.
[52] Boyce, *The History of the Yorkshire Residential School for the Deaf*, p.16.

a long term relationship between the subscriber and the Institution.[53] This relationship could result in a legacy and these were generally invested with the institution benefiting from the income generated. The accounts for March 1839 to March 1840 record legacies totaling £114/12/0 and dividends of £60/14/2. On occasions donations rather than subscriptions were actively sought, for example in connection with special appeals for building or renovation, and here wealthy patrons and committee members stood the institution in good stead.[54] By April 1831 £2464/18/0 had been raised for the purchase of a property, Earl Fitzwilliam having contributed £500 and Lord Harewood £100. Payments received on behalf of pupils either from their parents or friends or through local boards of guardians were the second most important source of income after subscriptions. By the 1870s the position had reversed and payments had become the most important source of revenue.

Subscriptions and donations were initially obtained through personal canvass by members of the Committee amongst their acquaintances and friends. Every opportunity was taken to promote the charity; one early resolution recorded, 'That Mr Petre, and Mr Bland, Mr J. W. Childers and Mr Denison be requested to solicit subscriptions from the noblemen and Gentry in the race week.'[55] Branch committees were established to extend the appeal for contributions throughout the county.[56] The Second Annual Report records thirteen local secretaries. By 1836 the efforts of these committees had resulted in a

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[53] YIDD, *Twenty First Annual Report*,1850, p.2
[54] The most substantial donations to the 1865 building fund came from these sources.
[55] YIDD, Minutes, 24 August 1829.
[56] YIDD, Minutes, 12 October 1829 contain a Resolution 'That Mr Baxter and the Rev. W. C. Fenton move that Annual Subscriptions and Donations be solicited throughout the county by Branch Committee.'

subscription list of nearly eleven hundred names.[57] The headmaster, Baker, and honorary secretary, Fenton, were continuously and assiduously active in raising funds. By the mid 1860s Baker alone was raising large sums of money through personal canvass and circulars.[58] Collections from sermons, lectures and public meetings, where pupils were examined prior to a collection taking place also provided a not insignificant source of funding.

The Public Examination of Pupils

The Committee were very conscious of the value of publicity, necessary not only to attract new subscribers and hence further funding, but also to inform the public of the charity's existence and attract new pupils to the Institution. The public examination of pupils combined these functions and subsequently came to serve a multitude of other purposes.[59] It also provides an interesting insight into the extent and nature of public support for the institution. Public examinations were held throughout the region with tours often necessitating the absence of Baker, Fenton and their pupils for weeks at a time. They were costly to mount and required complex administration: arrangements had

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[57] YIDD, *Seventh Annual Report*, 1836, p.4.

[58] Baker, feeling under appreciated by his Committee, wrote 'There was a slight murmur of satisfaction at these results of half a years toil, inconvenience & wear & tear but no other recognition of approval ... it must be remembered that a large majority of the donations obtained have been of Five Pounds and under..'. Baker to Aldam, April 9th, 1866. Warde-Aldam Papers, DD.WA/M/28/2.

[59] One of its most important functions was to allay parental concerns; '...in several instances in which prejudice or groundless fears have prevented persons entrusting their Children to your care, they not only cheerfully withdrew their objections but earnestly craved the benefit of that instruction and discipline, the fruits of which had just been exhibited before their eyes.' YIDD, *Sixth Annual Report*, 1835, p.4.

to be made regarding transport, accommodation, venues, publicity and the securing of the services of a respected dignitary to act as chairman. Much of this work was undertaken by the branch committees which also provided the necessary contacts and introductions to the local gentry.

The local philosophical and literary society was generally chosen for the launch of deaf institutions.[60] This was probably because its audience might be expected to be generous in donating to a new educational initiative. W. B. Stephens characterises these societies as '... favoured by an emerging elite of manufacturers, traders, professional men and other middle-class citizens of progressive outlook as a means of attaining social respectability, prestige and local influence.'[61] Not only did such organisations allow 'access for socially marginal groups to polite society and entry to the local elite...', they also provided '... an entertaining intellectual life, otherwise lacking in often grimy industrial environments.'[62] YIDD held a meeting at the Societies Hall in Leeds in 1830.[63] A young surgeon, Mr Wooler, was supposed to be addressing the audience prior to the examination taking place. Unfortunately he was indisposed and Mr Baker had to take his place. The examination which was very well attended, raised sufficient money (when added to the amount generated by a similar meeting in Wakefield), to enable the Committee to recommend that girls be admitted.[64] The following year the Committee reported that examinations had taken place in nine towns, 'and such has been the

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[60] D. G. Pritchard, *Education and the Handicapped, 1760-1960* (1963), p.26.
[61] W. B. Stephens, *Education In Britain 1750-1915* (1998), p.70.
[62] Ibid.
[63] For details of the foundation of the Leeds Society and its membership see T. Baines, *Yorkshire Past and Present* (c.1870), vol.II, p.169.
[64] YIDD, *First Annual Report*, 1830, p.5.

compassionate wish of the public to ameliorate the condition of the uninstructed Deaf and Dumb, that wherever an examination of the children has taken place, the hand of benevolence has been readily extended.'[65]

Details of a tour which took place prior to January 1833 are provided by Thomas Cook, a pupil at the institution and a frequent participant in the examinations.[66] On this occasion Cook and four other pupils took part in meetings at Tadcaster, York, Ripon and Harrogate. At Tadcaster the examinations were relatively informal; the children '.. went to gentlemen's and ladies houses, and the boys wrote on paper with pencil.' In York, the premises of the Savings Bank and the Guildhall having proved inadequate, the children went to 'a new chapel' where Lord Morpeth addressed the company. Here the examination was more sophisticated, with lessons in language, geography, scripture geography, scripture history and arithmetic, as well as the demonstration of some basic signs. The Ripon meeting took place at the Town Hall and Lord Grantham spoke to the audience who were 'sat on many benches.'[67] An evening meeting was addressed by the Dean of Ripon. In Harrogate, the children were visited at the inn where they were staying, and written questions and answers were exchanged. Although there are few hints as to the size of the audience and the scale of the takings, (sovereigns and shillings are

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[65] YIDD, *Second Annual Report*, 1831, p.3.

[66] Fenton, *A Brief View of the Institutions for the Deaf and Dumb in Europe.* Cook's letter, on p.32, was one given as a specimen 'of the improvement the children of the Yorkshire Deaf and Dumb Institution have made, after about three years instruction... It should be stated that a few corrections in the language have been made, but the sentiments are entirely those of the children.'

[67] Whilst Baker and his pupils stayed in local hotels, Rev. Fenton was a personal guest of Lord Grantham at Boroughbridge.

mentioned), the presence of socially prominent patrons would almost certainly have ensured the profitability of the tour.

A more complete picture of the income and expenditure involved in a tour, and of the size and nature of the audiences who attended, is found in the minutes of March 1835. These refer to a fortnights tour of towns in the northern part of the West Riding. On this occasion Mr Baker and the Rev. Fenton were accompanied by three boys. The first examination at Thorp Arch was attended by persons from Boston, Bramham and Tadcaster. 'The examination of the children was very satisfactory, & part of the next day was occupied in calling upon the neighbouring gentry, several additional subscribers were obtained.'[68] At Ripon, Jane Mawson a former pupil and her friends attended to express their gratitude to the institution. Three deaf and dumb siblings were present at the meeting in North Allerton and arrangements were made for the youngest of the three to enroll at YIDD. An examination at the Town Hall at Richmond was well attended and 'Partly from the impression made at this examination, Mr O'Tomlin, a solicitor, ... offered to take one of the boys, Henry English, as a copying-clerk into his office.' At the National School Room in Knaresborough 'at least 500 persons' were present. Rev. J. Collins, 'a liberal benefactor to the Institution' presided and the efforts of the Rev. A. Cheap in publicising the meeting were gratefully acknowledged.[69] The collection amounted to £16 10*s*. The National School Room at Skipton was the site of another

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[68] YIDD, Minutes, 28 March 1835.

[69] Rev. Collins, who must have enjoyed substantial private means, was also a major donor to the WSB. In 1853 Rev. Cheap established a dispensary for the poor of Knaresborough. The National School Room (1814) and the dispensary are situated very close to each other in the centre of the town.

'well-attended meeting' and examinations at Keighley and Bingley were again 'most numerously attended.' The final meeting was held at Bradford in the Exchange Buildings. It was 'respectably attended' and notable for 'the satisfaction expressed by some of the Subscribers who were present, at seeing their subscriptions so properly applied…'.

At the date of the minutes the increase in the funds of the Institution amounted to:-

Annual Subscriptions	£59 4*s* 6*d*
Donations	£81 12*s* 7*d*

The expenses of the fortnight were calculated at:-

Traveling Expenses - 242 miles @ 2/	£24 4*s* 0*d*
Points and Distributing Notices	£6 16*s* 9*d*
Postages and Porterage	£1 7*s* 0*d*
Expense of Room, cleans, &c	£2 0*s* 0*d*
Food, Beds, Servants &c	£10 5*s* 4*d*
	£44 13*s* 1*d*

When the expenses were deducted from the Donations the gain amounted to £36 1*s* 6*d*.

The importance of the Anglican clergy in organising the meetings was crucial to their success. 'At most of the meetings the incumbents of the various parishes in which they were held, presided, and they and the neighbouring clergy took a conspicuous part in the business of the meetings.'[70] It must be presumed that many of those attending the meetings did so in their capacities as dutiful and supportive members of Anglican

[70] YIDD, Minutes, 28 March 1835.

congregations. The solicitor Mr O'Tomlin provides some evidence of a middle class professional presence. The attendance of existing subscribers and the friends of those who had benefited from the Institution demonstrates the importance of the ongoing relationship which the Committee sought to encourage. One of the most interesting features of the meetings was the presence of the deaf themselves. By 1857 between ten and twenty former pupils were reported as regularly attending meetings held in large towns. This 'very gratifying feature' was attributed to their eagerness to 'evince their regard for their former instructor... to express their gratitude for the benefits they have received, and show their interest in the present welfare of the institution.'[71] Perhaps it also reflected the desire of deaf people to congregate and communicate with each other; an important step in the development of an adult community.

The YIDD continued to make use of the public examination throughout the period covered by this thesis. Although generally profitable financially, receipts could be effected by the absence of prominent local gentry, market day or trade irregularities. A loss of novelty might also explain why repeat visits to locations were often less successful than the initial visit. However some locations yielded more on a second visit and the length of time between examinations may also have been a factor, so no definite conclusions can be drawn. Certainly the Committee were conscious of the need to seek out new areas to hold examinations and hence new audiences. Children from the districts to be visited were included in the examinations in an attempt to marshal local support. It is possible that reductions in receipts might also reflect variations in the social

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[71] YIDD, *Twenty Eighth Annual Report*, 1857, p.3.

composition or relative affluence of those attending the meetings. In 1849, for example, two meetings were held in Leeds which although 'very numerously attended' yielded only £17 4*s* 8*d*, £5 of that sum being contributed by the subscriber and committee member John Maude.[72] Although Baker continued to hold examinations after Fenton's death, the final series with which he was involved finished in 1857. Nine towns were targeted and the Committee reported new annual subscriptions amounting to £65 18*s*, donations in the sum of £87 13*s* with £55 12*s* 6*d* being collected at the meetings. Despite the success of this tour Baker seems to have opted thereafter to canvass without holding an examination.

Although the charity was well supported in its early years, perhaps because of the novelty of its cause, income began to fall off by the 1840s. Successive reports lamented the decline in receipts which were variously attributed to a shrinking list of subscribers or difficulties in the economic climate. Notwithstanding the fall in finance, 'It is a matter of honest pride to the Committee that no application that has been made for admission in conformity with the rules, has either been deferred or refused', and specific appeals for building works were always met.[73] Close attention was paid to the contributions from particular towns and appeals were specifically directed toward those districts where it was felt that insufficient revenue had been raised. From 1861 the number of children which each district sent to YIDD was carefully recorded in the Annual Reports. References to the exercise of economy and retrenchment fill the reports from mid-century onwards; however the careful management and prudent investment which characterised

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[72] YIDD, *Twentieth Annual Report*, 1849, p.4.
[73] Ibid.

the charity's administration throughout the period bore dividends. By 1874, shortly before his death, Baker was able to write to Aldam 'I am glad to say, however, that everything connected with its pecuniary position and prospects is very flourishing.'[74]

Local Authorities and the Payment of Maintenance

One of the principal frustrations of Baker's headship was the often fruitless attempts made to persuade local authorities to contribute to the maintenance of their deaf children. Until the Poor Law Amendment Act of 1834, negotiations were conducted with the parish officers in accordance with the old poor law. The first indication of the difficulties encountered in this relationship comes in the *Fifth Annual Report*: 'The very early removal of some of the pupils, in consequence of the poverty of parents, or the ill-advised economy of parish officers, has been a matter of much regret to the Committee: many promising children have been withdrawn imperfectly taught, and many others have never been able to procure admission from the operation of the causes alluded to.'[75] One child whose education was curtailed through lack of funding was James, son of Robert Taylor, a weaver of Knaresborough, who was admitted to the Institution in 1830. 'This boy was in the Institution little more than a year, the parish officers declined to furnish the small sum required by the rules of the Institution towards his board.' In such circumstances its

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[74] Baker to Aldam, 13 March 1874. Warde-Aldam Papers, DD.WA/M/28.
[75] YIDD, *Fifth Annual Report*, 1834, p.4.

was unsurprising that the boy was reported as having '.... acquired some bad habits while working in a stone quarry.'[76]

As we have seen, the YIDD sought to persuade the parish officers that paying for the education of the deaf would reduce expenditure in the longer term by encouraging independence and self-help. 'Your Committee would rejoice, if they could persuade overseers of parishes that it is their best policy to cause their Deaf and Dumb poor to be educated; thus enabling them to earn their own livelihood; rendering them in future independent of parochial support...'.[77] Further references to 'the niggardly and short-sighted economy of those in whom is vested the management and expenditure of parochial funds', occur in 1836.[78] 'It has happened, in more than twenty instances, that Children have either been removed very imperfectly educated, or altogether excluded from the benefit of your charity by the unwillingness (inability it can hardly be) of parishes to contribute towards their maintenance the small sum required by your rules.'[79]

In 1834, the Earl of Harewood visited YIDD, and Charles Baker later recalled that he had taken the opportunity to 'call his Lordship's attention to the difficulty of convincing parish officers that it was an economical policy to afford the means of education to their deaf and dumb, and that it would be wrong to give such children *free admission*, thus transferring the local burdens of parishes to the benevolent supporters of an Institution of

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[76] YIDD, *Inquiry Respecting Former Pupils 1870, Together with the School-Register, 1829-1870,* p.3 no.15.
[77] YIDD, *Fifth Annual Report*, 1834, p.4.
[78] YIDD, *Seventh Annual Report*, 1836, p.8.
[79] Ibid.

this character.'[80] Although the Poor Law Amendment Act had already passed through the House of Commons, and had been introduced into the House of Lords, the Earl undertook to secure, if possible, 'some recognition of the claims of the deaf and dumb for assistance..'.[81] His attempts to make payment for their education compulsory on the unions failed, but he was able to secure the exception on behalf of "the deaf and dumb and blind" in S.56 of the Act. This enabled the parents of such children to 'have advances made to them for education, by Boards of Guardians, which advances are not liable to be reclaimed.'[82]

The passage of the Act was greeted with enthusiasm at YIDD, where naturally it was hoped that a more sympathetic approach to the education of deaf children would now prevail. One reason for this optimism was that under the new Act '...the determination whether a Deaf and Dumb Child shall have the requisite allowance granted or not, will no longer be left to the parish generally; but will be entrusted to a board of guardians, who, it is to be hoped, will be selected from a class of persons well aware of the utility of a sound, moral, and practical education both to the individual and society at large.'[83] Indeed a number of YIDD Committee members were appointed to the Doncaster Board in an ex officio capacity.[84] Earl Fitzwilliam was Chairman of the Sheffield Board of

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[80] YIDD, *Twenty Fifth Annual Report*, 1854, *A Brief History of the Institution*, p.3. The YIDD Visitors Book records a visit of Lord and Lady Harewood, Lady F. Lascelles and Lady Louisa Lascelles on April 3rd 1834.
[81] Ibid.
[82] Ibid.
[83] YIDD, *Seventh Annual Report*, 1836, p.8.
[84] *Historical Notices of Doncaster* (Reprinted from the "Doncaster Gazette," from September 26 1862 to December 22 1865), p.297. The list of Board members includes E. Denison, Sir J. Copley, Bart., J. W. Childers and W. Aldam Esq.

Guardians and displayed a particular interest in medical relief.[85] Early hopes were soon confounded for many of the new boards of guardians proved as unwilling as their predecessors to sanction relief. A later report lamented that children were still being 'deprived of the blessings of education, either from the unwillingness of parents to lose sight of their children, or from the ill-judged parsimony of parish officers, who, from not knowing, or not valuing the advantages to be derived from the education of the Deaf and Dumb placed under their charge, are not induced in all cases to perform that act of justice which becomes so urgent in the case of children of the poor who labour under total deafness, and who consequently do not possess the power of speech.'[86]

Practical steps were needed to convince guardians of the need for 'a proper administration of the laws for the relief of the poor ....'.[87] In order to remind guardians of the power vested in them under s.56 and persuade them of the benefits offered by the Institution, the Committee issued a circular signed by Denison which was sent to all the local boards. The circular contained a brief history of the institution and its terms and stressed the benefits of education in terms most likely to appeal to parsimonious Guardians. 'Respecting the policy of giving the Deaf and Dumb the advantages of instruction, there can be no difference of opinion; and from past experience, there is every reason to believe, that if they are left uneducated, they will, at some future time,

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[85] Roberts, *Paternalism in Early Victorian England*, p.134.
[86] YIDD, *Ninth Annual Report*,1838, p.4.
[87] Ibid.

increase the burthens of the parish...'.[88] A further copy of the circular was annexed to the Annual Report.

The ambiguous phrasing of s.56 clearly caused difficulties of interpretation. Clarification as to the meaning and extent of the exception was sought from the Poor Law Commissioners on a number of occasions.[89] Whenever reference was made, the Commissioners encouraged those enquiring '... to pay for the education of their deaf and dumb as the wisest economy.' [90]

In 1862, 25 & 26 Vict. c.43. s.1. permitted Guardians to maintain poor children in certified schools provided that the expenses incurred did not exceed the cost of maintenance in the workhouse. Guardians were to pay for the cost of transportation of the child to and from the school and in case of death, for its burial costs. The meaning of the word "school" was extended to include '... any institution established for the instruction of blind, deaf, dumb, lame, deformed, or idiotic persons...'.[91] Children could be assisted under this act regardless of whether their parents were paupers.[92] In 1868, 31 & 32 Vict. c.122. s. 42. provided that guardians could send deaf-mute or blind children to uncertified schools subject to the approval of the Poor Law Board. Since few schools desired the

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[88] *Circular*, YIDD, *Ninth Annual Report*, 1838, p.60.
[89] YIDD, *Twenty Fifth Annual Report*, 1854, *A Brief History of the Institution,* p.5.
[90] Ibid.
[91] 25 & 26 Vict. c.43. s.10.
[92] YIDD, *Fiftieth Annual Report*, 1879, credits Baker and the officers of YIDD for the passage of this act.

inspection that certification entailed and because the mechanism for circumventing certification was cumbersome, these Acts were of little assistance.[93]

In 1851 YIDD reached an acceptable compromise with local Boards. The 1851 Report referred to '...the Rev. J. M. Maxfield, a warm friend of the Institution, who has also induced the Huddersfield Board of Guardians to become subscribers at £3. 3s a-year. This praiseworthy example has been followed by the Dewsbury Board, on the suggestion of B. Wilson Esq. of Mirfield, and your committee entertain sanguine hopes that it will be extensively followed by other unions.'[94] A unanimous resolution was passed; 'That Boards of Guardians which subscribe Three Guineas a year to the Institution, shall have all the privileges of individual subscribers, so far as to recommend children of the poor of their own unions to be received into the Institution at the lowest rate of charge for board and education.'[95] Applications were made to all the boards of guardians and favourable replies were received from Barnsley, North Bierley, Dewsbury, Doncaster, Halifax, Huddersfield, Penistone, Pickering, Rotherham, Sheffield, Skipton, Stokesley, Wakefield, Wortley and York. The Union of Todmorden gave one guinea annually. 'From this source your funds are increased forty six guineas a year. Your committee trust that this subject will receive further attention during the present year from other boards of guardians. Through these channels the admission of poor children to the institution, at suitable ages, will, it is thought, be much facilitated.'[96] Although not every local union

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[93] Enabling Acts of 1879 and 1882 also dealt with the powers of Boards to help poor deaf children.
[94] YIDD, *Twenty Second Annual Report*, 1851, p.2.
[95] Ibid.
[96] YIDD, *Twenty Third Annual Report*, 1852, p.3.

could be persuaded to subscribe by 1853 seventeen of the Yorkshire Poor Law Unions were contributing £3 3s each, and another contributed £1 1*s*. In Nottinghamshire, two Poor Law Union's contributed £10 and in Lincolnshire, a further union also contributed £10.[97] By 1854, a further three Yorkshire Unions had been persuaded to contribute.[98]

The absence of statistical or demographic evidence as to the proportion of the population who were deaf made it difficult for the Committee to plan the scale of provision necessary. In 1830 Baker wrote to 'a few Members of Parliament' in an attempt to have a question relating to deafness included in the Census Bill then before the Commons.[99] A decade later, 'a much more vigorous effort was made in the same direction' and was rewarded with some acknowledgment of the importance of such a question in principle, but no significant action. 'In 1850 a deliberate and definite course of action was resolved upon, and the result was achieved.' This course of action involved Baker waiting upon the Registrar-General and explaining to him the dilemma faced by the institutions and also the role the Census could play in determining the causes of deafness, (whether congenital or acquired), and hence in indicating measures that might be taken to prevent future cases. Other institutions were sent a circular requesting their cooperation and asking that they lobby their local M.P.s. Subsequently, the Committee, expressing their satisfaction, noted that although, 'they are aware that their suggestions to the other institutions for the attainment of this object were in many instances ably carried out, at the same time they feel that their success must be mainly attributed to the exertions and

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[97] YIDD, *Twenty Fourth Annual Report*, 1853, p.20.
[98] YIDD, *Twenty Fifth Annual Report*, 1854, p.24.
[99] C. Baker, *Historical and Financial Statement of Forty Years Work at the Yorkshire Institution for the Deaf and Dumb*, (Doncaster, 1869), p.15.

influence of parties connected with the Yorkshire Institute for the Deaf and Dumb.'[100] Baker felt that the 1851 Census, although '... doubtless defective, ... was nevertheless valuable as an approximation to correctness.'[101] In 1873, in a letter to Aldam, Baker wrote that he had recently been in correspondence with the Census Commissioners, 'who had inquired of me how the proportional decrease [in the number of deaf persons] was to be accounted for.'[102]

The Curriculum

Education at YIDD was conducted through 'natural and explanatory signs, fingerspelling, and writing.'[103] Baker, who came to be seen as the country's leading exponent of the French or manual system, believed signing to be the most natural form of communication for the deaf. He saw the language of natural signs '.. as the truest mirror of their thoughts, hopes, wishes and feelings... this language is nature's most perfect, most expressive interpreter.'[104] Since signs could be acquired relatively swiftly, time could be spent in ensuring that the children received a general education on a par with that of their hearing peers. For Baker, deafness was 'a natural infirmity... the *worst* effects of which might be wholly overcome by education....'.[105] It was the awakening of the child's powers of reason and intellect that was crucial to his development, rather than the ability to parrot

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[100] YIDD, *Twenty Second Annual Report*, 1851, p.3.
[101] Baker, *Historical and Financial Statement,* p.15.
[102] Baker to Aldam, 26 September1873.Warde-Aldam Papers, DD.WA/M/28/2.
[103] A full description of the methods and techniques used by Baker is given in Boyce, *The History of the Yorkshire Residential School for the Deaf,* p.21.
[104] Ibid.
[105] Baker, *Historical and Financial Statement*, p.10.

speech. An oral education, which concentrated almost exclusively on teaching articulation, left little time for wider intellectual development. It required a high teacher to pupil ratio and was more expensive. Sign language was therefore a better medium for the mass education of the deaf poor. One corollary of the use of signs was that deaf people could teach each other, and a number of deaf instructors were employed by YIDD. Baker's own textbook *Circle of Knowledge* sold over 400,000 copies and was printed in many different languages.[106]

In common with other institutions for the education of working class children, and as an industrial school, YIDD attempted to provide an appropriate and 'practically useful education.'[107] Education centred around 'The various branches of elementary knowledge, which may at some period conduce to the worldly advantage and honest livelihood of those, who when removed from the school shall conduct themselves with industry, ... as indeed ought to be the case, whenever there exists a probability, that the lot of the instructed may be cast amongst those who are to earn for themselves the necessaries of life.'[108] It was not the intention of the Committee that the education received at YIDD should '... carry them beyond their sphere in life..'.[109] Children should learn their duties to God and their social superiors.

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[106] *Dictionary of National Biography.*
[107] YIDD, *Second Annual Report*, 1831, p.5.
[108] YIDD, *Eighth Annual Report*, 1837, p.4.
[109] YIDD, *First Annual Report*, 1830, p.6

In 1833, according to Thomas Cook, lessons began at six, after morning prayer. The children 'learn and write addition, geography, scripture, history, &c.'.[110] When not in class, the boys 'work in the mill, some play in the yard, some dig in the garden, some gather stones, weeds and sticks, and some clean.'[111] The girls were occupied with housework or needlework. Parents could visit on a Saturday, although apparently few did.[112] Sundays were spent in church or engaging in other religious activities.[113] Occasionally this routine was enlivened by a visit to an exhibition or to the circus. In 1871 the Institution forwarded 'examples of hand-writing, of Arithmetic - from the lowest rules to the Rule of Three, Practice and Fractions - in Geography, Bible History, Ancient History, Geometry, Perspective, Free-hand and Model Drawing...' to the International Exhibition.[114]

Religious education and devotion were central to the curriculum with secular education being delivered 'on Christian principles'.[115] Fortunately the YIDD seems to have avoided the religious controversy that dogged other educational institutions. Since its mission was to all the children of the county of York, and many of these children came from dissenting families, a tolerant attitude to other creeds was implicit. Baker sought to

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[110] Letter addressed by Thomas Cook to his teacher Mr Scott and dated April 12th 1833. Boyce, *The History of the Yorkshire Residential School for the Deaf,* p.20.
[111] Ibid.
[112] Boyce, *The History of the Yorkshire Residential School for the Deaf,* p. 21.
[113] The Sunday timetable at YIDD is given in full in K.W. Hodgson, *The Deaf and their Problems* (1953), p.72. Hodgson suggests that the cruelty of enforcing such an exacting religious education on young children was akin to that of placing them in mines or factories!
[114] YIDD, *Forty Second Annual Report*, 1871, p.4.
[115] *Results of an Inquiry Respecting The Former Pupils of the Yorkshire Institution for the Deaf and Dumb*, p.A.3.

emphasise natural rather than revealed religion in his teaching.[116] In 1844 a resolution was passed allowing the children '... to attend their respective Places of Worship if their Parents or Guardians express a wish to that effect, but upon condition that the officers of the Institution are not expected to convey, or take charge of them to or from such places of worship...'.[117] The child of a Dissenting Minister is recorded as having attended the institution and a Catholic pupil would sometimes attend Mass. Where appropriate, Anglican children could be prepared for confirmation. It may have been that in the early years of the Institution the lack of local alternative arrangements prevented any sectarian difficulties arising. When a Catholic School was established near Sheffield, Baker believed that it had 'intercepted some of the pupils we should otherwise have had here.'[118] Religious tolerance did not extend to members of staff, Baker berated his assistant Arnold for his conversion to Nonconformity, which rendered the latter ineligible for the position of Headmaster at Brighton.[119]

Vocational Training

The curriculum placed great stress on the importance of manual labour, in particular gardening for the boys. The girls were taught needlework and household duties under a work mistress, so that they might become 'useful members of society', and perhaps 'be

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[116] Many of Baker's publications were on the subject of religion. These included books intended for children and their teachers on biblical history and geography. At least one publication, *A Teacher's First Lessons on Religion; with a Catechism, and a series of Lessons on Prayer* (1833), was embossed for the use of the blind.
[117] YIDD, Minutes, 9 September 1844.
[118] Baker to Aldam, May 20 1873. Warde-Aldam Papers, DD.WA/M/28/2.
[119] T. Arnold, *Reminiscences of Forty Years* (Kettering and Wellingborough, c.1895), p.30.

qualified to pass from the Institution directly into service.'[120] In 1832 training in skilled trades, initially shoemaking and tailoring, was introduced to assist the promotion of 'a spirit of industry amongst the pupils.'[121] Training was thus justified in moral as well as practical terms: pupils 'employments give them an inclination for industrious pursuits, and aid, perhaps more than is generally allowed, in producing beneficial tendencies in their moral deportment.'[122]

The belief that deaf pupils had enhanced abilities of observation which could, with encouragement, be made manifest in an ability to draw or engrave, led to the proposal that a drawing master be employed.[123] Drawing would give the pupils 'resources which may serve to occupy innocently time.' A convenient by product of this might be that '...this auxiliary will constitute an useful as well as an innocent and amusing part of their system of education, and may contribute, as has been in some instances the case, to the support of those, who shall be able to acquire a sufficient degree of proficiency therein...'.[124] Baker also purchased a printing press and by 1842 the boys were printing the Institution's Annual Reports. In March 1867 the first examination in drawing under the Department of Science and Art took place. The Report of the following year commented, 'The accounts which have been published of former inmates shew manifestly the importance of this acquisition to the Deaf and Dumb, as an Industrial art:

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[120] YIDD, *Fourth Annual Report*, 1833, p.5. and *Eighth Annual Report*, 1837, p.6.
[121] YIDD, *Fourth Annual Report*, 1833, p.5.
[122] YIDD, *Fifth Annual Report*, 1834, p. 6.
[123] YIDD, *Seventh Annual Report*, 1836, p.6.
[124] Ibid.

many of them become engravers in metal, wood, and stone, carvers in wood and stone, ornamental painters, and designers.'[125]

The training the children received provided a firm grounding in the precepts of political economy. The girls sewed clothes for the poor and were allowed to keep the proceeds of their work, presumably as part of an attempt to teach them the connection between hard work and reward. The children were taught to eschew begging and mendicancy: 'Since its establishment the Institution has been frequently visited by deaf and dumb pupils, who, having left other Institutions and learned a trade, have been in search of employment, by others, asking pecuniary aid. It has been a constant practice, and hitherto, it is believed, a successful one, to give the pupils of the Yorkshire Institution an aversion to such models of life... I have never yet heard of a single case in which a pupil has been known to go "on tramp" in search of work, or to solicit charity... it is believed the pupils without exception have early imbibed a right feeling on this point.'[126] In theory at least, a strong practical education combined with effective moral and religious instruction, would promote independence, diligence and moral probity. These characteristics would enable successful competition in the labour market and hence the avoidance of pauperism.

Beyond providing the necessary educational grounding the YIDD was not initially concerned with further ensuring the employment prospects of its pupils. The Committee

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[125] YIDD, *Thirty Ninth Annual Report*, 1868, p.7.
[126] *Results of an Inquiry Respecting The Former Pupils of the Yorkshire Institution for the Deaf and Dumb*, p. 72.

stated that they 'wish it to be clearly understood that to provide situations for those who have been its Pupils, forms no part of the business of the Institution.'[127] It was the responsibility of pupil's parents or friends 'to assist by all honest means their temporal welfare.'[128] However an interest and concern for the prospects of former pupils was evident and perhaps inevitable from an early date. In part this arose from a natural desire to ensure that the fruits of both education and charity were not neglected or squandered.[129] Pressure from parents or sponsors may have been another factor. In any event, it soon became apparent that practical or paternalistic intervention was necessary to compensate for the additional difficulties and prejudices encountered by the deaf in the labour market. The Committee therefore made 'an earnest appeal to all friends of these poor children, – to the wealthy and influential in their respective neighbourhoods, to use their utmost exertions in procuring for them eligible situations... that the same kind feeling which prompted the affluent to found this Institution, will induce them to watch over those who leave it...'.[130] One early initiative was taken by John Maude. The *Third Annual Report* records a gift of 10*l* from Maude to establish a fund for assisting indigent children on leaving the institution.[131]

In 1837 a more interventionist approach to finding suitable employment for former pupils was adopted. The committee proposed that ten pounds should be appropriated towards the apprenticeship fees of two scholars, their parents or friends matching the donation. It

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[127] YIDD, *Sixth Annual Report*, 1835, p.6.
[128] Ibid., p.5.
[129] Ibid., p.6.
[130] Ibid.
[131] YIDD, *Third Annual Report*, 1832, p.45.

was acknowledged that this represented 'an extension of your Charity to a purpose perhaps not originally contemplated...'.[132] However this was a move the committee recommended since 'present circumstances and ... the state of the finances admit of it...'.[133] Such largesse was to be limited to '...those cases, where such talents and steadiness have been evinced in earlier years, as give a certainty or at least a fair presumption, that Pupils so highly favoured by the Institution will in after life do credit to it by skill and industry in their trade or calling, as well as by purity of character and uprightness of conduct.'[134] The Committee subsequently expressed their wish to extend the benefit of such payments 'so that in future years all pupils who require such aid for promoting their settlement to an occupation immediately on their leaving school, may have this trifling impediment removed... They are well assured that next to imparting knowledge and good habits to the children, the funds cannot be better devoted than in giving to them a permanent employment suited to their peculiar situation.'[135] By 1841 six pupils had benefited from the scheme, and the following year a further three set of fees were paid. The committee expressed their hope 'that they will be enabled to continue this mode of establishing pupils in useful occupations, being persuaded that they can only thus fully perform the duties they have undertaken towards such children.'[136]

Inquiries into the Employment of Pupils

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[132] YIDD, *Eighth Annual Report*, 1837, p.7.
[133] Ibid.
[134] Ibid.
[135] YIDD, *Tenth Annual Report*,1839, p. 7.
[136] YIDD, *Thirteenth Annual Report*, 1842, p.5.

In 1844 the Committee ordered an investigation, subsequently published as *Results of an Inquiry Respecting The Former Pupils of the Yorkshire Institute for the Deaf and Dumb*, into the employment and progress of its graduates. The Committee hoped that by presenting an 'impartial view of the effects of educating the deaf and dumb' the inquiry would generate and secure support, exert a 'silent influence' on pupils and also function as an educational document.[137] It 'would mark the trades in which experience had proved they would be fitted to excel, and thus facilitate the apprenticeship of pupils after leaving school, and bear upon their future prospects of usefulness.' It might also serve '... to remove prejudices highly injurious to the deaf and dumb themselves, which they had found constantly operating to their disadvantage.' In order to do so the Inquiry, '..... had to prove beyond the possibility of doubt or contradiction, that, with few exceptions, their pupils acquired the trades to which they were placed, generally, with the same facility as young persons who are endowed with all their senses, and with greater facility in many instances...'. Since the conduct of former pupils was the clearest indication as to the success of their education, subscribers and other interested parties could use the Inquiry to assess the extent to which the Institution was achieving its aims and hence was worthy of further support. The Inquiry might perhaps be interpreted as a reaction to the more sceptical and critical approach to philanthropy that commentators have detected during this period.[138]

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[137] *Results of an Inquiry Respecting The Former Pupils of the Yorkshire Institution for the Deaf and Dumb*, p.A.3.

[138] See for example Owen, *English Philanthropy*, p.98. 'The new philanthropist frowned on almsgiving, without careful investigations, and tended to judge charitable efforts by their success in encouraging recipients to stand on their own feet.'

Circulars were sent out 'to the parents of former pupils, to their masters, to the incumbents of their respective parishes, or to those philanthropic individuals by whose kind interest the pupils were placed under the care of the Institution...'.[139] Persons receiving the circular were asked to comment upon 'the occupations in which the pupils had been engaged since leaving the institution... their facilities, compared with others, *not deaf and dumb*, in acquiring the trade in which they had been employed... their conduct.. and any other information bearing upon these inquiries ...'.[140]

By January 1847 196 pupils, 105 boys and 91 girls, had left the Institution. Information was received about 122 of these pupils; of the remaining 74, twenty four were judged 'deficient in intellect', twelve had died and eight were known to be in weak health. Of the 69 girls included in the survey twenty six were employed as dress makers, nine as milliners or bonnet makers, ten at home in domestic work, three as laundry maids, three as factory workers, three as labourers and two as servants. Only two had failed to acquire 'their business as well as... those who hear and speak.'[141] The 70 boys were listed as engaging in 27 different occupations. The majority, fourteen, were shoemakers, eight were labourers and six were tailors. Others worked in various branches of manufacture or as artisans. The results of Baker's efforts to encourage printing were evident; two compositors, three engravers and a painter, a lithographer, a typefounder, and a pattern maker are also listed. In no case had a pupil become 'a common mendicant.'[142] One

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[139] *Results of an Inquiry Respecting The Former Pupils of the Yorkshire Institution for the Deaf and Dumb*, p.A.3.
[140] Ibid.
[141] Ibid. p.69.
[142] Ibid. p.78.

former pupil, Henry Jervis, was in the union workhouse; Jerivs was keen to learn the trade of shoemaker, '.. but no one is anxious to receive him, he being so dull.'[143] Six of the boys had not progressed as well as hearing peers and five ambiguous responses were received. A large majority of both sexes were either reported well of or were highly commended for their behaviour.

The Committee expressed their confidence that 'the difficulty which has frequently been experienced by the officers of the Institution, and by parents, in procuring masters and mistresses for the pupils on leaving School must be materially lessened, if not entirely done away with, by the publication of these Results.'[144] The information obtained would enable the Committee to guide parents in the choice of trades where children were most likely to be successful. It might also 'serve as a warning that labour in stone-quarries, mines and on railways, is especially to be avoided, as association with the characters employed upon such work appears to have a depraving tendency.'[145] The Committee noted that 'a deaf and dumb young person attracts attention which others do not; and while one party by over-indulgence would manifest unusual, and uncalled for kindness towards such a person when thrown on the world, another would heartlessly lead him astray, by indulging him in propensities which require error.'[146] Employers, it was stressed, should treat their deaf and dumb employees 'precisely like ordinary apprentices.'

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[143] Ibid. p.41.
[144] Ibid. p.77.
[145] Ibid. p.78.
[146] Ibid. p72.

This inquiry was reprinted and brought up to date in 1847, 1854, 1859 and finally in 1870. On the last occasion 700 circulars were sent out and 400 replies received. The Committee reported of its former pupils that 'a good proportion... have taken upon themselves the responsibilities of life, and pursued them with the same vigour and success as those who labour under no disadvantage or deprivation; some of them have become employers, many, too, are heads of families, ...while others, with missionary spirit, are engaged in promoting the welfare of their brothers and sisters in infirmity at Leeds, Bradford, Halifax, Sheffield, Hull, London, and in other places...'.[147] Many of the married pupils had married other former deaf pupils and some had sent deaf offspring to the Institution.

Of the 173 Females covered by the 1870 Inquiry, sixty one were dressmakers or milliners; fifty were engaged in domestic duties; twenty nine worked in mills or factories; twenty two were servants, laundresses or charwomen; eight were in sundry occupations and four were unaccounted for. Of the 246 Males, thirty nine were in the boot and shoe trade; twenty five worked in mills, factories or clothing trades; twenty three were tailors; twenty one lithographers, engravers, artists or pattern designers; twenty were labourers and farm servants; eighteen letter-press printers, compositors, bookbinders or type founders; fifteen engineers, mechanics or iron workers; fourteen joiners, carvers or cabinet makers; twelve cutlers or in Sheffield trades; twelve farmers; eleven brickmakers, masons or quarry men; eleven painters and decorators; eight gardeners; thirteen sundry trades and four unaccounted for. Two former pupils had been at least temporarily

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[147] YIDD, *Inquiry Respecting Former Pupils 1870, Together with the School-Register, 1829-1870.*

residents of the union workhouse; the 'unyielding and obstinate' William Bew, who after a short residence in the workhouse had learned the error of his ways, 'there have been no complaints since', and William Sutcliffe whose 'mother having no control over him, it was found necessary to send him to the workhouse.' Again the statistics showed that the majority of former pupils had acquired their trades at least as well as the average and had behaved in an exemplary fashion.

The 1871 Annual Report which followed the Inquiry made reference to two disturbing trends. The first was 'the unexpected and *too early* removal of children so imperfectly educated that they ought still to be under instruction.'[148] During the previous four years 'the unexampled number of 102 children have left school, of whom 30 have been at school less than three years, 12 under four years and 60 five years or upwards...'.[149] It was pointed out that whilst the school rules recommended that children should receive six years of education many YIDD pupils were receiving a shorter term of education than those 'possessed of all their faculties.'[150] This had serious consequences for their future prospects. The Inquiry had shown that the children who remained at the school for one to three years 'are those of whom they have either no accounts, or unsatisfactory

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[148] YIDD, *Forty Second Annual Report*, 1871, p.3.
[149] Ibid.
[150] Ibid. p.4. In 1861 the *Report of the Newcastle Commission* suggested that by the 1850s most children received an average of 5.7 years schooling. According to W. B. Stephens this figure is 'highly dubious' with most workers' children attending for three years at most. Stephens, *Education in Britain*, pp. 82-83.

accounts.'[151] Only after five or six years were the particulars 'complete and satisfactory in all respects.'[152]

The scale of the problem raised 'some apprehension that the high character which the Institution has hitherto sustained will be endangered if its future pupils should be denied those benefits which have been so productive of good results.'[153] The early removal of many of the more promising pupils was blamed on their parents desire that they should enter employment, 'their acquirements in that time being regarded by their parents as equal, or superior to those of their more favoured children...'.[154] Edmund Newman wrote regretfully of Hannah, daughter of Benjamin Turton, weaver of Barnsley, 'Her friends never apprised me of her removal from the Institution, or I had more insisted upon her being sent back; there can be no doubt but that their object was to profit by her earnings.'[155] The Inquiry Report lamented that such parents did not take into consideration 'that the higher moral and intellectual capacities, which contribute so largely to the formation of character, can only be developed and educated by a lengthened course of training and subjection.'[156]

The second trend observed in the 1871 Report was a fall in subscriptions due partly, 'as reported by our local agencies, to the transference of subscriptions to local Associations

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[151] YIDD, *Forty Second Annual Report*, 1871, p.4.
[152] Ibid.
[153] YIDD, *Forty Fourth Annual Report*, 1873, p.4.
[154] Ibid.
[155] YIDD, *Inquiry Respecting Former Pupils 1870, Together with the School-Register, 1829-1870.*
[156] YIDD, *Forty Fourth Annual Report*, 1873, p.4.

for the Adult deaf and dumb.'[157] In a draft of this report the religious, social and mutual aid functions of these associations were acknowledged as beneficial in that they required little financial aid. However the draft cautioned that, 'if in addition to these aims, young children are taken, as to a day-school for instruction, specially trained teachers would be required, and the cost of maintaining them largely increased.'[158] Such a development would divert resources from the YIDD and could only be harmful.

In his private correspondence with Aldam, Baker discussed two other factors which he believed were effecting admissions into the Institution.[159] One was the diversion of pupils to the Catholic school at Sheffield and to the Day School at Hull. The other was the decrease, as evidenced by the Census, in the proportion of deaf and dumb people in the population. Baker suggested that this fall was due to the influence of sanitary reforms and good medical attendance on the poor and the fact that the public were now 'better informed as to the effects of consanguine marriages...'.[160] Despite this proportional decline Baker was convinced that there were more educable deaf children in the region than the hundred then at the Institution. 'We want some form of compulsory power in operation before our number will be materially increased and it is a question as to what shape such power could assume.'[161]

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[157] YIDD, *Forty Second Annual Report*, 1871, p.3.
[158] Proposed Report of the Committee 1871. These cautionary remarks were ommited from the final report. Warde-Aldam Papers, DD.WA/M/28/7.
[159] Baker to Aldam, May 20 1873. Warde-Aldam Papers, DD.WA/M/28/2.
[160] Baker to Aldam, September 26 1873. Warde-Aldam Papers, DD.WA/M/28/2.
[161] Ibid.

A form of 'compulsory power' had been introduced by the 1870 Education Act which provided for the establishment of additional schools wherever existing voluntary provision was insufficient. These schools were to be run by locally elected school boards which had the power to compel attendance and were funded through the rates. Although the Act had not specifically exempted any children from its ambit, the first School Board had, by classing 'deaf and dumb, blind, and idiotic children' under the exemption for the "permanently disabled", chosen to interpret it as having done so.[162] This lead was followed by the influential London School Board under its first chairman and it was not until 1874 when Sir Charles Reed took over at the Board that any consideration was given to provision for deaf children. Consequently Boards were under no obligation to provide for their deaf children and many chose not to do so. Nor were deaf children included when elementary provision was made compulsory for the under tens in 1880.

The failure to make adequate provision for deaf children under the 1870 Act motivated Mr W. St. James Wheelhouse, M.P. for Leeds, to bring in the first of his many unsuccessful Bills for the Education of the Deaf and Dumb and the Blind. The YIDD Committee approved of the terms of this first Bill 'so far as it makes the payments for the education of the Deaf and Dumb compulsory on Boards of Guardians, though they doubt the propriety of requiring the cost of maintenance beyond the cost of maintenance of such children in Unions; they also approve of assistance being rendered by Boards of

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[162] W. Stainer, *The Powers of the School Board and the Poor Law Guardians in Relation to the Care and Education of the Deaf and Dumb* (Margate, 1888), p.4. Paper read at a special meeting of the Council of the COS, London, on Monday, July 30th 1888 by the Rev. Dr Wm. Stainer, Superintendent of 'Day Classes' for the Deaf and Dumb under the School Board for London.

Guardians to parents who cannot afford to pay the sums required for the maintenance of their deaf and dumb children in Institutions.'[163] If the state were to pay the full cost of maintenance of these children what role or scope would there be for voluntary endeavour?

The Oral System

The death of Charles Baker in 1874 and the subsequent appointment of James Howard ushered in a new era for YIDD and for deaf education generally. With the passing of Baker the manual system lost one of its most stalwart advocates and Howard lost little time in introducing the oral system. Howard's conversion followed a proselytising visit to YIDD in the autumn of 1875 by the Abbe Ballestra, principal of the Como Institution. Howard wrote to Aldam about the oral system, 'if ... found practicable, it will be of far greater importance to the whole of the pupils following - for if it be proved possible to give the deaf and dumb articulate language they must take a higher position in Society that at present, and their education be far more perfect.'[164] With the sanction of the Committee a first class was established with instruction in the oral method.[165] Doncaster thus became the first of the regional asylums to teach speech.[166]

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[163] YIDD, *Forty First Annual Report*, 1870, p.6.
[164] Howard to Aldam, 30 October 1875. Warde-Aldam Papers, DD.WA/M/28/5.
[165] Although a keen advocate of the oral system, Howard recognised the importance of signs as a means of enabling the incompletely educated pupil to enjoy 'the pleasure and profit of spontaneous conversation.' To deny this was 'a species of cruelty which I am not prepared either to advise or adopt.' Boyce, *The History of the Yorkshire Residential School for the Deaf,* p.66. He also acknowledged the existence of a class of children who could derive no benefit from the oral method.
[166] Hodgson, *The Deaf and their Problems*, p. 234.

Shortly thereafter a deputation from the YIDD Committee went to visit the three London schools which were run on the German or Oral method. 'The object of the visit was to ascertain which of the above systems [German or French] is the best for our purpose.'[167] Howard's report noted that all the oral school masters agreed that a minimum of eight years education was necessary if articulation was to be taught properly and that signing should be banned as far as possible. Highly experienced teachers and small classes were essential. The Report concluded: 'That language being the one object of Deaf Mute instruction, this should receive the whole attention:- the acquisition of knowledge to be delayed until it can be imparted orally.' Howard's concern to raise standards and status amongst professional teachers of the deaf was to lead to his involvement with Richard Elliot in the establishment in 1885 of a teacher training college which issued certificates to those trained in the oral method.

One factor which may have influenced the Committee in its enthusiastic endorsement of the oral system was the concern that signing limited the social contacts of deaf pupils leading to intermarriages and, it was feared, the birth of increased numbers of deaf children. Such views had been expressed by deaf educators at least since 1857 when Dr David Buxton had published a book entitled *On the Marriage and Intermarriage of the Deaf and Dumb.* The *Doncaster Chronicle* of June 1878 carried a report of the Institution's annual meeting and quoted YIDD Committee member the Rev. Scott Surtees: 'When children were taught by the fingers they were only enabled, as a rule to

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[167] Condensed Report of visit of deputation from the Committee to the London Schools. Warde-Aldam Papers, DD.WA/M/28/5.

communicate one with another, and when two met as a natural consequence, there was sympathy between them, which in five cases out of six led to marriage; and the result then generally was that the children were deaf and dumb too. By means of articulation, however, they would be able to communicate with others, and, therefore, he hoped in this respect the system would prove a great blessing.'[168]

Perhaps allied to concerns about reproduction was a new emphasis on the physical fitness and condition of the pupils that can be detected from the commencement of Howard's headship. Care was taken to distinguish the degree of deafness and to encourage those partially deaf to make use of ear trumpets and speaking tubes. The development of a healthy pair of lungs was seen as an important prerequisite of articulation and comments in the reports referred to the supposedly inferior physique of deaf children. One of Howard's first acts was to rent a field for athletic purposes and his interest in the physical health and development of the children led eventually to the erection of a gymnasium in 1892. The money for the gymnasium was raised through the efforts of Howard, his wife and staff.[169] In 1885 Mr George Greenslade was appointed First Teacher and he took responsibility for the special attention being given to the physical training of the children, which included regular drilling.[170] Sports galas, football and cricket matches allowed YIDD's children to mix with their hearing peers. A Chess club was formed and a reading room provided; 'The aim of all this is to give the pupils a taste for taking advantage of any facilities for improvement and mental culture that may be found in the towns where

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[168] *Doncaster Chronicle*, 21 June 1878.
[169] Boyce, *The History of the Yorkshire Residential School for the Deaf*, p.17.
[170] Greenslade became head of the institution following Howard's death in 1904.

they will reside, and also to encourage them to associate with speaking and hearing persons, and so to minimise that isolation which experts believe to be very harmful to the best interests of the deaf and dumb.'[171] In an attempt to encourage greater independence older children were encouraged to go in to town unaccompanied to practice their speech. The diet of the pupils was also improved with the addition of soup and a more varied selection of meat. Good table manners were encouraged. A nurse and honorary dentist were appointed for the first time.[172]

Howard's new approach was reflected in the restating of the objects of the Institution in the *Fifty First Annual Report.* These were '.... to provide a comfortable home, good substantial food and a thorough education to the Deaf and Dumb Children of the County of York.'[173] This pragmatic declaration was however underpinned with arguments in virtually the same terms as had been used by the charity's promoters in 1830. 'These, but for the training received in this, or kindred Institutions, would most probably have become burdens, not only to the ratepayers, but equally to themselves – living in a world of wonder, the mind overshadowed by a darkness, of which those best acquainted with the Deaf and Dumb can have but faint conception – leading an aimless and hopeless life – incapable of receiving advice, consolation or warning, and ignorant of the future, the vast hereafter remaining for them an utter blank.'[174]

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[171] YIDD, *Fifty Eighth Annual Report*, 1887, p.3.
[172] Boyce, *The History of the Yorkshire Residential School for the Deaf*, p.67.
[173] YIDD, *Fifty First Annual Report*, 1880, p.6.
[174] Ibid.

Howard also had definite ideas about the vocational training of his pupils. Baker's printing press 'was found to be of so little practical value, compared with the cost of its maintenance, that... the whole was disposed of.'[175] Shoemaking and tailoring were seen as more suitable areas for concentration; 'although the Deaf and Dumb make skilled workmen in almost any manual employment, these are the two trades most generally followed by them.'[176] A class for woodcarving and turning was also instituted and the high quality of the work received special commendation from the Royal Commission of 1889.[177] In 1895 workshops and sheds were erected so that joinery and boot making could be taught. Training for the girls remained restricted to house and needlework. Although no inquiry into the careers of former pupils on the scale that Baker had undertaken was attempted, the annual reports contained details of recent leavers. In 1881 the Report noted 'The pupils, as heretofore, find no great difficulty in obtaining employment at the conclusion of their school course, and all the fourteen who left the Institution last year (except one promising boy, who has since died of brain fever) are now following some useful occupation.'[178] In 1886 it was reported that whilst a few pupils still lacked settled employment, others were engaged in: 'farming, woodcarving,

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[175] YIDD, *Forty Sixth Annual Report*, 1875, p.4.
[176] Ibid.
[177] *Report of the Royal Commission on the Blind, the Deaf and Dumb and Others of the United Kingdom*, Parliamentary Papers (1889), XIX, p.60, c.357. It seems that YIDD was unusual in still offering vocational training at this time. The Commission found that 'The theory of school life for the deaf and dumb in this country has been to devote as much time as possible to giving pupils a knowledge of language and general knowledge, such as is taught in the early standards in our elementary schools during the short period of three or four years during which the pupils have ordinarily been kept at school, and not to have any of the time at their disposal curtailed by learning trades.' Ibid., c.356.
[178] YIDD, *Fifty Second Annual Report*, 1881, p.4.

printing, saddlery, shoemaking, tailoring, glass bottle making, corve making, millinery, dressmaking and domestic service...'.[179]

One new initiative in the field of employment was the setting up of a fund to assist boys from the country in response the Committee's plea that some means be devised of 'defraying the expenses of board and lodging during the early years of apprenticeship.'[180] The Committee had found that boys from rural areas 'do not find the same facilities for being apprenticed to suitable trades that boys do whose parents live in our large towns.'[181] A donation of four hundred pounds was promised by two ladies, conditional upon an equal sum being raised within a year. The Committee gratefully accepted the offer believing that 'such a fund must prove a great boon to a number of deserving boys whose tastes and acquirements fit them for work of an artistic or skilled nature not to be found in their native villages.'[182] As ever, the philanthropic citizens of Yorkshire rose to the challenge and the requisite sum was found.

Smaller classes and experienced teachers, the prerequisites of the oral system, increased the costs of educating deaf children at a time when income from subscriptions was falling.[183] The Committee were also concerned that there were more deaf children in the county than were being educated at YIDD and expressed their fears that the Institution was not sufficiently well known. The solution to both problems seemed to be the revival

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[179] YIDD, *Fifty Seventh Annual Report*, 1886, p.4.
[180]YIDD, *Fifty Fourth Annual Report*, 1883, p.7.
[181] Ibid.
[182] YIDD, *Fifty Fifth Annual Report*, 1884, p.5.
[183] Boyce suggests that this was because subscribers objected to the introduction of the oral system. Boyce, *The History of the Yorkshire Residential School for the Deaf*, p.67.

of the system of public examinations. In addition the examinations seemed the perfect format for demonstrating the potential of the oral system to a wider audience. Although Howard proposed holding examinations in 1876 there was 'some difference of opinion as to the desirability of canvassing..' and it was not until 1879 that he gained the sanction of the committee. Arrangements were made for examinations to be held in Leeds, Huddersfield and York. Arthur Lupton Esq. was responsible for the arrangements for the Leeds meeting which was to be held at the Philosophical Hall.[184] Lupton arranged for the Lord Mayor to preside over the meeting and announcements were made by circulars and posting bills. After the Leeds meeting the Rev. Wilmot Ware wrote to Aldam; 'You will very likely have seen in one of the Leeds papers an account of our doings yesterday. Unfortunately our attendance was extremely and unaccountably small...'.[185] The attendance at Huddersfield was also 'not large' and although those present expressed their opprobrium of the work carried on by the institution the tour can scarcely have covered its costs.[186] The York meeting was deferred.[187]

A further series of examinations was proposed in 1883 and subsequently Howard, the Revs. Wilmot W. Ware and J. W. Scarlett and 14 children visited Bradford. The result of this examination was not mentioned in the report. A public meeting in Sheffield the following year again proved disappointing; 'The financial result however has not yet

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[184] In 1841 Arthur Lupton (1809-1889) was appointed Treasurer of the Leeds General Eye and Ear Infirmary and by 1861 he was also on the Board of the Leeds Infirmary. S. Anning, *The History of Medicine in Leeds* (Leeds, 1980), p. 7.
[185] Rev. Wilmot Ware to Aldam, 10 July 1879. Warde-Aldam Papers, DD.WA/M/28/5.
[186] YIDD, *Fifty First Annual Report*, 1880, p.5.
[187] The fall in the numbers attending the public examinations also effected the annual examinations held at the school. Boyce, *The History of the Yorkshire Residential School for the Deaf*, p. 47.

been what your Committee had hoped for, but they trust that with revived commercial prosperity increased liberality may find its way to your Institution...'.[188] The committee noted their concern that 'with the multiplication of local charities, it is feared the benevolent find too many channels for their contributions at home to be generous to those at a distance...'.[189] The YIDD's position as the 'county institution' was stressed. Rising costs and falling subscriptions made the case for state aid increasingly attractive.

A temporary response to what was becoming a perennial shortage of funds was found by raising the fees payable by parents to £9 per annum and the charges to boards of guardians to £12. By 1878 these sources brought in £1208/4/6 a year. Further increases in fees charged occurred regularly thereafter. Charles Few, an advocate of the combined system of deaf education, visiting YIDD in 1884 noted that, 'taking an average for the last three years the Annual Dividends received by the Insitution are £507, the Annual payment by pupils £1,768, and the Annual Subscriptions £986.'[190] It is interesting to note that from the 1890s the minutes record a spate of donations sent in by associations with a working class membership. A Resolution recorded 'That votes of thanks be drawn up by the Secretary and sent to the following for their recent Donations viz:- Wheatley Flower Show & Sports Committee (£7.10.0) Doncaster Boro' Police Force (£23.5.6) and Gainsboro' Iron Works Trip Committee (£3.0.0).'[191] In 1891 a donation of £8 from the

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[188] YIDD, *Fifty Sixth Annual Report*, 1885, p.7.
[189] Ibid.
[190] C. Few, *Some Remarks on the Instruction of Deaf and Dumb Children* (1884), p.2. There were 143 children in the Institution at the date of Few's visit.
[191] YIDD, Minutes, 30 August 1890.

M. S.& I. Railway Servants is recorded.[192] Other donations included boxes of oranges for the children, newspapers, umbrellas, books and puzzles. Some offers were however rejected, as Howard thought they could be seen as demeaning to the interests of deaf children.

Howard, a dedicated and highly motivated teacher, ensured YIDD remained an important and active contributor to topical debates. In 1877 at the instigation of Richard Elliot, headmaster at Margate, a Headmasters' Conference was held in which Elliot, supported by Howard, attempted to convince fellow delegates that the asylum system was in urgent need of reform. The 1881 Report contains details of a deputation to wait upon the Vice President of the Committee of Council on Education at which YIDD was represented. Mr. Mundella for the Government maintained that there was nothing in the 1870 Act to prohibit the education of the deaf and that what was required was that local authorities 'should do their duty in educational respects by those afflicted ones, just as they would in the case of ordinary children.'[193] 'There was no doubt that if these Institutions were assisted by the State nearly all the voluntary contributions to them would cease. He could hardly believe seeing the immense sums subscribed for hospitals and other institutions for assuaging human misery in England, that money would not be forthcoming in sufficient quantitites to maintain Deaf and Dumb schools.'[194] As the Report noted ruefully, the usefulness of institutions such as YIDD was proportionate to the adequacy of the subscriptions, 'and in their present state the funds of the Yorkshire Institute are totally

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[192] YIDD, Minutes, 6 January 1891.
[193] YIDD, *Fifty Second Annual Report*, 1881, p.9.
[194] Ibid.

insufficient to meet the increased expenditure rendered necessary by the adoption and extension of the "oral" means of teaching.'[195]

YIDD hosted a further Headmasters' Conference in 1882 at which 'matters affecting the general welfare of the Deaf were discussed, and ideas were interchanged.'[196] The issue of state aid divided the various institutions, but the opinion of the majority of the meeting was 'That, under conditions recognising the peculiar requirements of Deaf Mute Instruction, State Aid would be advantageous.'[197] The Conference urged the government to include the deaf within the ambit of the Education Acts. By 1885 there was less dissension over the issue of state aid and a Conference in that year unanimously endorsed a resolution that state aid was essential and that some form of enquiry into the education of the deaf should be undertaken. The YIDD Annual Report of that year noted 'that within the last ten years the number of pupils has increased by forty whilst the amount of annual subscriptions has decreased by £250...'.[198] In early 1886 Salisbury took the decision to extend the ambit of the newly appointed Royal Commission whose original brief had extended only to the Blind, to the Deaf also. The YIDD Report expressed the hope that 'the Commission will be able to make recommendations to the Government such as shall lead to an Act making the education of all deaf children compulsory, for an adequate school term, and supported by a substantial money grant on acceptable lines.'[199] The institutions were anxious that any grant be on a *per capita* basis rather than by results

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[195] Ibid.
[196] *Yorkshire Institute for the Deaf Doncaster Centenary of the Founding of the Institution 1829-1929* (Doncaster, 1929), p.17.
[197] YIDD, *Fifty Third Annual Report*, 1882, p.5.
[198] YIDD, *Fifty Sixth Annual Report*, 1885, p.9.
[199] YIDD, *Fifty Seventh Annual Report*, 1886, p 9.

which they argued was an unfair measurement of a teacher's achievement in the case of deaf children.

Following the Royal Commission, fears that government legislation would favour day schools over institutions led in 1890 to a further Headmasters and Chairman of Committees Conference, again held at Doncaster. A deputation supported by Lord Egerton of Tatton and Sir Stafford Northcote and including Howard and the Rev. J. W. Scarlett, Chairman of YIDD, went to lobby Sir William Hart Dyke of the Board of Education. In 1893 a further deputation, supported by the Dukes of Fife and Westminster, at which Howard was one of the speakers, was received by Mr Ackland. Finally the Elementary Education (Blind and Deaf Children) Act of 1893 made the education of Deaf children compulsory, 'and there is no doubt this most necessary legislation was brought about in part by the efforts of the Committee and Officers of this Institution.'[200]

The 1889 Royal Commission

It is now appropriate to look in more detail at some of the issues raised and recommendations made by the Report of the Royal Commission of 1889 into the situation of the deaf and dumb. It is hoped that this might place some of the issues and concerns expressed at YIDD within a wider context. YIDD was visited by the Commission on the 4 February 1888. The Commissioners expressed no view as to the

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200 *Yorkshire Institute for the Deaf Doncaster Centenary of the Founding of the Institution 1829-1929*, p.17.

work of the Institution but the Committee recorded their belief that they had been well satisfied with all they had seen.

Unlike the Commission on the Blind, the Commissioners for the Deaf chose to concentrate principally on the 'education of the youth.' This was because '...when the adult, or even the partially educated has become afflicted with deafness, his condition differs little from that of the ordinary population.'[201] Hence there was less need for special education for those above 13 or 14, nor was there any need for 'special modes of industrial training, nor for special workshops...'. [202] The Commissioners drew heavily on the evidence and research of Mr [Alexander] Graham Bell whose contributions on intermarriage, mechanical aids and the benefits of the oral system were quoted at length.

The Commission confirmed the suspicions of both Baker and Howard that many deaf children were missing out on an education.[203] In London it was estimated that only 300 of an estimated 500 deaf and dumb children were at school.[204] This was despite the fact that the number of deaf children in education had more than doubled in the period between 1851 and 1888.[205] Charles Baker had calculated that approximately one sixth of the total deaf population were of school age and this figure had been adopted by Forster's Act for the general population. The Commission preferred to take one fifth as a more accurate

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[201] *Report on Blind, Deaf and Dumb*, P.P. (1889), XIX, p.53, c.315.
[202] Ibid., c. 316
[203] Ibid., p.54, c.324.
[204] Ibid., c.325.
[205] Ibid. In 1851 approximately 1,300 children were catered for, by 1888 the number had risen to 3,138.

figure for the deaf because, 'owing to the shorter average term of life of the deaf, it follows that a larger proportion must be of right school age.'[206]

It was reported that a number of school boards had, despite the equivocal nature of Forster's Act, begun to provide specialist education for these children. The London School Board told the Commissioners that they 'consider it their duty in London to provide elementary instruction for *all* children for whom efficient and suitable education is not otherwise provided.' Yorkshire boards were amongst the first in the provinces to provide special classes for the Deaf with Sheffield taking the lead in 1879, Leeds following in 1881 and Bradford making provision in 1885. In total provincial boards were educating 176 children by 1888.[207] The Leeds School Board reported to the Commission 'that parents prefer sending children to a local school rather than to a boarding school.'[208] The Commission considered the advantages and disadvantages of day schools and institutions and concluded 'that institutions are necessary for the teaching of the great majority of deaf and dumb children, except under favourable circumstances in the large towns...'.[209] It recommended that whichever system was adopted 'the school authority should exercise its powers compulsorily.'[210]

The Commission also favoured the use of compulsory powers to keep deaf and dumb children at school for eight years. Since education was not to commence until the age of

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[206] Apparently the one fifth figure was used in Italy and a larger figure still in the USA. Ibid., p.47, c.280.
[207] Ibid., p.56, c.330.
[208] Ibid., p.59, c.344.
[209] Ibid., p.60, c.352.
[210] Ibid.

seven, children would remain at school until the age of 16, some five years longer than the majority of their hearing peers. Such powers were justified '....on the general grounds that the deaf and dumb should not be placed in a worse position than the hearing.'[211]

The Commission recognised that although the deaf found employment more easily than the blind, 'they appear to have more difficulty in getting situations than hearing people.'[212] One suggestion to facilitate employment was the apprentice fund, a device which had been used successfully at YIDD for many years. The teaching of drawing was similarly commended as 'its knowledge is essential to those occupations in which they are fitted to excel...'. It found that regional industrial patterns were reflected in the employment of deaf adults.[213] Thus in Newcastle the deaf were 'chiefly employed in the engineering works and shipbuilding yards as engine fitters, boiler makers, joiners, &c., and their wages are equal to those of other workmen.' In Manchester it was noted that deaf 'pupils on leaving school have no difficulty in finding employment as joiners, cabinet makers, tailors, shoemakers, &c...'. The Committee found 'the deaf and dumb employed in Doulton's works, and in the pottery works at Worcester.' In Huddersfield 'some trouble is taken by the agent of the Association for the Deaf and Dumb to find employment for them when they leave school in mills and trades'.

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[211] Ibid., c.355.

[212] One reason suggested for the unwillingness of employers to take on the deaf was the belief that they were more susceptible to accidents, a matter of increased concern following the Workmen's Compensation Act of 1897. A. F. Young and E. T. Ashton, *British Social Work in the Nineteenth Century* (1956), p.195 .

[213] *Report on Blind, Deaf and Dumb*, P.P. (1889), XIX, p.63, c.373, 374, 375 and 379.

The Commission also considered the latest research of Bell and Dr Buxton on the consequences of intermarriage amongst the deaf, although in so doing they went beyond the terms of their appointment. Bell suggested an amendment to the Census form in order to distinguish between hereditary and acquired forms of deafness.[214] The Commission concurred; 'from the point of view of heredity it is important that we should know those who became deaf in later life.'[215] The opinion of the Irish Census Board 'that before education was imparted to deaf-mutes, and before they were congregated in various educational establishments, hardly any intermarried', was quoted.[216] The Commission deemed 'The mixture of the sexes in school and especially in after life ... in all cases unadvisable.'[217] It recommended '... that the intermarriage of the toto-congenital deaf should be strongly discouraged..' and that 'consanguinous marriages should be strongly discouraged, especially where deafness has occurred in the family.'[218] Such measures were necessary to ensure that the deaf and dumb did not become 'a class apart.'[219] The importance of obtaining immediate medical treatment for 'catarrhal inflammatory affections of the inner ear' was highlighted as a means of avoiding non-congenital deafness. That such attention was seldom obtained swiftly enough was also noted.[220] Technological innovations including Bell's 'conversation tubes', the audiometer, (which

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[214] Ibid., p.47, c.278.
[215] Ibid.
[216] Ibid., p.50, c.296.
[217] Ibid., p.58, c.566.
[218] Ibid., pp.52-53, c.307 and c.314.
[219] Bell feared that in the longer term intermarriage could produce '...a true breed or race' of deaf persons. Ibid., p.50, c.302.
[220] Doctors charged their poorer patients between 2*s* 6*d* and 5*s* per visit in the 1870s. F.B. Smith, *The People's Health* 1830 to 1910 (c.1979), p.370.

measured the degree of hearing), and the use of ear trumpets were recommended as a means of minimising handicap in cases where some hearing was retained.[221]

The Commission endorsed the oral system expressing the view that 'deaf-mutes who are not physically or mentally unsuited for it, should be taught to speak and lip-read on the pure oral system.' [222] It was recognised however that 'Much good work has been done by the sign and manual and combined schools in giving a fair general education and knowledge of written language to their pupils.'[223] It was recommended that such schools should be eligible for state aid on the same basis as oral schools. Recommendations were also made concerning the training and qualifications of teachers, 'except in schools where the sign and manual system is exclusively used, *all teachers* should be in possession of *all their faculties* and have had previous experience in teaching hearing children.'[224] The system required one teacher for every 8 or 10 pupils.

For the reasons outlined above scant attention was paid to the position of the adult deaf. It was noted that little supervision was exercised over former pupils by the institutions and the work of the Royal Association in Aid of the Deaf and Dumb was discussed in this context. In the past year the Association had apprenticed 89 youths and visited 3,686 deaf persons.[225] A missionary from the society conducted sign and manual services in

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[221] *Report on Blind, Deaf and Dumb*, P.P. (1889), XIX, p.48, c.287 and c.289.
[222] Ibid., p.75, c.485.
[223] Ibid., c.486.
[224] Ibid., p.80, c.523.
[225] Ibid., p.89, c.601.

Bradford and Leeds 'and has 219 adults under his supervision.'[226] The Huddersfield association had rooms with games and a library; 'it is found that the more educated they are, the more they prefer rational amusements.'[227] The work of the missions in 'imparting religious and secular instruction, visiting, assisting the deaf and dumb in obtaining work, and in giving relief...' was acknowledged as 'useful and benevolent.'[228] However the Commission were of the opinion 'that in all their meetings the sexes should be separated, on account of the inadvisability of giving opportunities for intermarriage among the deaf.'[229] For Deaf persons educated under the oral system attendance at special services and meetings was 'unnecessary and undesirable, the object of the best education for the deaf being to merge them in the hearing and speaking world, and not to encourage them to form a class apart, to intermarry, and, to a great extent, to lose their self-reliance.'[230] The deaf press was similarly regarded; '... in so far as they keep up the isolated position of the deaf we should not wish to encourage them.'[231]

The implementation of the recommendations of the Commission regarding the compulsory education of deaf children was delayed largely because of religious and financial disagreements, and the institutions themselves objected to an anticipated favouring of day school over residential provision.[232] The YIDD broadly welcomed the

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[226] Ibid., p.90, c. 606.
[227] Ibid.
[228] Ibid., c.609.
[229] Ibid.
[230] Ibid., c.611.
[231] Ibid., c.612.
[232] This was the view taken at YIDD. The advantages of day schools in providing for local children were acknowledged but it was felt that they would be 'an inadequate substitute for the religious, moral and industrial training which is imparted in addition to

findings of the Report and its endorsement of the oral system. Indeed the school congratulated itself on having anticipated many of the Commission's recommendations. Unfortunately the increase in demand for teachers skilled in the oral system led to a number of the school's staff accepting more highly paid posts at other institutions. The reports bemoaned YIDD's inability to offer better rates of pay claiming to be 'crippled through lack of funds.'[233] The eventual passage of the Elementary Education (Blind and Deaf Children) Act of 1893 with its package of compulsory state aided provision for the deaf was therefore a relief to the Institution.[234]

Assessment

Over the sixty year period of this study the YIDD played an important role, both locally and nationally, in advancing the cause of the Deaf. Successive generations of headmasters helped to shape the national agenda for deaf education: Baker through his writings, public appearances and lecturing; Howard with his enthusiastic participation in conferences and endorsement of the need for professional teaching qualifications. From the outset those involved with the school worked hard to counter widespread public ignorance about deafness and its implications. Baker's use of the examination system ensured that the situation of the Deaf was brought directly to the attention of influential sectors of the community. His instigation of questions in the Census relating to the 'deaf and dumb' and the 'blind' highlighted not only the incidence of these disabilities but also

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the other educational advantages in an institution.' YIDD, *Sixty First Annual Report*, 1889, p.4.

[233] Ibid.

[234] Even after the passage of the Act the school still needed to raise a third of its running costs through voluntary endeavour.

their geographical distribution, the differing rates experienced by the sexes and the higher mortality rate of disabled people. On a local level the careful tracking of the progress of former pupils and diligent investigation of areas of suitable employment provide further evidence of a deep and long term commitment to the Deaf.

The school also played an important part in the creation of a Deaf community – literally so in the case of those pupils who met there and subsequently married. It instilled a common language, and promoted a shared culture and history amongst its students. Former pupils who attended the public examinations were not only demonstrating their gratitude to the Institution, but also asserting their Deaf identity through their desire to participate in a communal gathering. Howard's encouragement of physical training and team sports also encouraged bonding between pupils.

The case study serves to demonstrate the processes by which voluntary organisations attempted to mould and interpret the Poor Law at both a local and national level. Baker secured the passage of section 56 of the PLAA through personal contact with a powerful patron. The significance of this exception has often been overlooked; here within the NPL was implicit acknowledgement that there were circumstances in which the receipt of public aid should not stigmatise the recipient. Other legislation favourable to the school was achieved through a combination of personal influence and pressure group lobbying. Negotiations with local administrators concentrated on attempting to persuade them of the justice and utility of educating the deaf. When these appeals failed, clarification was sought from the Central Board and their responses were then used by the school as

ammunition against recalcitrant local boards. The continued dogged refusal of local administrators to implement central policy, despite repeated encouragement from the school, illustrates that local interpretation of the law still retained the power to thwart central intentions.

The school's struggles over funding can also be seen as forming part of a long running debate as to the locus of responsibility for disabled youths. The insistence that parents should contribute towards the maintenance of their children echoed contemporary ideology. At the same time the school's persistent attempts to obtain funding from local boards reflected both a sound appreciation of the limitations of voluntary finance and a call for the state to acknowledge its role in supporting vulnerable youth. Later attempts to attain state aid on a par with state schools can thus be seen as part of a longer term campaign for social justice.

Chapter Six

The Wilberforce School for the Blind

Traditionally the Blind were regarded as the most helpless, and therefore most deserving of sympathy, of all groups of the disabled. In theory they enjoyed the strongest right to financial support from both public and private charity. However, since the majority of monies raised for charities came from the towns in which they were situated, geographical location could be decisive. In many ways York was the ideal city in which to found a new charity. Orange notes that in 1831 more than fifty seats of 'superior families' lay within a ten-mile radius of the city.[1] As the administrative, religious, and increasingly the cultural centre of the county, York also received regular influxes of prestigious visitors. The city had a long history of charitable endeavour and already supported many endowments. However, its very success in the provision of voluntary hospitals, asylums and retreats exerted considerable strain upon, and competition for, the not unlimited finances of the charitable. Residential institutions, such as the Wilberforce School for the Blind, were the most expensive forms of charitable enterprise and demanded a sustained commitment. One of the aims of this chapter is to explore the nature of the relationship between the city and the school.[2]

Another aim is to examine the growth of specialist knowledge in the field of disability, and to explore the consequences of this for the experience of the Blind. It will be seen

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[1] D. Orange, 'The Yorkshire Philosophical Society and the British Academy', in C. H. Feinstein (ed.), *York 1831- 1981 150 Years of Scientific Endeavour and Social Change* (York, 1981), p.4.

[2] In 1831York had a population of approximately 20,000.

that voluntary organizations provided individuals interested in disability with the opportunity to develop expertise and insight into the particular needs and requirements of the groups they set out to assist. The 1830s, when the school was established, might well be labelled the decade of the 'expert'. Expertise in the field of disability manifested itself in many forms; the development of educational systems and methods is often singled out for special attention. In this chapter, however, the focus will be on the emerging network of contact and communication between those working for the Yorkshire Blind and those beyond Yorkshire who shared their concerns. This will naturally lead on to a discussion of public campaigning on behalf of the blind and attempts to raise awareness of the problems posed by their condition. In some instances this expertise bordered on a more militant activism, which sought to influence public opinion, and in this way to bring pressure to bear upon those in power. Within the field of special education, activism often took the form of attempts to secure equality of treatment with the sighted. These calls for parity in education may be seen as precursors of later wider calls for social justice.

A key aspect of the WSB's work was the evolution of specialist services for the blind. Initially the charity limited its target group to blind boys, but within a few decades it was able to offer a wide variety of provision to the entire blind community. This diversity sprang, in part, from attempts to grapple with a number of difficult issues. What responsibilities did the school owe to its present and former pupils, and to those who supported them? To what extent should the need for pupils to be self-supporting over-ride all other considerations? Should the school concentrate on the vocational training of its pupils and restrict the curriculum to the severely practical, utilitarian even, or was a

wider, more liberal education possible or desirable? Was it possible to combine the two successfully? What indeed was the purpose of educating the blind? It was the Committee's attempts to find solutions to these issues that led to an extension of the school's activities; first through the provision of sheltered workshops and then into wider programmes of vocational training. Once the decision had been made to support blind pupils in their employment then the necessity for a further range of services, including the provision of tools and materials and a benefit club to provide sick pay, also became apparent. Finally concern over the plight of blind women, who faced even greater obstacles in obtaining employment, led to the opening of the Industrial Home for Blind Women in Scarborough. A further theme of this chapter relates to the attempts of successive generations of educationalists to confront the issues outlined above, and their success or otherwise in so doing.

This chapter commences by looking at the foundation of the school and, in particular, the character and motivation of its founder, whose enthusiasm and dynamism played such an important role in determining the nature of the school. It concludes by examining the achievements of the school at the time of its Jubilee celebrations in 1883, and by assessing the reactions of the Committee to the recommendations of the 1889 Royal Commission. The chapter also includes sections on the curriculum of the school, its finances and the employment of its pupils.

The Foundation of the Wilberforce School for the Blind

A life that own'd his Saviour's power,

Dwelt in His presence hour by hour,

Could best perpetuated be

By deeds of living charity.[3]

In 1833 friends and admirers of the late William Wilberforce called for a public meeting to be held in York. The aim of the meeting was to consider the most appropriate means of commemorating Wilberforce's life and achievements.[4] The proposed meeting had the support of the leading aristocratic, religious and political figures in the county and included many of the leading citizens of York.[5] A meeting, chaired by Lord Brougham, was held on the 3rd of October 1833 at the Festival Concert Room in York.[6] It was determined that a memorial be raised and that if the amount of subscriptions should prove sufficient a 'benevolent Institution of an useful description' would be founded.

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[3] This verse was part of a Recitation, written by the school superintendent Mr Buckle, and performed by pupils of the school to mark the opening of the Jubilee Wing in February 1886.

[4] A copy of the Requisition of 1833 is to be found amongst the Wilberforce Memorial Papers, Borthwick Institute of Historical Research, University of York.

[5] Those signing the initial requisition for a meeting included Lord Brougham and Vaux, the Lord Chancellor; the Hon. Edward Venables Vernon Harcourt, the Archbishop of York; and the Lords Carlisle, Fitzwilliam, Stourton, Dundas, Feversham and Wharncliffe.

[6] Lord Brougham had a particular interest and expertise in education. He was a founder member of the Royal Lancastrian Association and headed the Select Committee on the Education of the Lower Orders of Society of 1816-18. He was also one of the founders of the Social Science Association, the inaugural meeting of which was held at his house in July 1857.

The decision to found a school for the blind seems to have originated with the Rev. William Venables Vernon Harcourt (1789-1871).[7] Harcourt, a man of 'fire and spirit,' combined his religious calling with a passionate commitment to science and learning.[8] He was a founder member of, and the driving force behind, both the Yorkshire Philosophical Society (1822) and the British Association for the Advancement of Science (1831).[9] In an era where Science itself was imbued with a strong symbolic value, and linked in the public mind with progress and virtue, the Association represented its '...very epitome.'[10] The Association, and in particular its statistical section, swiftly became one of the central focuses for experts in a wide variety of fields.[11]

Harcourt's involvement with the Philosophical Society and British Association linked him to many of the most important and influential men in the county. The Yorkshire Philosophical Society included amongst its patrons the local Whig aristocracy; the Earls Carlisle and Tyrconnel and the Lords Milton and Stourton. Prominent York families such

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[7] Harcourt was recognised as having been '...virtually the founder of this institution' in the *Annual Report of the Wilberforce Memorial School for the Blind,* 1872, p.3. The report credits Harcourt with the decision to hold the meeting that led to the memorial and with the suggestion to found an institution for the blind.

[8] Orange, 'The Yorkshire Philosophical Society', p.8.

[9] According to his entry in the *Dictionary of National Biography* Harcourt used his presidential address to the British Association for the purpose of 'resolutely vindicating the claims of science to entire freedom of inquiry.' It was Harcourt's vision too, that lay behind the building of the Yorkshire Museum and his skilful handling of its management that secured it a national reputation. He was also instrumental in founding the Castle Howard Reformatory and 'many other useful institutions.' He was elected fellow of the Royal Society in 1824.

[10] Orange, 'The Yorkshire Philosophical Society', pp.1-29.

[11] For the history of the British Association and Harcourt's role within it see J. Morrell and A. Thackray, *Gentlemen of Science: Early Years of the British Association of the Advancement of Science* (Oxford, 1981). See also R. MacLeod and P. Collins (eds.), *The Parliament of Science; The British Association for the Advancement of Science 1831-1981* (Northwood, 1981).

as the Grahams and the Tukes were closely associated with its activities. By 1831 the Society could boast some 400 members including many individuals from the medical, legal and clerical professions. In a city fraught with political and religious division, the Society provided an opportunity for established church men and non-conformists, Whig and Tory to find common ground.[12] But Harcourt's network of contacts extended far beyond the confines of York. As the son of the Archbishop he enjoyed privileged access to the highest reaches of the Anglican hierarchy. His family was wealthy and well connected in its own right. Harcourt was thus able to link his own expertise with political and social influence.

Although the 'process of secularization of the idea of progress' increased throughout the century, it was perfectly possible to combine, as Harcourt demonstrates, belief in science and progress with religious faith.[13] However the precise nature of Harcourt's religious beliefs, and their influence on his activities, is debatable. In her book *Evangelicals in Action,* Kathleen Heasman states that the WSB was 'of definite Evangelical foundation.'[14] If she means by this that the school's founder was an Evangelical, and it is hard to see upon what other basis she could make such a statement, then this seems rather an exaggerated claim. Boyd Hilton discusses Harcourt in *The Age of Atonement.*[15] Hilton sees Harcourt as an example of a 'progressive' churchman inhabiting 'an evangelical

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[12] The Leeds Society explicitly banned discussion of politics and religion because this had led to the collapse of earlier societies. See R. J. Morris, 'Middle-class culture', in D. Fraser (ed.), *A History of Modern Leeds* (Manchester, 1980), p. 213.
[13] R. Nisbet, *History of the Idea of Progress* (New York, c.1980), p.172.
[14] K. Heasman, *Evangelicals in Action: An Appraisal of their Social Work in the Victorian Era* (1962), p.190.
[15] B. Hilton, *The Age of Atonement: The Influence of Evangelicalism on Social and Economic Thought 1795-1865* (Oxford, 1988), pp. 30-31.

frame of reference.' He finds Harcourt's faith, which encompassed a belief in miracles and a conviction that pain and suffering were necessary moral correctives for an inherently sinful mankind, to have been 'quite unscientific.' He notes that Harcourt's circle was not confined to the liberal Anglicans, who might perhaps have been the most sympathetic to attempts to advance the cause of Science, but extended also to High and Low Churchman.[16] However Harcourt was not, according to Hilton, a true Evangelical.[17] Clearly religious motives must have played an important part in the foundation of the school, and a number of those active on its behalf were Evangelicals, but it is too simplistic to assert that the school itself was an Evangelical foundation.

Although Harcourt's links with the Anglican establishment were clearly important they also highlight some ambiguities in his position. The Anglican church, keen to protects its privileges in the sphere of education, tended to react defensively to any measures it saw as challenging its position. Harcourt was keenly aware of the limitations as well as the possibilities of philanthropic effort. He seems to have endorsed calls for state aid for education from an early date.[18] He also, perhaps necessarily, chose to promote an

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[16] The High Churchman Walter Hook edited a collection of Harcourt's sermons in 1873. Harcourt was also a friend of Wilberforce and a pupil of Isaac Milner.

[17] Hilton, *The Age of Atonement,* p.29. See also D. M. Lewis, (ed.), *The Blackwell Dictionary of Evangelical Biography, 1730-1860* (Oxford, 1992), which has entries for no less than three of Harcourt's brothers, but includes neither Harcourt, nor his father the Archbishop. Nor do the WSB's Annual Reports, some of which were written by Harcourt, reveal evidence of Evangelical inspiration or inclination. The principal arguments made on behalf of the blind are based on simple humanitarian grounds and it is the language of science and statistics, of logic and rational calculation that dominates the discourse on their behalf.

[18] His attempts to obtain a grant of the King's Manor, see below, can be interpreted in this light. In 1862 Harcourt attempted to obtain for the school a share of the grants made by the Committee of the Privy Council. In 1869 members of the Committee signed a

ecumenical approach within the WSB in order to reach as many children as possible. Whilst the Church maintained its strongest links with the Tory establishment, the majority of Harcourt's personal connections appear to have been with the Whig aristocracy. His activities generally are marked by an appreciation of the need to compromise and his abilities in this sphere were perhaps central to his successes.

Contributions to the memorial seem initially to have been sluggish for on the 15th October 1833 Harcourt, in his capacity as Chairman of the York Central Sub-Committee, issued an *Address to the Public* expressing his concern at the 'present crisis of the subscription.'[19] It seems, from the nature of his argument, that Harcourt attributed the initial hesitancy of the public response to the specific social and political ambience of 1830s York, rather than any hostility or indifference to the plight of the blind.[20] In the *Address* Harcourt first justified the Committee's decision to support an institution for the blind as a fitting object for the memorial rather than other suggested causes, which had included a 'Mission to the Negro.'[21] A school for the blind would be durable, unlikely to

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memorial to the Lord President of the Council asking for pecuniary aid on the same terms as that granted to national schools. Buckle, the Superintendent from 1870, was also an active campaigner for state aid.

[19] *Address to the Public*, 15 October 1833, Wilberforce Memorial Papers, WM/2/1/2.

[20] The *Yorkshire Observer* 18 January 1823, noted that York had a history of being deeply divided by 'political parties, religious sects, and rival possessions.' On the1 March 1823 the same paper reported that 'In this great city nothing is thought of but Whigism and Toryism.' Cited in Orange, 'The Yorkshire Philosophical Society'. In the 1830s political contentiousness between the parties was heightened following the passage of the Municipal Corporations Act. This enabled the Tories to seize control of a corporation previously dominated by the Whigs. See A. Peacock, 'George Leeman and York Politics 1833-1880', in C. H. Feinstein (ed.), *York 1831- 1981 150 Years of Scientific Endeavour and Social Change* (York, 1981), pp. 234-54.

[21] Wilberforce's own achievements in this area would have made this an obvious choice. Missions were perhaps the most characteristic form of evangelical philanthropy.

be the subject of abuse, and fulfill a practical need. Harcourt explained that the Committee had hoped that their choice would be acceptable to persons of all political and religious groupings.[22] Charitable activity had always been considered as standing upon 'neutral ground,' and should operate as a means of unifying a community rather than as an arena for sectarian conflict.[23] 'It is not *here* a question whether we are Whigs or Tories, Churchmen or Dissenters, but whether we are neighbour, brethren, and Christians.'

A public meeting at York in support of the new institution was held at the Guildhall, under the auspices of the Lord Mayor on the 25th of November 1833. The meeting is worth considering in detail both for the evidence it offers as to the intentions and aspirations of the promoters of the charity, and for the insight it provides as to the difficulties even such a high profile endeavour faced. Perhaps in order to maximize the appeal to as many potential supporters as possible, the three principal speakers each chose to discuss a different ground upon which the institution merited support. It is notable that all three speakers were members of the Philosophical Society and it is likely that many of those in their audience were from a similar social milieu.

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[22] D. Eastwood refers to earlier philanthropists such as Thomas Bernard and William Wilberforce and suggests that they 'deployed a language of philanthropy which was avowedly non-partisan.' The language of philanthropy formed part of a series of discourses which 'were languages of an *elite* rather than languages of parties within that *elite.*' Subsequently 'the polarization of political languages...made social policy a much more obviously partisan question.' D. Eastwood, 'Men, Morals, and the Machinery of Social Legislation, 1790-1840', *Parliamentary History*, XIII (1994), p.205. Harcourt could thus be seen as appealing for a return to an earlier consensus.

[23] This characteristic of voluntary associations is discussed in R. J. Morris, *Class, Sect and Party; The Making of the British Middle Class: Leeds, 1820-50* (Manchester, c.1990), pp.161 –203.

Harcourt, the principal speaker, emphasised the 'peculiar' dependency of the blind on society and on charity and justified their education on humanitarian and rational grounds. He spoke of his own encounters with and observations of the blind during services at the Minster. 'If a blind man is left alone, and without education, he becomes one of the most miserable of God's creatures; on the other hand, give a blind man education, and he may be made equal, and even superior, to many that have their eye sight.'[24] He then cited the names and achievements of a number of notable educated blind men. He also made reference to 'Blind Jack' Metcalf, the famous Knaresborough road surveyor.[25] Harcourt expressed his confidence that a combination of civic pride and religious feeling would endear the school to the city and ensure the ample support of its citizens. A subsequent resolution proposed 'that the selection of York as the place in which the School is to be established, gives it a peculiar Claim upon the zealous support of the Inhabitants of this City and its Vicinity.'

The Rev. Graham, a prominent Evangelical, emphasized the claims of the charity on 'the Christian public in general...'. [26] He also highlighted the potential benefits that the institution would bring to the city; '... and if our admirably-conducted asylums and other charities gratify the philanthropist – must not the mingled sensations of delight,

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[24] Report of the Public Meeting in York, 25 November 1833, Wilberforce Memorial Papers.

[25] John Metcalf (1717-1810), was blinded by smallpox at the age of six. His long, active and eventful life is the subject of G. Hogg, *Blind Jack of Knaresborough: Road-Builder Extraordinary* (Letchworth, 1967).

[26] Graham was the driving force behind Evangelical religion in York until his death in 1844. E. Royle, 'Religion in York 1831-1981', in C. H. Feinstein (ed.), *York 1831- 1981 150 Years of Scientific Endeavour and Social Change* (York, 1981), pp. 205-233.

astonishment, interest, rational entertainment, and refined gratification, be excited, at the view of a receptacle of the indigent blind?'[27] Graham's argument, essentially an appeal to civic pride, would have reminded his listeners of the city's role, the result of historical, geographical and administrative factors, as a centre for the provision of health care. The emphasis Graham placed on the gratification of the philanthropist and the rational observer show how charitable enterprise was promoted as offering tangible, as well as spiritual, gain to the donor. The relationship between the city and the charity was reciprocal. If the citizens of York supported the school they would reap the benefit.

A third speaker, Thomas Barstow Esq., chose to base his case upon the dictates of political economy. His distinctly utilitarian argument played upon current concerns about the cost of poor relief and clearly proved popular with his audience. He believed the school would have 'as great a claim on the calculations of parsimony, as on the impulses of humanity – (Hear, hear.) It must be considered that the blind have no resource of their own for education or support, they must be burthensome on some individual, some family, or perhaps, on the public at large. Their only resource is mendacity:- the proposed institution will remove what is an incumbrance to individuals, to families, and to society.'[28] He referred to Count Rumford's essays and their account of an experiment to reduce mendacity in Munich.[29] The combination of cost cutting and scientific ingenuity

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[27] The notion that the institution would afford the citizens of York 'rational entertainment' will be discussed below.

[28] Report of the Public Meeting in York, 25 November 1833, Wilberforce Memorial Papers.

[29] Rumford's ingenious schemes were a direct influence upon Sir Thomas Bernard, founder of the Society for Bettering the Condition of the Poor. The Society published a number of reports including an account of the founding of the Liverpool School for the

embodied in Rumford's schemes, practical or otherwise, perhaps accounted for their appeal to Barstow as a member of the Philosophical Society.

It is difficult to assess the extent to which public hesitancy to donate, if hesitancy there was, should be solely attributed to the factors which Harcourt delineated. There is no reason to suggest that he was incorrect in his assessment that local politics combined with ignorance, rather than apathy and indifference, had resulted in a slower and less substantial response to the appeal than was desirable. However the city's charitable citizens may have been less sympathetic than normal given that they also faced contemporaneous appeals for the considerable sums necessary to repair York Minster and to build the Yorkshire Museum. Harcourt had considerable expertise as a fundraiser; it may be that in the light of his earlier fund-raising experience he employed the full weight of his powers of persuasion by invoking a 'crisis' at an early stage in the proceedings.

On the 10th February 1834 the Committee announced that the sum raised 'appeared to them to justify the establishment of the proposed institution.' The lease on the King's Manor, formerly a palace of James I, was shortly to expire and the Committee sought permission to convert it into a school of industry.[30] Application was made to the Crown for a grant of the buildings 'under the provisions of an Act of Parliament which authorizes such grants to District Schools.'[31] Although the application met with an initially favourable response from the Treasury, a successful legal objection was

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Blind. This led to the foundation of the school for the indigent blind in London. See D. Owen, *English Philanthropy 1660-1960* (Cambridge, Mass., 1965), p.106.

[30] The Philosophical Society occupied neighbouring premises.

[31] The reference is to 10 Geo. IV, c.50, s.45.

interposed turning on the definition of 'District School'. 'Possibly at some future period the bounty of the Crown may not be intercepted by a construction of the term "District Schools," so limited as to exclude schools for the blind...' wrote Harcourt in his preface to the First Annual Report. This was the first of many encounters with bureaucratic indifference that the Committee was to meet with in its attempts to secure parity of treatment for blind pupils.[32] The Committee was offered the option of purchasing the property or of taking a 99-year lease. They decided in favour of the lease in the hope that this might later be converted into a grant.

The first master to be appointed was Mr Anderson, author of *Observations on the Employment, Education, and Habits of the Blind.* Anderson, who left the school for another post after a few years, was an early advocate of state aid for the education of the blind.[33] It may be that his appointment represented an endorsement on the part of the Committee of Anderson's views on state aid. It is unlikely that Anderson would have been appointed had they disagreed strongly with him. It is notable, however, that Anderson was the only applicant for the post and this probably reflects the very limited pool of suitable candidates available at this time. The Rev. W. Taylor, inventor of a mathematical frame for the use of the blind, was appointed superintendent.[34] Taylor was already noted for his work on behalf of the blind at the Edinburgh Institute. He was an

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[32] Further fruitless attempts to obtain a grant were made in 1843, 1844 and 1883.
[33] T. Anderson, *Observations on the Employment, Education, and Habits of the Blind* (1837).
[34] Rev. Taylor left York in 1845 for Worcester, where he was instrumental in founding both the Society for Providing Cheap Literature to the Blind and the Worcester College for the blind sons of gentlemen.

acknowledged expert in the use of embossed types and advised the Edinburgh Society of Arts on this issue.

By October 1835 the first two pupils had been elected. After some initial hesitation, caused by uncertainty as to the number of likely applicants, it was decided that applications from girls should also be received.[35] It was hoped that their presence would encourage ladies to take an interest in the institution and that the girls might themselves prove 'useful'.[36] The York school was the fifth English school to be founded for the blind. In the 50 years following its foundation, some 500 children were to be educated there.

The 1834 Survey of the Blind

In order to gain information as to 'the number and condition of the blind', and as a means of publicising the institution, the committee sent schedules of inquiries to the ministers of every parish in the county.[37] The minister was instructed to procure the co-operation of the medical practitioners and the overseers of the poor in completing the returns. Eventually answers were received from 552 parishes, '... and this, it is conceived is the first and only statistical account of the blind which has been collected in England, a fact

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[35] A Minute of the 14 May 1835 indicates that initially applications were to be received from males only but the limited number of applications received meant that girls were also admitted.
[36] *Yorkshireman,* 10 October 1835.
[37] Rev. Fenton was the Minister responsible for collecting information from South Yorkshire.

which cannot be reflected upon without wonder and regret.'[38] Harcourt analysed the returns to produce *'A Numerical Statement, founded on actual investigation of the blind persons of different ages now living within a given district and compared with a given population.'*[39]

For Harcourt, facts provided the strongest rationale for social intervention. He believed that his research was of 'no common importance' allowing 'everyone to judge for himself in what degree Institutions of this description are needed.' R. J. Morris argues that the 'language of facts and surveys' can be seen as 'part of the move towards a culture which claimed to be unbiased in terms of political and religious opinions, a culture which represented the interests of the whole of civil society through the 'labour of excellent men.'[40] Harcourt embraced, advocated and epitomised such a culture.

Table 3. Harcourt's 'Numerical Statement' of the Yorkshire Blind

	Results of actual Returns	Ratios applied to County
Population of Yorkshire in 1831	862,533	1,374,296

[38] *Annual Report of the Wilberforce Memorial School for the Blind,* 1837, p.15. It is unlikely that Harcourt, a thorough researcher, was wrong in his supposition. In an extract from *Yorkshireman* of 10 October 1835 Harcourt referred to '...a foreign publication the only one I had ever seen on the numbers of blind in this country...' which estimated the number of blind at one in a thousand. He also stated that 'the number of blind is supposed to be greater than the deaf and dumb, in the proportion of three to two, and that there are already seventy of the latter in the Doncaster Institution, nearly all from Yorkshire.'

[39] Unfortunately, no definition is given of the term 'blind'. It is likely that if any definition was given to those compiling the returns it would have been that subsequently used by the school rules, *i.e.* no greater degree of sight than suffices to distinguish light from darkness. Alternatively it may be that the term itself was considered non-problematic and referred to those then known as 'stone blind.'

[40] Morris, *Class, Sect and Party*, p.189.

Corrected in round numbers to 1836	940,926	1,500,000
Blind persons in Yorkshire	840	1,339
..... not exceeding 50 years of age	326	520
..... not exceeding 25 years of age	140	223
..... not exceeding 20 nor under 10	58	92
..... not exceeding 16 nor under 10	40	64
..... under 10 years of age	49	8
Aggregate in four years of blind youth admissible between the ages of 10 and 16)	62	99

Harcourt calculated that if the Yorkshire ratios were applied to England as a whole then of a total population of 15,000,000, the blind population would be 13,390, with the number between the ages of 10 and 25 being 1,450. The existing private benevolent institutions at London, Liverpool, Norwich, Bristol and York could barely contain a third of the number capable of receiving education. Harcourt thought that the returns understated the number of blind people in the region, particularly those in the youngest class. Even so, it was evident that there were at least 40 Yorkshire children between the ages of 10 and 16 who were 'not yet partaking of the benefits of the Institution.'[41] The use of statistics to highlight deficiencies in the provision of education, in effect drawing

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[41] These figures seem to indicate that approximately 60 per cent of the blind were over 50 years of age. George Black, M.B., B.S., F.R.C.S. notes that approximately 70 per cent of the blind are currently over the age of 60, a figure he believes was likely to have applied in the nineteenth century. G. Black, 'The Leeds Eye Dispensary', *Thoresby Society Miscellany*, 16, 2 (1974), pp.101-103.

attention to the inadequacy of philanthropic effort, was a common feature of educational expertise.[42] The publication of such information can be interpreted as a political act.

The number of children in the school rose gradually, although in 1861 Rev. Harcourt still maintained that the number in the school represented only a fraction of those eligible.[43] He quoted the 1851 census which had recorded 1,667 blind persons in Yorkshire of whom 215 were between the ages of 10 and 20. Once allowance had been made for those who were not indigent, or who were otherwise provided for, and those incapable of benefiting from instruction, '...we see that the pupils whom our school instructs at present are scarcely more than 1/3d the number within the County who are proper subjects for an industrial education.'[44] Harcourt attributed the shortfall in the number of pupils to the difficulties incurred by the parents of the blind in meeting the maintenance payments required by the rules. One child, Jane Pickles of Holbeck in Leeds, had even been removed from the institution contrary to her parents' wishes, 'owing to the poverty of her parents, and their inability to obtain adequate parish aid.'[45]

Harcourt was probably correct in asserting that difficulty in raising the weekly sum of 3*s* 6*d* was the most significant factor preventing parents from sending young blind children

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[42] R. Johnson, 'Educating the Educators: "Experts" and the State 1833-9', in A. P. Donajgrodzki (ed.), *Social Control in Nineteenth Century Britain* (1977), pp. 93-94.
[43] Letter from Rev. Harcourt to unknown recipient, dated York 2 October 1861, bound with volume of Annual Reports for the 1860s.
[44] Ibid.
[45] *Annual Report of the Wilberforce Memorial School for the Blind*, 1837, p.3.

to the school.[46] Such a sum would have been beyond the means of many Yorkshire families, and some may have been too ignorant or too proud to claim their entitlement from the local board, or to locate a 'friend' willing to pay the fees on their child's behalf. But there are likely to have been other issues involved too, perhaps reflecting a mismatch between the goals and aspirations of middle class educators and the attitudes of working class parents. Some parents may have been unwilling to send their children away from home for an education – perhaps they were influenced by the recent expose of the scandalous conditions in the Yorkshire residential schools.[47] Others might not have been aware of the provision available at York, or they may have valued the company or earning potential, however small, of their blind children. A few children may have been tutored at home and others may have attended district schools.

Rules and Admission Criteria

The rules of the institution were established by a general meeting of the Subscribers on 26 March 1834. With characteristic thoroughness, Harcourt had carefully researched the operations of the existing institutions for the blind prior to this date, and the York rules

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[46] The fee was still 3*s* 6*d* in 1875 when Alfred Hollins started at the school. A. Hollins, *A Blind Musician Looks Back* (Edinburgh, 1936), p.36.

[47] Dickens' *Nicholas Nickleby* was published in 1838 and its portrayal of the sadistic Wackford Squeers, and his ill treated charges at Dotheboys Hall, was unlikely to commend boarding establishments to caring parents. Many 'respectable' Yorkshire schools such as Carus Wilson's Cowan Bridge, where the Rev. Patrick Bronte had sent his young daughters a decade earlier, also suffered high rates of pupil mortality. Such schools were a notorious source of blindness with one headmaster, William Shaw, being censured after a number of boys in his care lost their sight. Dickens toured the Yorkshire region in search of information about the already notorious schools with his friend Hablot Browne in 1838. L. K. Webb, *Charles Dickens* (1983), p. 50.

are expressed in similar terms to those of other schools. It is likely too that he consulted with the Rev. Fenton or Charles Baker at YIDD. Certainly Fenton was involved in some of the earliest meetings of the WSB and the precedent set by the YIDD was warmly praised by Harcourt. The first rule of the WSB was expressed in conventional terms; 'The object of the Institution is to give the pupils such instruction as may enable them to obtain a livelihood, attention being at the same time paid to their moral and religious education.' The second rule, proposed by Harcourt and clearly an attempt to avoid sectarian division, provided that pupils could worship either in accordance with parental choice or, if adult themselves, at their own discretion. The third rule delineated the proposed curriculum which was to comprise 'such mechanical arts... as the blind can exercise to advantage with whatever other branches of knowledge may appear conducive to the above mentioned ends.'

The Committee was anxious that the charity should be restricted only to the most severely visually impaired and to those who could benefit from the education it offered. The eighth rule provided that no candidate was to be admitted, 'who has a greater degree of sight than suffices to distinguish light from darkness, or who is incapacitated by weakness of intellect or otherwise from learning to obtain a livelihood.'[48] It was not uncommon, however, throughout the period in question, for children who had been admitted to the school to be found to have a greater degree of sight than the rules permitted. One explanation for this may have been that some parents or friends

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[48] Probably charity was denied to the partially sighted due to the greater difficulty of arousing public sympathy, and hence financial support, for their plight.

exaggerated the extent of their child's sight defect in order to secure their admission. Any child found to be in breach of the rule was swiftly removed.

The Committee sought professional medical, rather than lay, judgment as to the eligibility of pupils. This insistence on the employment of experts contrasted with the situation at YIDD where lay judgment was the norm. A number of attempts were made to persuade the school's medical officers to play an active role in the admission procedures.[49] On occasion the medical officers were able to cure the blindness of pupils (most probably those affected by cataracts). The 1842 Report expresses the Committee's gratitude to Mr. Hey for his successful treatment of one male pupil who had been 'restored to sight.' Such operations were strictly beyond the scope of the charity and in 1854 the Committee reassured subscribers that they were exceptional cases and that '… in future no applicants will be considered eligible whose blindness is not apparently irrecoverable.'[50] Medical confirmation of teachers' suspicions that children were mentally incapable of benefiting from the education offered was also sought.

Although the 1837 Report contained references to children who had been taught within a few weeks of their admission to dress and wash themselves, these abilities soon became minimum criteria for entry. The minutes record many entries such as that of the 14th November 1845, 'William George Slather of Beverly, aged 9 years, admitted on a certificate being supplied of his ability to dress and wash himself.' In addition to the lack

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[49] *Minutes of the Wilberforce Memorial School for the Blind,* 8 January 1847. The medical officer was Richard Hey.
[50] *Annual Report of the Wilberforce Memorial School for the Blind,* 1854, p.7.

of training in hygiene and domestic skills, many children were without basic social skills such as the ability to sit still or pay attention. Children, sometimes in their teens, arrived at the school unable to count or recite the alphabet. Although allowances should be made for parental poverty and ignorance, it is hard to escape the conclusion that some of the children had, no doubt through a mixture of motives, been neglected.

The situation had not improved by the 1870s when Mr Buckle, Superintendent of the school from 1870 until 1900, published his *Suggestions to the Parents and Friends of Blind Children seeking admission into the Yorkshire School for the Blind.*[51] The repetition of his advice in later reports suggests that children were still arriving at the school without basic skills. In 1889 Buckle again wrote of the 'miserably neglected intellects' of young blind children and lambasted parents who brought them up in isolation. 'The worst possible thing is to allow them to stay at home sitting in a corner rocking themselves.'[52]

The Curriculum and Ethos of the School

As befitting an institute whose founder was a staunch advocate of science and education, the ethos and rationale of the York school were progressive and liberal. In his *Address* Rev. Harcourt quoted the opinion of an American observer that in the existing English institutions '.... too little attention is paid to the development of the intellectual powers

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[51] *Annual Report of the Wilberforce Memorial School for the Blind,* 1872, p.4.
[52] *Annual Report of the Wilberforce Memorial School for the Blind,* 1890, p.11.

and the cultivation of those pursuits to which blindness offers the least impediment.'[53] This was the view also of the Belgian Abbe Carton who visited the English institutions in the 1837. The York school aimed from the start to attend to the mental cultivation of its pupils.

It was Harcourt's belief that the blind often possessed heightened abilities in disciplines where memory and 'the power of abstract attention', or use of senses other than sight, were requisite.[54] The emphasis on the teaching of handicrafts was of only limited benefit: the blind man who was engaged 'in inferior occupations' could compete neither with the sighted nor with the 'increasing power of machinery.' New opportunities existed '...for gaining a livelihood by intellectual occupation; the public taste for musical performance increases, and the demand for musical instruction; there is an increasing demand for every kind of mental labour, for accountants, for calculators, for instructors in science and in languages.' These considerations, and 'the natural bent of the genius of the blind', led him to question '... whether the time has not yet arrived for conducting such institutions on more enlarged principles, for introducing into them useful studies of a higher kind, and claiming for their management a greater degree of scientific assistance.'[55] Calls for the extension of the curriculum and improved teaching methods

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[53] *Address to the Public*, 15 October 1833, Wilberforce Memorial Papers, WM/2/1/2. His source was probably an article on the 'Education of the Blind' in the *North American Review* (Boston, 1833).
[54] *Address to the Public*, Wilberforce Memorial Papers, WM/2/1/2.
[55] Ibid.

were a distinctive feature of mainstream educational expertise, but it is interesting to see attempts being made to extend them into the field of special education.[56]

The concern of the founders of the school for the intellectual training of pupils was inevitably hampered by mundane economic and social realities. The children coming into the school were almost all of the lowest social classes.[57] These were children for whom society deemed 'industrial education' appropriate. It is unlikely that Harcourt intended the children to be 'raised above their station'. Nor is it likely that the charity's supporters would have wished this to be the case. Rather, it was hoped to extend to the children the fullest range of opportunity concomitant with their position. The teachers also faced considerable practical difficulties in imparting instruction to their pupils. Many of the children who arrived at the school lacked even the rudiments of an education and basic social skills had to be mastered before further progress could be made. There was a great shortage of texts and the use of a variety of embossed types restricted the circulation of the limited material available.

The superintendents of the school therefore tended to combine idealism with pragmatism. Rev. Taylor believed that 'The object of this institution, then, was to make the children happy and useful members of society, by teaching them trades, &c, and by instilling into them religious instruction... The object of teaching them music was chiefly to pass away

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[56] Johnson, 'Educating the Educators', p. 94.

[57] This remained the case throughout the period in question. Alfred Hollins, product of a middle class home, joined the school in 1875. He noted that 'My schoolmates, with one or two exceptions, came from poor homes, and many were very rough.' Hollins, *A Blind Musician*, p.36,

time which otherwise would hang heavily on their hands, but at the same time, in some instances, a livelihood might be obtained by it...'.[58] It was Buckle's opinion that 'the most pressing question of the day... is not "how shall they be educated," but rather "how shall they be employed when educated?"[59] It was the role of the school '...to instill into the minds of our pupils ideas of self-dependence and love of industry, and to train them as carefully as we can in some occupations most fitted to their abilities and circumstances; if possible to aid them in their start, and succour them in times of misfortune...'.[60]

One of the most distinctive characteristics of the school was its openness to new ideas, which found expression in a willingness to learn from similar institutions at home and abroad. When the Rev. Taylor was appointed the Committee determined 'That should he think it desirable to visit the Institutions for the Blind at Berlin, or other places on the Continent, his expenses to the amount of £50 be charged to the Institution.'[61] Taylor took the opportunity offered and duly reported his findings to the York Committee. Delegates from other institutions were also welcome at York. The *Third Annual Report* of 1840 noted that the institution had been visited by 'numerous individuals connected with similar establishments at home and abroad.' Participation in 'philanthropic tourism' enabled the WSB to monitor educational developments and initiatives and to amass

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[58] *Yorkshire Gazette*, 14 March 1840.
[59] *Annual Report of the Wilberforce Memorial School for the Blind*, 1884, p.13.
[60] Ibid.
[61] *Minutes of the Wilberforce Memorial School for the Blind*, 20 April 1835.

knowledge and gain expertise that could be applied for the benefit of the Yorkshire blind.[62]

Mr Buckle was a keen participant in European conferences for the blind and kept the York Management Committee fully informed as to the methods and techniques employed in continental schools. Often he was the only English representative present. In 1884 he was elected Vice-President of the International Society for the Amelioration of the Condition of the Blind. Buckle's travels made him increasingly aware of the disparities between the British Schools and those on the continent. State aid meant that the continental schools he visited, particularly those in Vienna, Paris and Copenhagen, had a higher proportion of teachers to pupils and were better equipped than those in England. Foreign Governments took an active interest in their blind citizens. In *The Education of the Blind,* (1879) Buckle advocated '...obtaining state aid, if possible...' as a means of bringing special schools up to the highest possible standard.[63] He was scornful of the failure of the 1889 Royal Commission to hear evidence from continental experts on the Blind.

As a means of generating further interest and support the Committee determined that the school should be 'as much open to public inspection as possible... scarcely any limit has

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[62] Philanthropic tourism is discussed in J. J. H. Dekker, 'Transforming the Nation and the Child: Philanthropy in the Netherlands, Belgium, France and England, c.1780-c.1850', in H. Cunningham and J. Innes (eds.), *Charity, Philanthropy and Reform: From the 1690s to 1850* (Basingstoke, 1998), pp.130-147.

[63] A. Buckle, *The Education of the Blind* (York, 1879). The paper was first read at the International Congress for the Amelioration of the Condition of the Blind in Paris in 1878.

been put upon the admission of visitors...'.[64] This policy was also in keeping with the charity's implicit contract with the citizens of York; those who supported the institution had a right to ensure that it was being properly run and also to derive benefit from its presence. This open invitation to the public was taken up with alacrity. So many visitors wished to hear the children sing that a regular public practice of music was instituted. Their constant presence interrupted the regular curriculum and sometimes inhibited the pupils.[65] The considerable interaction between the pupils and the outside world was in stark contrast with the isolated and insular character of other contemporary institutions, particularly those for the deaf. In 1888 free admission to the school was limited to subscribers, customers and their friends. For strangers, admission was by ticket.[66] This differentiation again represents an acknowledgement of the rights and privileges of those who had contributed to the institution.

The need to gratify visiting members of the public led on rare occasions to the Committee contemplating the dismissal of, or actually dismissing, children on the basis of their appearance. The 1845 Annual Report records the gratitude of the Committee for two operations performed by Mr Hey on one of the pupils. This boy 'an intelligent and promising pupil' had a double hare lip 'and was so much disfigured by it that his presence was painful to visitors, and the Committee were reluctantly compelled to entertain thoughts of removing him on this account from the School.'[67] The success of Mr Hey's surgery 'obviated the need of depriving him of those instructions by which he

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[64] *Annual Report of the Wilberforce Memorial School for the Blind*, 1840, p.3.
[65] *Annual Report of the Wilberforce Memorial School for the Blind*, 1837, p.19.
[66] *Minutes of the Wilberforce Memorial School for the Blind*, 11 May 1888.
[67] *Annual Report of the Wilberforce Memorial School for the Blind*, 1845, p.4.

seems likely so much to benefit, and which he himself so highly values...'.[68] In 1894 Dr Shann wrote of another boy 'He is disfigured to a state amounting to deformity... It is my opinion that it would be better that he should be removed to a smaller institution as visitors might be shocked at the sight of his condition.'[69] The Committee agreed that the boy's deformities were 'such that he cannot be retained at the school.'

The early reports detail the children's progress in knitting and needlework, basket making, music, arithmetic, reading and geography. Practical progress such as ability to dress and wash dishes was also noted. 'One girl in rotation always assists in brushing the shoes, four others in making up all the beds in the house, for these little services they have a trifling weekly allowance, and the very idea of being able to earn something, however little, gives them no small pleasure.'[70] The eagerness of the children to possess books was 'as extraordinary as it is delightful to see...'.[71] The evening readings were a 'source of gratification as well as improvement.' 'We begin with the merest trifles, any thing that will secure their attention, and from Esop's Fables advance to such books as the Kildare society's excellent narrative works, and the cheap repository tracts of Hannah More...'. The children learned psalms and hymns, verses from the Bible 'and have acquired much catechetical and other religious instruction.' Rev. Taylor looked forward to the time when '... the much desired object will at length be obtained of placing the

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[68] Ibid.
[69] *Minutes of the Wilberforce Memorial School for the Blind*, 9 Feb. 1894.
[70] *Annual Report of the Wilberforce Memorial School for the Blind,* 1837, p.18.
[71] Ibid., p.20.

printed scripture in the hands of the blind, in a cheap, commodious and intelligible form.'

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In 1850 it was reported that the boys were engaged in basket-making and mat weaving and the girls in knitting, netting, hair-work and housework. Finding suitable remunerative employment for the girls posed problems which were attributed to '...all their work, or nearly all, being done by ladies for their amusement, and also some of it being done by machinery.'[73] The children's 'mental education' was not neglected. The curriculum included Holy Scriptures, English History, Geography, Arithmetic, both mental and on the frames and reading raised characters.[74] Musical education involved singing, playing the piano and organ, and for the boys participation in the brass band. In 1857 superintendent Littledale appointed a drill sergeant for the benefit of the male pupils. This curriculum seems to have been more varied than that of other similar institutions.[75] As late as 1878 T. R. Armitage noted that despite the ready availability of suitable maps Geography was taught only '... in a few of the more advanced institutions...'. The widespread use of the Rev. W. Taylor's arithmetic board, used in York since the 1830s, had only 'lately been effected' in the majority of the schools.[76] Alfred Hollins, who left York for Norwood College in 1878, commented that the school had given him 'a very fair general education.'[77]

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[72] Ibid.
[73] *Annual Report of the Wilberforce Memorial School for the Blind,* 1851, p.3.
[74] *Annual Report of the Wilberforce Memorial School for the Blind,* 1850, p.6.
[75] It would not be fair to compare the WSB with Worcester College, which was a private institution catering for the sons of gentlemen or with the Academy of Music at Norwood.
[76] T. R. Armitage, *The Condition of the Blind of Great Britain and Ireland* (1878).
[77] Hollins, *A Blind Musician*, p.54.

During the 1880s the subjects taught were Holy Scripture, English History, Reading in Braille, Moon and Lower Case types, Writing in Braille, Pin type and Guldberg (lead pencil), Arithmetic, English Grammar, Geography, Memory Exercises and Music. Buckle noted 'our aims are modest, the range of subject being by no means an extensive one.'[78] He was scornful of schools which were, he believed, over ambitious in the range of subjects taught. It was better to have a trained mind than one crammed full of facts. In 1894 the HMI reported that the school contained 44 boys and 30 girls. 'The school is taught with intelligence and on the newest methods... The manual training for the boys is very good; for the girls it is difficult to provide anything but needlework.' [79] The inspector recommended that 'each inmate should have a separate towel' and that the children should have more outdoor exercise.[80]

Music

From the earliest years of the institution music played a central role in the curriculum. The Rev. W. Taylor was a vicar choral at the Minster and a keen promoter of musical education. Subsequent superintendents also acknowledged the importance of music. 'Music places the blind more nearly on an equality with others, than any other branch of education; and where any decided taste for it exists, I should be disposed to look upon it

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[78] *Annual Report of the Wilberforce Memorial School for the Blind,* 1880, p.6.
[79] *Minutes of the Wilberforce Memorial School for the Blind,* 13 April 1894.
[80] Ibid.

as by far the most certain means of subsistence for them, after having left us.'[81] Because musical education was expensive it was not initially available to all pupils and various means were adopted to restrict access to the most talented.

The musical abilities of the pupils again afforded the institution the opportunity to demonstrate the benefits its presence conferred on the city. In 1840 the public were granted admission to the weekly practice of music and sizable audiences attended for many decades.[82] In addition to raising 'a considerable sum of money' these concerts were 'most valuable, indirectly, in inducing people to become interested in the school.'[83] No doubt they also played a significant role in raising general awareness of the blind and in promoting a positive public image. In 1843 a brass band was started after Mr. Robinson, a local professor of music, raised the sum of £115 13*s* 6*d* to purchase instruments.[84] The pupils were regularly entreated to perform at public gatherings and if the request was deemed appropriate permission was usually granted. Again this provided the opportunity to promote a positive public image of the school and its pupils. The pupils performed at the Retreat, at the Mechanics Institute, and for the army. On a number of occasions the pupils volunteered to donate the profits of their concerts to various charitable causes. In 1863, £20 was raised for the fund for Lancashire Distress and in 1870 the pupils gave a concert for 'the relief of the sick and wounded in the present War.'

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[81] *Annual Report of the Wilberforce Memorial School for the Blind*, 1850, p.5. The Superintendent at this time was Beverley R. Morris, M.D.
[82] In 1855 receipts from the Thursday practices were £65 14*s* 1*d*. *Annual Report of the Wilberforce Memorial School for the Blind*, 1855, p.3.
[83] *Annual Report of the Wilberforce Memorial School for the Blind*, 1850, p.5.
[84] *Annual Report of the Wilberforce Memorial School for the Blind,* 1845, p.2.

Buckle regarded the musical education of the blind both 'as a means of education in a general sense, for humanizing and civilizing our pupils' and 'as the teaching of an art by means of which the pupils may in after life earn a livelihood.'[85] Those 'several' pupils of the school 'who are doing best for themselves in life, who are the least burden to their friends, and are occupying the most respectable positions are those who are employed as organists, teachers of music, pianoforte tuners, and music dealers.'[86] He was however circumspect about the prospects of youths trained purely in music. This may have been a consequence of contemporary debate about the limitations of the powers of creativity attendant upon early loss of sight. He felt that prudence was necessary '...for it is certainly, in my opinion, a by no means wise course to send out into the country considerable numbers of blind youths trained in nothing but music, intellectually well educated, and imbued with a feeling that they are in all cases fit to compete with the seeing. No possible good is done by encouraging our pupils to ignore their own deficiencies.'[87] Instead he commended the attitude of a successful blind organist and tuner of Berlin. This man had remarked that the blind tuner '...must be no competitor; he must aim at being a modest colleague, that his fellow musician may be led willingly to offer him aid.'[88]

Rational Entertainment

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[85] *Annual Report of the Wilberforce Memorial School for the Blind,* 1874, p.15.
[86] Ibid.
[87] Ibid.
[88] Ibid.

Like the YIDD, the WSB made use of the public examination as a means of generating interest and support, and of strengthening the existing 'contractual' relationship with subscribers. One early report, announcing a forthcoming examination, commented that those who took an interest in the school, 'have a right to inquire further whether it is conducted in such a manner as to fulfill the objects for which it has been founded: on that point personal inspection will afford the most satisfactory means of judging…'.[89]

A lengthy report of a public examination held by the WSB is to be found in the *Yorkshire Gazette* of March 14th 1840. The examination took place in the Festival Concert Room, York on a Wednesday afternoon. Both the timing and venue of the performance are significant indicators of the status of the occasion and the likely audience. Only middle-class people with control over their working agendas were likely to be able to attend afternoon meetings.[90] The smart location of the examination with its associations of high culture provides further evidence of the anticipated audience. The examination was attended by an 'exceedingly large and respectable assembly' of between 800 to 1000 people. [91] The *Gazette* noted the presence of the Right Hon. Lord Feversham, a Vice-President of the WSB, The Right Hon. the Lord Mayor, a Committee member, and the Rev. W. V. Harcourt, Chairman of the York Central Sub Committee.

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[89] *Annual Report of the Wilberforce Memorial School for the Blind,* 1837, p.xiii.
[90] Morris, *Class, Sect and Party,* p.186.
[91] The 1841 Census gives the city's population as 28,842. Hence those attending formed a sizeable proportion of the citizenry of York. Presumably some individuals traveled to York from surrounding towns for the proceedings.

After Lord Feversham had made a few introductory remarks the Rev. W. Taylor addressed the meeting. He explained the objects of the institution and expressed his hope that the audience would be 'satisfied that great advancement had been made' and continue their support. He then referred to 'unguarded remarks' made by visitors to the school which had 'affected the feelings of the children considerably.' 'On one occasion an individual inquired "Ah! don't you feel unhappy because you are blind?" another asked "can they speak?" and a third wished to know "if they did not sometimes in eating put the meat to their chins instead of their mouths?" Notices were placed at the entrance in reference to this subject, but still such remarks and questions had been made and put.' These remarks not only reveal the lack of sensitivity and considerable ignorance of some of the visitors but also demonstrate the role of the school in educating the citizens of York about blindness.

The Rev. Graham, who conducted the examination into the children's religious knowledge, was at pains to dismiss any suggestion that the examination was 'to use a common expression, a "got up affair." I can assure you this is not the case.' It is interesting that despite, or because of, the respectability of all those involved in the proceedings, he felt it necessary to issue such a disclaimer. He may have sought to quell residual suspicion as to the *bona fides* of the disabled or possibly of their teachers, or indeed a combination of the two. Alternatively he may have been attempting to distance public examinations from other less respectable forms of exhibitionism. After the examination the Rev. Graham addressed the children, emphasizing 'how thankful they

ought to be for the situation in which they were placed, and for the instruction they received concerning those things which belonged to their eternal welfare.'

The Rev. Taylor read out poems written by two of the children 'which were greatly admired'. He then conducted the rest of the examination, which included reading, music and arithmetic. As he did so he made 'numerous observations... describing the means of instruction as he went on.' The education of the audience was one of the most important elements of the examination format. Not only did it make the examinations more interesting but it also served to underline their respectability and seriousness of intent. Explanations of method and technique provided the audience with insight into the challenges faced by educators and helped to generate a more informed appreciation of their expertise in overcoming them. They may thus have helped to raise the status of specialist educators. At intervals pupils played pieces on the piano 'with exceedingly good taste.' Finally the National Anthem was sung and votes of thanks given.

The account is of interest because of the wealth of detail it offers as to the proceedings, which must have occupied a number of hours. The combination of entertainment with instruction –'rational entertainment'– which the examinations offered must have appealed to many of the same individuals who attended the Philosophical Society or visited the Yorkshire Museum. The huge size of the audience and its respectability give some indication of the popularity and status of the charity and the ability of its patrons and supporters to generate public interest.

In order to maximise the appeal of its fund raising activities, the public performances of the WSB increasingly focused on the musical abilities of its pupils. The popularity of these musical entertainments enabled the WSB to continue to hold successful meetings in the later decades of the century. These entertainments, whilst still retaining some elements of the examination format, no longer seem to have involved actual examinations of pupils. Instead, concerts and meetings, such as that at Halifax in 1888, included explanations of the philosophy and work of the school and of the methods used for reading and writing music. Following meetings the school's superintendent canvassed the local towns for new subscribers, usually with successful results. The support and local knowledge of the clergy was essential to the success of these visits.

Accounts

Table 4. Principal Sources of Income and Total Annual Income[92]

Source	1840	1850	1861 [93]	1870	1880	1890
Legacies	----------	£130	£610 17 6	£1070 8 10	£550	£525
Donations	£287 18	£77 4 4	£86 8 10	£67 5 3	£216 13 2	£37 13 9
Subscriptions	£490 17	£335 11	£348 10 6	£396 12	£424 12 6	£402 10 6
Quarterages [94]	£302 6 11/2	£662 12 2	£532 6 10	£743 10	£651 13	£655 0 6
Dividends	£180	£347 0 8	£654 12 3	£919 19 6	£1208 13 11	£1250 2 10

[92] For the sake of clarity and coherence I have omitted various miscellaneous sources of income such as concert receipts, rent received etc. Hence the Total Income figure is not equal to the sum of the listed sources but, including as it does all sources of income, instead represents the total annual income of the institution.
[93] There is unfortunately no report available for 1860.
[94] These were the fees paid on behalf of pupils.

Manufactures	£217 16 0	£166 99	£134 12 1	£850 11	£2205 13 11	£2996 2 8
Total Income	£1882 2 11	£1913 2 11	£2577 35	£4549 17 1	£5388 13 03	£5959 18 7
Pupil Nos.	47	68	62	74	87	60[95]

The first published set of Accounts included the period from the establishment of the institution to the 9th March 1837. The total income during this period was £9002 2*s*. The list of donors was headed by 'Their Royal Highnesses the Duchess of Kent and the Princess Victoria' who gave the sum of £25.[96] The most substantial donors were Lord Feversham and Earl Fitzwilliam who both donated £500.[97] Earl Fitzwilliam's tenants donated a further £128 4*s* 6*d*. The Archbishop of York donated £200 and the York Corporation £100. The sum of £177 19*s* 4*d* had been received on account of pupils. The proceeds of sale of the pupils' work, £34 10*s* from the sale of baskets, £4 19*s* 9*d* from rope mats, and £9*s* 4*d* from knitted shawls, stockings etc., raised £48 10*s* 1*d* in total. Materials for manufacture amounted to £65 10*s* 9*d*. Most of the expenditure related to the purchase of government stock as an investment with a large sum also being expended on tradesmen's bills relating to the alteration of the Manor Buildings. Salaries of the staff who included the master and matron, the knitting teacher, the music teacher, a basket

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[95] The decrease in pupil numbers was blamed on the opening of schools at Sheffield and Leeds. The number of children in the school had risen to 77 by 1894, no doubt in consequence of the 1893 Act.

[96] In 1875 it was reported 'The Queen lately took an interest in a blind boy at Windsor, and desired to provide for his education, and the Committee were gratified by Her Majesty's selecting the Yorkshire School for this purpose...'. See F. Prochaska, *Royal Bounty: The Making of a Welfare Monarchy* (New Haven,1985), for details of the Queen's patronage of charitable organisations.

[97] For details of the Earls Fitzwilliam, their sources of income and charitable expenditure see J. T. Ward, 'The Earls Fitzwilliam and the Wentworth Woodhouse Estate in the Nineteenth Century', *Yorkshire Bulletin of Economic and Social Research,* 12 (1960), pp. 19-27.

maker, a blind mat maker and female servants amounted to £230 18*s* 9*d*. The cost of maintaining a pupil at the school, £60 per annum, made the new institution the most expensive in the country.[98]

In common with other similar institutions the school struggled to maintain its subscription list after initial enthusiasm had faded. In 1861 Harcourt pointed out that the School had never been able to cover its costs purely from income and had had to spend approximately one third of its capital.[99] He contrasted the annual subscriptions of the YSB with the £650 received by the Liverpool school. Only if the Yorkshire subscriptions were raised to the Liverpool level would it possible to lower the weekly maintenance payment.[100] The 1864 report contains a summary of subscriptions. The largest sum, £297 3*s* 6*d* was raised at York. Leeds subscribers contributed the second largest amount, £38 16s, and Halifax and Sheffield both raised £20. In total residents of twenty seven towns in the county contributed subscriptions of £486 17*s* 6*d*. The relatively insignificant proportion of donations from the large manufacturing cities of the West Riding highlight the institution's dependence on its home city.

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[98] J. S. Hurt, *Outside the Mainstream: A History of Special Education* (1988), p.96. This compared with only £29 at the Glasgow institution.

[99] Letter from Rev. Harcourt to unknown recipient, dated York 2 October 1861, bound with volume of Annual Reports for the 1860's. The institution had amassed capital of £28,000 by this date.

[100] Ironically the Liverpool School was also experiencing a reduction in its finances. In 1859 subscriptions from the citizens of Liverpool amounted to £660, with £78 coming from outside the locality. This represented a considerable fall from the 1819 figures when subscriptions of £1,373 were received with £524 of this total coming from outside the city. The opening of other schools was no doubt responsible for a fall in revenue as the school now came to serve a local rather than a national role. See M. W. Royden, *Pioneers and Perseverance: A History of the Royal School for the Blind, Liverpool 1791-1991* (Liverpool, 1991), p.131.

The WSB was fortunate in that a number of substantial legacies enabled it to meet running costs. In 1845 a legacy of £5,000 from Dr Stephen Beckwith, a member of the Philosophical Society, helped to finance an extension to the school.[101] Thomas Clapham of Settle left the school £8,572 in 1852 and Mrs Thomas Tennant of Leeds left £5,100 in 1872.[102] In 1884 John Harrison's donation of £3054 19*s* 8*d* was used to finance the building of the new Jubilee wing. As the Table above makes clear, dividends upon the investments purchased with these and other legacies provided the school with a sizeable proportion of its income. A significant proportion of donors leaving legacies of £1000 or more to the school were doctors.

Responsibility for the payment of the pupils' fees fell upon their parents, friends or Poor Law Guardians. In 1850 only one pupil paid fees without the aid of charitable assistance. Some indication as to the proportion of applicants whose fees were paid by the Guardians may be found in a Minute of December 1835.[103] This records that the ministers or parish officers in 5 out of the 10 applications awaiting determination were to be informed of a reduction in the payment required from parishes for the education of pauper children. The proportion of children who had their fees paid by the parish did not alter significantly over the decades. In November 1876 a sub-committee reported '... that nearly half of

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[101] He also left £9000 to the Yorkshire Philosophical Society thus removing all anxiety over the state of its finances.
[102] Thomas Tennant was Mayor of Leeds in 1824 and was Chairman of the management committee of the Leeds Dispensary from 1825.On his death he left £1000 to the Leeds Dispensary. S. Anning, *The History of Medicine in Leeds* (Leeds, 1980), pp.79-81.
[103] *Minutes of the Wilberforce Memorial School for the Blind,* 14 December 1835.

them are of the poorest class friendless and paid by the Guardians of the poor and these if not in the School would be hopelessly condemned to the workhouse.'[104]

In 1856 Bradford Board of Guardians became the first board to subscribe to the institution paying £2 2*s* annually. It was some years before other unions followed this example, but by 1880 Guardians at Halifax, North Bierley, Huddersfield and Leeds also subscribed. Boards still had to pay a per capita fee for the teaching and maintenance of each pupil. From 1888 this was fixed at £12 per annum per child irrespective of any annual subscription.[105] This was the maximum sum permitted by the Local Government Board on account of pupils sent by Boards of Guardians.[106] Following the 1893 Education (Blind and Deaf Children) Act, the Committee resolved that the charge for each pupil received at the expense of a public authority should be £18 per annum, with £3 for clothing, over and above the £5 5*s* which was the amount of the Government Grant.[107]

The large majority of the remainder of pupils, although not indigent, came from families needing charitable assistance in order to educate their children. It may have been children from families like these, rather than those entirely dependent on the parish, who were most likely, in the absence of a 'friend' to find the weekly payment a bar to attendance.[108] There is some indication that this situation persisted into the later decades of the century. In 1880 Buckle wrote of the unknown numbers of children '...whom Boards of Guardians

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[104] *Minutes of the Wilberforce Memorial School for the Blind,* 10 November 1876.
[105] *Minutes of the Wilberforce Memorial School for the Blind,* 13 January 1888.
[106] *Minutes of the Wilberforce Memorial School for the Blind,* 8 February 1889.
[107] *Minutes of the Wilberforce Memorial School for the Blind,* 11 May 1894.
[108] Friends were often clergymen.

could and would send to school from a higher class whose parents are not aware that by receiving such aid they would not themselves become paupers?'[109] From the 1880s a regular feature of the reports was the publication of details of legislation in the interest of the blind and deaf.[110]

The nature of the manufactures of the school is detailed below. It is important to remember when considering the Table that the figures given are of gross income and that the expenditure on raw materials and wages made substantial inroads on profitability. The primary purpose of manufacture was the gainful employment and training of pupils and outmates with the making of a profit for the institution being a beneficial side effect. Sometimes certain occupations, like the making of mattresses, were pursued for a period despite proving economically unviable. In effect the manufacturing was subsidised by the charity and the figures in the Table need to be interpreted in that light. In 1893 however the trade receipts were sufficiently good for the institution to be '... able (for the first time) to avoid drawing upon legacies for current expenditure.'[111]

Evidence of the level of support for the charity can also be assessed by reference to the various fund raising activities undertaken on its behalf. It is notable that women, otherwise excluded from the administration of the WSB, were particularly active in this

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[109] *Annual Report of the Wilberforce Memorial School for the Blind,* 1880, p.4.
[110] Details were given of 25 & 26 Victoria c.43, s. 1, 9, and 10 which enabled guardians to educate blind and deaf mute children in certified schools; 31 & 32 Victoria c.122, s. 42 which made similar provision, subject to permission being granted, for children to attend uncertified schools; 42 & 43 Victoria c.54, s.10 which provided that Guardians might subscribe towards the support of Institutions, Associations etc. for the benefit of blind and deaf mute persons.
[111] *Annual Report of the Wilberforce Memorial School for the Blind,* 1893, p.7.

area. Mrs Markham, a 'kind benefactress' of the institution was the instigator of a fund for needy former pupils. Women also initiated subscriptions for the purchase of new instruments, chiefly pianos or organs, for the benefit of the pupils.[112] They were prominent amongst those friends of the institution who defrayed the costs of trips to concerts or entertainments. When Mr Buckle appealed for help in transcribing Braille, it was women who volunteered to assist. There is some evidence too of a limited but distinctively working class contribution to the charity. The sum raised by Lord Fitzwilliam's tenants has been mentioned above. In 1838 the Lodge of Ancient Foresters donated the proceeds of a Christmas day collection to the charity and a further donation of £7 10 s was received from the Foresters in 1872. The profits of a fireworks display and a donation from the circus are also recorded.

Employment

The Committee was anxious to highlight examples of former pupils who were able to maintain themselves independently. Employment was one of the most obvious criteria by which subscribers could judge the success of the school. Publishing details of pupils who were self-sufficient helped to satisfy the subscribers that the school was performing in accordance with its part of the 'contract'. The 1838 report anticipated that 'In a short while many of the boys and girls will be able to earn the greatest part, if not the whole of their livelihood, and thus have the gratification of "eating the labour of their own

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[112] In 1840 the organ subscription was, 'set on foot, and principally collected, by Miss Strutt, of Belper.' *Annual Report of the Wilberforce Memorial School for the Blind,* 1883, p.9.

hands…" '.[113] The school's first pupil, Francis Watson had been appointed organist at St Mary's Beverley at £25 a year. Other former pupils were engaged in basket making and teaching music. However by 1850 the earlier optimistic forecasts had been replaced with a more sober assessment of the difficulties pupils faced in the labour market. The reports sought to persuade subscribers that even those pupils who had not been able to find employment had benefited from their time at the school. Their education helped them to bear privations with resignation and made them more deserving of the sympathy of their fellow men.[114]

In 1840 a resolution was passed giving the Committee power to allow pupils who had completed their education to be employed as workers at the institution. This discretion, which was exercised sparingly, was generally utilised to enable the more able pupils to be employed as assistant teachers. It may have been that this resolution, which gave to the school 'the additional feature of an asylum,' was based on an assessment of the difficulties even the most promising of pupils faced in supporting themselves.[115] Several of the earliest pupils to whom this concession was extended remained either resident at, or closely associated with the WSB, for the rest of their lives. Charles Holmes, who married a fellow former pupil Martha Knowles, had spent 50 years in the institution by 1890. William Strickland was employed for a similar period of time as assistant music master at the school.[116]

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[113] *Annual Report of the Wilberforce Memorial School for the Blind,* 1838, p.4.
[114] *Annual Report of the Wilberforce Memorial School for the Blind,* 1850, p.3.
[115] *Annual Report of the Wilberforce Memorial School for the Blind,* 1845, p.4.
[116] *Annual Report of the Wilberforce Memorial School for the Blind,* 1890, p.7.

Another sign of the recognition on the part of the school that it needed to support its former pupils to ensure their success was the decision to provide them with gifts of tools.[117] In 1866, Mrs Markham set up a fund 'for the purpose of aiding former pupils of the School to establish themselves in positions of independent industry.'[118] This fund, which was administered independently of the school, again provided needy former pupils with tools and materials. Pupils who displayed 'industrious habits' were also eligible for small sums of money and assistance was available in the event of illness or accident. The need to make provision for ill health must also have influenced the decision to set up an Outmates' Benefit Club.[119] Because the number of outmates was comparatively few and their wages small, the club's position was initially precarious. Contributions were therefore welcomed from the public; those donating to the fund had 'the satisfaction of knowing that they are helping those who are willing to help themselves.'[120]

The first detailed and systematic attempt to garner information as to the ability of pupils to maintain themselves independently was instigated in 1855 by the then Superintendent, W. D. Littledale. Littledale, who was blind himself, confessed that he approached the subject of the industrial education of the blind 'with great diffidence, knowing the

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[117] *Minutes of the Wilberforce Memorial School for the Blind,* 11 June 1847 and 9 July 1847 refer to a 'gift of tools to be purchased for a sum not exceeding one Guinea.' A Minute of 12 December 1850 refers to a present of one pound to Henry Horner towards the purchase of a loom for mat making.

[118] *Annual Report of the Wilberforce Memorial School for the Blind,* 1882, p.25.

[119] The Club is first mentioned in the 1874 Report, but it was probably commenced a few years prior to this.

[120] *Annual Report of the Wilberforce Memorial School for the Blind,* 1876, p.6.

difficulties with which it is surrounded.'[121] The results of his enquiries were included in his Superintendent's Report of 1856:

> Of those who have left the Institution, eleven have obtained Organist's situations, and are, in this way, able to maintain themselves fully.
>
> Four others, engaged in teaching music and tuning instruments, are enabled to maintain themselves to a great extent, if not entirely.
>
> Only one female appears to be able to support herself, and, in this, instance, it is by means of her musical attainments.
>
> In addition to those who have left the Institution, there are six male adults and one female still resident in the School who are filling Organists' situations.
>
> In reference to Basket-making, it appears that four so employed are able fully to maintain themselves, and some others are partially successful.
>
> Seven are reported as employing themselves in making and selling blacking, hawking, carting, &c., and not availing themselves of the trade they learned in the school.[122]

Commenting on the position of the female school leavers Littledale noted that, '.... it is not to be expected that many should acquire the power of self-support.' He had confidence that most were useful in domestic matters. In addition, 'they are doubtless

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[121] *Annual Report of the Wilberforce Memorial School for the Blind,* 1856, p.4.
[122] Ibid.

happier personally, and more intelligently useful to others, in consequence of the mental training received here.'[123]

The enquiries confirmed Littledale's belief that music was the only really remunerative pursuit for the Blind.[124] This posed two difficulties: firstly there was the need to obtain sufficient positions for musical graduates of the school. Littledale appealed for anyone aware of vacancies, particularly organist's posts to inform him directly. It also raised issues as to the future employment of the many children who lacked musical ability. Littledale proposed further consideration 'of the best means of providing such instruction for the pupils as shall best fit them to maintain themselves, wholly or in part, after leaving the Institution.' [125] He reported on a visit he had made to the Scottish Institutions at Edinburgh, Glasgow and Aberdeen. In these institutions all other considerations were subservient to the need for the blind to be self-supporting. In effect, the schools operated as 'manufactories', run on commercial lines for the purpose of employing blind workers.[126]

In contrast Littledale acknowledged that the industrial training at York was 'only very partially successful...'.[127] He attributed this to the nature of the basket-work undertaken at York and to a lack of incentive on the part of the pupils. Even so, it remained 'easier to teach a blind man a trade than to find a market for his workmanship...'. Upon leaving

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[123] Ibid.
[124] *Annual Report of the Wilberforce Memorial School for the Blind,* 1856, p.4.
[125] *Annual Report of the Wilberforce Memorial School for the Blind,* 1856, p.5.
[126] Ibid.
[127] Ibid.

school the blind worker had to take responsibility for procuring stock, manufacturing products and marketing them; the combination of skills required were more than could reasonably be expected. Littledale recommended attempting to find a market for coarser basket-work and increasing the number of working hours for the older pupils. Those who worked longer hours were to receive small financial incentives.

Following Littledale's resignation in 1859, consideration of these issues passed to the Committee. 'It has been ascertained that, after all the care and pains bestowed upon the pupils in this School, many of them, after they have left it, eventually come upon their Parishes for relief, or eke out a living by begging in the streets. This seems partly owing to the fact that the trades usually taught are not sufficiently remunerative to enable the Blind to obtain a livelihood, but, in a still greater degree, to the difficulty which they experience in disposing of their goods, when made.'[128] It is some indication of the progressive and enlightened nature of the committee that they were prepared to be so forthright about the condition of former pupils and that economic difficulties rather than moral deficiencies were highlighted. The Committee made enquiries with other Schools to see whether they had had more success in pursuing other trades and also to try and find some solution to the shared dilemma of disposing of pupil's work.[129]

The Committee decided to convert Mr Littledale's vacated rooms into workshops for the Blind. A meeting was called to discuss the new venture and the Rev. Harcourt wrote a letter explaining the reasons why the proposals deserved further support. He condemned

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[128] *Annual Report of the Wilberforce Memorial School for the Blind*, 1861, p.7.
[129] Ibid.

as 'incomplete' the charity which left former pupils to struggle 'under insuperable disadvantages' in their attempts to obtain an independent livelihood.[130] He quoted the manager of the Aberdeen Asylum "I know of no trade, which blind persons can carry on at their own homes without assistance. Those of our blind who had tried any sort of work at home have all failed."[131] He also noted that the provision of employment for the adult blind might act as a further incentive to parents or parishes to send their children to the school.

A 'large and influential' meeting to discuss the situation of the adult blind was subsequently held at York on the 30th October 1861 with the Archbishop of York presiding. The Earl of Carlisle, the Lord Bishop of Oxford, the Rev. Canon Harcourt, R. M. Milnes, Esq., M.P., J W. Childers, Esq., the Hon E Lascelles, Sir John V.B. Johnstone, Bart., MP, and the Lord Mayor of York also attended. The meeting generated additional donations of £1675 and a further £130 in annual subscriptions was promised.[132] This sum enabled the committee to proceed with the conversion of Littledale's former suite into workshops.

By 1863 six outmates were engaged in basket-making and mat-weaving. They earned an average wage of eleven shillings and sixpence, depending on their rate of work.[133] The Committee recognised that the number taking advantage of the new facilities was rather

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[130] Letter from Rev. Harcourt to unknown recipient, dated York 2 October 1861, bound with volume of Annual Reports for the 1860's.
[131] Ibid.
[132] *Annual Report of the Wilberforce Memorial School for the Blind*, 1862, p.5.
[133] *Annual Report of the Wilberforce Memorial School for the Blind*, 1863, p.3.

small and the hope was expressed that numbers would increase once the advantages of the system were more widely known. In fact the number of outmates rose only slowly, but the Committee expressed its preference to fill vacancies with former pupils of good character rather than look further a field for employees.[134] It may have been that blind workmen preferred to return to their home towns or to work independently rather than to surrender personal freedom to the closely monitored and regulated workshops. [135]

The difficulties of disposing of products remained. 'Constant exertions' by the friends of the school were necessary to avoid 'embarrassment...from the accumulation of work...'. One initiative was to pay for a stall at the Saturday Market to dispose of baskets. A former pupil, William Horner who manned the stall was allowed 20 per cent of the takings. The venture was not very successful and was only continued for a few months. Regular Whitsuntide Bazaars proved a more effective means of disposal. These were so popular with the public that the school was able to charge for admission.[136] The School was also able to take advantage of an Industrial Exhibition held during the autumn of 1866 which attracted 'an immense number of visitors' to York. Much of the School's accumulated stock was sold, raising the sum of £188 7*s* 9*d*. The work of two female pupils who operated sewing machines at the exhibition attracted great attention and 'the produce from cambric handkerchiefs alone, which they made and sold there, was £53 15s 9d.'[137]

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[134] Ibid. By 1890 the number of workmen had risen to 22.
[135] See Appendix, Table 7, for comparison of Yorkshire workshops.
[136] *Annual Report of the Wilberforce Memorial School for the Blind*, 1875, p.4.
[137] *Annual Report of the Wilberforce Memorial School for the Blind,* 1867, p.3.

One new initiative was the replacement of mat making with brush making which had proved a success at other institutions.[138] Not only were the necessary raw materials easier to handle and relatively inexpensive, but the process of manufacture required little assistance from the seeing. Brush making quickly became the institution's most profitable activity with sales in the period of 1870-71 amounting to £1044 9*s* 3*d*. During the same period basket-work sales brought in £413 5*s* and wool work £33 6*s* 5*d*. Of the twelve outmates, seven were employed in basket making and five in brush making. 'They are all steady, well conducted efficient workmen, and there is no difficulty in selling at remunerative prices, the articles manufactured by them.'[139]

In 1877 a further enquiry was made into the employment of pupils. Buckle, reported that in the previous seven years, a school generation, 88 pupils had passed through the school.

Table 5. Employment of Pupils 1877

How employed or otherwise	Males	Females	Total
Basket making	12		12
Brush Making	9	3	12
Wool work and knitting		4	4
Music, (Teaching, Tuning, &c.)	11	1	12
Other occupations	5	2	7
Unemployed	6	13	19
Left School from incapacity or ill health	7	4	11

[138] Ibid., p.4.
[139] *Annual Report of the Wilberforce Memorial School for the Blind*, 1872, p.1.

Dead	7	4	11
	57	31	88

The high level of female unemployment, though regarded as inevitable, continued to cause concern. One consequence of this was that it increased the dependency of females upon their relatives. In some cases it was believed that women were being forced, through economic necessity, into entering unsuitable marriages. Others had little option but the workhouse. Buckle urged the necessity for an industrial home catering for blind women.[140] Finally, in 1894, following a generous donation from the Hon. Treasurer Alderman Close, the WSB opened a Scarborough branch for women which comprised accommodation and a shop.

The need to find suitable employment for past pupils was perhaps the most complex issue faced by the Committee of the WSB. Their open acknowledgment of the fact that many pupils failed to support themselves was matched by earnest, if not always successful, attempts to ameliorate this situation. It is perhaps unfortunate that the Rev. Harcourt's fears as to the over-concentration of blind workers in unskilled trades were not better heeded. Since for the majority of pupils vocational training was limited to a handful of low paid manual occupations, their potential to achieve independence was compromised from the start. The poor condition of many of the children entering the school and the challenge of countering low societal expectations of the blind, compounded in the case of pauper children and females, also contributed to the school's difficulties in this area.

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[140] *Annual Report of the Wilberforce Memorial School for the Blind,* 1893, p. 9.

The COS Report on the Blind

In 1876 the COS formed a Special Committee to discuss the training and education of the blind. Its recommendations, which included calls for a Royal Commission on the Blind, met with a mixed reception at York.[141] In particular, Buckle rejected calls for blind children to be educated with the seeing, other than in a preparatory capacity. He recognised that the COS was not alone in its advocacy of this policy. Dr Howe, a renowned America campaigner for the blind, also supported common schooling as 'one of the improvements of the future...'.[142] The London School Board had welcomed blind children into their classes, but no official reports had yet appeared as to their progress.[143] Buckle suggested that the motivation for these calls for a change in policy was twofold. Firstly it arose from an appreciation of the inadequacy of the special schools to meet the educational needs of the blind. This was combined with 'the foolish unwillingness of some parents to send their children from home to special schools.'[144] Secondly he recognised concern over 'the evils which result or are supposed to result from the congregation of blind children in special schools.' Whilst these cases deserved 'careful consideration, I yet do not admit that they are of sufficient force to induce us to materially modify the whole plan of blind education.'[145]

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[141] *Annual Report of the Wilberforce Memorial School for the Blind,* 1878, p.21.
[142] Ibid.
[143] In his paper *The Education of the Blind in Ordinary Schools*, presented to the International Congress for the Amelioration of the Blind in Paris in 1878, Dr T. Armitage was scathing of the efforts of the London School Board. 'The results of this education are by no means satisfactory ... little progress and contract the bad habit of sitting entire hours doing nothing...'.
[144] *Annual Report of the Wilberforce Memorial School for the Blind,* 1878, p.21.
[145] Ibid.

Buckle rejected the COS finding that education alongside the seeing would stimulate the blind. He believed this was unfair on the blind child and that the different treatment necessarily accorded to him or her would create jealousy amongst seeing classmates. He also found fallacious the COS belief that self-help and self-reliance would result from mixed classes. In these circumstances, rather than being encouraged to explore for themselves, many blind children would 'prefer to make use of the eyes of the seeing...' . Self-help was more likely to result from attendance at a well run blind school where independence was encouraged. The argument that children sent away to school missed out on the benefits of a good home training was only valid, Buckle felt, if the character of the parents was adequate. 'In sadly too many instances, the fond love of the parent does next to nothing for the careful training of the blind child. In Yorkshire, the parents will tell you plainly that they have not time to attend to it – with the work of the house and other children to attend to, the mother says she finds it takes less time to do the little offices for the blind child, than to teach the child to do them itself.'[146] The special school was in most instances the best place for the blind child of poor parents.

The 1883 Jubilee

The school's fiftieth anniversary provided an opportunity to celebrate and to reflect upon its achievements and the position of the Yorkshire blind generally. Buckle, referring to the founders of the school, noted that, 'Their efforts on the whole have been nobly

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[146] Ibid., p.23.

supported, and, without any aid from the Government of the Country, the education and care of the Blind, not only in Yorkshire, but also throughout the whole kingdom had made rapid strides and their condition has nearly on all points undergone great changes for the better.'[147] The expansion in facilities for the blind since the school's foundation had indeed been dramatic. Yorkshire now supported three schools for the blind catering for 189 children between the ages of ten and twenty.[148] Buckle believed that this encompassed virtually all eligible children. In addition workshops at Leeds, Sheffield, Bradford and Hull employed 140 blind men and women in the manufacture of baskets, brushes and mats. Most of the large towns had Blind Visiting Societies and many parishes in the county also had the benefit of Libraries for the Blind. [149]

Some 500 or more pupils had passed through the school since its foundation and it had been hoped that a detailed statistical account of their progress might be compiled. Unfortunately little or no information was available concerning a large number of former pupils and, in any event, many had been withdrawn from the school prematurely.[150] Instead Buckle provided details of some of the most successful pupils. Twenty five individuals who were employed either as musicians (primarily organists), music teachers,

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[147] *Annual Report of the Wilberforce Memorial School for the Blind*, 1883, p.73.
[148] The other two schools were the School for the Blind in Sheffield which had opened in 1879 and had seventy pupils and the Leeds School for the Blind which had thirty pupils. The 1871 Census had enumerated 232 blind people aged between ten and twenty, but Buckle surmised that the difference between the two figures was comprised of children who were physically or mentally unfit for school. *Annual Report of the Wilberforce Memorial School for the Blind,* 1883, p.72.
[149] Ibid.
[150] *Annual Report of the Wilberforce Memorial School for the Blind,* 1883, p.19.

tuners and music vendors were reported to be, '.... doing very well.'[151] Halley Plowman was the successful manager of a concert party to which a number of other former pupils belonged. W.H. Strickland had been assistant music master at the school for 43 years.[152] Buckle noted that he could have listed another twenty five similarly employed, '...earning, some fair good maintenance, and others, though not completely supporting themselves, are yet doing their best to earn what they can.'[153] In addition to the thirteen outmates at the school, five former pupils were independently engaged in handicrafts, and two of this group employed journeymen. Thirty one former pupils were employed in workshops throughout the County. Other pupils worked in family businesses.

The position of the female pupils was less satisfactory.[154] In part, at least this was the consequence of contemporary attitudes and expectations of disabled women, both on the part of their educators and the wider community. Most were felt to '... need the care of a protecting and helping hand, and all that we can, or ought to expect of them is that their time should be industriously employed in earning whatever they are able.'[155] An example was given of one female who worked as a Sunday school teacher and another who organised a knitting circle. One blind teacher at the school was praised both for her gentle and considerate attitude to her charges and for her Christian resignation and fortitude as she lay dying from consumption.

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[151] Ibid., p.20.
[152] Mr Barnby, the highly esteemed music master, had been at the school since its foundation.
[153] *Annual Report of the Wilberforce Memorial School for the Blind,* 1883, p.22.
[154] Ibid., p.24. A number of women were employed in workshops and a few earned between six and ten shillings a week from re-seating cane chairs. However most females were dependent on the charity of relatives or friends
[155] Ibid.

Buckle cautioned against over ambitious expectations of the prospects of pupils leaving the school. If some former pupils failed despite earnest efforts to support themselves without charitable or parish assistance then this should not reflect too harshly upon the efforts of the blind as a class or of the school itself. 'How many seeing people in their rank of life have to be helped out of their pecuniary difficulties? And in how many cases is the blindness accompanied with a certain amount of bodily weakness, which renders prolonged exertion impossible.'[156] It was the role of the school to teach its pupils the value of self-help and to find them a suitable occupation if possible, but it was unreasonable to expect that all would be self-supporting upon leaving the school.[157]

The Jubilee provided the opportunity to promote the activities of the school to the wider public. The principal event of the Jubilee year was the exhibition and conference held at York in July 1883. It was the first of its kind in the United Kingdom. Some 56 delegates, principally from British Institutions, attended and gave papers. A public exhibition was mounted of work from European, American and British Institutions. The official proceedings began with a visit from the Prince of Wales, followed a few days later by a county meeting. Those present included Earl Fitzwilliam, who presided, the Archbishop of York, the Earl of Feversham and local civic dignitaries. The Right Rev. Ernest Wilberforce gave a sermon at the York Minster and the Dean of York 'preached, before a vast congregation, a Sermon on the Life and Example of William Wilberforce.' The

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[156] Ibid.
[157] Ibid.

offertories from the sermon raised £46 7*s* 8*d* for the school.[158] The staging of such a prestigious gathering, which was widely reported in the local press, enabled the townspeople to share in the WSB's celebrations.

Naturally the opportunity to use the Jubilee to raise further funds could not be overlooked. The 1883 Report announced the establishment of a Jubilee Fund, the proceeds of which would be used to attain two objects. The first was the extinction of the rent, £115 per annum, which was still being paid to the Government for the King's Manor. Unfortunately, the Hon. Charles Gore refused to accede to a grant of the property claiming that such a conveyance would be *ultra vires*. Nor would the Lords of the Treasury support an application to parliament to change the law.[159] Buckle observed that the School was the only tenant of the crown properties of which the King's Manor formed part, still paying a substantial rental. The adjoining premises of the Manor School and those of the Philosophical Society were occupied free of rent and even the Fine Art Institution enjoyed terms more generous than the WSB. Eventually agreement was reached that the School would purchase the freehold for the sum of £3,800. The purchase was completed in 1885 and paid for with a fortuitously timed legacy.

The second object of the fund was the founding of a department to teach handicrafts to those blinded after the age of sixteen.[160] The friends of the blind out pupils were to be

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[158] Ibid., p.8.
[159] Ibid., p.9.
[160] Buckle believed the number of young men in this position to be 'considerable.' The 1871 Census showed that although the numbers of male and female blind between the ages of ten and twenty were more or less equal, between the ages of twenty and forty

responsible for provision of board and lodging and the institution would provide free instruction. By 1884 donations of £1370 3*s* 6*d* had been promised to the Jubilee fund. The principal donors, who each gave £100, were Earl Fitzwilliam, Sir Charles Lowther, the Rev. Horace Newton and the Gardner Trustees.[161] The department for out pupils was opened in 1886.

The 1889 Royal Commission

Buckle felt that the York Conference had 'prepared the way for the Royal Commission.' Certainly the consensus that was established amongst delegates attending the conference that an enquiry should be held was important in generating the necessary momentum. In June 1884 Buckle was party to a meeting at Grosvenor House in which unanimous resolutions were adopted urging the Government to enquire into the education and condition of the blind. The Government acceded and the results of the Commission were eagerly awaited. Buckle himself gave evidence in May 1887 and the school was visited by Lord Egerton and other members of the Commission in 1888.

Despite high expectations, the published Report was a disappointment.[162] Buckle felt that the extension of the remit of the commission to include the deaf and dumb and 'idiots' had filled it with men who, whilst possessing expertise in other fields, had insufficient experience of the blind. In these circumstances the Report was merely a compromise. It

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there were almost twice as many men as women. Buckle attributed this differential to the higher risk of industrial injury men faced.

[161] *Annual Report of the Wilberforce Memorial School for the Blind,* 1884, p.60.

[162] *Annual Report of the Wilberforce Memorial School for the Blind,* 1890, p.12.

displayed 'a sad want of stamina... and of that large minded simple dealing with questions which require generous treatment.'[163] Buckle contrasted the timid stance and economic-based arguments of the Commission with the firm resolution of the Cologne conference he had recently attended where education of the blind had been asserted as a right.[164]

The Report blamed a combination of poor teaching and difficulties in disposing of produce for the high proportion of blind unable to support themselves. Buckle felt aggrieved that no account was taken of the fact 'that no small part of this 42 per cent of failures is due to want of ability or character to such a degree as would have produced failures even among men and women with eyes.'[165] He was also unhappy that the Report, which favoured the adoption of the 'Saxon System' of after-school support for the blind, did not acknowledge that such a system, in the form of the Markham Fund, had been successfully running at York for 24 years. Derogatory comments about the musical education available at the school from a former pupil who had left at 12 to go to the Royal Normal College added to the insult.

Following the publication of the Report, the Dean of York, Chairman of the Institution, took part in a deputation to the Lord President of the Council which was received by Lord Cranbrook. The deputation sought assurance that legislation would be swiftly enacted.[166]

For Buckle the most important issue was for the education of the blind to be made

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[163] Ibid.
[164] *Annual Report of the Wilberforce Memorial School for the Blind,* 1889, Appendix.
[165] *Annual Report of the Wilberforce Memorial School for the Blind,* 1890, p.15.
[166] Ibid., p.8.

compulsory. Only with compulsion would there be '...an end to those miserably neglected intellects, with which too often we have to make a start at 10 or 12 years of age, or even later.'[167] He criticised the school boards for allowing '...blindness, which should be an extra incentive to seek education ... as sufficient reason why a child should be without any education at all.'[168]

The Elementary Education (Blind and Deaf Children) Act, 1893 made compulsory the attendance of blind children, between the ages of 5 and 16 at specially certified and publicly maintained schools. For the purposes of the act a blind child was defined as one 'too blind to be able to read the ordinary school books used by children.' The Act was hailed at York as ushering in 'a new epoch in our work.'[169] Buckle anticipated that the number of children at York would fall because a number of school boards seemed likely to provide their own classes for the blind. In addition, analysis of the census returns indicated that the number of blind children was decreasing.[170] It was possible that this reduction might be countered by the excellent reputation of the school and perhaps would result in children of a 'more advanced class' seeking its services. Nevertheless the most prudent course was to acknowledge the changing circumstances and '... husband our resources, in order to supply the requirements of the blind who are above 16 years of age,

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[167] Ibid., p.12.
[168] Ibid., p.11.
[169] *Annual Report of the Wilberforce Memorial School for the Blind,* 1894, p.8.
[170] The falling proportion of blind persons per million of the population was based on an analysis of census records. Buckle attributed the decrease to '...the more favourable conditions of the life of the people, and to the increasingly superior skill which deals with cataract and other diseases of the eye.' *Annual Report of the Wilberforce Memorial School for the Blind,* 1894, p.14.

rather than spend money in competing with other Schools, which can draw on the public purse.'[171]

The changing nature of the institution was reflected in a decision to rescind the first rule.[172] Henceforth the objects of the WSB were: 'To provide sound education, together with instruction in manual training and technical work, for blind pupils between the ages of 5 and 20; to provide employment in suitable workshops or homes for a limited number of blind men and women; to instruct blind men and women, who have lost their sight after the age of 16, in some occupation carried on at the School; and to promote such other agencies for the benefit of the blind as may enable them to gain their livelihood, or spend a happy old age.'[173] Buckle was confident that 'there remains most important work to be accomplished.'[174]

Assessment

The WSB's success was dependent upon its relationship with the city of York. The promoters of the charity therefore took care to develop and maintain a quasi-contractual relationship with the city, which involved both parties implicitly acknowledging rights and duties. In order that the maximum number of citizens should be party to this contract it was imperative that the charity should be seen to be acting in the interests of all the citizens of York. Appeals to civic pride proved an effective means of overriding religious

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[171] Ibid., p.8.
[172] Ibid., p.6.
[173] Ibid.
[174] Ibid., p.15.

and political differences, especially at a time when the city's traditional judicial and administrative role was under threat.[175] As a rallying cry civic pride was particularly successful in marshaling the middle class support which formed the mainstay of any charitable institution. The citizens of York were encouraged to see the school as part of a series of projects that would re-establish their city as one of the foremost in the kingdom. Just as the Museum, Philosophical Society and British Association reinforced the intellectual claims of the city, its progressive health care, represented by the Retreat and the WSB, helped strengthen its claims as an important civic centre.

The citizens of York, if not of Yorkshire, seem to have responded readily to the call to support and profit from the presence of the school.[176] Many visited to observe its benefits for themselves: for example, attendances at the school's music practices and entertainments testified to a high level of public interest and involvement with its activities. The prestigious patronage that the school attracted was gratifying to its supporters and allowed the city to share in its reflected glory. There is no mention in the reports of the sectarian and political infighting that blighted the memorial's first months. It must be assumed therefore that the school did come to occupy the 'neutral' territory that Harcourt desired for it. Alongside with the Yorkshire Museum and the Philosophical Society it can be seen as part of his wider project to build bridges across the divides of religion and politics.

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[175] A. J. Peacock, 'The Creation of the West Riding Court of Assize', *Northern History*, 23 (1987).

[176] Although the levels of subscriptions, for reasons discussed above, never equaled those of the Liverpool school, the WSB was one of the best-supported and wealthiest charitable institutions in the city.

The integration of the school in the communal life of the town had important and beneficial consequences for its pupils. It helped reduce their isolation and enabled them, chiefly through musical performances, to participate in the cultural life of the city. The interest and active involvement of supporters in the day-to-day running of the school probably brightened the lives of the children and helped reduce the monotony of an institutional existence. Their financial contributions enabled pupils to enjoy access to facilities that were undoubtedly superior to those available to the majority of children from their social background.[177] The high level of public interest in the WSB's affairs ensured that it was run efficiently and meant that there was constant pressure on the Committee to achieve results.

The school owed much of its early success to its charismatic and distinguished founder. The Rev. Harcourt, was both a polymath and a visionary with an interest in all aspects of education. He actively promoted adult higher learning and research and sought to extend the benefits of education to the young and underprivileged. A wide generalized interest in education seems to have been common to other pioneers of special education.[178] Later spokesmen for the WSB tended to be more specialized in their field of expertise. In part this was because of the growth of that field. The WSB was itself actively involved in the process of creating knowledge about the blind. Rev. Harcourt's initial collation of surveys and statistics, subsequent careful attempts to record the achievements of former

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[177] However the middle class Alfred Hollins commented on the scanty furnishings of the institution and on the monotony of the menu. Hollins, *A Blind Musician*, pp.42-43.
[178] Charles Baker of the YIDD wrote on the Blind for the *Cyclopedia*. He helped establish the Doncaster Public Library and also advised on a local reformatory.

pupils and the various publications of the institution, all contributed to this growth of knowledge. Contacts with other specialists and institutions at a local, national and international level helped promote the development of a community of experts. These experts were anxious to be accorded the status and treatment of professionals and thus had a strong incentive to maintain high standards. However, the lack of central regulation, both voluntary and state, inevitably resulted in a lack of consistency, both as regards curriculum and standards, between the institutions.

Another factor encouraging the trend towards specialisation was an increase in demand for the services of the expert. The first impetus for a wider general interest in the field was probably provided by the 1870 Education Act. This focused the attention of educational authorities on the special needs of disabled children whose position under the act was ambiguous. Although many authorities chose simply to ignore the situation of disabled children, others did make genuine attempts to adapt to their presence in the classroom. Public interest was stimulated with the publication of the COS Report and was further developed in the 1880s by the massive Gardner bequest and the appointment of the Royal Commission. In the 1890s the publishing firm of Sampson Low took advantage of increased interest to reissue volumes of past work on the blind. Concerns about national efficiency and the physical deterioration of the populace might also have helped generate a wider interest in all facets of disability. As expertise was increasingly

harnessed to the service of the state it ceased to be the province of the amateur. The expert had become a professional public servant.[179]

For experts in the field of disability, charitable institutions provided relatively attractive and prestigious employment. Although those at the bottom of the career ladder endured long hours, low pay and poor conditions, it was possible for the talented and ambitious to achieve progression in their profession by moving between institutions. Those who reached the top of the ladder, the headmasters or superintendents, could command an attractive salary, particularly if they could supplement their income by taking on lucrative private pupils.[180] The more enlightened schools also offered the opportunity of participation in a specialist community and the chance to make a contribution to an increasing body of knowledge. This honing and channeling of expertise through the schools, although occasionally misdirected, was in the longer term of undoubted benefit to the pupils.[181]

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[179] D. Eastwood notes '... it was information which constituted the currency of expertise, and as information became more specialized and extensive so the experts who could claim intellectual mastery over it became more important to government.' D. Eastwood, '"Amplifying the Province of the Legislature". The Flow of Information and the English State in the Early Nineteenth Century', *Historical Review*, LXII (1989), p.293.

[180] In some instances the master's obligations to his private pupils necessarily reduced the amount of time spent with the other children. In these cases tuition of poorer children was delegated to less experienced teachers, no doubt to the pupil's detriment. This does not appear to have been the case at the WSB.

[181] The Rev. Taylor's experiments with embossed types, for example, were of mixed benefit to the pupils. Although pupils were taught how to read, the multiplicity of styles taught through the school resulted in male and female pupils learning different types. The division of resources also limited the availability of texts in any one script. Buckle's later experiments, which resulted in all pupils being taught Braille, were of greater benefit.

Expert leadership, adequate financial support and the structural flexibility of voluntary organization, enabled the WSB to undertake a range of innovative projects. The diversification of services offered by the school can be seen as a pragmatic response to emerging problems, perhaps not foreseen or anticipated by its founders. However other motivations are also evident. The school's decision to operate as an employment broker arose in part from a genuine concern for the welfare of former pupils and from a desire that its educational investment was not wasted. But it was also recognized that supporting former pupils in their work was essential if the school was to be judged a success. Only through employment could the blind hope to achieve independence and demonstrate their ability to contribute to society.[182] Therein too lay the evidence of the benefits conferred by education and proof that the WSB was fulfilling its part of the contract with the citizens of York.

In *Education and the Handicapped*, D. G. Pritchard concludes his chapter on the institutional education of the blind and deaf with a quote from Cardinal Newman; 'They aimed low, but they achieved their aim.'[183] This does not seem an apposite judgment of the York school. Those who ran the WSB had lofty ideals, and if the school's 'results' were less dramatic than anticipated, this should be attributed more to the inherent difficulties of the task undertaken, than to any degree of apathy or complacency on the part of the Committee. The WSB offered the Yorkshire blind the opportunity of education under what appears to have been a relatively enlightened regime. Genuine

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[182] The slow uptake of places, both at the school and in the workshop, could be seen as evidence that the goals of the blind and their parents may have differed from the middle class aspirations of the educationalists.

[183] D. G. Pritchard, *Education and the Handicapped* (1963), p.44.

attempts were made to cultivate pupils' intellects and musical talents and to prepare them for independent life outside school. The inspectors' reports indicate that most pupils did achieve some degree of literacy, while the musical and vocational training, together with the company of other children, provided stimulation that many would not have otherwise received. Buckles' assessment that '.... the pupils in our own school... receive a better education than their brothers and sisters at home...' was almost certainly correct.[184] In the face of bureaucratic indifference, and in the absence of state aid, the school's achievement was considerable.

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[184] It should be noted that Buckle did add the proviso that the education offered by schools in Europe and America was probably better still. State aid meant these institutions could afford better staffing ratios and the latest equipment. *Annual Report of the Wilberforce Memorial School for the Blind*, 1874, p.17.

Chapter Seven

The Cripple

This chapter takes a different approach to the examination by case study adopted in previous chapters on the blind and the deaf. In part this is because of the absence of any single institution or organisation within the Yorkshire region which fulfils the methodological criteria outlined earlier. Instead the chapter examines a range of broadly philanthropic and charitable initiatives from which the physically disabled population might be said to have benefited. It will be seen that much charitable activity for this sector is 'hidden' or disguised, and that a degree of lateral thinking is necessary in order to locate it. Although a Yorkshire bias is retained where possible, the pattern of growth of voluntary and state activity for the crippled precludes a strictly regional focus.

The chapter raises a number of additional questions which complement those tackled earlier in the thesis. It begins by looking at the factors that differentiated the situation of the cripple from that of other groups of physically disabled people. These help to explain why attitudes and policies towards this particular group were distinctive. The chapter also examines some of the factors that distinguished between groups of crippled individuals and the implications this had for their treatment or management. The impact of gender and age will be discussed in this context.

The thesis suggests that the period witnessed a wider acknowledgement of 'the cripple' as a legitimate object of social welfare policy: indeed, as part of the growing concern

with 'national degeneracy', 'the cripple' was to play a role in shaping the Edwardian political agenda. From the Elizabethan period, if not earlier, the cripple had been identified as a social menace, a threat to a healthy society, in a way that other groups of disabled people were not. Some of the reasons for this anxiety have been mentioned previously. We have noted how the Old Poor Law, a measure which combined elements of social control with social justice, illustrates the unease and ambivalence with which the crippled were viewed. The law was motivated in part by growing concerns over the disorderly and anti-social behaviour of bands of vagabonds and beggars who were roving the country. These groups included a proportion of crippled or sick individuals who were believed to be spreading disease and contamination throughout the social body.[1] As we have seen the conflation of the 'criminal' and 'deviant' with the 'sick' and 'disabled' was to have long reaching consequences for the latter groups.

The cripple also loomed large in the public imagination in the aftermath of war. Thus after the Napoleonic Wars cripples formed the largest group of beggars on the streets of London.[2] Disabled veterans of the Crimean war may have benefited from an upsurge of public sympathy as a result of the development of candid and current war reporting.[3]

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[1] Popular prejudices were reinforced by contemporary superstitions and beliefs. These presented the cripple as simultaneously a source of misfortune and as a worthy object of charity. Thus to tread on the toes of a cripple was to court bad luck, but to give a cripple a coin was a good omen. Touching 'a hunchback's hump' was considered to be good luck. A. Cielo, *Signs, Omens, and Superstitions* (1919), cited in *Schott's Original Miscellany*, *The Daily Telegraph,* 8 November 2003.

[2] Although the beggar was primarily an object of pity, his presence also generated a variety of less charitable sentiments. For example, beggars who were obviously unhealthy may have aroused fears of infection and mortality. Begging challenged societal norms of acceptable or respectable behaviour, hence its subsequent criminalisation.

[3] E. M. Spiers, *The Army and Society, 1815-1914* (1980), p.98.

However the large number of disabled and unemployed former soldiers who took to begging was a source of concern to government and to the army itself.[4] At the time of the Boer War the inferior condition of working class recruits heightened fears about the degeneration of the nation as a whole.[5] These concerns, strongly influenced by the popularity of Social Darwinism, led to the setting up of the Interdepartmental Committee on Physical Deterioration (1904) and fed into the later Eugenics movement.[6]

The chapter argues that a specific category of cripple, the crippled child, rose to a new prominence during this period.[7] It is suggested that this focus on the child cripple had its roots in developments during the early and mid-Victorian periods; in particular in the use of the crippled child as an iconic figure by the factory reform movement.[8] The anxieties

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[4] A. R. Skelly, *The Victorian Army at Home: The Recruitment and Terms and Conditions of the British Regular, 1859-1899* (Montreal, 1977), p.207.

[5] J. Harris, *Private Lives, Public Spirit: A Social History of Britain 1870-1914* (1993), p.235. G. R. Searle, *The Quest for National Efficiency: A Study in British Politics and Political Thought, 1899-1914* (1990), pp. 60-61.

[6] G. R. Searle suggests that the reverses of "Black Week" 'triggered the whole debate about National Efficiency...'. Searle, *The Quest for National Efficiency,* p. xix.

[7] S. Humphries and P. Gordon state that the number of physically disabled children exceeded that of adults throughout the period from 1900 to 1950. S. Humphries and P. Gordon, *Out of Sight: The Experience of Disability 1900-1950* (Plymouth, 1992), pp. 8, 12-13. This may also have been the case for the nineteenth century since the proportion of older people (aged 60 plus) in the population during that period was 'historically unusually low... at around 7 per cent, due to the high birth-rate, which balanced the numbers of older people with larger numbers of young ones.' P. Thane, *Old Age in English History: Past Experiences, Present Issues* (Oxford, 2000), p.3. However disabled children were more likely to survive past infancy in the twentieth century than in the nineteenth. It is therefore difficult to reach any conclusion on this point.

[8] J. T. Ward lists seven poems with the words "factory child" prominent in their title published in Leeds c.1832. J. T. Ward, 'Leeds and the Factory Reform Movement', *Publications of the Thoresby Society, Miscellany,* 13 (1960), p. 92. The most famous account of the experiences of the factory child was the memoir of William Dodd, the so-called "factory cripple", published in 1841. These memoirs had already attracted a great deal of attention when John Bright MP attacked their authenticity in the House of

aroused by the factory child in the 1830s can be seen as a rehearsal of themes that were to reoccur at the end of the century; the degeneration of the race, the deformation of childhood, the disgrace to Christian norms and values. The moral repugnance that united wide ranging groups and interests to campaign on behalf of the factory child was also reflected in later initiatives. The chapter will examine how the disabled child came to be acknowledged as a social problem in his own right. How was public concern for his plight generated, channelled and focused?

The factory reformers were seeking to persuade the state to extend its protection to a particularly vulnerable sector of society, the factory child. The role of the state in the welfare of the child was closely linked to the issue of education. Whereas for the blind and the deaf, education was often seen as a panacea, its role was less obvious in the case of the cripple.[9] The chapter will look at the development of education for the crippled child during this period and examine the purposes it served. The issue of education also helps illustrate another on-going theme of the thesis – the relationship between private voluntary organisations and the state in the provision of welfare.

The Situation and Status of the Cripple

Commons. The resulting scandal persuaded Shaftesbury that Dodd could no longer be employed by the reform movement. Dodd died in obscurity in the United States.

[9] The delicate health of many crippled children affected both their ability to learn and their future prospects of employment. Contemporary methods of education could do little to alleviate the lot of those most severely affected. For some Evangelical Christians, the inability of the uneducated blind or deaf to receive the word of God provided a motivation to educate these groups. The cripple was a less urgent priority.

There were many factors which distinguished the situation of the lame and crippled from that of other groups of disabled persons. These, in turn, had implications for the nature and format of charitable endeavour on their behalf. Perhaps the most obvious distinction was one of scale; even allowing for issues of definition it is clear that the numbers of people with some form of crippling physical condition must have been vast.[10] For most of the period in question it is difficult even to begin to estimate the number or proportion of these disabled persons within the general population. A few small scale impressionistic or amateur surveys exist which serve to confirm the presence of many disabled people on the streets. However it would appear that there was no attempt to calculate or collate information nationally, as the census had done in the case of the blind and the deaf. The historian is therefore largely reliant upon anecdotal and pictorial evidence for some idea of the extent of this form of disability.[11]

By the end of the century concerns over degeneration of the race, and the health and welfare of children in particular, did help to generate a number of large scale statistical surveys.[12] The most influential of these were carried out by Dr Francis Warner and co-

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[10] B. Jerrold noted that 'The aged, the orphan, the halt, the blind of London would fill an ordinary city. When the struggle for life is so severe as it is in England in the happiest times, the wounded and disabled and invalided must be in considerable numbers.' G. Dore and B. Jerrold, *London: a Pilgrimage* (1872), p.179. Dore's engraving 'Refuge–Applying for Admission' shows a number of men with sticks waiting admittance. Ibid., p.181.

[11] A particularly useful source is F. Engels, *The Condition of the Working Class in England* (edited by D. McLellan, Oxford, 1993). Chapter Six contains much interesting information as to the nature, scale and causes of crippling injury in Yorkshire and Lancashire.

[12] The introduction of compulsory schooling in the years following Forster's Education Act of 1870, and the ancillary appointment of teams of attendance officers and visitors, meant that statisticians now had easy access to the data they needed.

sponsored by COS and the British Medical Association.[13] The surveys revealed in stark and concrete terms the extent of disability amongst London schoolchildren.[14] They were thus a highly effective means of focusing public attention on the condition of the working class child. At the same time growing medical interest in the physiology of the child and his development were factors leading to the formation of the Child Studies Movement.[15] The use of scientific and statistical data to define and standardize 'the norm' for childhood growth and development, also by implication defined what was abnormal or 'defective'.

Another factor setting apart this group of physically disabled people was the diversity of crippling conditions and the resulting range of degrees of impediment. Some crippled individuals may have been able to operate, almost unhindered, in the labour market. Others would have been unable to perform even the most basic of tasks without assistance. Both the range and the scale of crippling disability rendered it less susceptible to the concerted charitable initiatives we have observed in the case of the blind and the

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[13] Warner was a Professor of Anatomy and Physiology and a consultant paediatrician. He shared the belief of many of his contemporaries that physical defects generally masked mental disability. H. Bosanquet, *Social Work in London 1869 to 1912: A History of the Charity Organisation Society* (Brighton, 1973), p.198.

[14] Warner's 1890 study of 50,000 school children revealed *inter alia* 239 'Cases crippled, maimed or deformed' and 5,851 'Cases presenting bodily defects of various degrees of importance'. Warner suggested that as many as one per cent of the children he had examined would benefit from special education. See Appendix, Table 9. The number of crippled children was estimated at approximately three in a thousand. However this estimate did not take account of the large number of children entered as 'permanently disabled' in the school board returns. In 1898 there were 1,860 'permanently disabled non-attendants' on the books of the London School Board; of these 806 were crippled. *Report of the Departmental Committee on Defective and Epileptic Children*, Parliamentary Papers (1898), XXVI, Q 5411.

[15] H. Hendrick, *Child Welfare: Historical Dimensions, Contemporary Debates* (Bristol, 2003), pp. 21-23.

deaf.[16] Whilst it was conceivable, if ambitious, to envisage a comprehensive network of voluntary provision for the blind or deaf, catering for the cripple was a task of a different order entirely. The issue of responsibility for the welfare of the crippled child, in particular, was one that vexed social reformers and other interested parties throughout the century. John Grooms, noting the 'life of cruelty and despair' endured by the disabled child workers of London, observed: 'The evil was apparent to all... The great question was, whose duty was it? Who would undertake the work? For its cost would be great in money, time and human strength.'[17]

As a consequence of these and other factors, large charities specifically intended to aid the crippled were slower to develop than those catering for other sectors of the disabled population. One of the earliest of these charities was founded by John Grooms himself in 1866.[18] A spate of charitable initiatives focused specifically on crippled children can be observed from the late 1880s.[19] The Shaftesbury Society, which evolved from the ragged

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[16] Thomas Bernard was an early advocate of parity of treatment. As a footnote to an article on the Liverpool Asylum for the Blind he noted '... there would be both economy and kindness in giving the same kind of assistance to poor persons, who have had the misfortune to lose a limb, and thereby to be deprived of the common advantages of labour. In such cases, a little attention, and a very little parochial assistance applied in time, would prevent the sufferer from continuing to be a burthen to himself and the public.' T. Bernard, 'Extract from an Account of the Asylum (or School of Instruction) for the Blind at Liverpool', in J. C. Lettsom, *Hints Designed to Promote Beneficence, Temperance and Medical Science* (1801, reprinted 1894), vol.II.

[17] J. Grooms, *The Romance of the John Groom's Crippleage and Flower Girls' Mission 1866-1919* (Reprinted 1996), p. 5.

[18] Other well known children's charities followed swiftly thereafter. The National Children's Home was founded in 1869, Dr Barnardo's in 1870 and The Church of England Waifs and Stray's Society in 1881. A substantial proportion of the children cared for by these charities were disabled.

[19] A. Borsay calculates that between1870-1914 over forty voluntary organizations for 'crippled' children were established. A. Borsay, 'History, Power and Identity', in C.

schools movement, commenced its work on behalf of crippled children in 1888.[20] The Invalid Children's Aid Society, also formed in 1888, offered advice to the parents of crippled children. In 1894, Dame Grace Kimmins founded the "Guild of Poor Brave Things". The increasing importance of this sector of charitable activity was confirmed by the appointment of a COS inquiry in July 1890.[21] Thus the identification of crippling disability as a social problem capable of amelioration was a comparatively late phenomenon. Indeed, it would seem to coincide with a period when the health and welfare of working class society as a whole was the subject of increased scrutiny. This may suggest that the needs of this category of the disabled were viewed as part of a greater social problem.

It is notable that most of the early charitable organisations for the physically disabled were based in London.[22] These charities were often strongly evangelical in character and were frequently the offshoot of earlier and more general missionary activity. Much of their work was directed towards the costermongers and other street folk, amongst whose numbers crippled children were particularly conspicuous. From 1861 as many as 200

Barnes, M. Oliver and L. Barton (eds.), *Disability Studies Today* (Cambridge, c. 2002), p.106.

[20] A small survey into the number of crippled children in the East End was carried out by an American, Charles Boyer, in 1888. The results of this survey led Boyer to approach the Shaftesbury Society with a proposal that the society should undertake work on their behalf. K. Heasman, *Evangelicals in Action: An Appraisal of their Social Work in the Victorian Era* (1962), p. 86.

[21] A Special Committee was appointed 'to consider and report upon the public and charitable provision made for the care and training of feeble-minded, epileptic, deformed and crippled persons.' See Bosanquet, *Social Work*, pp.190-201. Notably this was some twenty years after the organisation had first begun to investigate the situation of the blind and deaf.

[22] Branches were often sited on the coast or at some other 'healthy' location.

such children received some degree of care from the Hoxton Costers' Mission.[23] In the same decade, the flower sellers, whose numbers included many disabled children, drew the attention of John Grooms.[24] The first industrial schools and residential homes were also based in London. Later in the century the London School Board was to prove more dynamic than the provincial boards in catering for the disabled child. This predominance of central initiatives may simply be the result of historical accident. However, there may be some explanation relating to the incidence of disability, and the proximity or availability of resources.

A further point of contrast between the crippled and other groups of the physically disabled poor lay in their differing legal status. Under the Old Poor Law the crippled, together with various other categories of the 'non-able-bodied', had formed the amorphous mass of 'deserving' or 'impotent' poor.[25] All these groups were acknowledged as having a right to public assistance. The 1834 Poor Law Amendment Act created for the first time a legal distinction between the crippled and the blind and deaf. Under the terms of the 1834 Act, all these groups were classified within the broad band of the 'aged and infirm'; the intention being that they should retain their entitlement

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[23] This was founded by a Mr Orsman in May 1861, on behalf of the street traders in Golden Lane. See London Metropolitan Archive: John Grooms Papers, Box 4, misc. letter headings.

[24] Although based in London, John Grooms' Crippleage (1879) was 'open to afflicted girls from all parts of the kingdom...'. Groom, *The Romance of the John Groom's Crippleage*, p.15.

[25] The law even made special provision for crippled children aged 5 to 14 to be apprenticed, in order to learn a craft and become self supporting. 26 Henry VIII, c.27 and 43 Elizabeth I, c.2.

to outdoor relief.[26] However, unlike the blind and the deaf, the crippled did not benefit from the exception in section 56. Thus to claim relief as a cripple under the terms of the Act was to accept the stigmatised status of a pauper.

We have seen how pressure for the exemption originated from lobbying by persons interested in the special education of the blind and deaf. Since many crippled children either did not require special education, or their need for such an education was not necessarily evident, they at first lacked such advocacy.[27] Moreover, the establishment of asylums and schools for the blind and deaf gradually saw the removal of many of the poorest of these categories of children to the care of voluntary institutions. For most of the century the absence of special schooling meant that similarly placed crippled children remained under the auspices of the state.[28] As a result there was little opportunity for crippled people to form the coherent sense of identity that this thesis argues was a consequence of a common schooling. Finally special education helped to facilitate administrative definitions of blindness and deafness. For lame or crippled individuals medical definitions remained pre-eminent.

Earlier in the thesis we looked at how the schools for the blind and deaf sought to extend their services to the provision of vocational training and suitable employment, often

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[26] Zealous attempts to distinguish the 'partially' disabled from the more seriously afflicted may have resulted in a reduction in out relief or admission to the workhouse for many people who would have received a more generous treatment under the old law.
[27] Once educational initiatives did begin to develop, those responsible gradually assumed the role of advocates and experts for the disabled.
[28] The education of pauper blind and deaf children remained technically the responsibility of the state, but was largely provided by voluntary endeavour. As we have already seen, crippled children were a distinctive presence in the workhouse.

within a sheltered environment. It was not until mid-century that any such rehabilitation or training was made available to even a tiny minority of poor crippled children. Even then, the training offered was restricted in scope. John Grooms' Charity taught crippled girls to manufacture artificial flowers, and girls attending other specialist institutions were taught to sew and perform simple household tasks in the hope of obtaining a position in service. Boys were taught basic manual trades such as boot and shoe making. The dearth of appropriate schooling and training meant that physical disability was often compounded by educational deprivation.

Unlike other groups of disabled people, the crippled were highly visible.[29] The rickety child was particularly noticeable; in the 1870s approximately a third of poor children in large cities showed obvious signs of the disease.[30] Tuberculosis, polio, cerebral palsy and infantile paralysis added to the toll of those 'crippled' in childhood.[31] The presence of large numbers of disabled children and adults in working class areas was seen as the norm and accepted as such. Many families contained disabled members and the family

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[29] William Dodd, visiting Leeds in 1841 noted that it possessed, 'the many marks by which a manufacturing town may always be known, viz., the wretched, stunted, decrepit, and, frequently, the mutilated appearance of the broken-down labourers, who are generally to be seen in the dirty, disagreeable streets...'. W. Dodd, *The Factory System Illustrated: In a Series of Letter to the Right Hon. Lord Ashley, MP, etc.* (1842, reprinted 1968), letter 25 September 1841. Compare with Engels' description of Manchester cited below p.334.

[30] E. Ross, *Love and Toil: Motherhood in Outcast London, 1870-1918* (Oxford, 1993), p.30. The children of the poor, ill-nourished and subject to poor housing, lack of sanitation and inadequate medical care, were particularly vulnerable to crippling diseases.

[31] For the incidence of tuberculosis amongst the poor in the nineteenth century see T. Dormandy, *The White Death: A History of Tuberculosis* (1999), pp.73-84.

remained the primary source of 'cash and care' throughout the period.[32] Sometimes, even in the poorest families, a disabled child like Dickens' 'Tiny Tim' would be the family favourite and the subject of devoted care and attention.[33] The very familiarity of crippling disability, together with its range and scale, may have contributed to the comparative neglect of this sector of the disabled population by the state and voluntary organisations.

Disabled Adults

As in the cases of the blind and the deaf, a crippling disability was often the precursor to a life of poverty. Once accident or illness struck, many of those still capable of work found themselves reduced to marginal and low paid occupations. In the 1850s Mayhew observed that the aged and infirm earned less than the street children due to their lack of bodily strength and stamina.[34] Decades later, Booth described his class B, the very poor who were reliant on casual earnings, as '...not one in which men are born or live and die, so much as a deposit of those who from mental, moral, and physical reasons are

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[32] For the role of the family as the principal source of social welfare provision see S. Becker, *Responding to Poverty: The Politics of Cash and Care* (1997), p.42. The strain that such caring placed on working class women in particular must have been considerable. It is probable that in some instances sickly or obviously disabled babies were subject to infanticide or 'selective neglect'. Ross, *Love and Toil,* pp.184-189.

[33] Mr Knipe Hon. Sec of the National Industrial Home for Crippled Boys told the COS, 'Mothers as we know, generally have a special affection for a child who is under some physical affliction; cripples are, in most cases the pets of the family.' *The Epileptic and Crippled Child and Adult: A Report on the Present Condition of these Classes of Afflicted Persons, with suggestions for their better Education and Employment* (1893), p.105. See also Ross, *Love and Toil,* pp.180-1. The heroic stoicism with which working class women attended to the needs of their sick or disabled children was liable to misinterpretation, particularly by middle class observers. Such women were often mistakenly labeled as cold or unfeeling.

[34] H. Mayhew, *London Labour and the London Poor* (edited by V. Neuburg, Harmondsworth, 1985), p.169.

incapable of better work.'[35] Booth characterized this group as 'in want', 'ill-nourished and poorly clad.'[36]

Throughout the period certain menial tasks were particularly associated with the disabled. Thus Mayhew noted that a majority of crossing sweepers were persons who '... from some bodily infirmity or injury are prevented from a more laborious mode of obtaining their living.'[37] Low wages meant many such individuals would have had to rely upon the aid of friends and family, including children, for financial support. Mayhew's 'maimed crossing sweeper' was fortunate to have friends in London who were able to assist him. 'If I depended on the few ha'pence I get, I wouldn't live on 'em: what money I get here wouldn't buy a pound of mate: and I wouldn't live, only for my friends. You see, sir, I can't be out always.'[38]

William Dodd, who visited Leeds in 1841, recorded the hand-to-mouth existence of a crippled man named Michael Hopkins.[39] He described how Hopkins,

> obtains a very poor and a very precarious living by selling blacking &c. He carries his wares in his basket, which also serves him for a stick, in resting or walking. He receives no weekly pension from any one excepting from Mrs Summers, who allows him a penny, and sometimes twopence a week. He never received a farthing from the parish, and says he CANNOT get anything.

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[35] A. Fried and R. Elman (eds.), *Charles Booth's London* (Harmondsworth, 1971), p.60.
[36] Ibid., p.92.
[37] 'Among the bodily infirmities the chief are old age, asthma, and rheumatism; and the injuries mostly consist of loss of limbs.' Mayhew, *London Labour,* pp. 258-59.
[38] Ibid, p. 263.
[39] Dodd, *The Factory System,* p. 39.

Dodd pronounced it a disgrace 'that cripples like this poor man, after having done all they can for the manufacturers, should be under the necessity of obtaining a precarious subsistence in the manner above described.'[40]

Disabling injury could also bring with it social consequences. Taine commented on the haggard and worn faces of the non-able-bodied and noted that they appeared more aged than those of similar persons in France and Italy. Mayhew's crossing sweeper, who referred to himself as 'a poor lame man,' also appeared prematurely aged.[41] He was unmarried, '...a lame man wouldn't get any woman to have him in London at all, at all...'.[42] His reduced earnings meant that he was forced to share his accommodation, a single room on the second landing, with a family. 'When I goes home I just smokes a pipe, and goes to bid, that's all.'[43] There were, however, instances cited by Mayhew of partners willingly supporting each other through years of chronic illness and disability.

Individuals who were disabled as a result of injury in the workplace often faced dismissal from their employment. A mechanic with a crushed leg was told by his employer, a small tradesman, 'I'm sorry...but my business can't be hindered by waiting for people getting

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[40] Ibid.
[41] Mayhew, *London Labour*, pp.260-62.
[42] Ibid., p.263. Mayhew's 'crippled street bird-seller' expressed similar sentiments. 'Other poor men can get married, but not such as me...'. Mayhew disputes this, noting that 'Among the vagrants and beggars ... there are men more terribly deformed than the bird-seller, who are married, or living in concubinage.' H. Mayhew, *London Labour and the London Poor* (1851), vol.II, p.68.
[43] Ibid.

better of accidents.'[44] In some industries, where worker solidarity was strong, fellow employees might make use of a variety of strategies in order to protect the earnings of a weaker co-worker. Thus gangs of workers could limit the hours worked, or the quantity produced, so that older or less physically able workers could keep up.[45] In some instances workers were able to take advantage of membership of friendly societies or sick clubs to tide them over a period of injury. A number of these societies provided medical care and orthopaedic appliances as additional benefits. However payments ceased when the worker was deemed to have recovered and did not extend into the longer term. The cost of subscriptions rendered the benefits of membership beyond the reach of the poorly paid, casual workers and women.

Some employers did acknowledge paternalistic responsibilities towards injured workers. Norman McCord details cases of mine owners providing employees crippled in accidents with alternative light work. He quotes a Tyneside Mining expert giving evidence to a House of Lords Committee of 1834: '...the coal-owners, though their charity does not appear publicly, yet to a very great extent in the way of giving extra wages, or certain work to cripples... do charity to a much greater extent than they are even themselves aware of.' [46] High profile mining or military disasters could also attract public subscriptions to assist survivors or their families.[47] Other employers offered re-

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[44] Ibid., p. 153.
[45] J. Belchem, *Industrialization and the Working Class* (Aldershot, 1996), p. 17.
[46] N. McCord, 'Aspects of the Relief of Poverty in Early 19th-Century Britain', in R.M. Hartwell *et al.*, *The Long Debate on Poverty: Eight Essays on Industrialisation and "The Condition of England"* (1972), p.103.
[47] Occasionally public subscriptions might be entered into for injured factory workers. Thus a young woman who needed both arms amputated, 'is still living upon a small

deployment to injured workers. Clerical posts and positions as overseers may have been available for literate or trusted employees who could still offer valuable service. Disabled employees could attend to the more menial tasks of factory life such as sweeping up at the end of a shift. Wealthy or landed families were able to maintain elderly or infirm retainers by providing them with less taxing employment.[48]

Following the passage of factory legislation in the 1830s some disabled people gained employment as teachers in the new factory schools.[49] Indeed teaching provided many disabled people with a means of earning a living. Dr Hook, the vicar of Leeds, 'a staunch friend of the factory people', supervised the progress of Mary Bucktrout, aged 14, who had lost her fingers in a factory accident.[50] He ensured that she received instruction in the management of an infants' school. Another teacher in the same school had also lost an arm in a similar incident. William Dodd, the factory cripple, set up a small school after leaving his position as a clerk at Wilson's textile mill in Kendall.

At the most menial end of the employment scale true work merged with begging – the former providing a cloak for the latter. The extent to which disabled persons were involved in soliciting or begging is uncertain. Nonetheless, contemporary comment

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income arising from a subscription entered into for her by the inhabitants of Bradford.' Dodd, *The Factory System*, p. 40.

[48] Thus in the 1870s an 'old and tottering' coachman was employed only for minor driving duties and his responsibilities included 'looking on in the stables' and maintaining the old family coaches which were no longer in use. He spent most of his time trout fishing. Cited in Thane, *Old Age in English History*, p.275.

[49] Althorp's Act of 1833 required employers of young children in the textile industry to ensure that they received two hours of education daily.

[50] Bucktrout wore a specially constructed device to enable her to use a pen. Dodd, *The Factory System*, p. 20.

makes it clear that at the very least disabled people formed a conspicuous presence amongst this sector of the poor. Able-bodied beggars envied the earning powers of the disabled and even faked disability themselves.[51] This would indicate that there remained a substantial pool of public sympathy for those with obvious physical disabilities which could be accessed in this way.[52] Many cripples engaged in static begging and wore cards round their necks detailing how they had sustained their injuries.[53] The success of disabled beggars aroused the ire of the Metropolitan Society for the Suppression of Mendacity. They recorded how one woman '...about thirty-four years old and paralysed in both legs, used to sit on a board with an infant propped in front of her, propelling herself with her hands... whereby she not only supports herself and child, but also maintains a strong, healthy man with whom she cohabits.'[54]

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[51] Mayhew reported one conversation with a beggar who claimed 'The loss o'my arm, sir, was the best thing as ever happened'd to me: it's been a living to me; I turn out with it on all sorts o'lays, and it's as good as a pension.' Mayhew, *London Labour and the London Poor* (1851), vol. IV, p.418.

[52] E. P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (1991), p.294. Not all requests for alms received sympathetic treatment. *The Cripple's Petition* (1810?) was written in response to the decision of 'the incumbent of G-d', 'a little, sleek, oily man of God' to withdraw his subscription to the local infirmary.
The cripple first explains his plight:
My back was sore bruis'd, and my leg
Was broke by a terrible blow;
If I live for my bread I must beg,
For no surgeon so skilful I know.
To which the incumbent replies:
Man! Cease useless prating,
To my ears it is grating-
Ere I part with my guineas so yellow,
Both the poor and the halt,
To their broth may add salt,
So be off, thou lame rickety fellow.

[53] K. Chesney, *The Victorian Underworld* (Harmondsworth, 1970), p. 231.

[54] Ibid., p. 238.

One form of begging which attracted particularly widespread condemnation was the use of the disabled child.[55] John Grooms recalled how: 'The crippled child in a go-cart was a source of income to the one who had charge; such guardians resented any approach to the rescue and care of the child. "What is to become of me," says a disreputable woman, "if you take this child away?"'[56] The *Charity Organisation Review* of July 1888 recorded the case of a crippled boy placed in the window of a sweet shop to draw in customers.[57] Some children may even have been deliberately maimed to increase their earning power.[58] This particular form of abuse of crippled children continued well into the twentieth century.

Begging may have provided a few cripples with a means of subsistence, but for most it probably operated as a supplement to other forms of income. Its importance would have varied with the seasons or at different stages of an individual's life. The presence of a considerable number of cripples amongst the begging population clearly illustrates the difficulties faced by this particular sector of the disabled population in finding suitable employment. It also serves to underline the importance of the mixed economy of welfare for disabled people.

Industrialisation and the Factory Movement

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[55] Begging by children was criminalised by the 1908 Children's Act.
[56] Grooms, *The Romance*, p. 6.
[57] This example was cited in the COS Report *The Epileptic and Crippled Child*, p. 106.
[58] L. Rose, *The Erosion of Childhood: Childhood Oppression in Britain, 1860-1918* (1991), p. 87.

The link between factory work and disabling illness or accident had been evident to concerned observers from at least the start of the century.[59] Hence much broadly philanthropic activity on behalf of the crippled took the form of campaigns to improve working conditions in specific industries and thus prevent accidents or injuries from occurring. Increasingly efforts were made to seek compensation for injury, although the development of the law was slow and tortuous.[60] The most prominent, and probably the most significant campaign for our purposes, was the movement for factory reform. This section examines the activities of the factory reformers during the years 1830-33, the era of Oastler's famous condemnation of 'Yorkshire slavery.'[61] To what extent might one be justified in regarding the factory campaign as a charitable or philanthropic crusade by and on behalf of the disabled?

The first expressions of disquiet about the factory system date from the 1790s and focused initially on the conditions imposed on poor law "apprentices". J. T. Ward identifies four principal groups as active participants in early demands for factory reform: the old labour aristocracies, concerned pioneers of social medicine, Northern clergymen – predominantly Anglicans – and traditional reformers who opposed the new liberal

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[59] The need for medical surveillance in the cotton mills was recognized by the Manchester Board of Health in the 1790s. R. Gray 'Medical Men, Industrial Labour and the State in Britain, 1830-50', *Social History,* 16 (1991), pp. 19-27.

[60] 'The common law view of the proper scope for compensation claims exposed the legal system to perhaps the most sustained allegations of class bias that have ever befallen it.' W. R. Cornish and G. de N. Clark, *Law and Society in England 1750-1950* (1989), p.483.

[61] Factory reform is, of course, a huge topic. I have chosen to concentrate on these years because they correspond with the period when the factory movement was centered in Yorkshire. Subsequently much of the initiative passed to Lancashire operatives.

capitalist regime.[62] These observers approached the issues raised by factory conditions and the effect of the factory system from a variety of perspectives, but shared a common unease as to the impact of industrialisation on working class lives. Much of this concern was focused on the impact the factory system on the physical health and development of the working class child.[63]

These early acknowledgements of disability as a social problem linked closely to industrialisation would seem to provide some, perhaps oblique, confirmation of Finklesteins' thesis. Finklestein sees changing modes of production, the transfer from a mercantilist to a capitalist economy, as crucial in the creation of 'disability'. Contemporaries were more concerned about the factory system as a source of impairment. However the impact of the industrial revolution on attitudes towards the body, whilst not falling within the scope of this study, clearly demands further attention.

Disquiet about the factory system was compounded by the concentration and hence increased visibility of the poor in the rapidly expanding towns and cities.[64] Since ill health and disability were frequently an adjunct to poverty, the presence of large numbers

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[62] J. T. Ward, 'The Factory Movement', in J. T. Ward (ed.), *Popular Movements, c.1830-1850* (1970), pp. 58-60.

[63] The Manchester Board of Health Report of 25 January 1795 noted the prevalence of fever amongst factory children. Large factories were condemned as '...generally injurious to the constitution of those employed in them.' Diminished future expectations of life and industry were identified as some of the consequences of lengthy hours and night works. Cited in Ward, 'The Factory Movement', p. 58.

[64] Britain's population trebled between 1750 and 1850. By 1851 approximately half the population lived in urban areas. Many urban areas experienced unprecedented rates of growth, with some of the most dramatic increases occurring in the towns and cities of the West Riding. C. Cook (ed.), *The Longman Companion to Britain in the Nineteenth Century 1815-1914* (1999), pp.111-114.

of physically disabled people must also have become increasingly evident. Engels refers to an impromptu survey of 'cripples' in the streets of Macclesfield which was cited by Commissioner Tuffnell in the Factories Inquiry Commission's Report of 1833. This survey revealed that even the 'cleanest and neatest' streets contained persons crippled 'by overwork in the silk-twisting mills.'[65] A decade later, Engels personally observed a great number of 'maimed' persons in Manchester, 'this one has lost an arm or a part of one, that one a foot, the third half a leg; it is like living in the midst of an army just returned from a campaign.'[66]

Regional variations in the pattern and nature of disability, related to the nature of local industry, were likewise evident. 'I never saw the peculiar bending of the lower ends of the thigh bones before I came to Leeds', Dr Sharp MRCS told the Factories' Inquiry Commission of 1833. Members of the Sheffield Medical and Surgical Society (1820) also took a particular interest in problems generated by local industry.[67] In 1821, Dr Knight of Sheffield described the 'grinders' asthma' (silicosis) which afflicted those who worked in the local cutlery trade.[68] During the 1840s the city's Literary and Philosophical

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[65] Engels, *The Condition of the Working Class*, p. 163. The survey was carried out by a factory manager named Wright, both of whose sisters had been crippled in the mills. Engels believed that conditions in Lancashire were such that the county 'rivalled Yorkshire for the number of cripples.'

[66] Ibid, p.173. See also evidence given to the Sadler Committee by Joshua Drake of Leeds and Abraham Wildman of Keighley. *Report of the Select Committee on Factory Children's Labour*, Parliamentary Papers (1831-2), XV, pp.37-47 and pp.153-157, respectively.

[67] I. Inkster, 'Marginal Men: Aspects of the Social Role of the Medical Community in Sheffield 1790-1850', in J. Woodward and D. Richards (eds.), *Health Care and Popular Medicine in Nineteenth Century England: Essays in the Social History of Medicine* (1977), p.141.

[68] Ibid., p.145.

Society was persuaded to fund rewards for dry grinding inventions, as these were believed to be less damaging to workers' health.[69] Equally evident were injuries and disabilities specific to other trades and industries within the county, such as mining.

Much of the blame for the seeming increase in disabling conditions was attributed to the factory system. Certain diseases had long been associated with employment in specific industries. For example, the link between scrotal cancer and chimney sweeping had been identified by London surgeon, Percival Pott, as early as 1775.[70] The 'phossy jaw' of the match worker was also well known. But the growth of the factory system, with its seemingly insatiable demand for child operatives, added a new dimension to the problem.[71] The factory cripple, spirit and body broken by overwork and the cruel lash of the overseer, began increasingly to impinge on the national consciousness. The contrast between the hollow cheeked factory child and his rosy country cousin, or between the current generation and its predecessor, was the subject of much contemporary comment.[72]

The apparent increase in the incidence of disability resulting from the growth of the factory system led to concern being expressed about the possible creation of a 'weak,

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[69] Ibid.
[70] R. Porter (ed.), *Medicine* (Cambridge, 1996), p. 48.
[71] The majority of factory workers were women and children. Children in particular were valued for their agility and docility. They were also cheaper to employ than adult male workers.
[72] Much of this discourse romanticized the past. Arduous child employment was a feature of cottage industry, with parents often proving the hardest task masters. See Rose, *The Erosion of Childhood.*

stunted and short-lived race'.[73] Dr Loudon, a Commissioner, considered that '...the fear of a posterity enfeebled by the shattered constitution of the survivors is but too well founded, from a physiological point of view.'[74] Engels quoted Robert Hyde Greg as saying '...that if things went on as at present, the operatives of Lancashire would soon be a race of pigmies.'[75] There were fears that a hereditary physically degenerate nation would be unable to defend its interests or its territory. There was also consternation over the moral debasement which was felt to be inherent in the factory system. Factories were seen as subverting the Christian family; the employment of women and children robbed men of their traditional role as bread winners and made women unfit for domesticity and motherhood.[76] Children, lacking appropriate maternal care and moral guidance, were growing up in ignorance and vice.[77]

The Factory Movement had its origins in a meeting which took place in September 1830 between John Wood, a Bradford manufacturer and Evangelical Tory, and Richard Oastler a steward at Fixby Hall near Huddersfield. Wood's description of conditions in the local mills inspired Oastler to submit his famous letter denouncing 'Yorkshire Slavery' to the *Leeds Mercury.* Oastler bitterly condemned a system that reduced Yorkshire operatives to living in 'a state of slavery, more horrid than ... the victims of that hellish system 'colonial slavery'. For whereas it was in the colonial master's interests to keep his slaves

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[73] Charles Turner Thackrah quoted in Ward, 'Leeds and the Factory Reform Movement', p.91.
[74] *First Report of the Royal Commission on the Employment of Children in Factories,* Parliamentary Papers (1833), XXI, p.124. Evidence of Dr Loudon is also cited by Engels, *The Condition of the Working Class*, p.167.
[75] Ibid., p.168.
[76] Ibid., p.157.
[77] Ibid., p.153-54.

'strong and healthy', local child workers were 'doomed to labour from morning to night for one who cares not how soon your weak and tender frames are stretched to breaking... Your soft and delicate limbs are tired and fagged, and jaded...'. The worsted mills of Bradford were 'magazines of British infantile slavery', their child workers 'innocent victims at the accursed shrine of avarice'. [78]

The *Leeds Mercury* was the local bastion of Liberal Nonconformist middle-class opinion and as such its readership included many of the factory owners whose practices Oastler was condemning. As an attempt to rouse Nonconformist conscience the letter was at best a partial success, but the strength of its appeal could not be denied. The irony of the existence of such cruel conditions in a region famed for its profession of anti-slavery principles and religious zeal touched a raw nerve, particularly with Yorkshire evangelicals and humanitarians.[79] These individuals, many already harbouring deep scepticism about the direction of society, provided some of the strongest support for the movement. Oastler's letter proved to be the rallying cry necessary to meld previously inchoate groupings of concerned radical operatives, humanitarian employers, medical men, Tory paternalists and concerned Christians into a coherent factory movement.[80]

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[78] Richard Oastler's letter on 'Yorkshire Slavery', *Leeds Mercury*, 16 October 1830. Cited in Documentary Appendix of D. Fraser, *The Evolution of the Welfare State: A History of Social Policy Since the Industrial Revolution* (Basingstoke, 2003), p.296.
[79] Both Oastler and Sadler had been amongst those supporting Wilberforce at the 1807 county election. J. T. Ward, *The Factory Movement 1830-1855* (1962), p. 33.
[80] Ward, 'The Factory Movement', pp. 65-66.

The moral outrage that had motivated Oastler was shared by Michael Sadler, who was to provide the parliamentary leadership of the movement during this period.[81] Like Oastler, Sadler was an Evangelical Tory with a strong paternalistic conscience. He was horrified by the cruelties inflicted on the factory children which he believed to be almost unparalleled. It was the shared indignation and anger of men such as this that the historian E. P Thompson characterises as 'the veritable fury of compassion which moved the few score northern professional men who took up the cause of the children.'[82]

In order to keep the factory reform at the forefront of the political agenda a propaganda battle was raged, initially through the pages of the Yorkshire press. Baines, editor of the *Leeds Mercury*, found Oastler's fiery rhetoric uncongenial and the correspondence was soon taken over by the Tory *Leeds Intelligencer* and the Radical *Leeds Patriot*. This pairing of the Tory and the Radical was to become characteristic of the movement.[83] Radical periodicals such as Doherty's *Advocate* and Parson Bull's *The British Labourer's Protector and Factory Child's Friend* informed a wider public of the progress of the ten hour campaign, often through the direct quotation of swathes of evidence given to the select committee. Individual case histories were also highlighted. Accounts of former child employees such as those of William Dodd 'the factory cripple' and Robert Blincoe,

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[81] Sadler was a Leeds linen merchant.

[82] Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class*, p.384. Thompson is keen to emphasise that no general "awakening of conscience" occurred.

[83] But see F. Driver, 'Tory Radicalism? Ideology, Strategy and Locality in Popular Politics during the Eighteen-Thirties', *Northern History*, 27 (1991), pp.120-138. On p.122 Driver draws attention to the 'fragility of such alliances, which developed only fleetingly and haltingly' and suggests that co-operation was based upon 'astute political calculation' rather than any ideological conviction.

a poor law apprentice, were widely read and provided a searing indictment of the factory system.[84]

A wide range of arguments, not all motivated by self-interest, were cited by those who opposed legislative interference. Many employers, often with the benefit of medical support, denied that factory work was harmful to health.[85] Factory work was light and required only momentary attentiveness. Properly administered factory discipline provided the young with a sound moral training and operated as a counter to idleness.[86] In support of their arguments employers were able to quote contemporary economic orthodoxy which categorically rejected interference with the market. They argued that they should be free to operate without impediment and employ their capital as they wished. Similarly parents should be at liberty to determine the employment of their children.[87] Meddling with the exercise of these rights would lead to loss of profits and falling competitiveness, particularly with foreign rivals.[88] This would have repercussions for all sections of the populace, from employers through to their lowliest employees. A reduction in the hours

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[84] Ward, 'The Factory Movement', p.75.

[85] See for example, 'A Manufacturer', *A Letter &c To Sir John Cam Hobhouse, Bart. MP* (1832), pp. 12-13; H. Hoole, *A Letter to Lord Viscount Althorp MP in Defence of the Cotton Factories of Lancashire* (Manchester, 1832), pp.9-10; J. Birley, *Sadler's Bill Cotton Branch* (Manchester, 1832), p.14. These pamphlets are reprinted in K. Carpenter (ed.), *The Ten Hours Movement in 1831 and 1832* (New York, 1972).

[86] J. R. McCulloch believed factories to have been 'the best and most important academies. Besides taking children out of harm's way, they have imbued them with regular, orderly, and industrious habits.' Cited in E. Evans (ed.), *Social Policy 1830-1914 Individualism, Collectivism and the Origins of the Welfare State* (1978), pp. 46-47.

[87] 'The right of the parent over the child, is that of nature – it is inalienable and indefeasible. 'A Manufacturer', *Letter to Sir John Cam Hobhouse*, p.17.

[88] Ibid., p.49. Hoole, *Letter to Lord Viscount Althorp*, p.15.

of child labour would inevitably reduce the working day and hence the wages, of adults.[89] Families denied the right to the income of their children would simply starve. Some individuals were hostile to the concept of centrally imposed, rather than voluntary regulation, of private enterprise.[90]

One of the most important elements in the battle for hearts and minds was the role played by the local medical profession. Doctors were amongst the first to raise concerns about the harmful effects of factory work, and they together with radical operatives and concerned employers were at the forefront of early protest against the factory system. The involvement of surgeons from the Leeds Infirmary in the campaign has already been discussed above.[91] However not all doctors supported reform. A number, particularly those with strong ties to the manufacturing interest, were actively hostile. Most notable of these was Dr Andrew Ure, author of *Philosophy of Manufactures*, berated by Engels as the 'apostle of the bourgeoisie'. R. Gray has calculated that in Leeds of nine medical commentators on factory labour c. 1830-40, five were ten hour supporters and four opponents.[92] In Bradford, support for the 1832 Factory Bill amongst the medical profession was practically unanimous.[93]

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[89] Birley, *Sadler's Bill*, p.20.
[90] Richard Webster, who was sympathetic to the factory campaigners, believed that legislation would be 'the most palpable disgrace'. *Leeds Mercury* 20 November 1830. Cited in J. T. Ward, 'Some Industrial Reformers', *Journal of the Bradford Textile Society* (1962-63).
[91] See above, Chapter Four.
[92] Gray, 'Medical Men, Industrial Labour and the State in Britain, 1830-50', p. 23.
[93] Ibid., p. 24.

Sadler introduced a ten hour bill in 1832 but progress was stalled when the government requested that a committee be convened to look into the evidence. The Sadler Committee heard evidence from a total of 87 witnesses, 23 of whom were from Leeds. Ten of them were cripples.[94] Witnesses were requested to exhibit their deformities (chiefly of the knees and lower limbs) to the Committee. Their stunted growth was also the subject of much comment. The operatives attributed their disabilities primarily to the long hours and overexertion to which they had been subject since early childhood. David Bywater, employed since the age of 12 as a steamer, testified 'It made me very crooked... The bone is quite bent.'[95] Abraham Wildman, the Radical poet, claimed that 'we can produce in Keighley 150 rickety crooked-legged children owing to their being over-wrought.'[96]

Another frequent cause of disability was injury, often a consequence of the use of unfenced machinery. Samuel Coulson told the Commission that his daughter Ann had lost a finger after it had become caught up in a cog. The girl had subsequently spent five weeks in Leeds Infirmary. [97] The cruelty of overseers, who inflicted beatings with the billy-roller or lash on their hapless charges, could result in disability or death.[98] Environmental factors, such as dry or dusty conditions, were also blamed for a variety of ailments.

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[94] Ward, 'Leeds and the Factory Reform Movement', p.93.
[95] *Select Committee on Factory Children's Labour*, P.P. (1831-2), XV, pp.51-52.
[96] Ibid., p.155, Q. 4110.
[97]'The most common accident is the squeezing off of a single joint of a finger, somewhat less common is the loss of the whole finger, half or a whole hand, an arm, etc., in the machinery.' Engels, *The Condition of the Working Class*, p.173. For evidence regarding Samuel Coulson's daughter see *Select Committee on Factory Children's Labour*, P.P. (1831-2), XV, p.192, Q. 5066.
[98] See the evidence of Mr Abraham Whitehead, a Holmfirth man and ten hours organiser. Ibid., pp.17-25.

The testimony of the operatives throws some light on the management and treatment of crippling conditions. Many of those who gave evidence had been treated by Samuel Smith at the Leeds Infirmary. A wide variety of devices and treatments for deformed limbs were referred to by these witnesses. These ranged from sticks and crutches to 'knee caps,' strengthening plasters and leg irons. The irons, which cost £3, were well beyond the means of most operatives. A number of witnesses mentioned rubbing or massaging their joints, sometimes with a special ointment.[99] Some had received visits from medical men acting on behalf of the friendly societies, the Oddfellows being specifically mentioned. However assistance from such lodges ceased once the operative was deemed to have recovered. Thereafter, there was little alternative but to turn to the parish.[100] In scarcely any instance was any help proffered by an employer, indeed some operatives had their wages commuted from the moment they were injured.

A number of medical men also gave evidence to the Commission. It has been noted that medical evidence tended to stress the overall breakdown in the operatives health rather than the specific generation of disability. It may have been, given the current state of medical knowledge, that this was an easier contention to prove. However the operatives called as witnesses included a substantial proportion of cripples, perhaps because the consumptive or bed-ridden could not be expected to endure the journey to London.

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[99] Earlier parliamentary commissions had also heard evidence of deformity caused by childhood employment and over working. Elizabeth Bentley of Leeds gave evidence to the Parliamentary Commission of 1815 that she was 'considerably deformed in person' as a result of early labour in the flax mills. Bentley mentions her mother's attempts to get 'a good pair of stays to hold me up'. Cited in J. Carey (ed.), *The Faber Book of Reportage* (1987), pp.295-298.

[100] See the evidence of William Cooper, *Select Committee on Factory Children's Labour*, P.P. (1831-2), XV, pp.5-13.

Operatives who chose to testify braved intimidation from their employers and the threat of dismissal. By 9 July 1833 six witnesses had already lost their jobs and Sadler determined that no more should be called to give evidence.[101] Parliament dissolved before the masters could be heard and the decision was taken to print the evidence as it stood. Extracts from the minutes of evidence were published in *The Times* during 1832 and had an immediate impact.[102] Southey wrote to Ashley that it 'disturbed my sleep, in a way that no book ever did before.' Ashley, who was not at that time involved with the factory movement, pronounced himself 'astonished and disgusted.'[103] The publication of the Report of Sadler Committee in January 1833 was a pivotal moment in the history of factory reform.

Under pressure from the masters, and keen to appear even-handed, the Whig government appointed a Factory Commission under Southwood Smith and Chadwick. The clinical approach adopted by the Commission was the complete antithesis to the moral fury which had motivated Oastler and Sadler. However their findings largely confirmed those of the earlier Committee. The Commission found that children were working the same hours as adults and that the consequences of this were 'Permanent deterioration of the physical condition; The production of disease often wholly irremediable; and The partial or entire exclusion (by reason of excessive fatigue) from the means of obtaining adequate education and acquiring useful habits, or of profiting from those means when

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[101] Ward, 'The Factory Movement', p. 62.
[102] The *Quarterly Review* claimed that the inquiry produced '...a body of evidence, which in depth, extent and science, has never been approached, alarmed and disgusted the world.' Cited in M. W. Thomas, *The Early Factory Legislation: A Study in Legislative and Administrative Evolution* (Leigh-on-Sea, 1948), p. 40.
[103] G. B. A. M. Finlayson, *The Seventh Earl of Shaftesbury 1801-1885* (1981), p. 73.

afforded.'[104] The Commission accepted that a child was not a free agent and should therefore be entitled to the protection of the state.

Althorp's Factory Act of 1833 was perhaps more significant for the principles it introduced rather than in its specific regulations, which the employers swiftly found means of circumventing. D. Fraser believes the significance of the act lies in its acknowledgement of 'the right of the state to intervene where there was an overwhelming need to protect exploited sections of the community. The ultimate responsibility for ensuring the welfare of children at work was centred not on parent or employer but on the community at large.'[105] Those disabled people who gave evidence before the Sadler Commission and other similar inquiries were instrumental in redefining not only the rights of employees and the duties of employers, but the role of the state itself.[106]

At the start of this section the extent to which the factory movement could be regarded as a charitable or philanthropic crusade by and on behalf of the disabled was questioned. Support for the reformers came from a wide cross-section of society and a variety of different motivations for seeking legislation can be identified. The principal aim of the operatives was the reduction of working hours for all workers to a ten hour maximum. Some officials sought reform as a means of ensuring the education of factory children. Others may have seized upon factory reform as a way of attacking a political enemy. However underpinning all of these concerns was a widespread revulsion at a system that

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[104] *First Report of the Factory Commissioners,* P.P. (1833), XX, p.48.
[105] Fraser, *The Evolution of the British Welfare State,* p. 23.
[106] Fraser suggests that the 1833 Factory Act 'clearly marks a great turning point in the history of social policy.' Ibid.

disabled and crippled its victims. A common humanitarianism was the principal factor holding together the unlikely Tory Radical alliance that was the factory reform movement. This humanitarian approach is starkly evident in Oastler's initial indictment of 'Yorkshire Slavery' and in Sadler's speeches. The bulk of evidence produced before the Sadler inquiry was designed to demonstrate the devastating physical effects of long hours and over exertion on vulnerable child workers. The Factory Commission endorsed these findings. Thus it is arguable that a humanitarian concern to protect the health of future generations, and to preserve them from disabling illness, was in fact the most important argument in favour of reform.[107]

For the purposes of this thesis it is significant that certain of the individuals already identified as activists on behalf of the disabled were linked to the movement. Local medical practitioners and philosophical society members – including notably Charles Turner Thackrah, William Hey and Samuel Smith – all played a prominent role. This involved speaking at meetings and rallies, selecting operatives to give evidence and testifying before the Committee themselves. As in other county initiatives on behalf of the disabled, the support of the Anglican establishment, including Archbishop Harcourt, provided valuable encouragement.[108] The evangelical John Graham lent his support to the movement, appearing on the platform at a big York meeting. The Hon. William Duncombe was also present at the meeting, and Lord Morpeth received the mammoth

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[107] A. S. Wohl notes that '...implicit in the movement and in the government factory inspectorate which was established under the 1833 Factory Act was the physical well-being of the labour force.' A. S. Wohl, *Endangered Lives: Public Health in Victorian Britain* (1984), pp.258-59.

[108] Archbishop Harcourt of York was asked by the Bradford Committee to organise clerical support, Ward, 'The Factory System', p.75.

York petition. Another prominent local supporter, Robert Hall MP, helped to finance the education of crippled factory children.[109] Ashley, who was to take over leadership of the movement following Sadler's death, maintained a lifelong interest in crippled children.[110]

The importance of the contribution of disabled people to the movement can not be denied. The testimony of crippled operatives to the Sadler Committee and subsequently to the Factories' Commission was crucial to the success of the campaign. Their eloquence, combined with the propaganda efforts of the factory reformers, succeeded in etching the figure of the crippled factory child on the national conscience.[111] A significant breach of laissez-faire ethos had been achieved by and on behalf of the most vulnerable members of society.

Charitable Activity and the Disabled Adult

The claims of the lame and the halt to private charity were fully acknowledged as a Christian duty. However, as with other sectors of the disabled population, the public reaction to the individual with a physical disability was tempered by factors such as his or her gender and age. Discrimination between the sexes was evident with the plight of females attracting more attention initially than that of males. This may have been because

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[109] Ibid.

[110] He was an early and important patron of John Grooms, one of the first charities to cater specifically for this form of disablement.

[111] By the 1860s many of those previously opposed to factory reform had changed their minds and 'few public men any longer cared to be associated with the 'classical' economic doctrines which had tolerated and even justified the overworking of women and children.' Ward, 'The Factory Movement', pp.55-56.

Christian inspired initiatives viewed disabled girls or women as more likely to be in need of 'rescue' from moral dangers.[112] Age discrimination was also rife. Even prior to the growing concerns about the state of the nation's health which emerged in the last decades of the century, public sympathy was more easily aroused by the plight of the crippled child than his adult counterpart. Within the adult population, elderly cripples benefited from a more sympathetic outlook than younger adults. It is also likely that the more severely crippled received greater attention than those with lesser disabilities. As with other sections of the disabled poor, those who could present themselves as morally upright or 'deserving' increased their chances of receiving charitable assistance.

Large scale charitable activity in the formats that we have discussed in the chapters on the blind and the deaf were slower to develop in the case of the cripple. However some debilitating or disabling conditions did succeed in capturing public imagination and sympathy. The Truss Societies, a number of which flourished throughout the nineteenth century, attracted much prominent backing. The object of the City of London Truss Society for the Relief of the Ruptured Poor was:-

> to relieve such poor persons recommended by Governors as are afflicted with Rupture, and have not the pecuniary means of obtaining surgical assistance;- by providing Trusses for every kind of rupture;- by furnishing Bandages and necessary Instruments for all kinds of Prolapses;- by performing every necessary operation;- and by administering surgical aid promptly. [113]

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[112] Often stress was laid on the need for the girls to sever 'objectionable' associations.

[113] *City of London Truss Society for the Relief of the Ruptured Poor, Throughout the Kingdom List of Governors, Rules and Regulations, Report &c* (1901), p. 3. The Society

The Society's report explained that hernias did not result from 'depraved habits' but arose in part from 'bodily defect, aided by those laborious exertions from which the affluent are in general exempted.' As a result of the condition 'the services of many ingenious artificers and useful labourers have been totally lost to the community, and their families, once decently maintained by them, are now absolutely impoverished.'[114] The emphasis on the moral probity of the recipients and the economic loss their disability posed to the community illustrates the long term persistence of discrimination between the 'deserving' and 'improvident'. This careful vetting of recipients was no doubt intended to reassure and appeal to middle class subscribers and donors.

Another form of voluntary activity that specifically aided the cripple during this period was the support given to specialist orthopaedic hospitals. The first, a General Institution for the Relief of Persons labouring under Bodily Deformity, was founded in Birmingham in 1817; the second in London in 1838. The further growth of these hospitals was both sporadic and piecemeal and relied heavily on the initiative of local doctors. It may have been that the ample opportunities to practice on this category of patient provided by local voluntary hospitals or poor law infirmaries inhibited the more rapid growth of specialist institutions. In 1867 St. Bartholomew's Hospital became the first general hospital to open an orthopaedic department.[115]

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was founded on 1807 by J. Taunton Esq. MRCS. It claimed to have relieved 557,803 patients between the date of its foundation and 31 December 1900.

[114] Ibid.

[115] F. Watson, *Civilization and the Cripple* (1930), 'Timeline'. Yorkshire had to wait until 1925 for a specialist orthopaedic hospital.

Although not catering for the chronically ill or elderly, the voluntary hospitals provided important short term care for those injured in the course of their employment. Samuel Smith estimated that as many as 35 per cent of admissions to the Leeds Infirmary in the 1840s were the result of accidents. For most of the century the most commonly performed surgical procedure was amputation. Anning notes that during the eighteen month period from March 1823 amputation was the most popular surgical procedure at Leeds.[116] In fact there were 22 amputations of the leg and 7 of the arm.[117] In 1868, 72 of the 344 operations were amputations.[118] The introduction of antisepsis rapidly increased the number of operations for the treatment of deformities caused by rickets or tuberculosis. At Manchester Children's Hospital the number of such operations doubled between the early 1890s and 1900.[119]

Large or prosperous employers sometimes subscribed to voluntary hospitals in return for the right to recommend workers for admission and treatment. Other employers voluntarily assisted their injured employees by paying for their medical treatment or rehabilitation.[120] Sheffield Infirmary, founded in 1792, owed its origins to the belief that

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[116] S. Anning, *The History of Medicine in Leeds* (Leeds, 1980), p. 132.
[117] The next most common procedure was couching of the eye for cataracts with 12 cases recorded.
[118] S. Anning, *The General Infirmary at Leeds 1769-1869* (1966), p.40.
[119] M. Cruikshanks, *Children and Industry: Child Health and Welfare in North-West Textile Towns during the Nineteenth Century* (Manchester, 1981), p. 118. The number of operations annually rose from 500 to 1000.
[120] The WSB papers refer to a case of an employer paying for the rehabilitation of a worker blinded during the course of his employment. Perhaps the warmth of the commendation which this gesture received in the annual report suggests that such actions were exceptional rather than commonplace.

'from the particular kind of Manufacture carried on in Sheffield and its Neighbourhood, an Infirmary near this Place would be extremely advantageous'. The need to return skilled employees to work is cited by H. Marland as one of the principal factors motivating supporters of the Huddersfield Dispensary and Infirmary.[121] Because so many of those treated by the voluntary hospitals were persons injured or maimed in the course of their employment, charitable donations to them may be seen as representing a form of 'hidden' charity for some sectors the disabled.[122]

For the adult cripple in need of long term institutional care the workhouse infirmary remained the place of last resort. Dr Wycliff Watson, Medical Officer to the Sheffield Board of Guardians, calculated that in February 1891 there were 28 cripples in the Sheffield Workhouse and 58 in the Infirmary.[123] He told the COS that 'for the adult crippled – in the widest sense of the term – very little can be done. A few may be able to leave the infirmary, but the bulk are, and must be, permanent residents there.'[124] Removed from the public eye such individuals were powerless to affect their own fate and their situation attracted little outside attention.

Other forms of charitable activity for this sector of the disabled poor are harder to trace. The extent of charitable activity amongst the poor themselves, noted and the subject of

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[121] H. Marland, 'Lay and Medical Conceptions of Medical Charity during the Nineteenth Century: The case of the Huddersfield General Dispensary and Infirmary', in J. Barry and C. Jones (eds.), *Medicine and Charity before the Welfare State* (1991), p. 153.
[122] We have noted how those disabled through chronic illness or old age were cared for in the workhouse sick wards, later the poor law infirmaries.
[123] See Appendix, Table 10.
[124] COS Report, *The Epileptic and Crippled Child and Adult.*

much commentary by writers such as Engels, is particularly difficult to recover. It is probable that the poor, well versed in the vicissitudes of poverty, were less likely to be judgmental than middle class donors. However this does not mean that their charity was necessarily selfless; an expectation of reciprocity may well have been implicit in their gifts. Nursing care, food, clothing and shelter voluntarily provided were all means by which members of the working class could assist one another. The difficulty for the historian is that such informal charity leaves little impression on the historical record. Doubtless much useful charitable work was also done by individual churches and missions of all denominations, but little evidence of such activity remains. Home visiting societies and domiciliary or district nursing, voluntarily undertaken, must have brightened many lives.[125] Masonic activity, by its nature secretive, may also have been significant.[126]

It is more than likely that other forms of charitable activity for this sector of the disabled were disguised, for example, under the umbrella of charity to the poor generally or to the

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[125] G. K. Belhmer, *Friends of the Family: The English Home and its Guardians, 1850-1940* (Stanford, Calif., 1998). Such interventions were not always welcomed.

[126] Masonic lodges naturally assisted impoverished members and their families. One reference to the scale of such activity locally can be found in an article, 'On the Industrial and Sanitary Economy of the Borough of Leeds in 1858', written by the factory inspector Robert Baker for the *Journal of the Statistical Society* in December 1858. Baker, commenting on the large numbers of those in receipt of relief, notes that such poverty existed regardless of the numbers 'assisted out of the savings of the industrious – notwithstanding all charity – notwithstanding that the Secret Orders raised and distributed among their sick and distressed brethren 20,000*l* – and notwithstanding an increase in depositers in the savings banks.' An account of the York Lodge records that, until 1900, 'the Lodge had made regular as well as *ad hoc* subscriptions and gifts to many organizations, including the York County Hospital, the School for the Blind, the York Dispensary, and the Blue Coat School.' R. L. Wood, *York Lodge No.236 1777-1977*, (1977), p.63. In 1879 Anthony Buckle of the WSB was the Worshipful Master of the York Lodge.

elderly or children. One possibility is that trustees or donors of charitable doles for the poor or aged exercised their discretion in favour of the most 'deserving' or disadvantaged poor such as the disabled. A particularly well documented form of care for the elderly was the almshouse. The provision of what was effectively sheltered accommodation, sometimes with the benefit of medical care and additional pension, was a valuable welfare gift to beneficiaries. Since many almshouses were of ancient foundation, their locations and residential qualifications did not necessarily answer the needs of nineteenth century demography. However, where such foundations were plentiful, as for example in York, they formed a significant resource.[127] Is it possible to determine whether disabled people were amongst the 'hidden' beneficiaries of this ancient form of charity?

Another Yorkshire city well known for its almshouse provision was Hull. The *Commissioners' Report on Hull Charities* of 1823 lists nine ancient hospitals or almshouses for the benefit of the city's poor.[128] Few qualifications for residency, other than poverty, or in some cases being of the female sex, appear to have existed. At Lister's Hospital (1640), 'The poor persons are not required to possess any other particular qualification, than that of being proper objects of charity.'[129] The ten poor women at Harrison's Hospital were 'to be single and fit objects of charity.'[130] In addition to

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[127] At the end of the nineteenth century twenty York almshouses provided shelter for approximately 145 residents. They had an annual income of £2550. The city also had the benefit of 115 pension charities with an annual income of £1150. D. Owen, *English Philanthropy, 1660-1960* (Cambridge, Mass., 1964), p.445.

[128] By a scheme of the Charity Commissioners of June 1887 the hospitals were consolidated into the Hull Municipal Hospitals.

[129] *Commissioners' Reports on Hull Charities 1823*, p. 31.

[130] Ibid., p.68.

accommodation, residents were entitled to receive a small weekly allowance and supplies of coal and turves.

Amongst the most ancient of the city's almshouses was The Charterhouse, or God's House, founded in 1384. The Commissioners reported that there were 'Currently 28 men and 29 women and each of them has a room in the hospital, a stipend of 6*s* a week, a yearly allowance of turves, and 2 1/4 chaldron of coals, a supply of water, and medical attendance when necessary.'[131] Power to nominate residents was vested alternately in the Mayor and Aldermen of Hull. 'There is no particular qualification required as to the poor people admitted; they are such persons as are proper objects of charity, from age or infirmity.'[132] The income of the charity was 1,395*l* 11*s* 8*d*. In 1882 the number of residents was 82, with four widows also supported, and income had risen to £3680.[133]

There is some evidence to suggest that by the 1830s, notwithstanding the Commissioners' Report, the appointment of residents to Hull's almshouses was corrupt. T. White, a Hull solicitor, published a detailed indictment of their administration.[134] He found that many of the residents were former servants of the donors (trustees) and that others were persons of property or not originally from Hull. A number of younger people are listed as beneficiaries. Some of them were in full time employment. The *Hull Rockingham* reported that if Mr White's claims were true 'these charities seem now to

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[131] *Commissioners' Reports on Hull Charities 1815-39* (Hull, 1876), p.9.
[132] Ibid.The original foundation was to provide for 13 poor men and 13 poor women 'feeble or old'.
[133] J. Cook, *History of the Charterhouse Hull* (Hull, 1882), pp.275-76.
[134] T. White, *An Enquiry into the Origin and Management of the Hospitals, Alms-Houses, and other Charities of Kingston Upon Hull* (Hull, 1833).

exist rather for the benefit of the members of the Corporation than of the poor of Hull.' In the light of the furore generated by Mr. White's efforts it seems likely that a tighter reign was imposed thereafter.

There is a register of persons resident in and admitted to the Charterhouse for the period immediately subsequent to White's report, c.1833-1860.[135] This gives some details of admission and room allocation as well as resident's names, ages and deaths. There are a few details which indicate that at least some residents were disabled. Thus Elizabeth Faulding of room 2 was removed by the masters to room 28 so that Bellamy Wells, described as 'lame and infirm' could have her, presumably more suitable, room. William Allison, 'being too lame for a room upstairs' was removed to a more suitable location on the death of another resident. John Wilson, who also moved rooms during this period, was described as 'infirm.' Although few other details exist, it seems highly probable that in an institution where people retained tenure of their rooms until death, a high proportion of residents would have been disabled.[136]

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[135] 'Register of persons admitted to the Charterhouse arranged on a room by room basis giving names, ages, and details of admission and death, compiled c.1833 and maintenance to 1860 but containing details of inmates alive in 1833, who had been admitted as early as 1809'. Hull City Archives, Hull, WT/7/40.

[136] J. Hollingshead described the inhabitants of London almshouses as 'a few stooping old men... withered old women...'. He suggested that urban development had engulfed the almshouses and 'The old pensioners find themselves in everybody's way and everybody is in their way.' The wishes of the original founders were being thwarted. He believed the old would benefit more if the almshouses were sold off and the proceeds used to finance other forms of care on their behalf. J. Hollingshead, *Ragged London in 1861* (New York, 1985), pp.226-7.

Although examples can be found in the Yorkshire region of charitable trusts or bequests for the benefit of local blind or deaf people, the absence of an institution specifically for crippled persons probably inhibited donors from leaving bequests of this nature. There were however a number of trusts for the benefit of the elderly, often restricted to residents of a particular parish, which may have been exercised in favour of the respectable disabled. Since only the barest details of these, often quite small, trusts exist in the records of the Charity Commissioners, it seems unlikely that further detailed information about beneficiaries can be recovered.

The Crippled Child

During the course of the nineteenth century the public image of the cripple dramatically altered. The adult cripple, his reputation tarnished by association with beggary and fraud, was replaced by the innocent and pitiful figure of the crippled child.[137] Much of the new found prominence of the child can be attributed to the effective use of the crippled child as propaganda by those fighting for factory reform from the 1830s. Successive campaigns for further protective legislation for children, particularly those undertaken by Lord Shaftesbury, ensured that children remained central to welfare legislation.

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[137] Public suspicion of disability as a refuge for the fraudulent and work shy remained potent. For allegations of fakery see Chesney, *The Victorian Underworld*, p. 229.

By the 1880s changing social, economic and political developments again focused attention upon the health and welfare of children.[138] As it grew increasingly evident that British global and economic superiority were under threat, the need for an educated, efficient, and competitive workforce became urgent. The role of children as the future workers and defenders of the nation, as its primary resource, was thus highlighted. The crippled, stunted or malnourished child was not merely a present and prospective burden to his or her parents and community; his condition jeopardised the welfare of the nation as a whole. Public anxieties were heightened, by the revelation of unacceptably high levels of disability amongst school children. The high infant mortality rate and falling birth rate, the latter most notable amongst the middle classes, suggested that increasing numbers of children were growing up in circumstances where their health was compromised. These findings raised the spectre of a hereditary disabled underclass and seemed to lend support to the doctrines of Social Darwinism and eugenics.[139]

In contrast to the utilitarian view of children as future workers, literary depictions of crippled children stressed their innocence and vulnerability. The crippled child was a favourite motif of Christian and improving literature. Much, of this literature, which often took the form of a religious tract, was directed specifically at children. One local example

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[138] Hendrick argues that during the last quarter of the nineteenth century children were the subject of 'a consciously designed pursuit of the national interest, which included all-round efficiency, public health, education, racial hygiene, responsible parenthood and social purity.' This new conception of children as belonging 'to the nation' is expressly linked to the evolution of the state. Hendrick, *Child Welfare,* pp.19-20. See also Harris, *Private Lives, Public Spirit,* p.87.

[139] Concerns about degeneration reflected a range of anxieties but have been explicitly linked to '...the mysterious and often terrifying phenomena of mass urban and industrial concentration and the apparent estrangement of large sectors of society from their "natural" roots.' Harris, *Private Lives, Public Spirit,* p.55.

was *The Cripple of Rothenstein*, translated from the German and published in 1846 by T. Harrison.[140] This work was dedicated to 'The Teachers and Children in Our Church Sunday Schools, At Leeds…'. In some of this literature a direct link was made between the sins of the parent – generally the mother – and the disability of the child. In *Base Born* the sinful mother dies in childbirth and the child's subsequent neglect and ill treatment at the hands of others results in his deformity.[141] In *Joseph Selden the Cripple or An Angel in our Home,* the eponymous hero, described as a 'withered, blighted thing' causes his 'wretched mother' pain whenever she beholds him.[142] More often the crippled child was portrayed as a moral and religious inspiration to others. Readers of the tale of *Sarah Wilson or The Young Cripple* may have been encouraged to find that 'Her Bodily trials were blessed to the good of her soul… Let cripples and other children of affliction learn where they may find consolation and support.'[143] The plight of the crippled child was also seen as a means of promoting charitable activity in the young. In *Ronald's Reason or the Little Cripple* by Mrs A. M. Hall, Ronald selflessly purchases 'strength-giving irons' for 'dear little pale Phil, a sick child… much loved by the great boys…'.[144]

The crippled child also appeared frequently in novels and other secular literature. Generally his presence served the same didactic purposes as in specifically Christian works. Factual accounts of the circumstances of crippled children and charitable efforts on their behalf were considered suitable reading material for children. Some literature

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[140] *The Cripple of Rothenstein* (Translated from the German, Republished Leeds, 1846).
[141] *The Base Born* by the author of "The Cripple of the Railroad" &c (1840).
[142] *Joseph Selden The Cripple or An Angel in our Home by the author of "The Dalrymples," &c* (1862).
[143] *Sarah Wilson or The Young Cripple* (*c.*1830).
[144] A. M. Hall, *Ronald's Reason or The Little Cripple* (1865).

was intended to supplement fund raising campaigns. The Lord Mayor's Cripple's fund, established c.1893, issued its own publication, *Crutches to help Christian Children.* Public sentiment and goodwill were particularly targeted over the Christmas period. *The Christian* appealed to its readers to 'Remember the Flower-Girls at Christmas'.[145] *The Daily Telegraph* published 'a Christmas Carol for Crippled Children' and Dickens' Tiny Tim appeared in *A Christmas Carol.* [146]

Raising money for crippled children was considered to be, and served as, an appropriate introduction to charitable work for their able bodied peers. Some voluntary organisations specifically targeted the pocket and conscience of the middle-class child. The Cripples and Orphans' Friend Brigade addressed its appeal directly to 'my dear Young Friend'. Children were invited to join the brigade, '... the object of which is to show a practical and personal interest in the thousands of Maimed, Crippled, and Afflicted Children of our country.... So that their lives may be made more healthy, useful and happy.'[147] Children were told that they themselves might recommend cases for admission to hospital. It was suggested that they persuade their parents and friends to subscribe a penny a week, or send letters, toys or clothes to individual cripples on their birthday or for Christmas. They were urged to create 'a circle of interest' amongst their friends. Assisting crippled

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[145] Supplement to *The Christian*, 17 December 1891, John Grooms Papers, Box 3/7.
[146] C. Scott, *The Cripples' Christmas Carol* (1885), was published in *The Daily Telegraph* in 1896. Dickens' *A Christmas Carol* was first published in 1843. Proceeds from its sale helped to pay for the crippled children's home at Alton. *Charles Dickens Christmas Books* (Oxford, 1988), p. xiii.
[147] *What is the Cripple and Orphans' Friend Brigade?* (c.1890), p.6. Booklet in John Grooms Papers, Box 3/6.

children was an activity pursued by members of various Boys' Brigades and various other children's groups also raised money.[148]

The crippled child was a central motif of the nineteenth century. Whether in the guise of the wretched factory child or the hopeless child of the residuum, he symbolised the need for dramatic social change. In an era of minimal government, where the sanctity of the family and the rights of the individual were seen as paramount, such change could only occur on a gradual and incremental basis. Pressure for change was both humanitarian and pragmatic in origin. Throughout the century Christian injunctions to aid the less fortunate inspired much voluntary endeavour on behalf of the crippled child. The exposure of consecutive generations to sympathetic representations of the cripple also served to increase public concern for his plight. By the end of the century the growing recognition of the centrality of all children to the future prosperity of the nation cast new light on the situation of the disabled child. When viewed as a challenge to the country's internal stability, to its future as an imperial race, the crippled child could no longer be ignored.

The Education of Crippled Children

The first attempts to make provision for the needs of crippled children were undertaken by the Ragged Schools Movement. Inspired by the large proportion of disabled children who attended such schools, teachers from the movement opened a number of 'Cripples'

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[148] Appeals to children were also made through magazines; the *Girls' Own Paper*, 30 January 1892, carries an article about the flower girls of London.

Clubs' in the 1860s.[149] The first residential schools for crippled children opened in London: the Cripples Home and Industrial School for Girls (1851), followed in 1865 by Wright's Lane Home for Crippled Boys. The extreme paucity of specialist institutions or industrial schooling meant that only a very few children benefited from these forms of education.[150] Such was the dearth of appropriate residential care for disabled children that many had to be accommodated in orphanages.[151]

Many severely disabled children can have received little or no tuition. It is these children that K. Heasman characterises as '...left at home, unwanted, and often unfed, in the dingiest of surroundings, with no chance of playing with other children.'[152] Some of these children came to the attention of missionary workers who visited them and perhaps provided a modicum of rudimentary instruction. The first large scale attempts to provide home teaching were undertaken by the Invalid Children's Aid Association (1888). The Association also advised the parents of crippled children. By 1892 some 2200 physically

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[149] Heasman, *Evangelicals in Action*, p.86.

[150] As late as 1893 the two industrial schools in London were the only ones nationally to cater for the physically disabled.

[151] Humphries and Gordon, *Out of Sight*, pp.66 and 85. Some orphanages refused to accommodate disabled children.

[152] Heasman, *Evangelicals in Action*, p. 86. Such a characterization, probably based on the observations of middle class interlopers, does not necessarily reflect the experience of the majority of disabled children. The presence of often numerous siblings, the devotion of many working class mothers and the interactions of neighbours and the extended family would have enlivened otherwise mundane existences. Certainly the overcrowding of working class homes suggests that disabled children were not likely to be kept in solitude. See also the testimony of Mr Knipe, Hon. Sec. of the National Industrial School for Crippled Boys, to the COS Committee of 1893. Knipe commented that 'Crippled children, as a rule, are either much spoilt or greatly neglected in their own homes.'

disabled London children were receiving assistance.[153] The ICAA in conjunction with the University Settlement Movement were instrumental in setting up special classes for physically disabled children, on occasion using premises loaned by the London School Board.[154]

Following the passage of Forster's Education Act in 1870 increasing numbers of crippled children, along with their able-bodied peers, were educated at local board schools. The 'permanently disabled' were, of course, exempted from school under the terms of the Act, and it must be assumed that the vast majority of the more severely impaired children continued to receive little or no education.[155] For others, attendance was dependent upon parental attitude, the degree and nature of their disability, and the facilities made available by the school. Often this meant no more than the provision of a special chair which enabled children to be carried between classrooms.[156] In many schools physically disabled children, together with the dull and 'feeble minded', were restricted to the lowest standards. Other crippled children languished in orphanages or poor law institutions where provision was very poor.[157]

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[153] T. Cole, *Apart or a Part? Integration and the Growth of British Special Education* (Milton Keynes, 1989), p.49.
[154] Ibid.
[155] The number of crippled children, based on Warner's data, was estimated at approximately three in a thousand. However this figure did not take account of the large number of children entered as 'permanently disabled' in the school board returns.
[156] Prior to 1889 School Boards had the power 'to provide suitable furniture for children in school'. This included provision of suitable chairs for crippled children. The extent to which such powers were exercised is unclear.
[157] Humphries and Gordon, *Out of Sight*, p.85.

The presence of a significant proportion of disabled children in the classroom eventually induced the more pro-active school boards to make some provision on their behalf. Naturally much of the pressure for action came from teachers whose pay, prior to 1890, was dependent upon the results achieved by their pupils, regardless of impairment. In 1881 the London School Board gave official sanction to the presence of crippled children in board schools. A decade later, it consented to the establishment of 'Schools for Special Instruction'.[158] These schools were intended for children who 'by reason of physical and mental defect, cannot be taught in the ordinary standards or by ordinary methods.' Two such schools were opened in July 1892. This was some two decades after similar steps had been taken to provide classes for blind and deaf children.

The situation of crippled was virtually overlooked by the Royal Commission of 1889, however they were subsequently included in the brief of the Departmental Committee on Defective and Epileptic Children of 1898. Although the Committee appears to have been principally concerned with the 'mentally defective', some evidence was heard from those working with physically disabled children. It is clear from the evidence given to the Committee that for most physically disabled children, those not fortunate to live within the jurisdiction of the more enlightened school authorities, very little provision was available. The existing special classes could cater for only a fraction of needy children.

> Some twenty Four London classes catered for 1277 'crippled or very delicate children ...

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[158] T. A. Spalding, *The Work of the London School Board* (1900). Mrs E. M. Bugwin wrote the section on 'The Physically and Mentally Defective' in Chapter VII 'The Abnormal Child'.

of average intelligence'.[159] The twelve provincial classes from which responses were received appear to have provided for only 17 children. It appears that often those responsible for the running of school boards had little idea of the scale of the problem they faced.[160] Once past childhood there was frequently little option for crippled individuals other than to enter the workhouse.[161] The continuing equation of physical disability with mental disability, and the belief that the majority of such children did not survive into adulthood and were therefore not a worthwhile long term investment, clearly influenced the Committee's deliberations.[162]

The Committee recommended that where physical defect was not accompanied by feeble-mindedness children should attend ordinary schools. Special classes were only appropriate when chronic ill-health meant that physically disabled children of normal intellect were incapable of benefiting from ordinary education. Under the terms of the Elementary Education (Defective and Epileptic Children) Act of 1899 the education of such children was permissive rather than compulsory on the school authority. Parents were only under a duty to educate 'a defective or epileptic child' aged between 7 and 16

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[159] *Report of the Departmental Committee on Defective and Epileptic Children,* Parliamentary Papers (1898), XIX, Appendix B, Answers to Questions Addressed to Teachers of Special Classes, Q 3. Responses were received from 24 London teachers and 12 from the provinces.

[160] Ibid. See evidence of the Rev. Martin of Bristol School Board at Q. 4974.

[161] Ibid. See evidence of J. S. Lidgett, Warden of Bermondsey settlement at Q. 3791.

[162] We have already pointed out that most, if not all, the feeble-minded children come within the category of physically defective children.' *Report on Defective and Epileptic Children,* P.P. (1898), XXVI, p.28.

years "where a special class or school is within reach of the child's residence." This duty was notably less stringent than that imposed on the parents of blind and deaf children.[163]

Humphries and Gordon maintain that the standard of education delivered at special classes and at other institutions for crippled children was generally inferior to that received by the blind and deaf.[164] They attribute this in part to limitations in contemporary understanding of various disabling conditions, for example cerebral palsy. Certainly the belief that such conditions were indicative of mental impairment must have had a stultifying effect on the development of educational initiatives on behalf of such children.[165] Neither the techniques nor the technology necessary to implement effective educational practices were as yet in place. Further evidence of the low priority given to educating such children is provided by the fact that the development of specialist schools and centres was to be tortuously slow.

The last years of the century saw the development of a new emphasis on the physical health of all school children. One particularly advanced education authority was Bradford, where the pioneer educationalist and ILP member Margaret McMillan was active during the period 1893 to 1902. McMillan was particularly concerned with the situation of half-time child labourers and with the children of the 'residuum'.[166] Her interest in the use of statistics to demonstrate the stunting of growth in child workers was

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[163] See Chapter Six above.
[164] Humphries and Gordon, *Out of Sight*, p. 85.
[165] Conversely a few educationalists maintained that the crippled child was superior in mental ability to his able-bodied contemporaries.
[166] C. Steedman, *Childhood, Culture and Class in Britain: Margaret McMillan 1860-1931* (1990), p.108.

shared by James Kerr, Medical Superintendent of the local School Board.[167] The institution of school feeding, already in place in Bradford before McMillan took up her post, and regular bathing, were of undoubted benefit to many Bradford school children.

The disabled child can be seen as an incidental beneficiary of educational reform. Forster's Act rendered the scale of crippling childhood disability starkly apparent. It brought disabled children into contact with the teachers and middle class professionals who were able to assess and vocalise their needs. The process of delineation and differentiation of the disabled child, of collating information and of debate, could now begin. Schools also served as a means of effecting treatments – bathing, feeding, distribution of specialised equipment and the teaching of basic hygiene and health care. The disabled child within the mainstream can only have benefited from these developments.

Assessment

During the nineteenth century the child became central to the public conception of 'the cripple.' At least some of the foundations of this focus were the result of the high profile campaigns of the factory movement and its skilful exposure of the factory child as the principal victim of industrial capitalism. The widespread and symbolic use of the crippled

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[167] Kerr gave strong support to the idea that physical disabilities were often an indicator of mental deficiency. Steedman cites Kerr's work and that of his colleagues at the Bradford Eye and Ear Hospital as having an important influence on McMillan's understanding of the physiological consequences of child labour. Steedman, *Childhood,* p. 110.

child in contemporary, and in particular Christian, literature may also have helped to sensitise consecutive generations to the claims of such children. Changing public sensibility about the nature of childhood, and the value of the working class child, intensified concerns about child health generally. The crippled child, whether in the guise of the wretched factory child or the impoverished flower-seller, provided a metaphor for all forms of blighted childhood.

This change of emphasis away from the crippled adult, whose spectre could still arouse ambivalence, to the child, a worthy object of pity, had important implications for social policy. In the 1830s paternalistic Tories were able to use the factory child to breach the barricades of laissez-faire, and, in the process, redefined the role of the state towards its weakest and most vulnerable subjects. The increasingly competitive environment of the later Victorian period led to the realisation that it was no longer expedient for large numbers of children to be left to fall by the wayside. The role of Christian sentiment and ethical socialism in generating sympathy for the plight of the crippled child was important, but perhaps changing economic circumstances were ultimately decisive in creating the political will to tackle the problems he posed.

Dealing with the crippled child presented a series of complex challenges. Whereas special education provided an obvious panacea to the difficulties of the blind or deaf, the problems posed by the crippled child were less susceptible to such a clear cut 'solution'. The ubiquity of physical disability amongst working class children, the sheer scale and range of crippling conditions, necessitated a broader approach. In the longer term the

'crusade against crippledom' would involve a full scale assault against the evils of poverty, malnutrition, disease, dirt and ignorance. It was necessary for a revolution to occur in the way all children were viewed before the education system could begin to assess and then to address the basic needs of its consumers.[168]

Suspicion or ambivalence towards the adult cripple seems to have remained deep seated, and his claim to support was still viewed through the gauze of morality. By the end of the century the development of socialist and workers' movements signalled a more sympathetic approach to the disabled and a greater readiness to tackle the problems posed by disability. The provision of disability benefits featured for the first time on the ILP programme of 1893-1897.[169] The appearance of issues such as this on Socialist agendas helped to stimulate both Conservative policies and the later Liberal programme of reform.[170] The growing strength and respectability of the Trade Union Movement meant that more assistance was available to those injured at work.[171] The hesitant growth of the

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[168] Anne Borsay suggests that the motivating factor for ''the "Social" discovery of the "crippled child"' was 'itself part of a broader reconfiguration of childhood in which the 'wage earning "non-child" of the labouring poor was transformed into the economically worthless "child-scholar"' Such a transformation was already underway in the years prior to 1870 but increased in pace during the years following Forster's Act of 1870. Borsay, 'History, Power and Identity', p.106.

[169] The party also sought to introduce a range of benefits for other vulnerable groups including the sick, the elderly and widows and orphans. Steedman, *Childhood*, p. 36.

[170] Proposals for an annuity scheme to assist the elderly were included in Chamberlain's 1892 election manifesto. Thane, *Old Age*, p.198.

[171] The provision of insurance for members was a traditional function of the Trade Union Movement and predated the militant unionism of the late 1880s.

law governing liability for accidents in the workplace, culminating in the Workmen's Compensation Act of 1897, was also significant.[172]

[172] The Act provided for compensation to be paid by the employer to workmen injured 'by accident occurring out of and in the course of employment.' Such compensation was to be payable regardless of fault. Injured workers were to receive a half pay pension to a statutory maximum of £1 a week. Dependants of deceased workmen received a lump sum payment equivalent to his last three years wages, again subject to minimum and maximum levels. The chief proponent of the Act was Joseph Chamberlain. Cornish and Clark, *Law and Society in England,* pp.528-30. There is some suggestion that, as a result of the Act, employers may have become less willing to employ workers whom they perceived as particularly vulnerable to injury in the workplace. Workers affected included older workers and those with a disability. Thane quotes a notice from a Barrow Steel works forbidding the future employment of men older than 50 and those '... who are known to have any defects, such as the loss of a limb, defective sight or hearing.' Thane, *Old Age*, p. 276. There was a campaign by deaf workers to exclude themselves from the ambit of the act which they saw as reducing their chances of employment.

Conclusion

The 1830s were a momentous decade for the disabled populations of Yorkshire. The founding of two pioneering schools enabled poor deaf and blind youth resident in the county to obtain an education for the first time. For those disabled individuals who were dependent on the community for support, the introduction of the Poor Law Amendment Act (1834) brought a new stringency to the administration of outdoor relief, and the beginnings of a more regulated regime in the workhouses. Section 56 of the Act created a distinct administrative category for the blind and deaf and, in theory at least, removed from their claims for relief any taint of pauperism. The passage of Althorp's Factory Act (1833), for which many disabled people had campaigned, offered a degree of protection against a lifetime of disabling illness to some of the most vulnerable sections of the labour force.

The development of the Yorkshire schools was inspired by a combination of Whig progressivism and Tory paternalism. Their foundation dates, and the values, in part Benthamite and utilitarian, which underpinned their establishment, tie them firmly to the period of reform initiated by the Whigs. Indeed the PLAA and the opening of the schools can be seen as determinedly progressive measures, emblematic of an era of avowedly rational reform. They owed much to the new ethos of professionalism, to the inspiration and energies of a middle class invigorated by the passing of the 1832 Reform Act.[1] Both

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[1] The traditional view of 1832 as 'the endpoint of a long social transformation' has been challenged by D. Wahrman. Wahrman suggests that the Reform Act was itself 'an important catalyst in the decisive transformation of people's conceptualizations of their

sought the application of scientific principles, particularly of the developing disciplines of social science and statistics. The schools also made use of, and were keen to promote, the new and innovative techniques of special education. Their project was commenced in an atmosphere of optimism and high expectation.

Although dynamism and reform characterised the new era, it would be a mistake not to recognise the continuing importance of older, traditional attitudes and methods of dealing with the poor and disabled. Both the schools and the PLAA reflected the defining or dominant ideologies of their time; the endorsement of religion, the value of respect and deference, the promotion of self-help. They sought to imbue their charges with 'appropriate' attitudes; providence and thrift, independence and industry, prudence and sobriety. In this respect the PLAA, for example, can be seen to have been rather more revolutionary in its administration than in its content. The new attitudes and values, whilst influential, had to co-exist alongside longstanding ideologies such as paternalism. Indeed paternalism, in part inspired by religious belief, was crucial to the development of the charitable schools. A humanistic paternalism motivated and guided the activities of the factory reformers. The 1833 Factory Act itself was a product of Tory rather than Whig initiative. It was to prove a landmark in social policy, helping to define the boundaries of state intervention for the Victorian age. Elements of paternalism, particularly in the treatment of vulnerable groups such as the blind and the deaf, are also evident in the PLAA.

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society.' Nonetheless he acknowledges that post 1832 'the category of "middle class" came to play a central role in organizing and understanding social and political experience...'. D. Wahrman, *Imagining the Middle Class The Political Representation of Class in Britain, c.1780-1840* (Cambridge, 1995), pp.17-18.

Traditional attitudes towards disability continued to inform contemporary discourse. There remained a widespread consensus throughout English society that disabled people merited special consideration. Their designation as 'deserving' was largely based upon the involuntary nature of disability.[2] This broad acknowledgement of privileged status transcended religious and political sectarianism and bridged the class divide. It was reflected in the provisions of the PLAA and in the high level of public support for charities for the disabled. The strength of public feeling provided charities such as the schools with some protection against the vagaries of fashion.[3] However such public and private largesse was not entirely without adverse consequences. It necessitated safeguards, in the form of careful vetting, to make certain that the charitable gift was not abused. The need to ensure that only *bona fide* applicants benefited exposed the disabled to a degree of intrusive scrutiny which in its extreme forms bordered on the paranoid.

A range of negative attitudes towards, and stereotyping of, disabled people also seems to have been a legacy from earlier times. This hostility can be seen to reflect the anxieties of

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[2] The Royal Commission relied upon the involuntary nature of disability to distinguish the indigent blind or deaf from the mass of pauperdom: 'It cannot be said that the group spoken of are as a rule impoverished by any fault of their own; to deal with them, therefore, liberally in such matters as education or out-door relief cannot be viewed as offering any reward to vice, folly or improvidence. They are as distinct from the "pauper," in the ordinary sense, as the "pauper" is distinct from the "criminal," and, if possible, they should not be subject to any legal disqualification in consequence of their infirmity.' *Report of the Royal Commission on the Blind, Deaf and Dumb etc. of the United Kingdom,* Parlimentary Papers (1889), XXI, p. xii.

[3] It did not however protect them from competition with other charities in the same sector.

contemporaries rather than the reality of disabling conditions.[4] The association of physical disability with moral imperfection, an attitude with biblical origins, found expression in a variety of cultural formats. Stories of fakery and shamming, of imposture and exaggeration, were frequently recycled as popular urban myths.[5] Folk tales, often stemming from ignorance and superstition, were a further source of prejudice. The stigma associated with disability was reinforced through widely held beliefs, for example that lax morality or foolhardy behaviour on the part of a pregnant mother could result in the birth of a disabled child.[6] The view that disability was a form of 'divine retribution' for past sins furthered hostility towards disabled people.[7] Other myths, for example that the

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[4] Thus fear of disease, disorder and contamination were acute at the time of the Elizabethan laws of settlement, anxieties relating to 'surplus population' underpinned the 1834 Poor Law Amendment Act and the Edwardian obsession with 'degeneration of the race' culminated in the appointment of the Interdepartmental Committee on Physical Degeneration of 1904. Disability and disabled people have provided a convenient scapegoat for a wide range of social problems.

[5] They were also a favoured motif in contemporary melodramatic fiction. In *Peveril of the Peak* (1822), Sir Walter Scott used deafness as a device to enable his character Fenella to spy on her father's enemy. W. R. Wilde referred readers to *Sketches of Imposture, Deception, and Credulity* (1827), which he claimed exposed the subject of feigned muteness with 'considerable ability'. More sympathetic accounts of deafness were to be found in Mrs Sherwood's *Theophilus* and Mrs Phelan's *The Happy Mute.* See W. R. Wilde, *On the Physical, Moral, And Social Condition of the Deaf and Dumb* (1854), p.21.

[6] Kilvert cites the example of Miss Sylvester 'the woman frog'. Miss Sylvester's condition was blamed upon her mother, who, when pregnant, had responded to the pleas of a begging mother with the retort, 'Get away with your young frogs.' As a consequence '...the child she was expecting was born partly in the form of a frog, as a punishment and a curse upon her.' F. Kilvert, *Kilvert's Diary: Selections from the Diary of the Rev. Francis Kilvert* (W. Plomer (ed.), 1977), vol.I, pp. 380-381. The entry is dated 22 July 1871.

[7] W. R. Scott endorsed this view. 'There are certain laws which the Creator has established to govern the habits at this period, and these cannot be neglected with impunity. How often does a sorrowing mother lament over her suffering Deaf and Dumb child, forgetting that she forms no exception to the general ordination of Providence, and that her affliction is only a necessary effect of some disobedience to an established fiat of the Almighty will. She may have sinned ignorantly, but not the less on this account is her

blind and deaf possessed supernatural powers, such as the ability to foresee the future, were perhaps less harmful: however they did confirm the disabled as a group apart.[8]

Although the strength of these beliefs almost certainly declined over time, they retained some of their potency into the twentieth century. As science and reason fought to displace the irrational and superstitious, the old myths were to some extent replaced by new, often equally prejudicial, beliefs. The fear that disability was indicative of widespread in-breeding and mass degeneration contributed to the sense of foreboding that characterised the last decades of the century. Darwinian notions of 'survival of the fittest' fed directly into later eugenic doctrines. Thus the charitably inclined had, on occasion, to defend themselves against allegations that the provision of charitable or state relief for the physically and mentally 'unfit' contravened the laws of nature: if such individuals survived to maturity and had children of their own, then the species as a whole would be weakened.[9]

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disobedience punished.' W. R. Scott, *The Deaf and Dumb Their Position in Society, and the Principles of their Education* (1844), p.68.

[8] 'Among the lower orders there are many superstitions regarding the deaf and dumb, who are believed to be otherwise gifted, as a compensation for their misfortune. This idea is generally turned to account, particularly by strolling dumb beggars, in fortune telling, charm-working, and in the discovery of theft. Muteism is on this account often assumed.' Wilde, *On the Physical, Moral, And Social Condition of the Deaf and Dumb*, p.60.

[9] The WSB papers refer to an article which had claimed that '... all out kindness to the weak in our midst, and to those who are imperfect in bodily or mental faculty, is mischievous to the race, that in protecting from the natural law the dumb, the blind from birth, the feeble of intellect *et hoc genus omne*, we are on a wrong tack... In particular they say that the education of the dumb and the blind and their aggregation in large institutions encourages them to marry, and to reproduce those congenital defects which it should be the aim of wise government to eliminate.' The WSB argued that the apparent decrease in the numbers of blind over the century refuted the 'mistaken view of the law of survival stated by Darwin... Even if these Spartan thinkers were right as to facts, their counsel would be abhorrent to a Christian nation.'

Alongside more generalised beliefs there existed a range of attitudes or prejudices specific to each form of disability. These included the view that uneducated deaf people were akin to savages and entirely at the mercy of their passions. The promoters of the schools, keen to reinforce the case for the education of disabled people, sometimes further propagated these myths. Widely held beliefs underpinned a hierarchy of disability with certain sectors of the disabled population viewed as more worthy of public support than others. The blind were generally perceived as the most helpless and therefore the most 'deserving' sector of the disabled population. Perhaps because the full implications of deafness were less apparent to the layman, the proponents of deaf education found that it was necessary to persuade the public of the merits of their case.[10] Harriet Martineau railed against those who believed it was better to leave a deaf child uneducated, and thus in a state of innocence, than to educate and thereby corrupt him.[11]

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[10] "Plead for the Dumb- we cannot plead!
The Blind may pour the faultering prayer,
And sorrow may recount the deed
That made her want and misery's heir.
But our sad fate is mute despair,
Unless all-gracious heaven above
Makes *us* the objects of your care,
And *you* the heralds of its love!"
Scott, *The Deaf and Dumb*, p.iv.

[11] Miss Martineau is cited in Scott, *The Deaf and Dumb*, p.19. One example of a similar attitude can be found in Jane Austen's family. Her older brother George, (b.1766), suffered from fits in infancy. At four, he had no clear speech: it became obvious to his parents that he would never be able to communicate with them. 'We have this comfort,' wrote Mr Austen, 'he cannot be a bad or wicked child.' Quote from D. Nokes, *Jane Austen: A Life* (1997), p.39. At the age of six the hapless George was boarded out with a family named Cullum. Thereafter, save for the payment of his board, all family ties were severed.

Another long standing motif in the discourse of disability was the view of the disabled as an incumbrance to their families, a burden to the community and a source of mendacity. Such views clearly predate the emergence of capitalism and can be traced through feudal and mercantile economic systems. It may have been that the Victorian reification of work, its idealisation as a source of moral worth, further strengthened the negative connotations of disability during this period. Certainly this theme retained its currency throughout the period of this thesis. Thus Bentham's view of disability as a pathway to pauperdom is echoed a century later in the strikingly similar rhetoric of the Royal Commission on the Blind, Deaf and Dumb &c (1889).[12] The Preface to the Commission's Report famously recorded that: 'The blind, deaf and dumb, and the educable class of imbeciles form a distinct group, which, if left uneducated, become not only a burden to themselves, but a weighty burden to the State. It is in the interests of the State to educate them, so as to dry up as far as possible the minor streams which ultimately swell the great torrent of pauperism.'[13] We have seen how the schools for the blind and deaf exploited these fears and prejudices in order to raise support for educating the disabled.

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[12] See above, Chapter One.

[13] See *Report on Blind, Deaf and Dumb*, P.P. (1889), XXI, p.xii. L. Davidson cites an 1845 introductory address by William Wilde 'the brilliant eye and ear surgeon and polymath' on a similar theme. Wilde warns his students to 'Remember, then, the great trust which is committed to you in this particular, and bear in mind that every case of ophthalmia which, either from your ignorance or neglect, ends in partial or total loss of vision, entails upon your country the expense of supporting the individual so affected during his lifetime.' L. Davidson, 'Identities Ascertained': British Ophthalmology in the First Half of the Nineteenth Century', *Social History of Medicine*, 9 (1996), p.316.

The relationship between disability and indigence was central to the Victorian perception of the disabled. Although disability was common to all social classes, the poor suffered disproportionately. Indeed, disabling illness was frequently the catalyst that turned a poor man into a pauper.[14] Pauperism was not only a stigmatised status with serious legal implications; it also meant that the individual was dependent upon the mercies of the state. Since the management of poverty was closely linked to the maintenance of law and order, there was considerable overlap in the treatment meted out to the poor and the criminal.[15] This series of unfortunate associations confirmed the disabled person as potentially socially marginal and deviant. The thesis has explored some of the social consequences of this status for disabled people: isolation; lack of appropriate educational opportunities; reduced opportunities to marry and found a family; malnutrition; a shortened expectation of life; and powerlessness.

Poverty and appauling environmental conditions were increasingly acknowledged as a major cause of disease and disability.[16] However many contemporaries chose to highlight individual tragedy or deficiency as more immediate sources of disability and sought solutions in self-help and independence. This reluctance to tackle the wider

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[14] 'Indigence is found to exist in the great majority of the cases of persons so afflicted, the greater part of the population from which such cases proceed being so little removed from want that such a calamity is sufficient in itself to produce indigence.' *Report on Blind, Deaf and Dumb*, P.P. (1889), XXI, p.xii.

[15] It is arguable that the classification and virtual imprisonment of some groups of disabled people within the workhouse, and the segregation of others within the institution or sheltered workplace, have operated to keep disabled people 'out of the mainstream' as effectively as a prison sentence.

[16] Chadwick's *Report on the Sanitary Condition of the Labouring Population of Great Britain* (1842), conclusively established the crucial connection between environment and disease. A number of earlier studies, such as those of James Kay and Charles Turner Thackrah, had highlighted the link between disability and working environment.

environmental causes of disability was in part a reflection of limitations in contemporary knowledge and also of the widespread acceptance of a staunchly individualist ideology. But it was also indicative of the scale of the problem. Tackling poverty was a far greater challenge than the provision of charitable or state aid for relatively small numbers of blind or deaf people. The need to prioritise resources, and direct them towards those judged most needy, helps to explain the comparative neglect of the problems raised by more common or minor forms of disability. The uncomplaining acceptance with which poor Victorians adapted to wide ranging health problems was a matter of necessity. Countless numbers of the hard of hearing or short sighted had simply to manage as best they could. Children's complaints were ignored or sometimes exacerbated by neglectful or inadequate parenting. Such stoicism was only gradually eroded by changing attitudes to, and expectations of, life.

The link between disability and poverty was longstanding, but in the early decades of the nineteenth century the dynamic was complicated by the need to adjust to the new pressures of industrialization and urbanization. The process of industrialization was accompanied by an uncertain economic climate, rapid population growth and a seemingly dramatic increase in poverty and indigence.[17] All of these developments may have made it harder for disabled people to compete economically and for families to support their disabled members. Changing modes of production made new demands upon the

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[17] The extent to which living standards deteriorated or otherwise during the period of the industrial revolution remains one of the key questions of economic history. It is certainly the case, however, that the majority of contemporary commentators believed that the condition of the bulk of the working population had worsened as a result of industrial capitalism.

emerging proletariat; the need to adapt to factory discipline might well have been particularly difficult for disabled people.

Rapid urbanization had a dramatic impact on public health and on the incidence of disabling conditions such as tuberculosis. It also increased the visibility of the poor; and of the disabled as a numerically significant proportion of this underclass. At the same time it weakened traditional networks of support; older people were left to fend for themselves as the young migrated to the city in search of employment.[18] Incentives to conform to 'respectable' norms such as supporting elderly and disabled relatives were undermined.[19] Social problems that had previously remained within the province of the family or immediate community were now exposed to the public domain. Would the new capitalist class be willing or indeed able to demonstrate *noblesse oblige* on the same scale as landowners? Would the family survive as the principal source of support for elderly or disabled members? It was imperative that both state and private initiatives should seek new remedies for a wide range of social problems.

Although industrialisation may have had a negative impact on some disabled people, it is important to stress that its consequences would have been liberating for others. In some

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[18] The issue of how effectively the old 'moral economy' had provided for or accommodated the needs of disabled people remains a moot point. The long standing persistence of poverty and begging suggests it was never fully adequate. The degree of change should also not be exaggerated; in rural locations in particular, local paternalistic attitudes persisted, and the family remained the most important source of support throughout the period.

[19] Such 'incentives' included family and peer pressure, the watchful eye of the village squire or cleric, their support in times of need and their ability to impose sanctions in the event of wrongdoing.

areas, particularly where agriculture or heavy manual labour had previously dominated, there were now more employment opportunities, and certainly a greater variety of employment for disabled people, than had existed in a purely rural setting.[20] Factory work, although requiring a degree of stamina and agility, was generally less arduous and better paid than farm work or other physical labour.[21] It may have been that the factory system with its division of labour, the simplification and deskilling of jobs, actually offered more employment opportunitites for some groups of disabled people.[22] We have seen that the YIDD encouraged its pupils to participate in gardening, but it concentrated heavily on industrial training as providing the most likely source of future employment for pupils. The schools and sheltered manufactories made use of the economies of scale that resulted from mass production to ensure profitiability. The new technologies developed through industrialisation offered disabled people a range of potential benefits, not least in the fields of medicine and communications.[23]

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[20] Disabled workers appear to have been employed in a wide range of regional industries. See above, Chapter Five, for the involvement of deaf workers in local industries at the time of the Royal Commission. Thomas Rhodes Armitage, founder of the Royal National Institute for the Blind, '...was most impressed to find nine blind men at work in two Glasgow shipyards when he visited Scotland 80 years ago.' J. C. Colligan, 'A Long Journey: An account of the Royal National Institute for the Blind, 1868-1968', *Blindness: AAWB Annual* (1969), p.41.

[21] In Nottingham for example, disabled children who were unemployable in domestic industry found jobs, albeit menial, in local hosiery factories. *Edinburgh Medical and Surgical Journal*, V (1809), pp.197- 98, cited in F. B. Smith, *The People's Health 1830 to 1910* (c.1979), p.171. It is important not to overstate the effect of the factory system on patterns of employment. In many parts of the country the system made little or no impact and its growth was a gradual rather than a rapid process.

[22] Contemporary accounts, such as Engels' description of workers leaving the Manchester mills, seem to corroborate the presence of a high proportion of disabled workers amongst the working population.

[23] They could also prove a further source of 'handicap', as was the case with deaf people and the introduction of the telephone.

Urbanisation could also be viewed as a mixed blessing for disabled people. It was only when their numbers were aggregated that the scale of disability became fully apparent.[24] Although this thesis has argued that the very ubiquity of disabling illness operated to make individual sufferers less visible, it is clear that in the longer term the congregation of disabled people played a vital role in motivating attempts to improve their condition. The nature of nineteenth century transport and communication links meant that services for the disabled poor were urban rather than rural phenomena. Specialist hospitals and schools only became viable when sufficient numbers of prospective patients or pupils were gathered together in one place. The administration costs and other expenses involved in the running of a large residential institution or workshop made access to a substantial and supportive centre of population essential for long term financial security.

Urbanisation also had positive implications for the development of social networks for both the blind and the deaf. Rural environments may have been particularly isolating for some groups of disabled people. In scattered villages or hamlets even casual encounters between blind or deaf individuals must have been a rarity. Lay visitors and missioners were often based in the towns and concentrated their efforts on the multitudes of urban disabled.[25] Missions, lectures, concerts, sporting and other leisure facilities all depended upon their close physical proximity to population centres. Employment prospects too were often brighter in urban areas. The YIDD found it easier to place boys in towns and

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[24] The role of statistics in helping to define both the scale and the nature of the problem and in influencing public opinion has been discussed above.

[25] For this reason the situation of disabled people in rural workhouses was particularly grim.

had to set up an apprenticeship fund specifically to counter the greater difficulties in finding employment for country boys.[26]

Changing economic circumstances and the influence of new ideologies and technologies gave a fresh momentum to social policy for the disabled. It was no longer sufficient to simply relieve the 'impotent' poor; new initiatives sought to make them fit into societal norms as far as possible. Ideally they should function as productive members of the community. This thesis has examined the role of two key agencies involved in this process; the poor law and charity. The nature of the relationship between the two was complex; in some respects they formed part of an integrated and internally consistent system.[27] Theoretically they served distinct but complementary constituencies. The poor law operated as a safety net for those with no other means of support. Since the very act of claiming relief was supposedly indicative of a weakness of character, those who did so were *ipso facto* morally dubious. Such individuals should be segregated from the rest of society lest their presence contaminate those around them. Bountiful yet discerning charity embraced the cause of the 'deserving' disabled. Such individuals were to be

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[26] See above, Chapter Five.

[27] Contemporaries believed that the balance between state and voluntary agency was delicate and that if the state encroached over much upon the realm of charity donors would become discouraged. 'Fear has been expressed that if the education of these afflicted classes be undertaken by the State, the effect might be to diminish that generous benevolence which has already done so much for them in this country. When it is remembered how much remains to be done for them it is obvious that, even were such aid given, there will still be room for the action of private benevolence, which experience shows to be often stimulated rather than discouraged by State aid, when judiciously given.' *Report on Blind, Deaf and Dumb*, P.P. (1889), XXI, p.xiii.

gently encouraged towards 'independence'.[28] Consistency and coherence of approach between the two agencies were sometimes assisted by an overlap in personnel, with individuals who were active in voluntary activity also frequently to be found serving as members of local poor law boards.

The charitable enterprise represented by the Yorkshire Schools can also be seen to have shared many of the goals of the reformed poor law. Ideally the products of the schools, as of the workhouse, would be hard working, pious and humble, tractable and grateful for the benefits bestowed upon them. Both schools and poor law sought to produce independent, self supporting citizens and both saw education as the primary means of attaining their ends. Although education was regarded by both as a panacea, the interpretation placed upon it and its manner of application were quite different. The schools, with their emphasis on productivity and self-help, appeared to offer a pragmatic solution to the problems posed by the disabled members of society. Rather than simply aiming to contain disabled people, they sought to educate their pupils and to train them for the workplace so that they could attain economic independence. The Poor Law attempted to inculcate a particular set of behaviours through a deliberately harsh and punitive regime. The explicit publication of conditions within the workhouses, and rules and regulations governing outdoor relief, were intended to teach a demoralised and idle populace the virtues of self-help. Only the most severely disabled were spared this indoctrination, but their status offered little protection from the practical realities of the law.

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[28] This terminology proved flexible; COS refined the role of charity to include those 'capable of benefiting' from its ministrations, but the basic distinction remained.

We have seen that the law proved a clumsy and inefficient mechanism for dealing with the variety of difficulties posed by the non-able-bodied. The authors of the Poor Law Report, and subsequently the administrators of the law, were primarily concerned with the problems raised by able-bodied pauperism and gave scant attention to the needs of other categories of paupers. It was hoped that operation of the principle of less eligibility within the workhouse would deter all but the most needy or genuine of prospective applicants. Careful attention to classification would ensure appropriate treatment for all, and in particular improve the conditions of those deserving of sympathy and care. It was on this basis that the condition of the 'aged and infirm' was originally promoted by the Poor Law Commissioners as a test case for the humanity and efficiency of the new law.

Inevitably a measure designed as a means of rationalisation and cost cutting proved a poor vehicle for achieving these goals. The inadequacy of levels of outdoor relief meant that disabled people were forced to resort to a range of income sources in order to attain subsistence.[29] This must, in many cases, have resulted in increased dependency on family and friends and added strain to all concerned. The situation of disabled individuals in receipt of indoor relief varied. The development of the single union workhouse meant that there was little opportunity to differentiate between groups of disabled people. Although a fortunate minority, encompassing principally blind and deaf children, were placed in the care of voluntary organisations, the vast majority of disabled people received no special provision whatsoever. Tales of working class dread of the 'house'

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[29] This was a clear and intended consequence of low levels of relief.

abound, but Mayhew records one dustman gratefully anticipating retirement in the workhouse.[30] Indeed some individuals appear to have been relatively content with the treatment they received; others were clearly maltreated or abused.

For many disabled persons the provision of medical treatment was an important consideration in determining whether to claim relief. Although the regulations governing eligibility varied, paupers appear to have enjoyed better access to medical care than those slightly higher up the social scale.[31] The quality of in-house care is hard to assess and certainly varied from institution to institution and over time. Generally, however, standards were much inferior to those of the voluntary hospitals. Although some dedicated individuals worked in the service, overcrowding, poor facilities and a lack of after care did much to thwart their efforts. The situation of the chronically ill or disabled was particularly grim and remained so until the end of the century. Such improvement in provision as did occur was primarily due to developments in nursing theory and practice. We have seen that the role of voluntary organisations and the media in publicising appalling conditions was vital in generating the momentum for reform.

Despite its manifold failings it would be wrong to see the PLAA as an entirely retrogressive step. The law explicitly acknowledged that certain groups of people would always need the support of the wider community and that these individuals had a right or entitlement to state aid. In theory at least, it recognised that the blind and deaf had

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[30] H. Mayhew, *London Labour and the London Poor* (1985), p.246.

[31] Access to medical relief was gradually widened, but it was not until the Medical Relief (Disqualifications Removal) Act of 1885 that claims could be made without legal penalty.

particular claims for support and that their relief should not attract stigma. The bureaucratic nature of the law helped to generate an inbuilt expansion of medical services. From the very beginning, the implementation of the PLAA was hampered by local and regional hostility. The Poor Law Commission and its successors were instruments of the centralized state; inevitably many contemporaries were hostile to a body they saw as threatening regional autonomy. This longstanding antipathy meant that on occasion central initiatives which might have resulted in genuine reform were frustrated by hostile administrators at a local level. Conversely, some local boards accused central administrators of indifference and face saving. Disparities between London and the provinces were exacerbated by the Metropolitan Poor Act of 1867.

The format of charitable organisation meant that voluntary enterprise avoided many of the pitfalls of state controlled activity. Charities were locally administered by those with a vested interest in their success. Their focus on distinct sectors of the disabled population allowed them to successfully implement their own forms of classification and specialist treatment. However voluntary effort was piecemeal, to some extent uncoordinated, and subject to geographical disparities of provision. It was also heavily reliant on the impetus generated by key charismatic individuals and could falter in their absence. The charitable world could be very insular, and the cares and concerns of those most closely involved were not always compatible with the best interests of their beneficiaries. In the case of the schools, we have seen that the aims and aspirations of middle class educators were not always shared by working class parents. Much time, effort and energy was expended on

fund-raising and this deflected attention away from the educational process. The inability to compel attendance was a further source of frustration.

The difference in philosophy between the administrators of the poor law and the schools was most evident in the early years with the refusal of some boards to pay for the maintenance of pauper children at school. Although a series of rulings and subsequent legislation backed up the schools' claims, the law remained obscure and its interpretation continued to be contested.[32] By the 1850s the YIDD had negotiated a successful compromise with the poor law authorities whereby the boards themselves became subscribers to the institution in return for the right to nominate prospective pupils. The arrival of the COS heralded a new era in relations between poor law and charity, with the constructive criticism of volunteers helping to galvanize the bureaucratic processes of the state. Such developments were mirrored in the activities of agencies such as the Workhouse Visiting Society which sought to improve conditions within state institutions. Almost from the start interventionists became activists, campaigners for the disenfranchised and powerless. The Poor Law undoubtedly benefited from the energy and dynamism of these zealous reformers.

The harsh and punitive attitude adopted by some of those who administered the Poor Law seemed to some concerned commentators to be indicative of the fragmentation of wider

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[32] The COS may have been right in its complaints that relevant legislation was often ignored or not enforced.

society.[33] The absence of humanity in dealing with vulnerable sectors of the population raised the spectre of the breakdown of family and community, of traditional practices and relationships replaced by the harsh realities of the cash nexus. Faceless bureaucratic control from the centre was believed to be edging out the more familiar, and hence sympathetic, local administration. In this bleak new world charity could provide a counterbalance, a means of softening the impact of unmitigated capitalism for the selected 'deserving' poor. Charity sought to strengthen the bonds of society, to recreate an organically integrated community where each member had a place and a value. In the new urban jungles, churches and chapels struggled to plant and cultivate new communities. Other less godly, but perhaps no less charitable, networks developed around the factory, the public house or between women of a neighbourhood. A variety of worker's organisations, co-operative societies, independent orders and benevolent societies endorsed and encouraged the development of self-help through mutuality.

The provision of hospitals and charitable foundations for the sick and disabled can also be interpreted as a conservative strategy, designed to bolster the social order and promote political stability. Institutions such as the schools provided a conspicuous demonstration of the beneficence of the local aristocracy and its fulfilment of the duties implicit in the existing social contract. The concomitant rights of the aristocracy to deference and respect were urged upon, and often fully acknowledged by, those benefiting from their munificence. Gifts to charitable organisations also endeared the aristocracy to the local

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[33] Tories in particular harked back to the days of a more paternalistic society. Oastler said of the law, 'It lays the axe to the root of the social compact; it must break up society and make England a wilderness'. Cited in J. T. Ward (ed.), *Popular Movements c.1830-1850* (1970), p.80.

religious hierarchies, who in turn provided further endorsement of their worth and value to the wider community. The above case studies have demonstrated that, in Yorkshire, aristocratic support was crucial to the success of the schools.[34] Aristocrats or wealthy landowners provided the initial financial backing without which their foundation would have proved impossible. They also made substantial donations to funding extensions and other special projects. A few aristocrats took a more active role in their capacity as patrons, for example by speaking on behalf of a school at meetings or by providing occasional treats for pupils. Occasionally an aristocrat might be persuaded to campaign on a charity's behalf in parliament, as Lord Harewood did at the instigation of Charles Baker.[35] Their prominent support gave a charity kudos which could encourage others to donate.

Both of the Yorkshire Schools were founded on the initiative of Anglican clerics and the role of the church was fundamental to their success. Clergymen helped compile returns as to the number of blind or deaf children in their parishes. They were required to sign, and in some cases compile, the forms of admission to the schools. They vouched for the good behaviour of children and the circumstances of their family life. They liased with local boards of guardians over the payment of fees. Clerics not only subscribed to the charities but also frequently acted as friends of the children, guaranteeing responsibility for their fees in cases where parents, although not paupers, required such charitable assistance.

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[34] It is salutary to contrast the role of aristocrats as staunch supporters of the schools with their sometimes willful refusal to ameliorate the sufferings of their employees or tenants. Thus Lord Feversham was content to allow endemic Typhus to run through the valleys of his domain and the coal mining activities of the Fitzwilliams involved the employment of women and young children underground.

[35] See above Chapter Five.

They gave sermons and held collections on behalf of the charity, and they publicised and helped with the arrangements and introductions necessary for its local meetings. Some took an active part in the schools' management committees. Archbishop Harcourt made sizeable donations to assist the foundation of both institutions. Senior church figures acted as figureheads bestowing patronage upon the schools. Their endorsement was a sign of the respectability of the charity.

Association with a large and prestigious institution reflected well on those who occupied the myriad of honorary positions and committee membership such organisations necessarily engendered. The most important and high status designations were reserved for the aristocratic founding fathers of the institution, and often passed from father to son. However, important positions remained available for the middling classes, with doctors, bankers and solicitors amply represented. Such individuals may well have benefited from the social and networking opportunities that membership of a large committee presented. Some used the schools as a vehicle for their own advancement, others to further the interests of their professions. Medical men and teachers were able to develop a body of specialised knowledge which, as well as benefiting successive generations of pupils, enhanced their own status as experts. It would, however, be cynical not to recognise the genuine and selfless contribution of the middle class both as donors and subscribers and as hard-working committee members.

Although the working class were the chief beneficiaries of the schools, their role in their management was limited to the mundane but necessary tasks associated with the

everyday running of the institutions. At this lowly level, association with the voluntary sector could be grim, with low pay and little prospect of improvement rendering many jobs literally thankless tasks. The constant supervision of the children meant that long hours were the norm. Financial contributions from the working class to the schools were rare and tended necessarily to take the form of group donations. It is important, however, not to overlook the vital role that families played in the support of their disabled members. Many must have struggled to raise even the few shillings fee which the schools demanded as proof against pauperism.

Although the host community shouldered the lion's share of the running expenses of an institution, there were significant fringe benefits to be had from so doing. The relationship between charities and their communities was to some extent reciprocal. We have seen that charities could provide a neutral ground in communities otherwise fraught by political or religious sectarianism. At York, Rev. Harcourt envisaged them playing an important role in unifying the communities they served. Institutions also played a significant part in the generation of civic pride in the local population. Many were physically imposing or impressive; the York School operated from the King's Manor, formerly a palace. The schools hosted prestigious gatherings, such as the York Jubilee, attended by the Prince of Wales, which enabled the city to bask in reflected glory. Since the schools were heavily reliant on the generosity of the local population, they were very much aware that the relationship needed careful nurturing. They actively encouraged charitable members of the community to take a proprietary interest in their local institutions. The provision of entertainments and examinations, of fun days and sales of

work were a means of cementing the relationship of the school with its local constituency. The importance of such 'respectable' church-sanctioned entertainments in enlivening the social life of provincial towns should not be underestimated.[36]

The committee meetings of the schools also played an important role as a forum for the exchange of ideas. The individuals who served on them were often involved in a range of other civic or charitable enterprises. William Aldam, Chairman of the YIDD, served on the committees of a number of educational ventures including libraries and reformatorics. He also served on the local poor law board. Thus he could bring a wide and multi-faceted experience, and a degree of educational expertise, to all his endeavours. The Rev. Harcourt at York brought his undoubted gifts as a fund-raiser and his numerous useful contacts, many of them forged through the Yorkshire Philosophical Society, to the WSB. A degree of cross-fertilization enabled useful insights and ideas to flow between the institutions, allowing them to benefit from the experiences of others. Charities can thus be seen as oiling the wheels of local government.

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[36] B. Harrison notes that 'The numerous charity balls, philanthropic dinners, and conversaziones, the pretentious central offices, the pages of print devoted to listing subscriptions, the elegant membership cards – the very organization of the philanthropic world itself (not to speak of the causes on which its resources were spent) – all ensured that such nineteenth-century redistribution of the national income as did take place gave pleasure to, and even financially profited, many of the not-so-poor before it finally filtered down to those in need. B. Harrison, *Peaceable Kingdom: Stability and Change in Modern Britain* (Oxford, 1992), p.244. See also S. J. D. Green, 'The Death of Pew-Rents, The Rise of Bazaars, And The End of The Traditional Political Economy of Voluntary Religious Organisations: The Case of the West Riding of Yorkshire, c.1870-1914', *Northern History,* XXVII (1991), pp. 222-233.

Attempts to assess the achievements of the Yorkshire schools retrospectively are complicated by a range of insights generated by modern scholarship. Thus it is important to acknowledge the "social control" connotations of large scale institutional care, the powerlessness and institutionalization of residents, and the impact of segregation from mainstream society in generating concepts of 'otherness' and 'difference'.[37] From a twenty first century perspective, conditions in Victorian institutions appear harsh and austere and the lives of their pupils boring and over-regimented. The rigidity of the administration and narrow definitions of eligibility for aid can also appear petty and unduly restrictive. Over the span of years that we have considered, there were probably periods when standards within the schools declined or where their management was uninspired or inefficient. It would also not be surprising if over time the energy and enthusiasm generated by their founders lapsed into complacency. Although these considerations are pertinent, they should not prevent us from setting the achievements of the schools in context.

Education for physically disabled people did not attract the attention of politicians and mainstream educationalists until the end of the century. However voluntary endeavour had ensured that special education was already widely available to many blind and deaf children. Although there were gaps in provision, the huge increase in the proportion of blind and deaf persons receiving education since the start of century was a significant achievement. The benefits conferred, of communication to the deaf and of literacy to the blind, were fundamental in enabling pupils to lead more fulfilling lives. Communication

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[37] The works of Foucault, Goffman and Wolfenburger are particularly significant here.

made social contact possible, between the child and his peers and with the wider community.[38] Schooling facilitated the making of friendships and on occasions led to marriages between pupils. It created a sense of belonging and camaraderie which helped to combat the isolation which must have been the lot of at least some of the uneducated disabled population. This thesis has argued that it was of major importance in the development of a sense of community.

In addition, the schools provided their pupils with a rudimentary wider general education. Whilst criticism might be made of the quality and nature of what was taught, there is no indication that this was in any way poorer or inferior to that received by other working class children. Indeed certain specialist subjects such as music and drawing appear to have been taught to a relatively high standard. The instruction in religious doctrine the schools provided may have brought comfort to some of their pupils and to their parents. Although the methods of teaching employed could be dull and repetitive, the school environment was probably more stimulating than that to which many of these children would otherwise have been exposed. Education under the auspices of charity would almost certainly have been preferable to conditions in a workhouse or dame school.

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[38] Many of the Deaf were deeply hostile to the introduction of oral techniques. In an era where hearing aids were primitive, they believed that a child's ability to communicate was hampered by the exclusive use of speech. Francis Maginn, founder of the British Deaf and Dumb Association, thought American delegates to the Paris Congress of 1889, who were fluent in sign, fully demonstrated 'the excellence and superiority of their education.' The BDDA subsequently endorsed the 'combined method' as the most effective means of educating deaf children. B. Grant, *The Deaf Advance: A History of the British Deaf Association 1890-1991* (Edinburgh, 1990), p.17.

The schools also made genuine attempts to facilitate the employment of their former pupils. Networks of clergymen and subscribers sought out employment opportunities, apprenticeships were encouraged and sheltered workshops and out-working schemes were propogated. Efforts were made to cultivate pupils' talents in music or drawing in the hope of improving their prospects of success. Most pupils were taught a range of skills deemed appropriate to their social status. In the case of the boys, the vocational training they received helped to create the potential for lifelong employment, however monotonous and low paid. This must have provided a degree of relief to their families and given them hope for the future prospects of their disabled children. The WSB struggled to find employment for female pupils, but this was in part due to the limited availability of 'suitable' occupations.[39]

Despite the inevitable lean years, the schools were generally successful financially. Although they had to operate with prudence and economy, they were able to embark on a range of projects which expanded the services they offered to their respective communities. In the longer term, increasing competition from other schools in the region, and from a variety of other local charities and missions, may have reduced their potential income. However it was the need to compel attendance, as much as the need to raise cash, that prompted their calls for state aid.[40] The schools proved able to adapt their spheres of operation in the face of growing encroachment from local school authorities upon their activities.

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[39] Areas of occupation traditionally available to 'respectable' working class women, such as going into service or needlework, were particularly difficult for blind women to pursue.

[40] We have seen how at YIDD costs rose with the introduction of the oral system.

From the 1890s some former pupils of residential schools became more critical of the quality of the education they had received. In particular, they were aggrieved that their vocational training condemned them to restricted employment opportunities in low paid occupations. Certainly this is a valid criticism, yet with hindsight it can be seen that many of the problems which the schools attempted to tackle have proved fairly intractable. Many disabled people were unsuited to casual labour and hence were excluded from the largest sector of the Victorian labour market. Difficulties in communication restricted pupils' employment opportunities and reduced their earning potential. The prejudice and ignorance of prospective employers also presented a significant hurdle. An over-concentration in certain industries, which may to some extent be attributable to limitations in the training offered by the schools, further depressed wages.

Whilst the schools may be criticised for their use of stereotypes of disability as a means of attracting funds, they nonetheless played a significant role in helping to counter prejudice amongst the wider community. By publicly seeking to demonstrate the abilities of their pupils, to explain the nature and consequences of their impairment, they helped to dispel public ignorance and negativity.[41] They should thus be credited with playing a part in changing public attitudes towards disability. This in itself must have helped create a more positive environment for their pupils.[42] By educating the wider public about the

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[41] They may also have helped to protect their pupils from the concentrated attention of the Eugenicists. Instead such attention was focused on the mentally disabled.

[42] Development of respectable and respectful behaviour, manners and church going probably went some way to counteract cruelty, crudity and harshness of the eighteenth century.

potential of disabled people, the schools helped to establish a convincing case for the validity of special education. We have seen that their representatives were prominent in lobbying government for state aid, and for education for the blind and deaf to be made compulsory.

Although the schools' own accounts are necessarily hagiographic, they probably did benefit most of their intake. The vast majority of these pupils were from poor or pauperised homes, and it would appear that a significant number had been grossly neglected prior to entering the institutions. Throughout the period children arrived at school without such basic skills as the ability to wash and dress. Some had not learned to sit still or to concentrate, and many were lacking even the rudiments of literacy. It is clear too that some parents, perhaps for genuine and pressing economic reasons, were only interested in the earning potential of their children. For pupils from very poor homes attendance at school must have provided a welcome relief from lives otherwise filled with unremitting drudgery and toil. The schools should also be credited for their stalwart attempts to fulfil the loftier idealism of their founders. If economic realities forced them into more pedestrian realms, they still sought to enrich the inner lives of their pupils.

The schools were, of course, only one element in the network of services and institutions available for the benefit of the disabled people of Yorkshire. The county was well served by a range of missionary activity. The missions, many of which undertook religious services and social gatherings, played an important role in creating a sense of community amongst their membership. Of the forty-five English and Welsh missions to the blind

listed by the Royal Commission, eight were in Yorkshire. Similarly the county hosted four out of the nineteen listed missions to the deaf.[43] Within the county it is clear that some regions, for example the heavily populated West Riding, were better provided for in this respect than others. Regional disparities also affected the availability of almshouse provision and access to voluntary hospitals. Specialist hospitals were to be found in most of the major cities of the region; although it is known that Charlotte Bronte accompanied her father Patrick to Manchester for a cataract operation. Whilst certain elements of the county's disabled population might be seen to be disadvantaged in relation to Londoners, their position appears to have been relatively privileged in comparison to the residents of other counties.

One of the contentions of this thesis has been that a range of disabled identities emerged during this period. The speed at which such identities developed was dependent on a multitude of factors, but the role of the school is seen as being of central importance. In some senses the forging of identity through the schools was likely to have been a negative process, based on shared adversity, and akin to that formed by inmates of other large scale institutions. Thus the segregation and isolation of pupils for lengthy periods of time, albeit with the intention of easing their later reintegration into wider society, was probably an important factor in melding group identity. Institutional life with its rules and regulations, the pressures of conformity and the need for discipline, must have encouraged feelings of solidarity between pupils. Contemporary pedagogical techniques

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[43] See Appendix, Table 5.

and religious and moral indoctrination perhaps furthered development of a group mentality.

There were also economic and social factors quite beyond the control of the schools that probably operated as cohesive factors. The common experience of prejudice or discrimination may have rendered contact with the outside world difficult and reinforced a sense of comradeship with others in a similar situation. Even individuals eager to break their bonds with the institutions may have found themselves forced through economic necessity to remain in dutiful contact. The schools for their part were anxious to keep in touch with former pupils and traced their moral and economic progress with paternalistic interest.[44] Recourse to forms of mutual aid specifically catering for disabled people such as savings and burial societies may indicate some degree of fellow feeling, but probably represent no more than a reaction to the difficulties of participating in public schemes.[45]

The building of communal identities and the development, sometimes through necessity, of a tradition of mutuality, can be seen as providing some contrast with the prevailing tide

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[44] The WSB appointed a former pupil as a visitor in order to maintain contact with former pupils who were no longer directly connected with the institution.

[45] See, for example, the announcement of a 'Grand Concert for the purpose of forming a Sick and Burial Society' in an advertisement placed by T. H. Hemingway (Pres) J. French, (Hon. Sec) and J. B. Meeson (Manager) of the Blind Institution at Leeds. 'A Grand Concert will be held at the Leeds Town Hall, on Wednesday March 5th 1890, for the Benefit of the "Industrious Blind of Leeds". The proceeds of the Concert will be given to the Workpeople at the Institution, for the purpose of forming a Sick and Burial Society for the Blind. These poor people have long felt the want of such a society, for as is generally well known, they are debarred from joining other affiliations, in consequence of their sad affliction, which makes them so much more liable to accidents. Again the wages earned are so small, that they have really no chance of providing for the time when sickness or death may overtake them.' Borthwick Institute of Historical Research, University of York, Wilberforce Memorial Papers, WSB WM 1/3/2.

of individualism. Although the schools vigorously trumpeted the importance of self-help it was evident from an early stage that many pupils required the continuing support of a paternalistic agency, whether school or mission, in order to lead successful and fulfilling lives. Arguably the sheltered manufactury, where the more able workers supported the weaker under the eye of a benevolent authority, bore more resemblance to co-operative than capitalistic enterprise.[46] Whilst making a profit, or at least not sustaining a loss, remained the explicit goal of such enterprises, the maintenance of former pupils in full employment was of primary importance. The use of mutual aid and communal solidarity as a means of countering the harsh economic realities of laissez-faire competition represent a shift away from individualism. The importance of communalism was reinforced by the missions.

Of course, there were many positive factors involved in the creation of a sense of community amongst the distinct groups we have discussed herein. This is perhaps most clearly evident in the case of the Deaf, who were probably the first group to exhibit a strong sense of communal identity. The most important factor in this development was the evolution of a distinctive shared language.[47] The intimacy and exclusivity of sign, the use of which allowed deaf people to communicate with each other with fluency and expression, formed a cohesive bond between them.[48] Prior to the opening of the schools

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[46] Indeed the subsidising or underwriting of these 'manufacturies' through charitable donation rendered them an almost unique form of economic organisation for the period.

[47] For the role of language and printed literature in the development of the 'imagined community' see B. Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (1983), pp.46-47.

[48] Clearly the teaching of oral communication did not offer the same opportunities for group intimacy and this provides some explanation for the hostility of the signing adult

the Deaf may well have constituted one of the most isolated of all disabled groups. The frustrations of inadequate or limited communication with the wider community would have condemned many deaf people to a lonely existence. Despite the hardships of institutional life, generations of deaf children must have welcomed the new opportunities for friendship and personal development that school offered.

Although a natural enjoyment of each others company predated the founding of the schools, opportunities for meeting and socializing with other deaf people would have been limited. We have seen how deaf people may have taken advantage of the public meetings and examinations of the YIDD, using them as a chance to catch up with fellow pupils, former masters and with the progress of the institution itself. The use of sign enabled deaf people to teach each other and a number found employment as teachers or visitors, their activities helping to reinforce communal solidarity. The development of a range of services provided for the signing community, including religious offices and negotiations with employers, had a similar bonding effect.[49] Participation in group social

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deaf to Howard's public demonstration of oral techniques. Although teachers of the oral method generally prohibited their pupils from using signs, children often learned sign at home or from older deaf people.

[49] These activities were the province of voluntary societies and missions to the Deaf. Grant notes that, 'This new kind of organisation was formed from about 1820 onwards mainly in towns with a substanital number of deaf and dumb people. The spread was partly due to the initiative of former pupils of deaf schools who wanted to continue the friendships which school life had forged and to help one another in adulthood, and partly to the evangelistic zeal and charitable urge of hearing people associated with deaf schools, who realized that deaf and dumb children needed support also in adult life... Gradually all these societies came to be known as missions, their premisis as deaf club or institute and their heads as superintendents, missioners.' Grant, *The Deaf Advance,* p.5.

and sporting activities again reflected a desire to be together.[50] Intermarriage between former pupils of YIDD, some of whom sent their children to the school, also helped lay the foundations of a deaf community.[51] The multiplication of societies and organizations for the Deaf led in 1864 to the foundation the Yorkshire Association for the Deaf and Dumb which was intended to serve as a parent body.[52] A newspaper, initially known as *The Deaf and Dumb Times,* was established by Charles Gorham, deaf son of the vicar of Masham, to serve the growing community. The importance of the Yorkshire community, and Leeds in particular, was confirmed by the choice of Leeds as venue for the first congress of the British Deaf and Dumb Association in July 1890.[53]

A sense of community amongst blind individuals was perhaps slower to develop than in the case of the Deaf. The most likely explanation for this was the absence of an exclusive shared linguistic identity or indeed a common written form of communication. Braille was not firmly entrenched as the primary choice of type until the end of the period and this clearly inhibited its effective operation as a binding mechanism.[54] The ability to

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[50] It is interesting to compare the figures given by the missions of the numbers of deaf people within their area of operation with their actual membership. See Appendix, Table 5.

[51] We have seen that the Royal Commission, strongly influenced by evidence from Dr Alexander Graham Bell on the influence of heredity, believed that such marriages should be 'strongly discouraged.' It cited expert opinion 'that before education was imparted to deaf-mutes, and before they were congregated in various educational establishments, hardly any intermarried.' *Report on Blind, Deaf and Dumb*, P.P. (1889), XIX, p.50, c. 296.

[52] A. J. Boyce, *The Leeds Beacon* (Feltham, 1996), p.10.

[53] Grant, *The Deaf Advance,* p.21.Grant mentions Leeds' central location and the fact that the city was hosting an international exhibition that would prove an attraction for delegates, as determining factors.

[54] Braille texts were relatively scarce until the end of the period in question with many Yorkshire libraries stocking books in Moon type. We have seen that Sir Charles Lowther

speak to family and friends meant that it may have been easier for blind people to feel part of and participate in the wider community. However the schools played a vital role in creating a shared identity and carefully cultivated bonds with their former pupils. The decision by the WSB to allow some former pupils to continue boarding at the school, and the opening of sheltered workshops, meant that some connections lasted from childhood to old age. For some individuals the school became a home.[55] The majority of pupils naturally preferred their independence but this did not mean that they shunned all contact with their peers and with the institution itself.[56] We know that a few former pupils married, even though such relationships were strongly discouraged. Evidence of connections between pupils is also found in their independent choice of fellow blind artisans as co-workers.[57] A group of musical pupils were able to operate with some degree of success as a concert party for many years. The keen attendance of blind people at organized activities during the period seems to point to a desire to mix socially with others in a similar situation.[58]

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endowed a number of local libraries with books in Moon. The content of available texts was closely monitored by distributors and tended to be of a primarily religious or educational nature.

[55] Certainly this was the case with Charles Holmes and Martha Knowles, former pupils who married and remained at the school for fifty years. William Strickland served the school as music master for a similar period.

[56] Mayhew's informant on the Blind noted 'The blind people in the streets mostly know one another; they say they have all a feeling of brotherly love for another, owing to their being similarly afflicted.' When blind people met '...the most particular question of all' was 'Do you belong to any of the Institutions?' H. Mayhew, *London Labour and the London Poor* (1851), vol. I, p.398.

[57] Mr Alfred Hirst of Whitby, who was himself blind, set up a workshop in his home town in 1895.

[58] By the 1890s the annual tea and meeting of Huddersfield Blind Association attracted 80 blind people and their guides. A press cutting records that The Rev. Cannon Bardsley M.A. (Vicar of Huddersfield) was in the chair and Mr Buckle of the WSB attended. See report of annual tea and meeting of Huddersfield Blind Association, Wilberforce

Also evident was the desire of some blind people to assist others either in the capacity of missioners or visitors, or, in the case of middle class or wealthy individuals, by helping to found or endow institutions. The WSB employed a blind superintendent, W. D. Littledale, for a few years and local blind notables such as Alderman C.R. Lambert spoke at school functions and entertainments. Within Yorkshire, the activities of Sir Charles Lowther have already been noted. Many less affluent blind people were employed in setting Braille.[59] Empathy and fellow feeling combined with calls for social justice in the politicization of blind people. In 1893, a National League of the Blind of Great Britain and Ireland was established. Its membership consisted primarily of blind workshop employees, and its first Secretary was Ben Purse, who was himself a product of a school for the blind.[60]

A number of reasons have been advanced for the failure of other physically disabled individuals to develop a distinctive identity or sense of community during this period. One explanation for this is probably related to the general low state of health amongst the general public.[61] Amongst certain working populations physical disability was only one

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Memorial Papers. Note also the high proportion of blind people who were members of local missions. See Appendix, Table 5.

[59] By 1890 the British and Foreign Blind Society was providing employment for 40 blind Braille transcribers and 60 blind copyists. Colligan, *Blindness: AAWB Annual*, p.35. This employment may of course have reflected a dearth of other job opportunities rather than a wish to be of service to the community.

[60] R. A. Abel, 'Visually Impaired People, the Identification of the Need for Specialist Provision: A Historical Perspective', *The British Journal of Visual Impairment*, VII, 2 (1989), p.49.

[61] Anne Hardy refers to '.... the miserable run of chronic respiratory, rheumatic and digestive illness, and nutritional inadequacy that dominated the health experience of the

of a range of debilitating conditions; it may not have been sufficiently distinctive in its consequences to generate the sense of 'otherness' that helped to mould the identities of the blind and the deaf. Although many disabled individuals would have faced prejudice in their attempts to forge social and working lives, their 'handicaps' in this respect were shared by other disadvantaged and poverty prone groups such as the sick, the elderly or children. Nor did they have to surmount the additional hurdles caused by the inability to communicate with wider society. They were thus less isolated from the general community than either the blind or the deaf. The near absence of special educational provision meant that there was no common experience or subculture around which a group identity could develop. The variety of manifestations of crippling disability also militated against a specific identity. Perhaps, from a psychological perspective, the consequences of this form of disability, particularly if of late onset or relatively minor in extent, were less central to an individual's self image than in the case of the blind or deaf.

The above discussion has served to highlight some of the differences in circumstances between the various groups of physically disabled people. A range of other factors also affected the individual's experience of disability during this era. The first and most obvious of these was the nature and in some cases the degree of the impairment.[62] This had a direct impact on educational and employment opportunities, social life and the availability of voluntary provision. It also, as we have seen, affected the individual's position or status in the hierarchy of disability and hence the way he or she was viewed

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majority of British people during the Victorian and Edwardian periods.' A. Hardy, *Health and Medicine in Britain Since 1860* (Basingstoke, 2001), p.46.

[62] We have seen that there was, throughout this period, scant sympathy available for those viewed as 'partially disabled.'

by wider society. The prejudices of mainstream society played a vital role in determining the nature of the disabled experience. Individuals who appealed to Victorian sentiment, the vulnerable, the docile and the compliant, were more likely to attract sympathetic treatment. Thus the aged, women and children were generally seen as more 'deserving' than adult males. Those who had been injured in the course of public duty, such as the disabled soldier or sailor, may also have been viewed in a more charitable light. Individuals engaging in behaviour viewed as morally inappropriate, for example begging, could expect to experience hostility.

One of the most significant factors in determining the impact or consequences of disability on the individual was his or her gender. Victorian conventions, the cultural norms of appropriate behaviour and employment that were expected of the sexes, were not waived in the case of the disabled. Although the need to provide education for boys and girls was recognised by the schools, the vocational training provided reflected contemporary gender stereotyping. Fewer occupations were available for girls and there was much attention paid to domestic training, either to increase a girl's usefulness at home or in the hope of obtaining a career in service. Although opportunities for boys were restricted, they were expected to aspire to the goals of self-help and independence. For the girls, the most that could be aspired to economically was that they should be able to contribute to their own living expenses. The limited opportunities available to girls restricted their independence and rendered them particularly vulnerable to abuse and over work on the domestic front. There was a genuine concern that some girls were being forced into unsuitable marriages through the absence of other career alternatives.

Another important factor was the age at onset of the disability.[63] The pre-lingual deaf and those blind from birth or early childhood were in a different situation from individuals whose impairment occurred at a later stage of life. For adults, particularly those engaged in physical labour, the onset of physical disability generally signalled the end of their working lives. There were few opportunities to retrain, and chances of finding suitable alternative employment were slim. The schools obviously concentrated their attention on the young, although as we have seen, they soon undertook a range of services to aid former pupils. The missions, too, expended most of their energies on young people. This focus on the part of voluntary agencies was echoed within families, with support for their younger members taking priority over that of the elderly. As a result, blind and deaf children were less likely to be long term residents of the workhouses than adults. We have seen that the condition of the elderly disabled in workhouses remained poor until the end of the century.[64] There were however some privileges reserved for the elderly. A few older disabled people were able to benefit from pensions schemes.[65] Almshouses, too, provided a degree of care and a small pension for a fortunate minority of elderly disabled people.

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[63] The Royal Commission calculated that the average age of the blind was 49, with the average age of onset of blindness being 31. *Report on Blind, Deaf and Dumb*, P.P. (1889), XIX, p.xiii.

[64] The Royal Commission noted that 'The state does nothing for the aged and infirm blind, except through the guardians to offer them the workhouse without any special provision for them to alleviate their lot, or to distinguish them from the general mass of paupers reduced by their own vice or folly.' Ibid., p.xxviii.

[65] The Royal Commission reported that 'the Harrison Fund, Bradford, has been of great use in enabling small monthly pensions to be given to 16 blind persons of the town too old and infirm to work, and who, but for this help would be in very great want.' Ibid., p.xxx. The sum available for distribution was 120*l* per annum.

Although this thesis has not explored the contrast between the working class experience of disability and that of other groupings it is clear that social class must have had a significant impact on the experience of disability. The restrictions and constraints experienced as a consequence of disability by a Henry Fawcett or a Harriet Martineau were of a different order to those experienced by working class disabled people.[66] We have also mentioned briefly the contrast in the experience of urban and rural people with disabilities and, in particular, the isolation of the latter. The significant discrepancies between urban and rural death rates suggest that people living in the country generally enjoyed a healthier existence than those in the towns.[67] Although chronic complaints abounded, there was a lower incidence of diseases such as rickets and tuberculosis in the countryside. This may have been reflected in a proportionately smaller occurrence of some forms of disabling conditions.[68]

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[66] See for example S. F. Bohrer, 'Harriet Martineau: Gender, Disability and Liability', *Nineteenth Century Contexts,* 25 (2003), pp. 21-37. For Henry Fawcett see L. Goldman, *The Blind Victorian Henry Fawcett and British Liberalism* (Cambridge, 1989).

[67] In the 1830s the first Registrar-General estimated the death rate for towns at 26.2 per thousand as compared to 18.2 in rural areas. D. Fraser, *The Evolution of the British Welfare State: A History of Social Policy since the Industrial Revolution* (Basingstoke, 2003), p.66.

[68] This may not have been the case for all forms of disability. T. R. Armitage reported that 'The proportion of blind is always greater in agricultural than in manufacturing districts. This high proportion in agricultural districts may perhaps be accounted for by the constant emigration to the towns of those able to work, leaving an undue proportion of blind in the agricultural districts.' T. R. Armitage, *The Condition of the Blind of Great Britain and Ireland; And Other Papers* (1878). For descriptions of the nature of injuries sustained as a consequence of rural occupations see D. H. Morgan, 'The Place of Harvesters in Nineteenth Century Village Life' in R. Samuel (ed.), *Village Life and Labour* (1975), pp.33-38.

Clearly, too, the passage of time, and changing priorities and sensibilities amongst the wider public, had a significant impact on the situation of the disabled. In the later decades of the century changing attitudes towards children and their relation to the future prosperity of the 'imperial race' helped to create a new momentum for reform. The presence of large numbers of disabled children in the classroom placed disability firmly on the national agenda. The reports of medical men and commissions into the health of the nation were seized upon by the press and eagerly followed by an anxious public. As part of their enquiries the commissions and subsequent legislation sought to define the conditions they were investigating.[69] This contributed to a shifting perspective of the nature of disability. The narrow definitions of disability that we have seen practised by the schools were gradually expanded to encompass a wider range of conditions. In the last decade of the century the partially sighted child became, for the first time, a cause for concern. At the same time special classes for the physically disabled or 'defective' were opened in London.[70] Not all new developments were positive. Rising interest in eugenics posed a new and potentially dangerous threat to many disabled people.

By the end of the century a more sophisticated understanding of poverty and its multi-faceted nature had developed. A gradual acknowledgement that the causes of poverty were often divorced from the character of the individual, and rooted in the wider

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[69] Thus the Elementary Education (Blind and Deaf Children) Act of 1893 defined the blind as those 'too blind to be able to read the ordinary school books used by children.' The deaf were those 'too deaf to be taught in a class of hearing children in an elementary school.'

[70] In 1894 Miss Sewell opened a class for physically disabled children. This was followed in 1899 by the foundation of the Passmore Edwards Settlement School for the physically 'defective'. T. Cole, *Apart or A Part? Integration and the Growth of British Special Education* (Milton Keynes, 1989), p. 30.

economic environment, shed a different light on the situation of the poor and indigent.[71] There was wider acceptance that poverty in itself was a cause of disability; although little could as yet be done to stem the numbers of the malnourished or those with inadequate housing and sanitation.[72] At the same time came the first real recognition of older people, the sick and the disabled, as particularly vulnerable to poverty. The investigations of Charles Booth swiftly revealed the extent of poverty amongst these groups.[73] Booth became a passionate advocate of pensions in the case of the elderly, and was appointed as a member of the Royal Commission on the Aged Poor in 1893.[74] However his suggestion that his 'Class B', 'the helpless and incompetent', should be segregated into colonies in order to maximise their productivity, attracted little attention and was never seriously pursued, even by Booth himself.[75]

The years following the publication of the Report of the 1889 Royal Commission mark the beginnings of a new era for disabled people. Advanced groups such as the Blind and the Deaf began to agitiate for self–determination. The Deaf were angered by the endorsement given by the Commission to oral teaching methods and also by gratuitous recommendations regarding intermarriage between deaf people. On the initiative of

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[71] This was reflected in poor law administration with a gradual distancing from the harsher aspects of the old regime. See Chapter Three above.

[72] It is noticeable that the schools increasingly stressed the importance of 'hygiene' on the part of parents in their later annual reports.

[73] Charles Booth started to research *Life and Labour of the People in London* in 1886 and completed the final volume in 1903.

[74] The Commission's brief was to investigate 'whether any alterations in the system of poor relief are desirable in the care of persons whose destitution is occasioned by incapacity for work resulting from old age'. Cited in P. Thane, *Old Age in English History: Past Experience, Present Issues* (2002), p.177.

[75] For details of Booth's recommendations see A. Fried and R. Elman (eds.), *Charles Booth's London* (Harmondsworth, 1971), pp. 383-392.

Francis Maginn, the British Deaf and Dumb Association was founded, with Leeds chosen as the venue for its first congress in July 1890. The chief objects of the BDAA were '..the elevation, education, and social status of the deaf and dumb in the United Kingdom.'[76] Although the BDAA aspired to represent the Deaf, it was initially, perhaps necessarily, rather an elitist organisation. The formation of the National League of the Blind in 1893 by blind workshop employees marks a similar pattern of development in the case of the Blind. The Blind and Deaf now had their own pressure groups to campaign for social justice and equality.

By the end of the period, the welfare of the poor and the disabled had come to occupy a more prominent position in the political arena. The scale of the problem, its potential implications for the future, and the anxieties it created in an increasingly vocal populace, encouraged state activity in this area. In the field of education and the welfare of children generally, the boundaries between state and voluntary activity had become increasingly blurred over time. Yet statutory bodies proved reluctant to interfere in the provision of special education preferring, probably for financial reasons, to leave such matters to voluntary providers. The unwillingness of all but a few of the most advanced school boards to move into the area of special education illustrates their reluctance to cross the divide. Conversely, state intervention, to secure funding and powers of compulsion, was actively sought by the charitable institutions which we have been studying. They saw state aid as an important step towards securing parity for their pupils. The eventual

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[76] Grant, *The Deaf Advance*, p. 19.

passage of legislation, albeit from the perspective of the schools limited and imperfect, represented a triumph for the voluntary sector.

The dilemmas and challenges faced by Victorian campaigners for the disabled have proved long standing and intransigent. Unemployment, low wages, and the social and political consequences of economic exclusion still dominate the life experience of many disabled people. Discussion as to the merits of institutional care or of care in the community, of special schooling or education within the 'mainstream' and of the best means to ensure full inclusion within wider society, continues to inform contemporary debate. Victorian reformers made earnest efforts to grapple with these perennial problems and their efforts and achievements were significant; indeed their legacy, in the form of the multitudinous and diverse voluntary institutions and organisations which they have bequeathed to us, has proved durable and adaptable. The residential schools of Yorkshire were advanced in their idealism, liberal in their methods and humanitarian in their objectives. Their longevity, albeit in differing formats, provides a testimonial both to the vision of their founders and to the support of their communities.[77]

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[77] The Wilberforce Trust, (formerly the Wilberforce Home for the Blind), specializes in encouraging visually impaired people to develop their independence. Doncaster currently supports both a school and a college for the Deaf.

APPENDICES

TABLE 1

In *A Digest of All the Accounts relating to the Population, Productions, Revenues, Financial Operations Manufacturers etc. of Great Britain and Ireland* (1833), John Marshall gives the following figures for the West Riding:

No. of Persons Relieved Out of Parochial Rates in Year Ending Easter 1803 in the West Riding -

No. permanently in Workhouse	2,534			
No. relieved out of Workhouse	20,149			
Children of those out of Workhouse	Under 5	7,119	5-14	10,602
Total relieved occasionally	13,961			
Proportion disabled by permanent illness	*9, 867*[1]			
Non-Parishioners relieved	7,343			
No. of Friendly Societies	492			
Members of Friendly	59,558			
Children in Schools of Industry	795			
Rate per head at which maintained in Workhouse	£10.3.10			
Charitable Donations for the Poor	In money	£1,953		
	In land	£13, 634		

[1] My italics.

TABLE 2

Sampson Low's summary of the London Charities in 1862[2]

No in existence in 1860	Founded 1850-60	Founded 1800-1850	Founded C18	Founded before C18	Annual Income from voluntary contributions (1860)	Annual income from property or trade (1860)
14 General Medical Hosp	2	5	5	2	£ 58,049	£126,809
66 Hosp, Infirmaries, or other institutions for medical purposes	15	39	11	1	£73,950	£81,075
39 Dispensaries	8	21	10		£23,377	£2,500
12 Preservation of Life, Health and Public Morals	2	8	2	_	£34, 674	£11,815
124 Colleges, Hospitals Almshouses and other Asylums for the aged	4	29	27	64	£9,734	£85,587
16 Charities for Blind, Deaf and Dumb, and Poor Cripples	5	5	4	2	£14,274	£29,247
640 Institutions	144	279	114	103	£1,600,594	£841,373

[2] Cited in G. M. Young, *Early Victorian England, 1830-1865* (Oxford, 1934).

TABLE 3

Institutions for the Deaf and Dumb as listed by the 1889 Royal Commission

Aberdeen	1819
Bath	1843
Belfast	1831
Birmingham	1812
Boston Spa	1870
Brighton	1842
Bristol	1841
Derby	1874
Doncaster	1829
Dublin	1849
Dublin	1846
Dublin	1816
Dundee	1846
Edinburgh	1810
Edinburgh	1850
Exeter	1826
Glasgow	1819
Hull	1871
Lanark	1872
Liverpool	1824
Llandaff	1862
London Clapton	1851
London Ealing	1878
London Fitzroy	1871
London Jews	1864
Manchester	1823
Old Kent Road	1792
Margate	1862
Newcastle	1838
Swansea	1847

Institutions for the Blind as listed by the 1889 Royal Commission

Bath	1842
Birmingham	1846
Brighton	1842
Bristol	1793
Exeter	1839
Leeds	1869
Liverpool Indigent Blind	1791
Liverpool Catholic	1841
London Indigent	1799
Hackney	1856
Kilburn	1869
?	1838
Manchester	1838
Newcastle	1838
Norwich	1805
Nottingham	1843
Plymouth	1860
Preston	1867
Sheffield	1860
Southsea	1863
Worcester	1867 (Worcester College for Blind Sons of Gentlemen)
Yorkshire	1833

TABLE 4

Committee Members of the YIDD

Committee Members of YIDD 1830[3]	Committee members of YIDD 1890[4]
The Hon. E. Petre,	Rev. J. W. Scarlett
Sir W. B. Cooke, Bart	Rt. Hon. Viscount Halifax
Sir F. L. Wood	The Mayor of Doncaster
The Mayor of Doncaster	The Vicar of Doncaster
W. Aldam Esq.	W. Chadwick
E. B. Denison	W. Warde-Aldam G. B. C. Yarborough

Patrons of YIDD 1830[5]	Patrons of YIDD 1890[6]
The Archbishop of York	The Duke of Devonshire
The Earl of Scarborough	The Duke of Portland
Earl Fitzwilliam	The Marquis of Ripon
The Earl of Lonsdale	The Earl of Carlisle
The Earl of Harewood	The Earl of Scarborough
Lord Grantham	The Earl of Dartmouth
Lord Hawke	The Earl Fitzwilliam
Lord Wharncliffe	The Earl of Harewood
Viscount Galway	The Earl of Yarborough
Lord Morpeth	The Earl of Effingham
Lord Milton	The Earl of Zetland
The Hon. Lumley Saville	Viscount Galway
The Hon. E. R. Petre	The Bishop of Ripon
The Hon. William Duncombe, M.P	Lord Mowbray and Stouton
Sir Edward Vavasaur	Lord Feversham
The Hon. P. Stourton	Lord Wharncliffe
Sir W. B. Cooke, Bart.	Lord Whenlock
Sir F. L. Wood, Bart.	Lord Londesborough
Sir William Milner	Lord Derwent
The Mayor of Doncaster	The Hon. A. Duncombe
J. C. Ramsden, Esq. M.P.	Sir Digby Cayley, Bart.
The Venerable Archdeacon Markham	Sir T.W. White, Bart.

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[3] Forty four individuals are listed, ten of them members of the clergy. The above names head the list.

[4] Twenty four individuals are listed including seven members of the clergy and a doctor.

[5] Sixteen patronesses are also listed. In 1831 the following names were added to the list of patrons; The Earl of Dartmouth, Viscount Palmerston, Lord Feversham and W. Aldam, Esq.

[6] Again a number of patronesses are listed, generally wives of patrons.

Rev. J. A. Rhodes	Sir J. Radcliffe, Bart.
W. Wilberforce	Sir C. Lowther, Bart.
	Sir R. Tufton, Bart.
	H. Edwards, Bart.
	Lieut-Gen Sir William Bell

TABLE 5

List of Yorkshire Associations and Missions to the Deaf and Dumb[7]

Title: Bradford, Adult Deaf and Dumb Association, 1863

Est. no of Deaf in area of operation:	194
Members of or visited by Association:	135
Visits last year:	282
Income last year:	£228 3*s* 6*d*
Activities:	Education, religious instruction, classes &c., general care and supervision in after life
Conducted by:	Missionary

Title: Hull, East Yorkshire and Lincolnshire Institute for the Deaf and Dumb, 1870

Est. no of Deaf in area of operation:	140
Members of or visited by Association:	110
Visits last year:	295
Income last year:	£514 12*s* 7*d*
Activities:	Visiting, education of the young Deaf and Dumb, and promotion of spiritual and temporal welfare of the adults.
Conducted by:	The master of the Hull Deaf and Dumb Institution and others

Title: Leeds, Dewsbury, Batley and District Mission to the Deaf and Dumb, 1883

Est. no of Deaf in area of operation:	427

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[7] *Report on Blind, Deaf and Dumb,* P.P. (1989), XXI, Appendix 25, p.278. Nineteen English and Welsh Institutions are listed.

Members of or visited by Association:	427
Visits last year:	2161
Income last year:	£300
Activities:	Visiting, instruction (secular and religious), assistance in finding work, &c.
Conducted by:	A hearing superintendent and assistants

Title: Sheffield, Association in Aid of the Deaf and Dumb, 1871

Est. no of Deaf in area of operation:	--
Members of or visited by Association:	80
Visits last year:	--
Income last year:	--
Activities:	--
Conducted by:	--

Register of Yorkshire Missions &c. to the Blind[8]

Title: Bradford, Association for Improving the Social Condition of the Blind, 1861

Est. no of Blind in area of operation:	265
Members of or visited by Association:	255
Visits last year:	1,953
Income last year:	£11, 186 11*s* 6*d*
Activities:	Providing work, granting temporary relief and annuities, and general help

Title: Doncaster Home Teaching Society for the Blind, 1864

Est. no of Blind in area of operation:	70
Members of or visited by Association:	70
Visits last year:	--
Income last year:	£72 *5s* 3*d*
Activities:	Visiting, teaching to read and write.

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[8] Ibid., Appendix 12, p.214. A total of 45 missions to the blind are listed for England and Wales. The oldest listed was the Indigent Blind Visiting Society, founded in London in 1834. Most of the missions listed date from the 1860s and 1870s.

Title: Halifax, Society for Home Teaching of the Blind, 1864

Est. no of Blind in area of operation:	125
Members of or visited by Association:	--
Visits last year:	--
Income last year:	£36 1*s* 1*d*
Activities:	Visiting, teaching, especially the young blind, at home and at school, and assisting them to earn their own living

Title: Huddersfield, Society for the Education of the Blind

Est. no of Blind in area of operation:	83
Members of or visited by Association:	83
Visits last year:	556
Income last year:	£120
Activities:	Teaching children reading writing and arithmetic and adults reading

Hull, Society for Teaching the Blind to Read at Home, 1865

Est. no of Blind in area of operation:	165
Members of or visited by Association:	120
Visits last year:	1200
Income last year:	£282 13*s* 8*d*
Activities:	Visiting, reading to the blind, and teaching them to read, and relief

Title: Leeds, Blind School and Visiting Society, 1869

Est. no of Blind in area of operation:	--
Members of or visited by Association:	127
Visits last year:	1560
Income last year:	£435 19*s* 5*d*
Activities:	Educating blind children, visiting blind adults, and teaching them to read, relief &c.

Title: Sheffield, Home Mission for the Blind	
Est. no of Blind in area of operation:	200
Members of or visited by Association:	--
Visits last year:	877
Income last year:	Income included with Sheffield Blind Institution
Activities:	Teaching to read, visiting sick and needy, relief, &c. sewing classes

Title: Wakefield Blind Society, 1869	
Est. no of Blind in area of operation:	60
Members of or visited by Association:	58
Visits last year:	400
Income last year:	£30
Activities:	Visiting, teaching to read, meetings for religious instruction &c. general help

TABLE 6

List of School Board Classes of the Deaf and Dumb in Yorkshire[9]

Title: Bradford School Board Class for the Deaf, 1885	
No. of present pupils:	20
No. who have left school:	10
Method of communication taught:	pure oral
Cost to pupil:	3*d* per week
Cost to Board:	6*l* 4*s* 6*d* per annum

Title: Leeds Deaf and Dumb Department, Leeds School Board, 1881	
No. of present pupils:	38
No. who have left school:	37
Method of communication taught:	22 manual, 16 combined

[9] Only seven school boards are listed, although the London School Board ran a number of classes.

Cost to pupil: 11*s* 6*d* per annum
Cost to Board: 6*l* 3*s* 8*d* per annum

Title: Sheffield School Board Deaf and Dumb School, 1879
No. of present pupils: 32
No. who have left school: 48
Method of communication taught: combined
Cost to pupil: No fees charged
Cost to Board: 3*l* 16*s* 6*d* per annum

List of School Board Classes for the Blind in Yorkshire

Title: Bradford School Board, 1885
No. of present pupils: 12
No. who have left school: 9
Method of communication taught:
Cost to pupil: 3*d* per week
Cost to Board: 6l 4*s* 6*d* per annum

TABLE 7

Workshops for the Blind in Yorkshire 1878[10]

	Employees	M	F	Wages	Av. Earnings	Sales 1877
Bradford	62	35	27	1933*l*	311 3*s*	7900*l*
Hull						544*l*
Leeds	27	17	10	348*l*	12l 18*s*	3142*l*
Sheffield	25	19	6	597*l*	23l 17*s*	2222*l*
York	13	13		466*l*	35l 17*s*[11]	2537*l*

[10] T. R. Armitage, *The Condition of the Blind of Great Britain and Ireland; and other Papers* (1878).
[11] Nationally only Birmingham and one London workshop exceeded the wages paid at York.

TABLE 8

Summary of the Returns relating to Deaf and Dumb Persons who were assisted from the Poor Rates in week including 2nd September 1887[12]

Indoor	Male	Female	Total
Above 5 and under 15 years of age	371	267	638
Above 15 and under 21 years of age	59	42	101
Above 21 and under 45 years of age	120	133	253
45 years of age and upward	161	136	297
Total	711	578	1,289

Outdoor	Male	Female	Total
Above 5 and under 15 years of age	20	14	34
Above 15 and under 21 years of age	23	33	56
Above 21 and under 45 years of age	57	152	209
45 years of age and upward	96	191	287
Total	196	390	586

Indoor and Outdoor	907	968	1,875

No. of Deaf and Dumb children in receipt of Relief above 5 and under 15 who were under instruction

	Male	Female	Total
Special Schools	335	240	575
Workhouse Schools	21	12	33
Other Public Elementary Schools	3	5	8
Total	359	257	616

Not under Instruction	Male	Female	Total
Indoor	15	17	32
Outdoor	17	7	24

[12] *Accounts and Papers*, P.P. (1887) LXX.I. The figures relate to England and Wales only.

Total	32	24	56

Summary of Returns relating to Blind Persons who were assisted from the Poor Rates in the week which including the 2nd September 1887

Indoor	Male	Female	Total
Above 5 and under 15 years of age	171	144	315
Above 15 and under 21 years of age	99	64	163
Above 21 and under 45 years of age	232	222	454
45 years of age and upward	804	813	1617
Total	1306	1243	2549

Outdoor	Male	Female	Total
Above 5 and under 15 years of age	9	12	21
Above 15 and under 21 years of age	20	31	51
Above 21 and under 45 years of age	464	379	843
45 years of age and upward	1429	1378	2807
Total	3228	3043	6271

Indoor and Outdoor	Male	Female	Total
Total	907	968	1,875

No. of Blind children in receipt of Relief above 5 and under 15 who were under instruction

	Male	Female	Total
Special Schools	154	132	286
Workhouse Schools	2	3	5
Other Public Elementary Schools	2	8	10
Total	158	143	301

Not under Instruction	Male	Female	Total
Indoor	15	6	21

Outdoor	7	7	14
Total	22	13	35

TABLE 9

Sir Frances Warner's 1890 study of 50,000 Elementary and Poor Law Schoolchildren[13]

Feeble-minded or mentally exceptional	234
Epileptic, or a history of fits during school life	54
Crippled, maimed, deformed	239
Cases presenting bodily defects of various degrees of importance	5,851
Cases presenting some defective action or ill-balance of parts of the body, indicating deviations from the normal nerve-state	5,487
Children pale, delicate or thin	2,003
Eye cases (squint, not ophthalmic)	1,473
Children that appear to require special care	817

TABLE 10

Adult Cripples in the Sheffield Workhouse and Infirmary February 1891[14]

Sheffield Workhouse	Male	Female	Resident
Crippled Paralysis from Brain Disease	9	7	13

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[13] F. B. Smith, *The People's Health 1830 to 1910* (c. 1979), p.183.

[14] Evidence given by Dr Wycliffe Watson, Medical Officer to Sheffield Board of Guardians to the COS Inquiry, *The Epileptic and Crippled Child and Adult: A Report on the Present Condition of these Classes of Afflicted Persons, with suggestions for their better Education and Employment* (1893).

Spine disease	3		3
Hip disease	1		1
Other diseases			
Wrist-drop from lead poisoning	2		
Limbs stiff from Rheumatism	3		3
Legs deformed from Rickets	1		1
Defect from Injury	4	1	4
Limbs Amputated			
a) For Disease	5	2	
b) For Injury	3		28

Sheffield Infirmary	Male	Female	Resident
Limbs Defective from Birth	1	1	
Club Foot	1	1	2
Paralysis from Brain Disease	15	14	28
Hemiplegia in all cases but one: In that case general paralysis			
Spine disease	4	1	5
Other disease (including ?diseased bone? rheumatism, chronic ulcer of leg, etc.)	10	4	14
Defect from Injury	1	1	2
Limbs Amputated			
a) For Disease	2	1	3
b) For Injury	3	3	58

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[2] Neuburg's selection is based on the 1852 edition of Mayhew. This later edition includes material which did not form part of the 1851 edition.

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